



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 151 No. 326
Thursday, June 6, 2024

Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, June 6, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*Translation*]

PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to lay upon the table, pursuant to subsection 40(1) of the Privacy Act and subsection 25(1) of the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, the Privacy Commissioner's report for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024.

[*English*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h) this report is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

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EXPORT DEVELOPMENT CANADA

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Export Promotion, International Trade and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the pleasure to table, in both official languages, the annual report of the 2022-23 Canada account, as prepared by Export Development Canada.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), and consistent with the policy on the tabling of treaties in Parliament, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaty entitled “Arrangement between the Government of Canada and the European Space Agency concerning the Participation by the Government of Canada in the Space Safety Programme”, done at Paris on June 8, 2023.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

* * *

CONNECTED CARE FOR CANADIANS ACT

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-72, An Act respecting the interoperability of health information technology and to prohibit data blocking by health information technology vendors.

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

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the reports of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association respecting its participation in the meeting of the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region in Iceland, from October 16 to 17, 2023; the 42nd interparliamentary meeting with the European Parliament's delegation responsible for relations with Canada in Normandy and Paris, France, and Brussels, Belgium, from June 5 to 9, 2023; and the fourth part of the 2023 ordinary session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, PACE, as well as the Parliamentary Mission to Germany in Strasbourg, France, and Berlin, Germany, from October 9 to 18, 2023.

* * *

• (1005)

HAIDA NATION RECOGNITION ACT

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.) moved that Bill S-16, An Act respecting the recognition of the Haida Nation and the Council of the Haida Nation, be read the first time.

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time)

*Routine Proceedings***PETITIONS****CARBON TAX**

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our country is facing an escalating cost of living crisis. Home heating expenses are surging, fuel prices are skyrocketing, and farmers are being forced to sell their land and reduce food production. This has resulted in higher food costs and record-high visits to food banks, all due to the government's carbon tax.

Petition e-4840, signed by over 10,000 Canadians, is just one voice among many that strongly oppose this unjust tax. Despite widespread opposition and the fact that many Canadians are only \$200 away from missing bill payments, the government chose to increase the tax.

Today, I stand and represent the overwhelming majority of Canadians who oppose this costly carbon tax. This petition calls for immediate relief for Canadians and urges the government to take decisive action by halting the tax hikes and eliminating the carbon tax altogether.

RARE DISEASES

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am presenting an urgent petition on behalf of all individuals and families of Brantford—Brant and Canadians across the country who are affected by cystic fibrosis.

With over 4,000 Canadians battling cystic fibrosis, we must address this pressing health issue. Shockingly, half of the lives taken by this disease are under the age of 39. Trikafta, an effective gene modulator drug targeting the mutation causing cystic fibrosis, offers hope to these individuals. However, access to such rare disease medications remains a challenge.

I join these Canadians in calling on the government to enhance access to rare disease treatments and establish a regulatory framework enabling bulk approval of gene mutations responsive to medications such as Trikafta. I urge the Minister of Health to prioritize this critical issue and swiftly respond to the demands outlined in the petition. Canadians with cystic fibrosis cannot wait any longer for essential treatments.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the hon. member, and all hon. members in the House, that they cannot put their points of view on the petitions. It has to be the petitioners' point of view. I would ask members to refrain from saying whether they are in support or are urging the government.

FIRST RESPONDERS TAX CREDIT

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to rise to present three petitions today.

The first is in support of volunteer firefighters, who account for 71% of Canada's total firefighting essential first responders. Approximately 8,000 essential search and rescue volunteers respond to thousands of incidents every year.

The petitioners state that the tax code of Canada currently allows volunteer firefighters and search and rescue volunteers to claim a \$3,000 tax credit, but only if 200 hours of volunteer services were completed in a calendar year. This works out to a mere \$450 per

year, which would allow these essential work volunteers to keep, of their own income from their regular jobs, \$2.25 an hour.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to support Bill C-310 and enact amendments to subsections 118.06(2) and 118.07(2) of the Income Tax Act in order to increase the amount of tax credits for volunteer firefighters and search and rescue volunteers from \$3,000 to \$10,000.

The second petition I wish to present calls on the government, again, to support Bill C-310 and enact amendments to subsections 118.06(2) and 118.07(2) of the Income Tax Act for firefighters.

● (1010)

The last petition I wish to present has been signed by thousands of petitioners. We need to support firefighters and, again, amend the Income Tax Act to make sure that we respect all these volunteers who keep our communities safe.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There are a lot of individuals rising for petitions. I just want to remind members that they are supposed to summarize. If they could give a brief summary, we can try to get through all these petitions.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

POVERTY

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise on behalf of my constituents, who express deep concern about the level of poverty in Canada. The petitioners point out that poverty affects more than 10% of Canadians, disproportionately impacting indigenous peoples, racialized people, recent immigrants and the young, especially children. The petitioners ask for the House of Commons to adopt a national poverty elimination strategy to ensure that every Canadian has a suitable quality of life and the opportunity to succeed.

NATURAL HEALTH PRODUCTS

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by the increasingly conservative-minded people of Timmins—James Bay, Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking and Nipissing—Timiskaming. The petitioners call on the House of Commons to immediately repeal the new regulatory constraints on natural health products passed last year, which has since affected their medical freedom of choice and affordability. Millions of Canadians rely upon these products.

GAZA

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a number of petitions here.

One of the petitions really is timely right now, given the bombing of a school in Gaza. It states that, whereas Israel's war with Hamas killed almost 20,000 people in Gaza in two months, between October 7 and December 18, 2023, with about 70% of them women and children, the civilian casualty rate in this war is significantly higher than the average rate in all the conflicts of the world during the 20th century. In the occupied West Bank, it has been the deadliest year on record since the UN began reporting in 2005, with at least 477 Palestinians killed by Israeli gunfire. The value of Canada's arms trade with Israel has been accelerating in the last few years; in 2022, Canada transferred over \$20 million in arms to Israel, the third-highest value on record. Canada has a legal responsibility under the Arms Trade Treaty and its harmonized domestic legislation to ensure that its arms exports are not used in commission of serious violations of international law or serious violence against women and children. In the late 1980s, during the first intifada, Canada imposed a two-way arms embargo on Israel as a response to violence against Palestinian civilians.

Therefore, the undersigned citizens and residents of Canada call on the Government of Canada to impose a two-way arms embargo between Canada and Israel; investigate whether Canadian weapons or weapons components have been used against Palestinian civilians in the occupied Palestinian territories, including in the current war on Gaza; review all military and security co-operation between Canada and Israel; and close loopholes that allow the unregulated and unreported transfer of military goods to Israel through the United States.

• (1015)

FIRST RESPONDERS TAX CREDIT

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, my second petition is on the importance of recognizing the role of volunteer firefighters in our country. Volunteer firefighters account for 71% of Canada's total firefighting essential first responders. In addition, approximately 8,000 essential search and rescue volunteers respond to thousands of incidents every year.

The tax code of Canada currently allows volunteer firefighters and search and rescue volunteers to claim a \$3,000 tax credit if 200 hours of volunteer services were completed in a calendar year. This works out to a mere \$450 that we allow these essential volunteers to keep of their own income from their regular jobs; that is \$2.25 an hour. If they volunteer more than 200 hours, which many do, the tax credit becomes even less.

These essential volunteers not only put their lives on the line and give their time, training and efforts to Canadians, but they also allow cities and municipalities to keep property taxes lower than if paid services were required. Increasing this tax credit would allow these essential volunteers to keep more of their hard-earned money, which would likely be spent in the communities in which they live. It would also help retain these volunteers in a time when volunteerism is decreasing.

Therefore, the undersigned citizens and residents of Canada call upon the Government of Canada to support Bill C-310 and enact amendments to subsections 118.06(2) and 118.07(2) of the Income Tax Act in order to increase the amount of the tax credit for volun-

Routine Proceedings

teer firefighting and search and rescue volunteer services from \$3,000 to \$10,000.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I remind members that they are not to read the petitions verbatim; they are supposed to be summarizing them. I see that there are a lot of individuals trying to get their petitions in. We have only four minutes, so I would ask members to please summarize.

The hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa has the floor.

PUBLIC SAFETY

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

I rise for the 41st time on behalf of the people of Swan River, Manitoba, to present a petition on the rising rate of crime. They live in crime and chaos caused by the Liberal government's soft-on-crime laws, like Bill C-5, which allows criminals to serve their sentences at home. In fact, Manitoba West District RCMP reported that in 18 months, just 15 individuals racked up over 200 charges. The people of Swan River are asking for jail, not bail, when it comes to violent repeat offenders.

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

GAZA

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I have some petitions with me as well. I have petition number 12950150, on the subject of foreign affairs.

This is a similar petition to what was already tabled, but I wanted to show my support for how important it is to share that Israel's war with Hamas killed almost 20,000 people in Gaza in the two months between October 7 and December 18, 2023, with about 70% of them being women and children.

The undersigned citizens and residents of Canada have called on the government to impose a two-way embargo on arms between Canada and Israel; to investigate whether Canadian weapons or weapons components have been used against Palestinian civilians in the occupied Palestinian territories, including during the current war on Gaza; to review all military and security co-operation between Israel and Canada; and finally, to close loopholes that allow the unregulated and unreported transfer of military goods to Israel through the United States.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): Madam Speaker, another petition I have is on the environment, petition number 12257265.

Routine Proceedings

Children born in 2020 will face an average of two to seven times more extreme weather events than their grandparents. According to a 2021 report in the *Lancet*, 83% of children worldwide reported that they think people have failed to take care of the planet. Those most affected by climate change are the youngest generation, as they will live to see the worst effects of the crisis. They call on the government of Canada to require all members of Parliament, regardless of party lines, to consult with secondary or elementary school leadership, student councils or environmental youth groups of those under 18 in their ridings, before Parliament holds the second reading of any bill that directly affects Canada's greenhouse gas emissions. The purpose of the consultation would be to listen to the viewpoints of those directly affected by the specified bill but do not already have representation in Parliament.

• (1020)

FIRST RESPONDERS TAX CREDIT

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): Madam Speaker, the last petition that I will read out is petition number 12734938, regarding firefighters and how important it is that we support the great work they do and that we make sure they have the supports they need. The petitioners say that the undersigned citizens and residents of Canada call upon the Government of Canada to support Bill C-310 and enact amendments to subsections 118.06(2) and 118.07(2) of the Income Tax Act in order to increase the amount of the tax credits for volunteer firefighting and search and rescue volunteer services from \$3,000 to \$10,000.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There is no more time for petitions. That brings us to the end. I do want to remind members again that they are to summarize their petitions when we do petitions. They are not to put their points of view forward as to whether they support those petitions. That brings us to the end of petitions.

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

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, I am rising on a point of order to discuss a serious incident that occurred in this chamber on Tuesday night. As you may recall, the House was sitting late on that evening to debate Bill C-20, the public complaints and review commission.

Bill C-20 is a very important piece of legislation, which is a long time coming. The purpose of the bill was to put in place an independent oversight body for the RCMP and CBSA as a way to deal with institutional issues, including actions of excessive police force and systemic racism.

It is also worth noting that the debate that evening came a day after the five-year anniversary of the release of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls across the country, which called on a need for reforms in policing to deal with both violence and over- and under-policing of indigenous peoples, particularly indigenous women, specifically noted in calls for justice 9.1 to 9.11. It is within this context, the comments I am about to cite are deeply concerning.

During the debate on the bill, the member for Saskatoon West made very concerning and inappropriate remarks. During the member's speech, while speaking about the case of Myles Sanderson,

the member made the following shocking and completely wrong statement. He said, "One of the interesting things in that particular incident was that the perpetrator, Myles Sanderson, had a history of violent offences and had been recently released on parole, despite the prediction by the parole board that he was likely to reoffend because of his racial background."

Mr. Speaker, that is not at all what the Parole Board said in a statement in response to the final report of the National Joint Board of Investigation into the mass stabbing in Saskatchewan by the offender on statutory release. It clearly said, "The BOI found there were no pre-incident indicators or precipitating events that were known to staff, or that staff could have acted upon to prevent this incident." Moreover, the Parole Board also noted, "the overall case preparation leading up to the release of the offender was both reasonable and appropriate, including the consideration of the Indigenous social history of the offender in the decision-making process."

It is important to note "that courts must consider an Aboriginal offender's background when he or she is being sentenced for a crime. Factors that are considered include discrimination, physical abuse, separation from culture and family, or drug and alcohol abuse", in response to the Supreme Court of Canada's ruling.

I will read from the Supreme Court ruling, *R v. Ipeelee*. It states—

• (1025)

The Deputy Speaker: We are getting into the debate of the other night. Could I ask specifically what the point of order is, or what Standing Order the member is referring to so that we can have a better idea of what we are looking at?

The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, this is very important context about why—

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, but in a point of order, we normally have to look at what Standing Order we are specifically looking at because what I am hearing sounds more in the line with a question of privilege, which requires an hour's notice to go to the House.

I do not really want to cut the hon. member off, and I understand the sensitivity around this, but I want to make sure that we are following the Standing Orders of the House of Commons.

The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, the statement of the member for Saskatoon West, which I read into the record a few moments ago, was very clearly said by the member. It was audible when re-examining the video of his intervention, and that was recorded in the blues. I am going to read it again into the record—

The Deputy Speaker: How about if we speak off-line about this to see what would be most appropriate? It sounds like it may be something that would fall more into the privilege range, and there is a different process for that if we are looking at a specific Standing Order to try to make a case.

I understand the importance of what the hon. member is trying to bring forward, but I think the tool that is being used is not the correct one. I would suggest that we have a little chat, and then maybe come back to this after.

The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, are you suggesting that this be a question of privilege and not a point of order? I want to make sure, out of respect to you, that I understand you correctly.

The Deputy Speaker: I think it would be best to consult with the Table and see how we can tighten it up just a little to make sure that it is in the correct order for hearing in the chamber. Let us do that. We will see if we can come back with that.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will come back to it later.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—DOCUMENTS REGARDING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT TECHNOLOGY CANADA

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC) moved:

That the House order the government, Sustainable Development Technology Canada (SDTC) and the Auditor General of Canada each to deposit with the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel, within 14 days of the adoption of this order, the following documents, created or dated since January 1, 2017, which are in its or her possession, custody or control:

- (a) all files, documents, briefing notes, memoranda, e-mails or any other correspondence exchanged among government officials regarding SDTC;
 - (b) contribution and funding agreements to which SDTC is a party;
 - (c) records detailing financial information of companies in which past or present directors or officers of SDTC had ownership, management or other financial interests;
 - (d) SDTC conflict of interest declarations;
 - (e) minutes of SDTC's Board of Directors and Project Review Committee; and
 - (f) all briefing notes, memoranda, e-mails or any other correspondence exchanged between SDTC directors and SDTC management;
- provided that,
- (g) the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel shall promptly thereafter notify the Speaker whether each entity produced documents as ordered, and the Speak-

Business of Supply

er, in turn, shall forthwith inform the House of the notice of the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel but, if the House stands adjourned, the Speaker shall lay the notice upon the table pursuant to Standing Order 32(1); and

(h) the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel shall provide forthwith any documents received by him, pursuant to this order, to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for its independent determination of whether to investigate potential offences under the Criminal Code or any other act of Parliament.

He said: Mr. Speaker, after nine years, it is clear that the NDP-Liberal government is not worth the cost or the corruption. The Auditor General delivered a shocking report this week that outlined a history of wasted money, conflicts of interest, and possible illegal and criminal activity in funnelling taxpayer funds to Liberal-friendly board appointees' own companies.

Let me just set the context. Right now, Canadians are living through complete misery. Government-caused inflation leading to high interest rates means that Canadians are hit with a brutal double whammy of not only having to pay higher prices at the store but also higher interest payments on their debt, everything from lines of credit to mortgages. They are paying more for the goods they buy and for the money they owe. This comes after the Prime Minister promised Canadians that interest rates would stay low for a very long time.

The Prime Minister also promised Canadians that he was going to go into debt so they did not have to. It is cold comfort now for the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who are facing default on their mortgages, as those rates keep rising, pushing people out of the homes that they have lived in for years. In many cases, there are tragic stories of people moving back in with their parents because they have lost the ability to stay in their house. This is all caused by wasteful government spending, pushing up prices and forcing the Bank of Canada to raise interest rates at the fastest pace in Canadian history to combat that inflation.

The government will tell us that it is not its fault. The Prime Minister loves to spread blame around. He is always looking for people to pin responsibility on, anyone other than himself. The Liberals say ridiculous things like there is global inflation, as if inflation was kind of like the weather, where we might have a warm front move in off the gulf and we might have some pesky inflation plaguing Canadians. Inflation is always and everywhere a monetary problem. It is always caused when governments print money that they do not have out of thin air, flooding the economy with brand new cash without any growth in economic activity to justify that expansion of the money supply.

Business of Supply

When the Conservatives point that out to the Liberals, they say that, in fairness, Canada was going through a pandemic and that they had to spend all this money to keep Canadians safe. The Parliamentary Budget Officer found that 40% of all that extra spending had nothing to do with the pandemic. Now, slowly but surely, we are learning what actually happened. The Liberals used the excuse of a pandemic to line the pockets of their friends and waste taxpayer money, not only during that critical period of the pandemic but also in the years that have followed. When Canadians are begging the government to get inflation and interest rates under control, the government keeps borrowing billions and billions to spend, spend, spend, not benefiting Canadians but lining the pockets of its friends.

I have so much to say that I do not think I am going to fit it all into my slot, so I am going to share my time with the hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets, Madam Speaker. I know that he has been working hard on this file. He is one of the members of Parliament who rolled up his sleeves and pored through documents, vigilantly looking for waste of taxpayer money. On this side of the House, we know that Canadians work so hard for the money they earn. The least they can expect is a government that respects the value of that hard work and their tax dollars.

I will run through a few of the greatest hits of Liberal corruption during the pandemic. We will remember the time the Prime Minister tried to funnel a billion dollars to his friends at the WE organization, an organization that had paid members of his own family hundreds of thousands of dollars in speaking fees. We will remember former Liberal MP, Frank Baylis, who suddenly, without having experience in the field, developed a medical fabrication company that did not actually produce anything, getting sole-sourced contracts from the government. In the past few months, we have learned more and more about the arrive scam app, where the government ballooned costs for IT services without any accountability or oversight of where that money was going.

It is clear that the Liberals use crises and attempts to fulfill noble causes to hide the corruption that they have become so famous for, and now we have an example.

• (1030)

The Liberals talk about the crisis that Canadians are facing. They try to justify all their wasteful spending and all their massive tax hikes on the backs of existential threats coming from climate change. However, now we know that their efforts to improve the environment have nothing to do with lowering emissions, but everything to do with doling out cash to people who have supported the Liberal Party in a very real way.

Let us look at what the Auditor General found: \$76 million in taxpayer money was paid out in direct conflict of interest. That means there were people on the board, people who made the decisions about where the money would go, who should have recused themselves because they had a financial interest in some of the companies that would get contracts.

In fact, the Auditor General found, and through investigations at committee we also found, that there were government representatives in almost all the board meetings when these decisions were being made. There cannot be any excuse the government has that

this corruption was happening in some kind of arm's length way. They were in the room when they were being warned there were conflicts of interest. They were in the room when the decisions were made. They were in the room when they found out the companies getting the contracts were at least partially owned, if not entirely owned, by members of the board themselves.

For Canadians who are following this story, basically what the government did was with respect to an existing agency, SDTC, which, by the way, had been fulfilling all its governance requirements up until 2017. Then something peculiar happened. Former minister Navdeep Bains did not like something that the chair of that board said, something about protecting the privacy of Canadians. That rubbed Navdeep Bains the wrong way, so he fired that chair and he appointed one who would be much more co-operative with the Liberal government. That is when the problems started.

The chronology is stark. When he was minister, Navdeep Bains went on to appoint another five controversial board members who engaged in unethical and illegal behaviour by approving funding to companies in which they held ownership or held seats on the board. There are examples of those officials sitting on the board as observers witnessed 96 conflicts of interest, but the officials did not intervene.

We have examples from the Auditor General's report of \$59 million being paid out to projects that did not qualify. I want to read what the Auditor General said about that. She said, "These projects were ineligible for funding because, for example, they did not support the development or demonstration of a new technology." The entire point of this agency, the entire point of this funding mechanism, was to incubate, to find potential technologies that might help reduce emissions and clean up particulate matter from the air. The whole purpose was that the agency would grant some of the funds to scale-up some of these innovative technologies.

What the Auditor General is saying is that in the agency's own project applications, there is no proof that there would be any benefit to the environment, not that it had tried and failed, not that it hoped that some new technology would work and despite its best efforts it was not fruitful. That happens all the time in the world of scientific innovation and inventions. People take ideas, they test them and sometimes they do not work. They learn from that and they go on to the next thing. In this situation, the applications themselves could not even point to any environmental benefit.

Business of Supply

There were \$6 million charged to taxpayers for projects that were not even built; over \$123 million in misappropriated funds; and as I mentioned, over 180 conflicts of interest with the funds. Here we have an example of Canadians suffering through one of the biggest cost of living crises since the Great Depression. Mothers are watering down milk to feed their children; people are moving back in with their parents; and single moms are working two, maybe even three jobs just to tread water, not with any hope of getting ahead but of just keeping a roof over themselves and their family.

While all this is happening, while the Prime Minister is claiming that every single penny he needs to scoop out of the pockets of taxpayers must go to all this spending, we find out that hundreds of millions of dollars were wasted, that there were massive conflicts of interest and that we have another example of Liberal corruption, where the Liberals reward their friends instead of respecting taxpayer dollars. That is why this motion is so important, so we can get all the information handed to the RCMP, because this is so serious we believe this warrants a police investigation.

• (1035)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, 60% of the member's comments were with regard to the economy. It is interesting when he does that. When the world was seeing record-high increases in interest rates and inflation, Canada's performance was far superior than the vast majority of other countries, especially if we compare ourselves to the G20 and the G7.

There is even some good news. For the last four months, inflation has been kept under control. In fact, yesterday it was announced that Canada was the first G7 country to see a decrease in the interest rate. This is all good news.

I am glad the Conservatives now want to start talking about the economy today and the day after, but I wonder if he could provide his thoughts with respect to the good news that Canada is the first of the G7 countries to decrease interest rates.

• (1040)

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Madam Speaker, we have an Auditor General's report that may very well end up with an RCMP investigation and perhaps criminal charges, and the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader cannot even defend it. There is nothing the member can defend in the Auditor General's report.

Did the Auditor General get anything wrong? Was she wrong when she said that \$76 million in taxpayer money was paid out in direct conflicts of interest? Was she wrong when she said that \$123 million in total was misappropriated? Was she wrong when she said that \$59 million was given out to companies that did not even qualify? No. The member wants to tell us not to worry, that Canadians should take heart that it is worse in some other parts of the world. That is not good enough.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the travesties with this situation has been the workers who have been involved. The government funded the agency 100% from public taxpayer federal money, but then it gave the workers no protection, no union and no protection under laws for whistle-blowing. We have had people come forward. They have lost their jobs. They face sexism. They face racism. They face attacks because they

come from French Canada. Some have had their names dragged through the mud consistently on this.

My question is about the justice for these workers who came forward, because none of this would have happened. Three investigations have culminated in this.

Will the Conservatives agree to stronger whistle-blower protection and also move some of the workers who are paid 100% federally under the umbrella system, where they get unionization and representation, so they and their families can have the sanctity of telling the truth, when necessary, to protect all Canadians?

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Madam Speaker, the hon. member raises another aspect of this that I did not have time to cover, and I am glad he did, which is the abominable treatment of the whistle-blowers in this whole sordid affair. For example, we found out that Andrée-Lise Méthot is the founder of a green venture capital firm called Cycle Capital. During her time on the board at SDTC, companies in which Cycle Capital was invested received \$42 million from SDTC. That is a board member who oversaw the distribution of those funds. Do we know who used to serve as strategic adviser at Cycle Capital from 2009 to 2018? It was the Minister of the Environment. That is some of the shocking things we found out.

The hon. member is absolutely right. There was terrible treatment of these employees. The Conservatives believe in protection for whistle-blowers. It was our government that brought in the Federal Accountability Act, which prevented reprisals against whistle-blowers. We absolutely support measures that would protect those whistle-blowers and those workers who were treated so terribly by the government.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, one of the most shocking things in the Auditor General's report is that she classified two groups of conflict of interest decisions. The first group involved 96 occasions where the board members declared a conflict of interest but then awarded themselves money. The most shocking part is the \$76 million, which is another 90 times when these board members did not have the courage to share that they had a conflict of interest. That is 186 times, half of which they hid.

Could the member comment on why someone would be appointed to the board with that kind of ethic?

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Madam Speaker, I think the member is absolutely right. Canadians would ask themselves why a government would do this. Why would there be government officials in the room overseeing these types of decisions, knowing that there were conflicts of interest? I think it goes back to the fact that this is the desired outcome. It is why a Liberal minister put his friends on the board.

Business of Supply

It is said that a fish rots from the top. The Prime Minister faces no consequences for his myriad conflicts, and there are other ministers with similar types of findings against them. The Prime Minister has been convicted three times. Nothing happens to the ministers and nothing happens to the Prime Minister. We can see the culture of corruption that the Prime Minister has created.

• (1045)

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin with a slight indulgence of the House. This is a remarkable day in history, the 80th anniversary of D-Day. I just wanted to share a brief story because we probably all have family members who, in one way or another, have a connection to World War II.

My mother's cousin Everett Borgald, my second cousin, from Chester Basin, Nova Scotia, signed up like a lot of young men did in 1942. He ended up landing in Normandy a month after D-Day, in July 1944. He was a tank trooper. He went inland and fought in the brutal battle of the Falaise gap, which the allies won on August 21, 1944, one month after he landed.

Two days later, in the subsequent pushing back of the German army, his tank was attacked by two 75-millimetre shells that pierced the turret and mortally wounded my second cousin. His best friend, who happened to be part of the crew, pulled him out of the tank, but unfortunately he did not survive. He passed away on August 23, 1944. Like many others, I am thinking of family members who made the ultimate sacrifice for the freedom we have, and I just wanted to acknowledge that.

Today we are debating a motion to have the Liberal government produce SDTC documents and send them to the RCMP. SDTC is a foundation set up 20 years ago by a Liberal government to invest in pre-commercialized green technology. The organization was doing good work. In fact in 2017, the Auditor General did a governance audit and found that it was complying with all of the best practices.

Unfortunately, after that, the chair of the board at that time started to criticize the government publicly around the breaches of data and weak privacy policies, appearing before a parliamentary committee. Former minister of industry Navdeep Bains and his office phoned the president of the green slush fund, as it has become known, and asked them if they could get the chair to stop criticizing the government.

The chair was not taking orders from the government and continued to criticize it. After an appearance at a parliamentary committee two days after that, the former minister's office phoned and said, for some reason, it was going to change the chair, and gave two names. The minister's office told the president to check it out. Former minister Navdeep Bains phoned the president personally and said that they were changing the chair because he was saying things they did not like. They had not been able to keep him quiet, so they gave two names and asked that they be checked out.

The president, Leah Lawrence, testified in industry committee that she checked the two names out. The first person declined because they had a conflict. The second one said they were willing to do it even though they had a conflict. The president advised the assistant deputy minister, Mr. Noseworthy, who was the liaison who

sat in the board meetings, that it was an inappropriate appointment of a chair because the appointee was conflicted. She was conflicted because the green slush fund was already doing business with her company.

However, Ms. Verschuren had no problem with being in a conflicted position, because she was doing the same thing at an organization called MaRS in Toronto, which I said also helps with the finance. The former minister came back through the ADM a couple of weeks later and said they were changing them. They phoned the then chair, Mr. Balsillie, and told him he was out. Three days later, Annette Verschuren was in, over the stringent objections of the organization. This included its head of communications, who, only a few months earlier, was working in the Prime Minister's Office, and they phoned the former minister's office to say that this was inappropriate. This is all in testimony.

What happened? It was the fourth or fifth appointment that the then minister Bains had made. It is quite a record of insider dealing and trading, the billion-dollar slush fund. The Auditor General audited a small portion, only five years' worth, and released a report this week. The AG found that board members voted to give companies money, and in 186 of the transactions, board members had an ownership interest in the companies. The Auditor General pointed out that in 90 of the transactions, board members did not even declare the conflict of interest, and that money alone totalled \$76 million. The situation led whistle-blowers to go to the government a year and a half ago to seek help and to stop the corruption.

• (1050)

The CFO from the industry department is quoted as saying that this is the biggest scandal since the sponsorship scandal. Actually, that was a Liberal scandal as well, in a previous government. The current scandal is huge in terms of dollars, compared to the earlier one. Almost half of all the transactions in the period of time that the Auditor General audited were transactions in which the board voted money to companies that they owned, almost half of the billion-dollar slush fund went to them, feathering their own interests.

Business of Supply

Public office holders have to comply with the Conflict of Interest Act, which says that public office holders cannot financially benefit from any job they are appointed to by the government. The SDTC act, an act of Parliament, says that individual board members cannot participate in and benefit from, for them or their families, any decision that financially makes their situation better, yet the directors did it 186 times while the senior departmental official sat in the meeting. The departmental official briefed his deputy minister at the time, who I am sure briefed the minister, former minister Bains, who did nothing for 46 months. The current minister, over the 46 months this was going on, did absolutely nothing until the whistle-blowers went public.

To give the House some idea of the graft and corruption, Andr e-Lise M ethot, a director appointed in 2016 by former minister Bains, while she was on the board, her companies that she has an equity investment in, received \$42.5 million from the green slush fund. Before she was appointed to the board, her companies received \$143 million from the green slush fund. She should never have been appointed to the board. She had an immediate conflict of interest. It was in breach of both the Conflict of Interest Act and the SDTC act to appoint her.

Annette Verschuren was the chair. We went through that. She has a company called NRStor, which was receiving government money. She was appointed to the board and should not have been. Guy Ouimet admitted in committee that he sat in committee and voted \$4 million to his own company, which he owns equity in, and nobody in the government stopped it. That was a direct conflict of interest. Stephen Kukucha, the organizer for the current Liberal leader in British Columbia and a former Liberal staffer to an environment minister, was on the board, and while he was, his companies received almost \$25 million.

This is massive corruption and fraud on a scale not seen in Canada in my recent memory, which is longer, I think, than that of some of the people here; at least, I am told that frequently.

What we have is a situation where last night we actually summoned, and it was the only way we could get him, former minister Navdeep Bains to the industry committee. He now works for Rogers, the largest and most expensive cellphone company in Canada, or the most expensive in the world. He was the minister who was supposed to reduce cellphone prices but actually ended up selling out and joining the most expensive company in the world in the last two years.

I think Mr. Bains was actually zooming, but it looked more like he was some sort of avatar that was programmed with only two answers: that it is a public and open process and that he had nothing to do with it. Obviously, if the former minister had nothing to do with it, then he was directed by the PMO to appoint the Liberal hacks, cronies and swindlers to the board.

He betrayed and said he does not have anything to do with it. His chief of staff said that he himself did not have anything to do with it either. They played the Hogan's Heroes Sergeant Schultz card and said, "I know nothing. Talk to somebody else." It is typical of the government, and everybody in the government. It is never the fault of the person who made the appointment. It is somebody else's fault. It is the "the dog ate my homework" government.

We are asking the House to pass a motion saying that the corruption has to end, and that not only does it have to end but it has to be investigated by the RCMP now that we have the Auditor General's report. I would ask and encourage all members to please show the ethics necessary for us and for Canadian taxpayers, and ensure that any illegal activity is dealt with by the police.

• (1055)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, to the member's point, the government has consistently acknowledged the work that our independent officers do for the House of Commons on behalf of Canadians. Where there is a need, the government has taken to action address the concerns. We continue to wait, and we will ultimately see what takes place.

Having said that, I would contrast some of the actions of the current government with those of previous administrations. There was the ETS scandal, which was in excess of \$400 million, under the Harper regime, which completely ignored the issue and denied any sort of accountability and transparency. The member can feel free to provide comment on that if he would like.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, I understand why the parliamentary secretary does not want to talk about the scandal we are debating today.

The issue is this: The government claims to have done something, but it was actually the whistle-blowers who exposed this corruption, because the government was not doing its job. Even after receiving word of it, the government did nothing except call for a study. It was the ethics committee, led by a Standing Order 106(4) motion brought forward by our ethics critic, that called for it to be investigated by the Auditor General. The Auditor General's review was done because of the actions of our side, the official opposition, not because of the Liberals, who are continuing to cover up the corruption.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, yesterday, former minister Navdeep Bains appeared before the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology. The Auditor General's report very clearly indicates that the minister at the time had the power to request that Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC, be audited to see what was happening, so I asked the minister how many audits he had requested. Not only did the former minister not respond, but we know that he did not request any audits. He told us that this was a completely independent fund.

What does my colleague think that Minister Bains should have done at the time when allegations of wrongdoing were already circulating in his department?

*Business of Supply**[English]*

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, it was an excellent question the member for Mirabel asked at the committee meeting last night. Of course, the automaton, AI-generated vision of former minister Bains just stuck with the process, and the answer, obviously, was zero, because he would not answer it. What former minister Bains could have done in the first place to prevent this was to not appoint corrupt Liberals to the board but to appoint people with ethical approaches to business and to ensure that when he got the monthly reports from the board with respect to the board meetings and what was going on, he did something to stop the corruption with respect to the 186 times the Liberals voted to give themselves money.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, a good example of how this type of situation would escape the current process the government has decided on is an interesting point the member has talked about before. Annette Verschuren is a good example of receiving all kinds of money from several different projects, and even from SDTC, but what about the managers who got bonuses to give money to projects that were not even recommended for acceptance? Why are we not getting the money back from those people? They got the bonuses through corruption and malfeasance, and at the expense of the workers whom I have been trying to raise as the real victims in the situation.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, that is true. Like a lot of things with respect to the government, the management of SDTC was not paid for results but for output, which generated the need for its members to get a bonus when they put money into a project. That was not a great way to go forward.

I would say this about the governance structure of the organization, which deteriorated greatly in 2019: When the chair changed the rules with respect to conflict of interest to suit her own benefit, it actually allowed the directors to buy shares in the companies for insider trading three days after the board approved money for those companies. That is how bad the corruption in the organization was under the Liberals.

• (1100)

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to this motion. I would like to address the substance of the issues raised and present the government's action to address allegations at SDTC and the actions we are taking to restore public trust and restore funding to Canada's world-class clean-tech sector that is helping deliver climate solutions and create the jobs of the future.

On Tuesday, we announced that we will transition SDTC programming to the National Research Council to enhance governance and ensure public confidence after recent reviews, including, but not limited to, the report of the Office of the Auditor General, which revealed lapses in SDTC's governance. We take those lapses very seriously. Transitioning SDTC programming to the NRC will ensure continued support for clean technology innovations, which, as we all know, is not only crucial for meeting Canada's climate targets, but is also helping companies scale up and grow, strengthening our economy and creating good jobs. The changes announced will provide continuity and stability for clean-tech companies

across the country, ensuring that entrepreneurs can move forward confidently with current projects and SDTC employees have opportunities to continue their work to enable homegrown innovation. I will return to these themes in more detail in a moment.

First, let me provide some background on the facts, the specific issues raised, the reaction by the government and the key steps that we are taking. This government expects organizations that receive public funds to be held to the highest standards. When allegations of mismanagement at SDTC first came to light, our government took immediate action to undertake the proper due diligence to understand the facts. These were serious allegations that warranted a careful assessment of all of the evidence. Only with the facts could we then take the appropriate next steps.

As the first step, the government engaged an impartial third party, Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton, to undertake a fact-finding exercise. That fact-finding exercise focused on a review of documentation and interviews with key stakeholders related to organizational policies and procedures, program governance and the project approval process. RCGT also interviewed employees, external advisers, senior management, members of SDTC's board and government officials. After receiving this report, we took swift action to freeze any new funding to SDTC and we tasked the organization with a management response and action plan. We also began to work collaboratively with the Office of the Auditor General to support a full and comprehensive audit.

Business of Supply

Just as the government has high standards for the use of government funds, we expect employees to benefit from a healthy and respectful work environment. Given this, in addition to the RCGT fact-finding exercise, the government took action to address allegations related to human resource practices at SDTC. With SDTC's consent, which was required due to the organization's status as a shared governance corporation at arm's length from Innovation, Science and Economic Development, ISED requested that the Department of Justice appoint McCarthy Tétrault LLP to undertake a fact-finding review of alleged breaches of labour and employment practices and policies at SDTC. Current and former employees were permitted to speak openly and freely to the law firm without violating any applicable settlement agreements or non-disclosure agreements. The report of the review, which the government has made publicly available, concluded that SDTC's leadership did not engage in the type of repetitive, vexatious or major-incident conduct that would constitute harassment, bullying or workplace violence under applicable standards.

Now, let me move on to two days ago, on June 4, when the Auditor General, as we all know, released the report of her audit of SDTC. As mentioned, the government welcomed the Auditor General's decision to undertake this audit and fully co-operated with the auditors. The Government of Canada agrees with the findings of the Auditor General's report on SDTC. We acknowledge the areas identified for improving governance, accountability and conflict of interest practices. Several of the recommendations are already being implemented by the organization, such as revising procedures for funding decisions and project oversight, as well as clarifying roles and responsibilities. The government is committed to working with SDTC to implement further measures that uphold transparency and prudent management of public funds.

- (1105)

Evidence collected from all of these independent reviews revealed lapses in SDTC's governance. We have never once denied that those are true lapses in its governance. The government listened and, as we saw yesterday, we are taking definitive action. To be clear however, the Auditor General did not report any evidence or suspicion of criminal behaviour.

As acknowledged by Ms. Hogan herself before committee on Tuesday, Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada has reacted quickly and well in response to the findings in the reports. In October 2023, a management response and action plan was developed, which set out action items aimed at improving SDTC's governance, its conflict of interest management and human resource practices; and at enhancing ISED's oversight of SDTC to ensure that the organization is in full compliance with its contribution agreement. A reinforced contribution agreement with SDTC will formalize the enhanced governance practices and oversight measures set out in the MRAP.

Of chief importance among amendments and complementary MRAP actions are those that clarify, enhance and standardize SDTC's reporting requirements and processes, which will allow the government greater insight into and oversight of the organization's operations and management of public funds. To help restore confidence in SDTC's management of public funds for the benefit of Canadians, ISED has implemented enhanced standards for disclo-

sure, documentation and management of conflicts of interest. Furthermore, active reporting requirements have been established to track conflict of interest disclosures and recusals. This includes measures specific to SDTC employees, external consultants, senior management and the board.

These measures will increase accountability, ensuring that any potential conflicts are managed effectively. They also introduce new requirements for declaring and documenting management of conflicts of interest within the foundation and reporting them to ISED. Collectively, these measures establish stronger governance and oversight of SDTC and will ensure increased transparency, accountability and confidence in the new board's ability to continue delivering benefits to Canadians as the programming transitions to its next phase.

Sustainable Development Technology Canada was created over 20 years ago in 2001. Canada's clean technology ecosystem looked very different at that time and was much less mature than it is today. The funding that has been provided since has helped to commercialize many clean technologies, and these projects continue to make valuable contributions to the Canadian economy, and the environment, today. It has been an example of how Liberal leadership in the environment and climate change has always supported economic growth in Canada, helping good companies grow and helping Canada be a leader in the world.

The governance model adopted by Parliament at that time in the Canada Foundation for Sustainable Development Technology Act provided for a high degree of independence, but the various reviews I have outlined prompted the government to take a close look at whether the governance structure of SDTC continues to be fit for purpose today.

After careful consideration, we determined that a new delivery model for SDTC programming was needed. This is why our government took action by announcing a new delivery approach that includes transitioning SDTC programming and employees to National Research Council Canada. In addition to its proven track record of providing tailored support to Canada's innovative small and medium-sized businesses, the NRC is a Crown agency and is subject to rigorous and stringent oversight of its personnel and finances. This will help rebuild public trust while increasing accountability and transparency in program delivery.

Business of Supply

This transition will take several months, so the government appointed new SDTC leadership, made up of highly regarded and trusted individuals, to lead the important work ahead to ensure the terms and conditions of ongoing projects are respected, and appropriate employment opportunities for SDTC employees at the NRC are identified, because it is not just about sound governance; it is about people.

• (1110)

SDTC's employees have a wealth of experience and knowledge of the clean-tech sector and have been integral in helping Canada's clean-tech companies move from seed to start-up to scale-up. Their transition to the NRC will help ensure that Canada's clean-tech companies will be at the forefront in the fight against climate change by receiving the same type of support to innovate, grow and create well-paying, sustainable jobs. This support will continue with resumed funding for new, eligible projects in a sector vital to our country's economy and clean growth transition. In line with the Auditor General's findings, ISED will enhance oversight and monitoring of funding throughout the transition period.

Now, the opposition members do not take climate change seriously. We know that from their many actions and votes against climate change. Conservatives would rather play politics than make sure that Canada's clean-tech sector can keep paving the way for the solutions the world needs. However, we understand that confidence in SDTC must be restored so that these visionary entrepreneurs can receive the funding they need for their businesses. Continuity of support for our clean-tech sector is paramount in the fight against climate change, and to keep growing our economy and keep Canada competitive in a world looking for cleaner solutions.

We know that clean-tech companies have felt the impacts of the funding pause as this government took the time it needed to uncover the evidence and identify a robust governance solution. We have done what we set out to do, and we thank the clean-tech sector for its resilience and patience as we shape the way forward.

The wheels are in motion at ISED, the NRC and SDTC to make the transfer happen while ensuring continuity for clean-tech projects and SDTC employees. By transitioning the support for clean-technology innovators into the NRC, leveraging its robust governance structure, the government will maintain the strengths of the programming that have benefited Canada's clean-tech companies for over two decades.

Going forward, it is crucial that our efforts are focused on supporting Canadian innovators in the clean-tech sector. These companies are generating jobs and developing world-class technologies to respond to the impacts of climate change and build the economy of the future here in Canada.

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Madam Speaker, the appetite for Canadians for corruption is very low, but specifically, right now, given the fact that the financial burden of Canadians is becoming quite high, this corruption, after nine years of this Liberal government, is just becoming far too much for Canadians.

We know that of all the individuals being investigated, we are asking the RCMP to look into this one individual, who may or may not be investigated, as it is very concerning. A former industry min-

ister, Navdeep Baines, appointed the chair of the board. Subsequent members to the board, who he knew at the time, had conflicts of interest and doled out \$140 million of taxpayer money where directors voted 186 times in instances with conflicts of interest. However, more concerning to Canadians with the burden of the cost of living is that this minister got a million-dollar job with Rogers Communication at a time when he promised cellphone bills would be down 25%, and this government subsequently promised 50%. Rogers has posted its best profit ever off the backs of Canadians.

Canadians demand an answer. Why was this appropriate for this government to treat this individual and others this way and for the further corruption coming from this story and others?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Madam Speaker, again, from day one, when we learned of the allegations of mismanagement, our government has consistently taken steps forward to address the issues that surfaced, and I have outlined that very clearly in my speech. Our government has taken action time and time again to collect the facts. We have never denied the fact that these allegations are serious and that there are breaches to specific governance standards that we all think we need to uphold.

We are doing the work. We are now relaunching SDTC with a new governance model that will have the accountability, transparency and oversight that I think we all agree is needed.

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, towards the end of his speech, the parliamentary secretary raised a couple of interesting points, namely the consequences these measures will have and the relentlessness of the Conservatives, who, as we know, are largely funded by oil companies. He was talking about the consequences this relentlessness had on Sustainable Development Technology Canada, which invests massively in green funds, technological innovation and small and medium-sized businesses that will contribute to the energy transition and the economy of tomorrow.

I would like to ask the government representative what he thinks of this strategy. More importantly, what does the government intend to do to ensure that investment in these SMEs continues? After all, they depend on investment to be able to take their technologies to the next level. They have been neglected for just over a year now.

These SMEs have no governance or ethical problems, but they are victims of these political strategies.

[*English*]

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Madam Speaker, part of my reason for getting into politics was to support small and medium-sized enterprises in this country and ensure that we unlock capital and investment to scale up the innovative solutions that entrepreneurs and small business owners are developing, so we can meet the challenges of today and tomorrow, one of the challenges obviously being climate change. I cannot tell members how committed we in the government are. There is a heartfelt commitment to ensuring that small businesses can access the capital and support they need.

Obviously, SDTC has played a pivotal role in that. We got a letter from Canada Cleantech that said, “Canada has consistently outperformed in the cleantech sector relative to its size, partly due to the support of SDTC as a funding source for early-stage technologies.” That is just one example. That is why we feel it is so important to get SDTC back up and running under a new governance framework.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Madam Speaker, I am rising to address the point of order raised earlier today by the member for Winnipeg Centre. I wish to apologize—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The point of order was set aside, if I remember correctly.

I will allow the hon. member to continue, but I would ask him to indicate which standing order he is rising on.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Madam Speaker, I would like to advise the House that I misspoke one word when I read my speech on Tuesday night.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will listen to it, but if it becomes a point of debate, I will let the member know. I am hoping that it will be on a point of order from the Standing Orders.

The hon. member for Saskatoon West.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Madam Speaker, I wish to apologize to the member, to the House and anyone else I may have offended.

Specifically, the member referenced a speech that I gave in the House Tuesday night on Bill C-20. In a quote she read from my speech, I said the following, “One of the interesting things in that particular incident was that the perpetrator, Myles Sanderson, had a history of violent offences and had been recently released on parole, despite the prediction by the parole board that he was likely to reoffend because of his racial background.” I misspoke when I used the word “because”. I meant to say “regardless”.

This was caught immediately and when the blues came out, the preliminary version of Hansard, we requested to change the word “because” to “regardless”. That change was accepted and published in Hansard officially.

Business of Supply

Once again, I apologize for misspeaking. I never meant to offend anyone. I never meant to cast any aspersions on anyone because of race.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That was a point of order.

The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, in terms of the blues, we are allowed to change things, but the change by the member entirely takes away what was said in the House. The edit made to the blues changed it entirely. Changing the record from “because of his racial background” to “regardless of his racial background” might seem like a small change, but it fundamentally alters the meaning of what was said. The former links criminality to one's race and the latter is not connected to race. That is—

● (1120)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Saskatoon West has apologized.

I would ask the member for Winnipeg Centre to speak to the Clerk to find out if that is more a question of privilege. It seems to me that it is more of a point of debate at this point in trying to expand on the point of order that the hon. member just brought forward again. I am not sure if it is a question of privilege as opposed to a point of order. It seems to be debate.

The hon. member for Saskatoon West did apologize.

The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, the member did not really apologize. He gave the reason he changed the word. He is not taking responsibility—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order, please.

The hon. member did apologize. He said that if it offended anybody he apologized and that it was not the word he wanted to use. The apology is there, so I would just ask the hon. member to maybe discuss it with the clerks or with her House leader to see how to move forward from here. At this point, I feel this is more of a point of debate.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Windsor West.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, one thing that is concerning about this situation is that the government knew about the problems with the workforce at SDTC. Now it is proposing another model, moving it under another government department, which would have more direct oversight. What is the point if SDTC management and board members who abuse the staff and the process are still part of it?

Business of Supply

How many of these individuals has the government rooted out to stop them from joining the recovery process and the justice necessary for the workers who remain there? I asked the government to offer other jobs to the SDTC whistle-blowers and it refused, leaving them in a lurch until right now. What is the government going to do to ensure it is a safe workplace?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Madam Speaker, we too feel it is very important to preserve a healthy work environment for the employees of SDTC. After all, they are not the ones at fault here. To the member's point, the board is no longer and will be reconstituted with new members under the new governance framework. As I said in my speech, employees who have worked at SDTC will be given opportunities within the new structure to have meaningful employment and to apply their skills and expertise in a way that benefits the clean-tech sector across Canada, which, to me, makes a lot of sense.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, perhaps the parliamentary secretary will be able to tell us if Navdeep Bains will be part of that process and put some more corrupt Liberals in.

My question is about the statement by the parliamentary secretary that the government acted and supported every single time the investigation into this. That is actually factually incorrect. That member, at the industry committee, opposed every vote we tried to have to do an investigation into this, every single time. It was only through the support of the Bloc and the NDP that we were able, in the industry committee, to do any investigation into this corruption at all.

Why is it that the member would claim that the Liberals actually were in front of this when they were fighting it every step of the way?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Madam Speaker, what that member just uttered is patently false. I have supported meetings on SDTC at committee, and our government has studied it at multiple committees. We have also taken action from day one to, as I said, do numerous fact-finding missions and independent reviews, all of which have provided the evidence and support for the actions we are now taking. We have taken those to heart and we have acted on the recommendations that independent third parties have given us, including all the witness testimony that has been provided at numerous committees.

• (1125)

Mr. Rick Perkins: You voted against all the summonses.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order, please.

The hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets has a habit of doing this, and I asked him to please be respectful and to allow members to have their say. If he has anything else to say, then he should wait until the appropriate time.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I just want to stand first to say that I have tracked the work of Sustainable Development Technology Canada over a 22-year

history, in which there were leading entrepreneurs from my own riding, people like Juergen Puetter from the wind energy sector, who was active as a member of the board. In those days, we would look at a track record of extremely effective, targeted support that led to multiplier factors of benefits to our economy in moving to innovative technology.

I cannot believe it is the same organization that is found so lacking in rigour by our current Auditor General. There has been a shocking decline in management, and I certainly support the Conservative motion today that we get to the bottom of it.

Does the hon. parliamentary secretary see a day when Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or the work it was doing, will be properly restored through the National Research Council?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Madam Speaker, I think the hon. member's question is a good-faith question. It is exactly what we hope to see. This organization has a legacy of really great strategic work in helping finance, seed and scale up financing for some of our most promising clean-tech entrepreneurs. To see that work continue is really where our commitment is.

Obviously, we need to address the governance issues that have surfaced and the practices that have been lacking. I agree with her that the hope is that we can do that, under the National Research Council, in a way that gives a lot more oversight to the federal government. I think that is what is really needed in this case.

I share her concern and her commitment to ensuring that we restore SDTC to its previous and most effective model.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will begin by saying that I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague from Saint-Jean.

Sustainable Development Technology Canada or how to take a great idea and a noble cause and screw the whole thing up. This organization was founded as a non-profit in 2001 with the noble aim of stimulating innovation in clean energy and green technologies during a crucial stage for many entrepreneurs and creators, that being the pre-commercial stage. This is the point where businesses are not yet profitable and need financing to be able to develop their technologies and commercialize them. In Quebec, home to a strong entrepreneurial fabric, many businesses depend on this type of financing, which can be obtained in very few places.

Since its inception, Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC, has been sitting on about \$2.1 billion in funding. Of this amount, it has spent \$856 million on some 420 projects, which is no trifling sum. Again, this was for a noble cause, with the laudable aim of stimulating innovation in clean technologies. This funding is necessary.

Business of Supply

On Tuesday the Auditor General's devastating report landed with a thud. In fact, this is one of three devastating reports we received Tuesday, proof that this government has completely lost control of the federal machinery of government. This is appalling.

First, we see that since the eligibility criteria were simply not defined, there is no way of knowing which projects could qualify. There was no follow-up on the fact that certain projects had, for example, proved less beneficial for the environment than what had been previously described. The eligibility criteria were not even sent to the outside experts who had been asked whether these projects should be funded or not. That takes the cake: Outside experts are hired to tell us whether this is a good or a bad project, but they are not sent the eligibility criteria. The number of problems outlined in this report is outrageous.

What is more, the Auditor General noted that one out of 10 projects were ineligible. It is as if, every time someone buys a bag of 10 apples at the grocery store, one of them is rotten. There comes a point when enough is enough. That is what happened at SDTC. One out of 10 projects were not even eligible. That is a huge ratio.

Then we get to what might explain why some ineligible projects were still funded: conflict of interest. The Auditor General identified 90 breaches of conflict of interest policies. In some cases, there were personal business relations between directors and the companies. In many cases, although the person disclosed their conflict of interest, they were still present when the decision was made whether or not to fund the project. Put the conflicts of interest and the ineligibility of projects together, and there is wrongdoing amounting to many tens of millions of dollars. That is what we learned from the Auditor General's report.

It is passing strange, moreover, that we learned that Sustainable Development Technology Canada had been abolished the very morning the report was submitted. What is going to happen with these recommendations? The recommendations made to SDTC will not be followed up on, since SDTC no longer exists. That raises a lot of questions. The government has disavowed an entity that receives public funds, that has a responsibility to taxpayers, that has a dual responsibility: properly managing the public funds it receives and stimulating a part of the economy essential to our future. The government says that the organization, the foundation, is not even worth cleaning up, and that it must be abolished.

What we have also learned is that SDTC employees will all have access to positions at the National Research Council of Canada, and that the funds will also be transferred there. However, we are not being told how that will work. We are completely in the dark. What is going to happen with the funding? I would remind the House that this funding is essential.

• (1130)

What will happen? Will the criteria at last be clear? Will projects continue to be funded? Will all the projects funded to date really be audited? Are we going to resume funding those that truly need it and whose survival depends on it?

There are tons of questions. This elimination comes at a crucial time. Now that many questions are being raised, it seems quite wise to scrap Sustainable Development Technology Canada or SDTC.

Will the documents follow? Will the government destroy all the documents that prove conflicts of interest or those that show that there may have been questionable ties or that the department may have been aware of certain facts well before the report was tabled and the first alarm sounded?

This leads me to today's opposition motion, moved by the Conservatives. If the aim is to shed light on what is happening at SDTC and to protect information that will support an investigation, especially by the RCMP, we fully agree on that.

The wording now has to be made acceptable and realistic. For example, the 14-day deadline is inadequate, given the volume of documentation requested. It is a huge number of documents. It includes all emails and briefing notes about SDTC exchanged between the directors for the past decade. That is huge. If these documents have to be translated, and we would like them to be, because we want them in both official languages, 14 days is not enough. Obviously, this sort of thing is very important to us.

We also want to tighten the language. Asking for financial information on every company that received funding from the SDTC may be going a bit too far. We should tread more lightly. However, we definitely agree that we should focus on projects where the Auditor General found a breach of conflict of interest policies. We must get to the bottom of this. These documents must be preserved so the RCMP can investigate, if necessary.

I would also point out that we must be very careful with how we word the request to the RCMP. In fact, we have no request to make to the RCMP. The RCMP decides whether, yes or no, it wants to launch an investigation or open a file on the matter. Yes, it can rely on the Auditor General's report. However, the documents used by the Auditor General must still exist, and the RCMP has to be able to go to the SDTC, which no longer exists, and request the documents. That is one of the things we would like to improve in the Conservatives' current motion.

However, let us not forget one thing. All the bad elements mentioned in this report and all the money that came out of the SDTC are preferable to the billions of dollars we are sending to the western oil companies. Moreover, we should we forgot the SDTC's important role and commendable objective in contributing to a cleaner future, with less climate change, more mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, with more of our clean technologies and so on.

Business of Supply

We should not forget the fund. This type of investment, because it comes from our taxes, must continue to exist. Let us not wage a vendetta against all the projects that need this funding. We have to be clear, and the wording has to be written more accurately so we can do our work as parliamentarians more seriously. Once again, the Liberals have proved to us that they are unable to manage anything, and it is really too bad, but do not worry: The Bloc Québécois will be here to help shed light on the issue.

• (1135)

[English]

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's remarks on the corruption we are seeing in the Liberal government, which is displayed in the Auditor General's report. I will note, as seen on page 14 of the Auditor General's report, that there were 90 cases where, according to the foundation's own records, conflict of interest policies were not followed.

How do we get rid of corruption in Parliament and in our institutions? How do we do it?

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Madam Speaker, to begin, if we could get rid of corruption here there would be no more Liberal Party. Furthermore, we would really like Quebec to be independent so we could leave this Parliament.

Nevertheless, if there has been misconduct, I would like it to be dealt with. However, the Conservative Party must not forget that there is a commendable objective in this type of investment and it should not start a vendetta against everything that is clean. That is what I want to see.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there is no doubt that the idea of sustainable development and funding green projects is something that is worthwhile. I would like to think that all political parties in the House support it, with the possible exception of the Conservative-Reform party.

Looking at it, yes, obviously everyone in the chamber recognizes that something is wrong here. The minister took immediate action, and the National Research Council is going to, in essence, ensure that we can continue to have funding ongoing while we address the concerns that have come out.

Would the member not agree that to have a government agency, such as NRC, take responsibility for this important file is a positive step forward?

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Madam Speaker, I would say that it is too little, too late. In paragraph 6.52 of the report, the Auditor General says, "We found that the department knew of 96 cases when directors declared conflicts of interest because it had access to the meeting minutes and materials of the board of directors."

The department had access to all kinds of documents. It never asked questions about ineligible projects or about recovering funds from those projects. The department simply did not deal with what

was happening at Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC. What a crying shame that it is now getting rid of SDTC altogether without a plan B.

• (1140)

[English]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, the NDP supports this motion because Canadians expect that their tax dollars will be managed responsibly and will not be used to appoint political appointees and other corporate friends. We absolutely support getting answers about the financial mismanagement, conflict of interests and toxic workplace at Sustainable Development Technology Canada.

I wonder if the member would agree that, while the Liberals are saying that they have done what they can, they have not done enough, which has led to the important motion we are debating today.

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Madam Speaker, first of all, the Liberal government did not do enough in recent years to monitor what was going on. It sent money, but it did nothing to monitor what was being used and what was being done with that money.

Second, suggesting that getting rid of SDTC will fix everything is absolutely ridiculous. It is absolutely ridiculous to suggest that eliminating a fund and transferring the money and the employees to the National Research Council will fix everything. These are the same employees. What is more, the eligibility criteria for projects to get funding remain unclear.

What is going to happen? We do not know.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is always difficult to follow my colleague from Terrebonne, but I will do my best to address the day's topic, the production of documents following the three rather explosive reports just made public by the Auditor General of Canada.

I will quickly address the Conservatives' motion because I may have a few proposals to make at the end of my speech. The Conservatives' motion essentially asks that the House order the government and Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC, to produce several documents within 14 days following the potential adoption of the motion.

They want all files, documents, briefing notes, memoranda, emails or any other correspondence exchanged among government officials regarding SDTC; contribution and funding agreements to which SDTC is a party; records detailing financial information of SDTC; SDTC conflict of interest declarations, which we will be talking about in detail; briefing notes and so on. They also want these documents to be provided to the RCMP for its independent determination of whether to investigate potential offences under the Criminal Code. I will circle back to that later as well.

Business of Supply

In short, this motion relates to the performance audit of SDTC submitted by the Auditor General of Canada two days ago, on June 4. The Auditor General looked into the organization's activities between April 1, 2017, and December 31, 2023, and her findings were as numerous as they were damning. Let me name a few.

She revealed that SDTC “did not always manage public funds in accordance with the terms and conditions of the contribution agreements for the Sustainable Development Technology Fund”. That was the basis for her findings. She also revealed that “the foundation had not established targets or clear guidance for assessing eligibility criteria” of the projects it was going to fund. Despite the eligibility criteria, when it finally arrived at the conclusion that a project was ineligible, in some cases, the foundation gave the projects funding even if they did not support the development or demonstration of a new technology, or if “their projected environmental benefits” had been exaggerated.

The foundation did not inform Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada of funding that needed to be recovered. The foundation poorly managed its conflicts of interest in several respects. Its records show that “the conflict-of-interest policies were not followed in 90 cases”. The foundation's conflict-of-interest policies simply did not comply with its enabling legislation. It did not even have an “effective system to maintain records over disclosures of conflicts of interest and related mitigating actions.” SDTC's conflicts of interest were linked to approval decisions representing nearly \$76 million in funding awarded to projects. This is no small matter. The foundation did not declare its conflicts of interest to the department. The board of directors failed “to oversee the foundation's compliance with key legal requirements.” Right from the start, the board was not set up correctly, since the number of directors did not comply with the enabling legislation. There were only two, rather than the 15 who were supposed to sit on the board.

Nevertheless, SDTC should not take all the blame. The minister did not provide sufficient oversight of the foundation's use of public funds. That, my friends, is another problem. Despite whistle-blowers having sounded the alarm a long time ago, nothing was done. As one of my colleagues, the member for Mirabel, mentioned in his question to a Conservative member, former minister Navdeep Bains could have requested audits but did not. As the saying goes, the longer we wait the worse things get. In this case, the wait was long indeed, and things went from bad to worse.

In short, what the Auditor General of Canada did two days ago was to finally confirm what we have suspected for months. She tabled three reports the same day and with the same ultimate finding, which is especially striking: The Liberals have completely lost control of the machinery of government. If we needed another blatant example of this, we got one today.

• (1145)

As my colleague from Terrebonne mentioned yesterday during a question, Ottawa should get its own house in order instead of trying to manage the provinces. It should begin by doing its own job before trying to do everyone else's. This shows there are systemic problems within the machinery of government. The widespread trend to contract out and create increasing distance between the

government and the projects it manages leads to an absence of accountability and transparency. This doubles and even triples the number of intermediaries, causing us to lose the thread concerning who does what. We are unable to follow the money, and we lose track of everything. This is probably something the government can at last understand. It truly tends to be incapable of following up on programs because they have been outsourced to third parties.

If the government were asked to do an eight-piece puzzle, it would probably not be above making sure the puzzle was manufactured by a Liberal and creating a non-government agency specializing in solving puzzles. It might even hire a consulting firm to get engineering advice about puzzles, but it would certainly not be able to determine how much it ended up costing them to finish the stupid puzzle. It might not even be able to finish it because one of the pieces was lost in the sofa cushions. That is how the current government is running things, and here we have a clear example of that.

Essentially, the problem is that we need to support the development of sustainable technologies. At a time when climate change is likely to cause not only health problems, but economic problems as well, we need to deal with it and develop technologies that can help mitigate it. The problem is that, by suspending funding activities for SDTC because it was so rotten, they also suspended the funding needed to develop these technologies.

In the meantime, we are continuing to fund oil companies and engage in greenwashing by asking the same oil companies to develop their own sustainable technologies. Ultimately, it probably suits the Conservatives to be able to blame the government for its poor management inasmuch as we know they are climate change deniers, but we still need to tackle the underlying problem and fund the development of green technologies.

That being said, there are interesting things in the Conservatives' motion. My colleague alluded to them. Asking for the rapid production of numerous documents may help us prevent a few of them from getting lost in the sofa cushions. They are sending the message that members of Parliament intend to look into the matter, which is not bad in itself. We need to shed light on this issue to make the government stop constantly delegating its authority and its project management to other entities. Let us not forget the importance of transparency in the government's management of different projects and the subsidies it grants.

However, there are two things in this motion that bother us, and we need to point them out. They are asking that the documents be produced within 14 days of the adoption of the motion. The Conservatives appear to have forgotten that there are two official languages and that the Bloc Québécois works in French. Fourteen days will not be sufficient to have all of the requested documents translated. It might be a good idea to show a little flexibility in this respect without going overboard.

Business of Supply

Furthermore, regarding involving the RCMP, as worded, the motion seems to be giving the RCMP instructions rather than simply allowing it to access documents, which it would be more than capable of obtaining through warrants, anyway. In short, we are open to talking with the Conservatives about minor amendments to their proposal.

We invite them to come talk to us. We will be in the House fairly late this evening anyway. Properly managing the Liberals' legislative agenda means we will be working for quite a while. The Conservatives should not hesitate to come see us to discuss proposals and amendments. We are always open to discussion.

• (1150)

[*English*]

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, earlier today, we had a Liberal member stand up and say that the government has done what it set out to do. When one looks at 186 breaches of conflict of interest in SDTC alone, the government definitely set out to do what it wanted to do, which was to reward Liberal friends with hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars.

Does my colleague see that particular issue as well with the current government?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, as I said already, when we create parallel entities and delegate, including to firms or boards, the important principle of government accountability tends to get lost. This is the crux of the issue, of which Sustainable Development Technology Canada, SDTC, is just one example.

The way the government manages its affairs and its propensity to constantly delegate need to be examined. It is systemic. Decisions are being made further and further away from the government, which can then distance itself from them. Furthermore, the traceability of many decisions is lost. This is what we have to fix.

SDTC is a symptom. It is the disease that causes the symptom. That is what we must tackle. We have another blatant example of that here.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is important to recognize that SDTC was an arm's-length organization from the government. When it was brought to the attention of the government, immediate actions were in fact taken. Ultimately, today, it has now been given over to NRC to ensure that we can continue to deal with things that are affecting our water, energy and agricultural communities, and to make sure that the good work being done is allowed to continue while we continue to address what the auditor referenced this week.

Would the member not agree that having NRC take over is the responsible thing to do? Through NRC, it would be more direct, in terms of the government because it is a Crown corporation.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, the problem is that we never should have reached this point. It was said earlier. Minis-

ter Navdeep Bains was informed, and he did nothing. He did not request an audit. Shutting down SDTC is the nuclear option.

It might have been better to do things differently. We know this type of program is the product of the government's obvious desire to create a fiscal imbalance, stop funding the provinces and keep their money in an effort to prove that the federal government is the one that gets things done. The federal government is the one that creates agencies, gives funding and grants subsidies.

Quebec, however, had Transition énergétique Québec, which, incidentally, operated in partnership with SDTC. It could manage such a fund. Since Quebec is a leader in developing sustainable technologies, I put the suggestion out there.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is hard to take the Liberals seriously when they talk about climate change.

This is a perfect example right here. They have \$37 billion-plus for a pipeline, and at the same time, they actually bought the pipeline, managed the pipeline and continue to put all the resources into the pipeline. Meanwhile, the Liberals created an agency independent from the government, they claim, with all hands-off, so they have no responsibility, no accountability, and they let the workforce down by making them the scapegoats for sustainable investment and projects.

Could the member tell us how we can even take the Liberals seriously when the numbers for the investments and the strategy do not actually coincide with the rhetoric?

• (1155)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, I think that the question clearly shows where the government's priorities are in terms of climate.

If we had applied the same criteria to Trans Mountain as those used for the SDTC in abandoning the whole project, we would have pulled out of Trans Mountain a long time ago. Finally, funding was secured, which went far beyond what was originally estimated, to end the damned project because it is oil and that is one of the priorities of a government that, despite everything, tries to make us believe it is green.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Edmonton Griesbach.

Business of Supply

This issue is serious. New Democrats will support this motion. We have supported shedding more light on this because we believe in the support of sustainable technology, but it has to be done with accountability and it has to be done with a process that builds public confidence. This motion would provide a clearer path of where we need to go because the Liberals continue to be in some type of spin cycle that they cannot get out of and will continue to be in until there is actually justice on this file.

SDTC was created under Jean Chrétien's government. It has survived all the way through successive Liberal and Conservative governments over this period of time and, most recently, it has poked its head out again because the workers brought forth the erosion of a good program and some good investments that were costing Canadians.

What is important to recognize, too, is that all the other competition that was going on for money in SDTC, which is 100% publicly funded, was lost because corrupt and poor decision-making processes, political interference and intimidation sent money to projects that should not have been supported. By the organization's own internal investigations, which are now shedding more light, it probably had political favouritism involved at the very least. That is unfortunate because all those other companies, investment strategies, programs and services are now cast in doubt. To this day, we have not recovered a single cent from all that money that went out there.

The practices got so bad that during the pandemic the government just decided it was going to give everybody a 5% raise because it could not bother to go through the files. The government gave up and decided to just give everybody 5% more across the board in funding. On top of that, there was also 10% more for some select companies and, surprise, surprise, familiar names have popped up and political connections have popped up. There still has not been a word from the government about what it is going to do about that.

During that process, some managers were getting bonuses. They should have declared a conflict of interest. Some managers would get their packages, would go into the boardroom and would know it was all on the table there. They would leave for a moment and then they would come right back into the same room. They would do that over and over. What was awful was that there was a direct connection to the minister's office because we had a public servant staffer in there.

During all that decision-making process, all that camaraderie and all that time at the board table, there was no information apparently brought back to the minister; nor recognition at a time when we had not one, not two, but now three reports about how poorly it operated, about how poor the decision-making process was and about the culture of racism and sexism. An attack on French workers as well was noted in terms of the whistle-blowers. Some people lost their jobs and they had to sign non-disclosure agreements just to get out of there so they and their families could be protected.

I had an amendment that I wanted to propose today that would call on the government to apologize. Neither the government nor the minister nor anybody has apologized to these workers and their families for the stress that they went through every day having to

go into a toxic workplace, being pressed to hand out government money to people it should not have gone to, and being maligned in the public as SDTC spokespeople defended the organization and the culture there at the expense of the whistle-blowers.

I had a motion that was ruled out of order because of the document requirement. Part of this motion is different from what I was proposing, so we will look for another way to have the government to at least say sorry. How sad is it that I had to come here today to get the government to say sorry to the whistle-blowers?

I want to go back for a second. Let us recognize what has happened here. The government created SDTC at so-called arm's length because then the workers were not unionized and it had fewer supports and structures for workers and their families.

● (1200)

I asked the government if it would at least, in all these months of investigations and circuses, allow those employees to get out of this toxic environment and have another public service job, but no, the government could not even do that. It could not even do that for the remaining people who have held the line and done the right things. We still do not know who is going to be migrated over to the other agency.

They do have an association, so there will be better rights there. I do not know the full story right now, and we do not even know if that is what they wanted. Perhaps some of them still wanted to go somewhere else and start a new chapter, doing the right thing. We should have at least provided the choice for them. The government has not done that, and part of that is because of its insincerity in protecting workers. The government's recent decision on anti-scab legislation does not mean it has changed its culture against workers.

I asked that there be an independent evaluation to determine whether managers and people in authority, including board members, should keep their positions and be migrated. That is a fair thing, because there are probably some good people in there who do not need to be blanketed as part of the problem of workplace bullying.

We had the Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton report, the confidential report of the special committee and the Osler report. The Privy Council Office got a report, and now we have the Auditor General's report, all because a number of people raised issues about people like Annette Verschuren and others who were in conflict of interest in deciding where money should go and where it should not go. This is the biggest part of this that we want to fix, if we are going to have the confidence of the public for doing work for sustainable technology.

Business of Supply

I asked my colleague where the Liberals are on this, so let us get an idea here. The Liberals continue to leave all these people on their own. They cannot say sorry, but they had enough energy to buy a pipeline and manage the politics of a pipeline, at 37 times the cost and with less accountability. They are putting that on the shoulders of the workers to whom they still cannot even say they are sorry.

An interesting thing has come about in this culture that still exists under Liberals. I recently got a document. As we are looking at a potential strike and border closure, here is what the departments under the governance of the President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Public Safety should know about. Their management plan right now to deal with our customs officers on the front line is an email that went out to their staff and to the unionized workers saying:

As stress and anxiety rise with the pending strike deadline of Friday, June 7th, 2024 16:00EST, we wanted to send out some clarifying information to our team. Some officers across the county have received letters deeming their positions "essential". In essence, this means that they are to report to work for duty (our team) despite being in a legal strike position. These determinations were made with PSAC and TB collaboration. For those officers who did not receive notification and therefore were not deemed "essential", you have the choice to either participate in the legal strike actions or continue to report to your current work (our team). Whatever decision each team member makes will be respected and kept private. We will not be disclosing who was deemed essential and who was not. We will continue to support each other and continue to ensure our team is a healthy, supportive team, free of any harassment. Should any team members who were not deemed "essential" decide to continue to report to work, please PRIVATELY email me...as such reporting will be recorded to ensure those who reported are continued to be paid.

This attempts to bring in scabs and break the union. Right now, our border could be closed for the economy and is being compromised for safety. The President of the Treasury Board has a recommendation to treat these workers like every other border officer and every other public safety officer by giving them the "25 years and out" and also ensuring the workplace is safe for all of us.

Shame on the Liberals for the continuing practices of their management and for not caring about the workers who actually fight for Canadians every single day.

• (1205)

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, we have seen, since this began to unfold quite some time ago, that the current minister gets up and claims that as soon as the government knew there were governance problems, its members took swift action. We have heard that talking point repeatedly today during this debate, and it is false.

We know that this goes right back to 2017 and the behaviour of the former minister, and we know it was only through the whistleblowers, the workers themselves, who brought this to the public's attention at tremendous personal cost to themselves, that we even know the depths of the corruption at work here.

As such, I wonder if the member could correct the record with respect to the false narrative from the Liberals that they took immediate action.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, the proof is in the reports that were identified, brought in and have lingered for years, even the external ones that had to be approved by the minister's office to be investigated, as well as the fact there was somebody from ISED

sitting on the board of directors. How could the government not know this was happening? It was like having a front row seat on the Titanic and for some reason having no idea what was going on. I can say that the cozy relationships, the appointment process and all those different things, unfortunately clouded some really good work that could have been done. That is why we need to clean this up, to make sure that the workers and taxpayer money are going to be respected.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I know my colleague is working very hard at the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology.

I would like him to talk about the fact that, as my colleagues from Terrebonne and Saint-Jean explained in their speeches, we are talking about the damning reports of the Auditor General. We are talking about poor management, and this is not the first scandal involving poor management in the federal system. It is one after another and we can see it building up.

What I see is this worrisome tendency of the federal system to want to take money, try to create programs, manage them poorly, and meanwhile retain the money that should be transferred to the provinces so they can manage their own areas of jurisdiction. Quebec also has its own environmental programs, and we have talked about it.

The Liberals and the Conservatives who followed made cuts, undermined transfers and tried to meddle. In the end, we lost out again, and in 2024 we have an incompetent, non-functional federal system.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, in the auto sector where I come from, we have been looking at, and fighting for, a transition to a green car strategy for a long period of time. We are finally seeing some of that innovation. What has been exciting is that we are seeing Quebec re-emerge as a place for automotive investment. That was lost with the Sainte-Thérèse plant and other places that were very good, well-established automotive manufacturers. Now we are being brought back into the fold of competing, which is excellent for Ontario and Quebec, but, sadly, what we are seeing with this situation is an erosion of confidence in the programs and services. That is why yesterday at committee I raised this concern with some of those who were saying that we should just turn the spigot back on. We have to make sure there is accountability for workers and also a proper process, not just move it to a department without a plan. If we want to do this right, it needs work.

Business of Supply

• (1210)

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his work. I enjoy working with him on the industry committee.

When I used to serve on boards and it came to pecuniary interests, we used to ask if anyone was making any money, and 90% of the time people were making money. This is not just in one instance, but in many instances.

The solution from the government is to dissolve SDTC and put it back into the government. The very problem that created all of these instances, of course, was that the minister and the department had that knowledge. The member even mentioned that a member of ISED was sitting on the board.

How do we ensure that we maintain the creation of sustainable technology and innovation as a whole in Canada given how muddled this whole process has been and how corrupt the government is?

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his work.

The minister needs to bring in all of the opposition parties if there is going to be a new model presented. The government has not presented a plan and is just shuffling it off without sharing any of that information. That is not healthy for the workers, or for ourselves, as we have the hard job of making sure that the government and those who have benefited from this are held to account. That is why I will be supporting the Conservative motion today.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, before I begin, I want to thank my hon. colleague, the member for Windsor West, for his immense work in making certain there is justice for workers and for Canadian taxpayers in regards to this ridiculous and unfortunate circumstance that the government finds itself in, which is a very blatant disregard for the procedures and practices that are required of boards and taxpayer dollars.

I want to first recognize the immense suffering of Palestinians who are seeking safety and shelter. Just this morning, we learned that there was another air strike against a United Nations school that harmed over 6,000 innocent lives. We need sanctions, we need a two-way arms embargo and we need a ceasefire now.

The Auditor General just released her damning report in regard to serious issues and claims made against Sustainable Development Technology Canada's governance and stewardship of public funds, issues that were present in her investigation. The report reads:

We found that the foundation awarded funding to projects that were ineligible, that conflicts of interest existed in some instances, and that certain requirements in the Canada Foundation for Sustainable Development Technology Act were not met.

It continues to say, "the foundation awarded funding to 10 ineligible projects of 58 we examined." It goes on to suggest that they "found 90 cases that were connected to approval decisions, representing nearly \$76 million in funding awarded to projects, where the foundation's conflict-of-interest policies were not followed." In addition, it suggests, "The board of directors...did not ensure that the foundation complied with its enabling legislation. The act requires that the foundation have a member council of 15 members."

It says that unfortunately "The board of directors supported reducing that number to 2."

I do not think it takes a rocket scientist to know that public accountability in the creation of a board, particularly of 15 members, is an important piece of the enabling legislation that would have, or could have, required more oversight. However, the reduction of those members to just two creates a very obvious vulnerability and risk present to the very obvious mismanagement of this fund, likely leading to the very serious issues of conflict of interest.

It is extremely concerning that SDTC was handing out money to companies for projects that were not eligible. This fund is intended to ensure that we have sustainable development of clean technology, something I believe many members in the House support. In fact, this fund goes back in its origin for a significantly longer amount of time, beginning in 2001. Back then, it was established as a not-for-profit corporation, with a mandate to award funding to eligible projects, carried on primarily in Canada, to develop and demonstrate new technologies related to climate change, clean air, clean water and clean soil, to make progress on sustainable development.

The goals are to ensure that we have a responsible path toward a future where our children and our grandchildren can breathe good air, drink good water and live in an environment that Canadians, for so long, in particular indigenous people, have safeguarded and stewarded for generations. It is needed now more than ever to ensure that these projects are not just developed in Canada, but that they actually serve the goals of a more sustainable future.

However, it is a double sin to not just see that this fund has been left largely in the hands of a government that is so disinterested in the accountability that is required of non-for-profit corporations, but it is leading to what is a very obvious and extreme instance of misappropriation of funds. In addition to all of that, we see these extreme conflict of interest cases where, in one circumstance, a board member was able to award their own company millions of dollars. That is basic-level transparency of which members of boards, particularly government created boards, should have an understanding.

I know many members in my community who sit on small non-profits and do the hard work every time they go into their board meetings. They read the minutes, and they clarify among themselves and their colleagues the true facts. They also hold themselves to a moral standard, because they are serving a community and they are serving a real need.

Business of Supply

● (1215)

It is a second sin to use what was intended to be one of the most important pieces of a better future for Canadians as an easy access point for corruption and conflict of interest. The foundation entered into contribution agreements with the Crown, most recently with the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, to manage the sustainable development technology fund. According to these contribution agreements, the fund's goal is to advance clean technology innovation in Canada, specifically by funding and supporting technology projects at the pre-commercial development and demonstration stages, to demonstrate solutions to Canadians that have a potential for our future.

It came to light in February 2023 that Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada had received serious allegations of financial mismanagement and poor human resource management practices at the foundation. In March of 2023, the department hired an external consultant to conduct a fact-finding exercise to determine whether there was sufficient merit to the allegations. In November of 2023, the department announced that a law firm would be hired to review alleged breaches of the labour and employment practices and policies.

In August of 2023, whistle-blowers filed a complaint against SDTC, hoping for a management overhaul. In their complaint, the whistle-blowers alleged a series of conflict of interests and a number of potential cases of mismanagement of public funds at the foundation.

It is important that I make note of those very brave workers, the people who were able to see what was wrong when it was meant to be for true good. They courageously stepped forward under penalty of losing their jobs. For many Canadians, the penalty of losing their jobs would also mean they would also be penalized by losing their ability to house and feed themselves, of dignity for themselves and their family. These workers put everything on the line so that Canadians could get the truth that we are dealing with here today.

These whistle-blowers are in need of real protection. That highlights an even bigger problem we have, which is the need for whistle-blower reforms to better protect whistle-blowers in an instance where they have witnessed corruption and mismanagement and bring forward what they have seen.

We know that in the instance I cited earlier, it was an approving grant to NRStor, totalling \$217,000 in 2020 and in 2021. Those grants were part of COVID-19 funding to help businesses survive the pandemic. However, the former board chair of SDTC said that she received a legal opinion to not recuse herself in the very instance of her own company applying for funds to the fund she chaired. She followed that legal advice, citing that this was the reason why she did not recuse herself. It does not take an immense amount of knowledge to know that if someone's company is applying to a fund to which he or she is a not-for-profit, of which the person is the chair, that it is not just a perceived conflict of interest but a very real conflict of interest.

I am delighted to say that I am thankful to our Conservative colleagues for bringing this motion forward. The New Democrats will be supporting this motion to better understand and to better bring

clarity to this immensely difficult issue facing Canadians and Canadian taxpayers.

I hope we have the courage in this place to not only deal with the production of these documents for the better purpose of our investigations, but to also recommend true solutions that can put an end to this kind of extreme level of breach of trust. It is not just present here but has been on so many issues even prior to the current government. It is so important that we take this opportunity to clamp-down and create better security assurances, as called for by the Auditor General.

● (1220)

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, I think what the member was really trying to get at in his speech is that it seems like this type of corruption, this level of corruption, is ingrained in the government. Toward the end of his speech he was referencing that even during the pandemic the government was taking taxpayer money and sending it off to Liberal insiders.

Does the member agree that this is not just a one-off with the government, but that this is actually part of what it is at its very core?

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for the opportunity to speak to not only the party's record of corruption, but how consecutive governments, particularly Liberals, have to wait for the Auditor General to catch them red-handed. It should not take the Auditor General and other independent officers of the Parliament to hold the government accountable to do the job that it is supposed to do.

A government should have the ability to hold itself accountable and review these processes internally before this level of corruption takes place. The whistle-blowers came forward many times, and it took them filing an official complaint before the government even listened.

Worse yet, we still know that the recommendations made by the Auditor General to just follow the rules that are in place are still instances where the Auditor General has to call attention to the government. Her recommendations are squarely put on the fact that rules are in place, but rules are meaningless if they are not followed.

We need to hold governments accountable when they breach public trust, and we need to set an example so that Canadians can actually build trust in our systems and not continue to see what is a tradition in the country of the breach of public trust toward the abuse of taxpayers.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madame Speaker, as my colleagues have said previously, we agree with the idea and the principle of the motion, but we do not agree with its wording.

Business of Supply

For example, we think there should be more time granted to allow translation services to do their work, as well as a less prescriptive tone to avoid directing the RCMP. It should not be told in advance whether there was an infraction or not, because that is not our job as parliamentarians.

That said, basically, we are fully in favour of requiring that the documents be produced.

Does my colleague have the same position, that is, does he agree with the idea, while recognizing that the motion needs to be amended to be truly appropriate?

[English]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for what I believe is a very good-willed offer to parliamentarians in this place to not only strengthen this motion, but to enable us to get not only more documentation, appropriate documentation, which, allowing for more time for translation services, allowing more time for the public service to actually provide credible documents to the betterment of this investigation, is an important piece to this work.

I would support such an amendment that would see, for example, within the first paragraph of the motion, it amended from within 14 days to a longer period of time to give the supply period of these documents a better chance of being fully reviewed and also tabled in this place.

To the second point that the member makes about directing the RCMP, I fully agree that the RCMP cannot be directed by parliamentarians, particularly in places of democratic nature, because the RCMP investigation needs to have impartiality and independence, which I support.

• (1225)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is very important for us to recognize that this is an arm's-length foundation that has been up and running for the last 20 years. To try to give a false impression that the government has been standing by idly doing nothing, that the federal Auditor General's report comes out and then we take action, is just simply not true. The government has been aware of it. It is the one that initiated the review, which got the third party engaged, which ultimately led to the federal Auditor General also then becoming engaged, all of which the federal government, and the minister in particular, has supported. We have acknowledged that.

I was intrigued by the questions that were just posed. After stating the facts, does the member then support the motion being proposed by the Conservatives if it is unamended?

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, on the first portion of the member's comments regarding the arms-length nature of the not-for-profit, I would submit that this is the truth. However, another truth is the fact that the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry entered into an agreement with Sustainable Development Technology Canada in order to deliver a fund.

The government needs to take more seriously its approach to partnering with groups when they are in breach of very basic principles.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

Sustainable Technology Development Canada was launched in 2001 to support businesses to innovate and create new sustainable technologies. For more than a decade, and under both Liberal and Conservative governments, SDTC had a few problems, but nothing major, until the current Prime Minister took office.

In 2016, the Liberals changed the process for appointments, claiming it would be open and transparent. In 2019, the Liberals were frustrated with then-chair Jim Balsillie, who had spoken out against government legislation, and they decided he should be removed and replaced.

The former minister of industry, Navdeep Bains, proposed two options for Mr. Balsillie's replacement. One of them was Annette Verschuren, an entrepreneur who had been receiving SDTC funding through one of her companies. There was a clear conflict of interest with Ms. Verschuren, so one would think, with this new and open transparent appointment process, Ms. Verschuren would have been disqualified immediately. One would be wrong. Former minister Bains, ignoring several warnings about her conflict of interest, proceeded with the appointment within three weeks of Mr. Balsillie's removal.

With the arrival of Ms. Verschuren at SDTC, an environment was created in which conflicts of interest were tolerated and managed by the board. Board members would go on to award SDTC funding to companies in which they held stock or positions. Minister Bains appointed five more of the board members, who engaged in unethical and illegal behaviour by approving funding to companies in which they held ownership or seats on the board.

Officials from the Department of Innovation, Science and Economic Development sat on the board as observers and witnessed 96 conflicts of interest, but they did not intervene. Former minister Bains would be replaced in January 2021 by the current minister, and in November 2022, whistle-blowers began raising internal concerns with the Auditor General about the unethical practices at SDTC.

In February 2023, the Privy Council was briefed by whistle-blowers, and it commissioned two independent reports. In September, the allegations became public, but it took the industry minister a month to agree to suspend funding to the organization. In November, the Auditor General announced that they would be conducting an audit of SDTC.

Business of Supply

That brings us to this week, with the damning report outlining how \$123 million of taxpayer money was misappropriated and misused by the board. The Auditor General's report is one of the most damning I have ever seen in my adult life. It is way worse than the sponsorship scandal of the 1990s, I might add. The report outlined that SDTC did not follow conflict of interest policies in 90 cases and \$76 million went to projects connected to friends of the Liberals who sat on the board. SDTC spent \$59 million on projects that were not allowed to be awarded any money. Moreover, SDTC spent \$12 million on projects that were both in a conflict of interest and ineligible for funding. In one case, Ms. Verschuren siphoned off \$217,000 to her own company. The report makes clear that this scandal falls squarely on the shoulders of the government, on the current minister, who did not sufficiently monitor the contracts that were given to Liberal insiders.

At last night's Standing Committee on Industry and Technology meeting, the government was quick to gloat over how many clean-tech projects have benefited from SDTC. However, when witnesses were questioned, they failed to admit to the corrupt nature regarding the funding and conflict of interest of these projects.

My colleague questioned the witnesses who were responsible for making appointments, yet the SDTC communications manager failed to take any responsibility for the conflict of interest cases. We continued to ask officials how decisions and appointments were made, but time and time again, the government failed to take responsibility for its corrupt practices. Instead, it pointed to broad administrative processes that had no bearing on the questions taxpayers were demanding be answered.

It seemed as though the whole team had amnesia, and they failed to provide the committee with answers on how these decisions were made or the relationship to the Auditor General's report.

• (1230)

I will again ask what my colleagues asked of the Liberal government last night. Nobody really knew what was going on, nobody had any involvement in the appointments process, and the government was completely guilt-free of anything that happened. Maybe today we can get some answers from Liberal members about what they did wrong and how they are going to fix it.

When former minister Bains was questioned as to whether he had read the Auditor General's report, he could not even say he had. It is absurd that a former minister and current vice-president at Rogers Communications would not take the time to read such an important report before going to committee.

It is hard not to feel disappointed in one's government when there is a new scandal every day. In 2015, the Liberals promised to be the most open and transparent government in Canadian history. Very quickly, Canadians learned that this is not the case. We saw this in 2019, when the Prime Minister pressured former justice minister Jody Wilson-Raybould to give a get-out-of-jail-free card to the corrupt SNC-Lavalin and fired her for refusing to do it. We saw this in 2020, when the Prime Minister granted hundreds of millions of dollars to WE Charity, an organization his family had financially benefited from. He then prorogued Parliament to shut down the investigation and avoid accountability. In 2022, when we first started to

hear of foreign interference in Canada's democracy, the Liberals continued to cover up.

This week, we asked Liberals numerous times to name the MPs involved; they refused to do so. After nine years, Canadians know that they will not get any transparency or accountability out of the government. At this point, Canadians have so many scandals before them that they are becoming numb to how bad things really are. They are no longer able to expect the government to be open and honest with them or to take responsibility for its actions, which should be the bare minimum expectation of any government.

We cannot continue to allow the government to get away with this level of corruption. More than \$100 million was handed out to Liberal insiders with clear conflicts of interest. Therefore, the Conservative Party today is calling upon Parliament to get the requisite documents and to get to the bottom of what happened at SDTC, to get to the bottom of how taxpayer dollars were misappropriated in such a clear and deliberate way.

Canadians do not have a lot of trust left in our institutions. I hope the Liberals will vote with the Conservatives today and allow Parliament to access the information we are seeking. This will give Canadians, the RCMP and law enforcement the clear tools they need to hold people accountable, so Canadian taxpayers know where their money is being spent and how it is being used.

Again I will point out that last night's industry committee meeting was one of the most disappointing displays I have ever seen in the close to five years I have been in the House. The Liberals clearly could not answer a single question, nor did they want to. It was delay and obfuscation at a level I have never seen before.

Parliament needs to know how Canada's money was spent. Parliament needs to know that this will not happen again, and Canadians need to be assured that we will not waste their taxpayer dollars in this way ever again.

• (1235)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, putting the SDTC issue aside, over the last 20 years, it has provided all sorts of opportunities for companies across the country. It has provided opportunities for start-ups wanting to expand, created green jobs and allowed Canadian companies to be leaders in the world in technology. We recognized it was important to dissolve the board and transfer it to the NRC.

Business of Supply

Does the member have any thoughts with regard to NRC taking over the responsibilities to ensure that we can continue to provide the funds that are necessary for our environment?

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, in terms of the first part of the member's question, the big scandal here is that the government has let down small businesses and the innovative sector in Canada. The government has discredited start-ups in this country that legitimately rely on SDTC to bring their technologies to market and commercialize new and innovative technologies that will protect the government.

Today we see a clear case of administrative injustice at a level we have not seen very often in the history of our country. The Auditor General's report is like nothing I have ever read. There is case upon case of the government clearly allowing conflicts of interest and for insiders to have money in their pockets at the expense of Canadian companies, which deserve so much more.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, among the reports by the Auditor General that came out yesterday, there was one that talked about McKinsey. We know that when sub-contracts are awarded to private companies, that contributes to a loss of expertise in the public service.

It is the same thing with the closure of Sustainable Development Technology Canada. We do not know where the workers with expertise in sustainable development will end up. There is an even greater risk that we will lose this expertise in the public service.

I would like my colleague to tell us whether, in general, we should support the public service more and stop delegating so we can keep more expertise within the government.

[*English*]

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, in respect to the workers at play here, it was the former Conservative government that brought in stronger enforcement for whistle-blowers.

We need to protect members of the public service who see an injustice and are willing to stand up for Canadian taxpayers. In this case, we really did see that. While we did see a level of incompetence and disregard for public money at Industry Canada and at SDTC, the positive thing is that there were public servants and officials willing to step up to protect Canadian interests.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I had a lot of confidence when we came into this Parliament that we would get serious about the climate crisis.

Canada has the ability and the leadership to have a clean energy economy, yet we are still waiting on the investment tax credits long after the Deputy Prime Minister promised them. We are seeing green slush funds, yet, all the while, the government focused on giving \$34 billion in taxpayers' money to build a pipeline for Pathways Alliance.

The Liberal government never blinked once when it came to building that pipeline, but when it came to putting the solutions on the ground for a clean-tech economy, it was more willing to help its friends than to live up to the obligations that the Prime Minister made as a solemn promise to the Canadian people back in 2015.

• (1240)

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, the debate today is not about pipelines, although I am very pleased to see the Kinder Morgan pipeline completed. That is going to do a lot of good for the Canadian taxpayers. I am glad that project is finished.

However, what we are talking about here today is a very serious issue, an Auditor General's report that clearly outlines cases of a conflict of interest. It says the Liberal government failed in its duties to the Canadian public to administer public funds, both transparently and in a way Canadians would expect from their officials.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, we have a billion-dollar green slush fund. This is from a government that claims it is serious about the environment, yet it takes a billion dollars and finds every possible way to line the pockets of Liberal insiders with that money.

It is incredibly disappointing for Canadians, who once believed in the NDP-Liberal government, but they have seen, after nine years of the Prime Minister, his broken promises and his insider dealings, that he is just not worth the cost. We know, from the Auditor General's bombshell report this week, that he is not worth the corruption.

How many conflicts of interest do members think we could find at the billion-dollar green slush fund? Would it be one, two or three? I am going to give members the number in a second. First, let us talk about two conflicts of interest. One is the hand-picked chair, Annette Verschuren, who was hand-picked by the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister. She is under investigation by the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. We also have another hand-picked Liberal appointee, Guy Ouimet, who is under investigation by the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

Is the number two? Is the number 90? There were 90 conflicts of interest, where \$76 million in funding was awarded to projects where there were connections to the Liberals' friends appointed to roles within the SDTC, the slush fund. The Auditor General found 186 conflicts of interest. It is unbelievable, as it was with the Auditor General's report into the government's failed \$60-million arrive scam.

The NDP-Liberal government will do everything it can to avoid accountability. We heard from the minister that he was going to take tough action, and as soon as the Liberals found out, they were going to get to the bottom of it. They have been dragged, kicking and screaming, this entire time. Finally, this week, we thought we had some signs of life in terms of accountability from the minister when he shut down the corrupt slush fund, but he just rolled it into his ministry to make it a little harder to track, and he was hoping that nobody would notice the grift continuing to go on.

Business of Supply

Was there an Auditor General report on the billion-dollar slush fund because the Liberals wanted to check on what was going on at the arm's-length organization? No. Conservatives had to call for there to be an investigation. Like with the \$60-million arrive scam, we took a vote in the House. We heard from the Liberals that anyone who broke the rules would be held accountable, that they took it all very seriously and everything was above board. Of course, it was not. The Prime Minister, his front bench and all of his MPs voted against accountability when they voted against an Auditor General report, which uncovered massive corruption in that case.

Of course, the RCMP needs to investigate here. Why? It is because of the alleged and potential criminal wrongdoing, just like we saw going on with the CBSA, the arrive scam, and with the Botler project. After Conservatives raised the matter, and the truth started coming to light, the RCMP start kicking people's doors in. It involved dragging people in front of the House of Commons because they were lying to parliamentary committees. That is not acceptable, and it is certainly not going to do anything for the environment, just as not a dollar from the billion-dollar slush fund was intended to do.

● (1245)

Members will hear the Liberals say in responses today that the Conservatives set this whole thing up. They are telling on themselves because they say that Conservatives do not take care of the environment, but we wanted Canadians to be able to innovate in this space. We wanted there to be a partnership with government, but after nine years of the Liberals in government, they just turned it into another piggy bank for their buddies to line their pockets.

We saw that with the CEO, who had to resign in disgrace, and the directors, who had to resign in disgrace. They were paying themselves bonuses instead of supporting the innovators, but that is very much the hallmark of what we expect from a tired government that seems to be found in these cases of corruption almost weekly.

We had the minister from Edmonton this week claim that he wholly owns an Alberta numbered company that owns 50% of a company called GHI, which he seems to have been continuing to operate. He is a cabinet minister, so that is, of course, against the law. The text messages that were revealed in Global News talk about “Randy”, “Randy” wanting a partner and there needing to be a partner call.

The minister has been very clear. He says it is another Randy, and we want to know who that is, but he did not come to committee to tell us. He did not come to committee to say that it is, for example, Randy Smith. He said that he does not know who that is. I asked if he does not own half the company. He claimed that, no, he does not. I asked who owns half the company. He said that it is Alberta 12345678. I asked who owns that company. He said that he does. Even on straightforward matters, Liberals cannot tell the truth. Every week, sometimes multiple times a week, we find scandals with the government.

Why is the hand-picked board chair at the billion-dollar slush fund being looked at by an officer of Parliament, the Ethics Commissioner? She voted to give herself \$220,000. How does that help the environment? What does that do for Canadians in a cost of living crisis? I have said before that the Liberals are not worried about

the lines at the food bank; they are worried about lining the pockets of Liberal insiders.

We have learned that the member for Calgary Skyview was told of corruption at the green slush fund by whistle-blowers in 2022. I checked the Hansard. He did not talk about it in here, and if he talked about it in his caucus with the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister, the Prime Minister did not seem too worried about it. Neither did the minister, who gets very animated when we talk about this subject and claims that Conservatives are attacking a sacred institution. It is sacred to Liberal insiders who are getting fat off of the pork that the Liberals are shovelling into this organization.

I want to offer a quote from a senior public servant who was captured in an audio recording that was released by a whistle-blower on this. The officials knew how bad it was, so we know the minister knew how bad it was. The public servant said, “It was free money”. He also said, “That is almost a sponsorship-scandal level kind of giveaway”. It is as bad as the 2000s-era sponsorship scandal under the Chrétien Liberals, and it barely raises an alarm bell after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government.

● (1250)

Conservatives want accountability. That is why we asked for the Auditor General to investigate. Conservatives want Canadians to be able to have confidence in their public institutions. That is why the RCMP needs to be able to see the documents, in full, from the billion-dollar slush fund. It is \$120 million in ineligible payments, and Canadians want their money back.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there is no other member in the Conservative-Reform party who continuously harps on this one issue more than the member. Whatever the issue is, he will just add the word “scandal” to it. Whether it is real or not, that is his job. Members can take a look at this and try to look at what actually transpired, contrary to what the member tries to give a false impression of.

When it was discovered, the government did take actions. Those actions ultimately led to the national Auditor General taking a look at it and issuing a report. When the report came out, there was a consequence. That board no longer exists, and now it is going through the NRC.

I wonder if the member would like to reflect, as maybe he overuses the word “corruption”, because he uses it all the time. I would not mind doing a contrast between Stephen Harper and corruption versus our—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

*Privilege***PRIVILEGE**

RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, if the Liberals are tired of me talking about their corruption, they should stop being corrupt. The parliamentary secretary, the Liberals and the Prime Minister did not ask for the Auditor General to investigate. I want to refresh the member's memory. Conservatives had to call for an emergency meeting to have this issue raised to the Auditor General. Conservatives had to do that.

The process gets obstructed every step of the way by the Liberals, who want to cover up their corruption. If they do not like being called corrupt, they should stop all the corruption.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, we are in 2024, 19 years after the Auditor General's 2005 report that covered the 10 years of the Conservative government. Despite that, Sustainable Development Technology Canada still exists. There is a certain loss of control over public funds. That has never been resolved.

The Conservatives are trying to create a Liberal scandal with today's motion. I would like to make a scandal out of the new Conservative Liberal coalition because, honestly, this issue transcends parties. Ultimately, the federal government's mismanagement is not just a Liberal problem, it is a Conservative one as well.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, I have good news for my hon. colleague from the Bloc from the Office of the Auditor General. In the year 2017, the Auditor General offered a clean bill of health to Sustainable Development Technologies Canada, which was established by the former Conservative government. What happened after that was an Auditor General report that looked at the period thereafter, when the NDP-Liberal government was in power. What happened? Corruption happened. Call in the Mounties.

• (1255)

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Madam Speaker, the response of the government is incredible to Canadians. It is not just about this issue or this scandal, as there have been so many this morning. At the security and public safety committee meeting this morning, they were trying to figure out foreign interference. Certain MPs were involved in foreign interference and foreign entities on our own soil. The member for Pickering—Uxbridge said boo hoo, we should get over it. That was a perfect response.

When we look at this scandal, this epic scandal for Canadians, of course the Liberals say to get over it, that they will fold it into the government and there is nothing to see here. However, there is much to see. Should Canadians get over it?

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, obviously, those were very concerning comments raised by my hon. colleague, the member for Bay of Quinte. Of course, Canadians should not get over a question of foreign interference and people acting in the interests of foreign state actors while serving in the House of Commons. This is a scandal that is incredibly important that Canadians should have transparency on. They want the RCMP to be able to review these documents.

Canadians need to be able to get their money back. It is \$120 million. Let us get serious.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I took the advice of the Deputy Speaker this morning, and approximately one hour ago, I wrote to the Speaker to provide notice of a matter of privilege regarding the troubling statements made in the House on Tuesday evening by the member for Saskatoon West. As outlined in my letter, and as I had started to say this morning, there are two issues at play.

First, there is an issue of appropriateness of the member's comments. They were troubling. They were hurtful. What is more, they were made during a debate about systemic racism. However, the member has apologized, so I am going to keep the comments to the second matter, which is still unresolved.

That matter has to do with what was said in the chamber and what is now recorded in the official record. The *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* states on page 1227:

The Debates are published under the authority of the Speaker of the House. They are compiled using the audio recording of the proceedings as well as information provided by Parliamentary Publications staff stationed on the floor of the House.

It is imperative that members have confidence in what is recorded in the Hansard. The member for Saskatoon West very clearly said that an indigenous Canadian was “more likely to reoffend” because of his “racial background”. He has admitted that and has apologized. I will read into the record what appeared in the blues and what was heard at the time: “Myles Sanderson, had a history of violent offences and had been recently released on parole, despite the prediction by the parole board that he was likely to reoffend because of his racial background.”

As the member noted in his apology, and at his request, Hansard represents the same speech differently. It reads, “Myles Sanderson, had a history of violent offences and had been recently released on parole, despite the prediction by the parole board that he was likely to reoffend regardless of his racial background.”

Changing the record from “because of his racial background” to “regardless of his racial background” might seem like a small change, but it fundamentally alters the meaning of what was said. The former linked criminality to one's race; the latter does the opposite. Likening criminality to one's race is rooted in racist tropes often used in regard to indigenous individuals. It is highly disturbing and racist.

It is of paramount importance that the Hansard be an accurate record of what happens in this place, and it is important that the rules around editing the blues be respected, as stated on 1228 and 1229 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*:

Business of Supply

The availability of the blues on the House of Commons' internal website permits Members and their authorized delegates to use the web page or email to submit suggested changes for Parliamentary Publications editorial staff to consider. Members may suggest corrections to errors and minor alterations to the transcription but may not make material changes to the meaning of what was said in the House.

In his apology, the member noted that he had requested that the Hansard be changed in a way that I believe is inappropriate and is outside the scope of what should be allowed. The meaning of the member's words was very clear, yet the official record has now been altered.

Just last month, the member for Lethbridge raised a question of privilege regarding the Hansard's being modified without her being informed. In raising the matter, the member cited Bosc and Gagnon as well as Joseph Maingot's *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* in arguing that such changes to the blues could be considered falsifying papers belonging to the House. I will not repeat those citations right now, but they remain relevant.

The Speaker considered the matter, and stated on May 30 that, "it is understood that the revisions should not alter the substance and the meaning of the members' statements in the House." The substance and the meaning of the member for Saskatoon West's statement in the House were, without a doubt, altered.

• (1300)

I would also note that, from time to time, members seek unanimous consent of the House to correct the record. Such a remedy not only ensures that it is the decision of the whole House rather than an editorial decision as to what is entered into the record, but also ensures that there is an official record of the change being requested and being granted.

Taking responsibility does not entitle the member to whitewash what actually happened. I would ask that the member reflect upon this, and I would ask that the official record actually reflect what occurred, what we all heard and what the member has admitted to having said, rather than being rewritten to avoid accountability and responsibility.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I thank the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre for bringing that to the attention of the Chair. It will be taken under consideration, and it will come back to the House if necessary.

* * *

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—DOCUMENTS REGARDING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT TECHNOLOGY CANADA

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always an honour to rise in the House and speak on the opposition motion in today's debate.

I was here this morning when Parliament opened, and I listened to the opening statement by the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, if I am not mistaken. I listened intently and heard what he had to say. The hon. member and others referenced our government's programs that were put in place during the pandemic, when approxi-

mately 60,000 Canadians passed away due to COVID, to help Canadians.

I wish to state that I will be splitting my time with my wonderful friend, a great mentor and someone I look up to very much, the hon. member for Humber River—Black Creek.

During the pandemic, we put in place a number of programs, such as the emergency wage subsidy and the CERB, and we assisted businesses with rent payments. The economy was frozen because of the pandemic, and I do not back away for one moment from having the backs of Canadians, businesses and our economy so that we could recover without any scarring.

We know the members of the official opposition would not have had those programs and would have left Canadians to fend for themselves. They would not have had the backs of Canadians. In no way would they have demonstrated leadership. They probably would not even have recommended vaccines. If they were ever to get into power, who knows if they would even recommend measles or polio vaccines for our children because we know they do not believe in the science.

I remember, if I am not mistaken, that during the debate on Brexit, the hon. member who spoke this morning was in favour of Brexit and against free trade. I wonder if he would be in favour of the CETA agreement at this point in time in his career. It is so disappointing to listen to.

We, as parliamentarians, have the privilege here in the House of Commons to pontificate, to say what we wish and to thank our colleagues and our residents for their great work. We are here to do good work. However, sometimes I wonder why hon. members will mention the name of an individual, in this case, my former colleague Frank Baylis, but will not mention that individual's name or the accusations outside of the House. To me, it speaks a bit to the word "shame", and I could use stronger language, but I want to be polite. When members mention the names of former parliamentarians or any Canadians in a disparaging way, they should have the courage or the gumption to say it outside. It is amazing how some folks in the official opposition will say unseemly things about individuals but will not say them outside of the House because they are covered under privilege. I would love for them to say those things outside to see what would happen the next morning or thereafter and to hear the apology they would have to issue. To be honest, I think it is almost cowardly.

I am thankful for this moment to rise and speak to the motion of the hon. member for Carleton regarding Sustainable Development Technology Canada, an entity that has been around for over two decades and has funded over 500 companies.

Our government is committed to providing support to clean-technology innovators and entrepreneurs. The recent announcement by the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry that sets out the transfer of SDTC over to new management at the National Research Council will ensure the continuity of support for Canadian clean-tech companies, will restart funding for eligible projects and will maintain the economic and environmental objectives of the SDTC tech fund. This will help advance the commercialization of clean technologies and, in so doing, will support Canada's climate goals.

As a Government of Canada organization, the NRC is subject to a stringent oversight of its personnel and its finances, and it enjoys an excellent reputation, built over many decades, for the delivery of programs and services to innovative businesses, including in clean tech. In fact, the NRC's industrial research assistance program, commonly known as IRAP, originated in 1947, just after World War II, to assist Canadian companies.

Canadian clean-technology companies are crucial to ensuring that Canada and the world meet their 2030 and 2050 climate commitments. The government's support has enabled Canadian companies to become global leaders in clean technologies and in the fight against climate change. We are also creating thousands of high-skilled jobs across Canada.

• (1305)

Members may ask why this particular funding is a priority. Not just in Canada but in general, there is an acute and long-standing funding gap in the economy at the pre-commercial development and demonstration stage. This gap results from market barriers, including the low maturity of new technologies and the financial sector's aversion to the risks associated with bringing new technologies to market. Pre-commercial development of clean technologies is often less attractive to investors due to technical uncertainty, long lead times to market, unproven management teams, uncertainty regarding the pricing of environmental externalities or the substantial upfront investment required to demonstrate a new technology on a commercial scale.

To address this, continued programming to incentivize the development and demonstration of pre-commercial clean technologies is needed. It is crucial that public investment remain focused on supporting Canadian innovators in the clean-tech sector, no more so than now. Companies are generating jobs and developing world-class environmental technologies to address the impacts of climate change on our economy and our environment.

The government's decision to transfer SDTC programming to the National Research Council would enhance governance and oversight, provide stability for current projects and SDTC employees, and ensure continued support for homegrown clean technology innovations.

[*Translation*]

I rise to speak to the motion moved by the hon. member for Carleton concerning Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC.

Our government is committed to providing support to clean-technology innovators and entrepreneurs. The Minister of Innovation,

Business of Supply

Science and Industry recently announced the transfer of SDTC programming over to new management at NRC. This will ensure the continuity of support for Canadian clean-tech companies by restarting funding for eligible projects and by maintaining the economic and environmental objectives of the SDTC technology fund. This will help advance the commercialization of clean technologies and support Canada's climate goals.

As a Government of Canada organization, the NRC is subject to stringent oversight of its personnel and its finances. It enjoys an excellent reputation, built over many decades, for the delivery of programs and services to innovative businesses, including those in clean tech. In fact, the NRC's industrial research assistance program was founded in 1947, just after World War II, to assist Canadian businesses.

Clean technology companies are crucial to ensuring that Canada and the entire world meet their 2030 and 2050 climate commitments. The government's support has enabled Canadian companies to become global leaders in clean technologies and in the fight against climate change, while at the same time creating thousands of high-skilled jobs across Canada.

My fellow members may wonder why this particular funding is a priority. Not just in Canada but in general, there is an acute and long-standing funding gap in the economy at the pre-commercial development and demonstration stage.

This gap results from market barriers, including the low maturity of these new technologies and the finance sector's aversion to the risks associated with bringing new technologies to market. Pre-commercial development of clean technologies is often less attractive to investors due to technical uncertainty, long lead times to market, unproven management teams, and uncertainty about the pricing of environmental externalities or the substantial upfront investment required to demonstrate a new technology on a commercial scale. To solve this problem, we must continue to fund programming to incentivize the development and demonstration of pre-commercial clean technologies.

Business of Supply

• (1310)

[English]

As I finish up, I look forward to continuing my participation in the debate in questions and comments. We are here to provide accountability and transparency to our constituents at all times. We all should do that as members of Parliament, including in this case with SDTC. I applaud the measures taken by the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry and the steps taken after the Auditor General's report. I regard the Auditor General's report as having a high degree of value and service.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am surprised that the member spoke almost the entire time and never even mentioned the Auditor General's report, which found that 123 million dollars' worth of contracts violated the conflict of interest rules at the green slush fund, the SDTC. We are talking about 76 million dollars' worth of projects that were given to Liberal friends and insiders. We also know that 12 million dollars' worth were actually ineligible for funding and were in violation of conflict of interest policies.

I have been here a long time, 20 years, and I was here at the tail end of the adscam under the Chrétien Liberals. We have now witnessed, since the Prime Minister came to power, the SNC-Lavalin scandal, the WE scam, arrive scam and now the green slush fund scandal, just to name a few. Is this Liberal incompetence? Is it Liberal corruption? Is it Liberal complicity?

We are calling for a RCMP investigation because the current issue is a breach of trust as well as fraudulent behaviour. Would he agree that we have to call the RCMP in here? Is it the responsibility of, and does it fall on the head of and under the accountability of, the Minister of Industry, or is it, again, Scott Brison's problem?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, first of all, SDTC is and was an organization at arm's length from the government. Whatever lapses there were in governance were pointed out. I did also read the Auditor General's report. If contribution agreements were signed between parties that did not meet the bar of certain thresholds, they have been identified.

I wish to thank the Auditor General for their work. There needs to be transparency and accountability. The conflict commissioner is investigating on that part. Again, this entity, SDTC, has existed for 20 years and has funded 500 companies in the Canadian clean-tech sector. We need to look at the entire picture, but I do very much appreciate the Auditor General's work, all of the organization's work over the years and the reports issued to date.

• (1315)

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will ask my colleague to state his position on the very short 14-day deadline for the production of the documents that need to be translated. This is a good opportunity for the Liberal government to redeem itself, given the affronts Quebec has suffered in recent weeks on the subject of the French language.

Can my colleague state his position and explain to our Conservative colleagues that 14 days is not enough time to have the documents translated into both official languages?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, the French language is very important to me and my family. My children are in French immersion in Ontario. I agree with the member that all documents, not only in this situation, but in all cases, must be translated, whether from English to French or vice versa. Our government always supports the French language across Canada.

[English]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, whistle-blowers were raising serious concerns for years about conflict of interest and gross mismanagement of public funds, but their complaints were ignored; they were never taken seriously.

Can the member explain why it took the minister so long to act on the issues?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I wish to thank the hon. member for Nunavut for her advocacy for the issues in northern Canada and her riding. The Minister of Innovation, Science and Technology took concrete steps immediately when the situation arose, in terms of acting and putting in force measures to stop SDTC from any more contributions or signing contribution agreements.

As for the decisions, in terms of moving SDTC to within NRC Canada and combining it with the industrial research assistance program, in 2026-27, the new Canadian innovation corporation, I believe it is called, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Technology has acted swiftly, prudently and effectively.

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Madam Chair, it is great to see you in the chair, as always. For me, seeing a woman in the chair is always very encouraging. It is great, especially when it is a beautiful woman. I think we could all agree on that.

As we have the discussion, we need to remember what the role of the Auditor General is, which is being independent and doing the job that we appoint them to do. I wish we were not talking about this particular issue today, but we are. The Auditor General has done what we expected, the job that was required. Now we need to do the work that we need to do to correct the inadequacies.

Business of Supply

The Government of Canada of course remains committed to ensuring that public investments continue to advance the commercialization of homegrown clean technology in support of Canada's priorities to lead the fight against climate change and to create high-skilled jobs in Canada. This is certainly something that we all support, especially given the issues of climate change and the opportunities to look at commercialization of initiatives that can advance many of the opportunities for Canadian companies.

The government is now transferring Sustainable Development Technology Canada programming to National Research Council Canada. This change will enhance governance and restore public confidence after the recent reviews that we have heard about, including the fact-finding exercise that was run by an independent third party, Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton, and the report of the Office of the Auditor General that revealed lapses in SDTC's governance, which was very disappointing.

The Government of Canada agrees with the finding of the Auditor General's report on SDTC. We acknowledge the areas identified for improving governance, accountability and conflict of interest practices. Unfortunately, this should have been done earlier, but we are now dealing with it, and the minister has put the right check boxes in place now, I believe. The government has demonstrated that it is committed to ensuring that organizations that receive federal funding act in the best interest of Canadians. The government reacted quickly in response to the findings of the multiple reviews of SDTC's operations.

In response to the RCGT report, ISED developed a management response and action plan which set out 22 action items aimed at improving SDTC's governance, conflict of interest management and human resources practices, as well as at enhancing ISED's oversight of SDTC to ensure that SDTC is in full compliance with its contribution agreement.

Chief among those oversight enhancements are actions that clarify and improve SDTC's reporting requirements, which provide ISED with better insight into SDTC's management of public funds as well as improved conflict of interest policies. Importantly, SDTC will be required to declare and document its management of conflicts of interest and report them to ISED. These enhanced reporting requirements and processes are critical to restoring confidence in the delivery of public funds.

However, the government has decided to go even further. Just as the government has high standards for the use of government funds, we also expect employees to benefit from a healthy and respectful work environment. This is why, in addition to the RCGT fact-finding exercise, the government appointed a third party law firm to undertake a fact-finding review of alleged breaches of labour and employment practices and policies at SDTC.

The fact-finding review, which is publicly available, concluded that SDTC's leadership did not engage in the type of repetitive, vexatious or major incident conduct that would constitute harassment, bullying or workplace violence under the current applicable standards. Nonetheless, we recognize that the results of the OAG and the RCGT reviews of SDTC demanded important change. That is why, on June 4, a new delivery approach for SDTC programming was announced. This approach includes transitioning SDTC pro-

gramming and employees to National Research Council Canada, a Crown agency that is subject to rigorous and stringent oversight of its personnel and of its finances.

● (1320)

The NRC has a wealth of experience in supporting innovative, tech-focused small and medium-sized companies under programs such as the industrial research assistance program, referred to as IRAP. This makes it an ideal choice to take on the responsibility of supporting homegrown clean-technology companies. NRC and IRAP have a dedicated clean-tech sector team that has been accelerating the scale-up and commercialization of clean tech since 2017, offering tailored advice and one-to-one matching with multinational enterprises, end-users and investors. This is something that is very important to Canada. With its proven track record of supporting small and medium-sized Canadian businesses, the NRC is well-positioned to rebuild public trust while increasing accountability and transparency in the delivery of SDTC programming and funding.

The transition of SDTC programming and employees to the NRC will take time. Moreover, this needs to be done right. That is why the government appointed new SDTC leadership, made up of highly regarded and trusted individuals, to lead the important work to transfer programming and the employees to the NRC. SDTC will also resume funding under this new, rigorous governance model for eligible new projects in a sector that is vital to our country's economy and clean growth transition. In line with the Auditor General's findings, ISED will enhance oversight and monitoring of funding during this transition period.

The government is focused on ensuring the continuity of support for Canadian clean-tech companies, restarting funding for eligible projects and maintaining the economic and environmental objectives of SDTC's SD tech fund. This will help advance the commercialization of clean technologies and accelerate the growth of innovative businesses that support Canada's climate goals and create economic benefits for Canadians.

Business of Supply

Canadian clean-technology companies are crucial for ensuring that Canada and the world meet their 2030 and 2050 climate commitments. The government's support has enabled such companies to become global leaders in the fight against climate change while enabling a clean growth economy and creating thousands of high-skilled jobs across Canada. It is crucial that we maintain our efforts to assist Canadian innovators in the clean tech sector.

The government has done its due diligence. Neither the OAG nor any of the other fact-finding reviews found any evidence of fraudulent or other criminal activities by any officer, director, member or employee of SDTC. While some of the investigations concluded that there were lapses in governance, including the management of conflicts of interest, these conclusions did not rise to the level of fraud or other criminal activity.

It is now time to focus on the path forward for new clean-technology projects, as support for innovators and entrepreneurs is renewed under the new leadership and transition to the NRC.

• (1325)

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are talking about a deep level of corruption that should have been found earlier. Whistle-blowers caught this. If not for them, we would not be here. How many times have we said in the House of Commons that, if it wasn't for whistle-blowers or this publication or journalism, we would not be here? There are too many times.

Perhaps a better way than looking at maybe just one instance of having one organization have a different mandate would be to really look at what the Ethics Commissioner's role is.

Here is the problem with the government. We can look at the Information Commissioner, whose budget has been slashed. However, here is the stat that just boggles me and would boggle Canadians' minds: The government slashed the salary of the Ethics Commissioner by more than \$110,000 per year.

We are looking at where the priorities lie with the government, and we talk about corruption all the time here. Why was the priority not in ethics in the government from the start, so we could stop the corruption that we are seeing almost every day?

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Madam Speaker, if the member is asking how the department is dealing with a lot of the budgetary issues, all areas of government were asked to take a 3% cut, to my knowledge. I believe it was for everybody.

I would remind my hon. colleague that, with three fact-finding investigations into this issue, neither the Auditor General nor any others found any evidence of fraudulent or criminal activities by any of the officers, directors, members or employees.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, in her speech, my colleague said that we needed to ensure follow-up with companies who had received funds from Sustainable Development Technology Canada. The question remains unanswered. How will the government make sure that innovation continues to grow and that investments continue to be made in the energy transition and SMEs, many of which are in Quebec?

For the past year, things have stagnated, and investments have ceased. I am very concerned.

In recent years, the government has failed to protect the interests of clean energies and emerging innovations, and the situation has not changed.

[English]

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Madam Speaker, I would remind the member that, in some of the evidence put forward earlier, over 500 companies were approved and went on to excel in clean technology. I am quite certain that, under the new leadership and after transitioning, the NRC will continue to ensure that some of the best companies receive the opportunity to move forward with more clean technology.

• (1330)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, Canadians absolutely expect their tax dollars to be managed responsibly, and the public needs assurance that government will go even further than what the Liberal government has done to restore public confidence. At this point, I have not yet heard any Liberal intervention that restores my confidence.

Can the member share with us what the Liberal Party will do to get that done and whether Liberals will vote in favour of this motion to show that they will work toward restoring public confidence?

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Madam Speaker, I believe all 338 of us in the House want to ensure that all the government's programs and funding efforts are put forward in the very best interest of all of us. I am quite confident that, with the transition to the new leadership under the NRC, there will be opportunities for many more companies to excel, in excess of the 500 that I referred to earlier. There will be lots of opportunities for clean technologies to come forward and help us in our battle with climate change.

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, life has become much more difficult for Canadians. However, for the Prime Minister and his well-connected Liberal friends, life has actually never been better. I rise today in the House to speak to the Conservatives' opposition day motion calling on the government to deposit all relevant documents pertaining to SDTC within 14 days of the adoption of the motion.

Let us go back in time and remember the year 2015. When the Prime Minister took office, he promised a new wave of governance, transparency and accountability that, in his words, Canadians had never seen before. However, he did the complete opposite. He established a culture of secrecy, and his stewardship of taxpayer funds ended. SDTC is a prime example of that. The essence of the motion is accountability.

Business of Supply

At this point, it is appropriate to repeat the words of the assistant deputy minister of the industry ministry. He was not aware he was being recorded speaking to a whistle-blower, and this came to light. This is in relation to the \$40 million that was handed out during the pandemic to well-connected friends because they were having it tough. Life was tougher for these companies and the board decided that \$40 million would be sufficient.

The deputy minister said, “It was free money”. He then made an analogy with the controversy that brought down the Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin Liberal government in the early 2000s. He said, “That is almost a sponsorship-scandal level...giveaway.” We now hear from the Auditor General that \$40 million is not even close to the amount of taxpayer abuse. Canadians deserve to know how their taxpayer dollars are being utilized and misused, especially within organizations such as SDTC, which are supposed to play a crucial role in our environmental and economic landscape.

This past Tuesday, the Auditor General released a damning report that spoke to what Conservatives had been saying all along: The Prime Minister has turned SDTC, which was supposed to stand as a federal foundation supporting small and medium-sized businesses in the clean-tech sector, into a green slush fund for Liberal insiders. A staggering \$123 million was misappropriated for projects that were ineligible, that were marred by conflicts of interest or that should simply never have received funding in the first place.

What is even more concerning is the revelation that conflicts of interest directly influenced approval decisions, resulting in a whopping \$76 million awarded to projects with connections to the Liberals and their associates within the SDTC.

I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

On top of this, \$12 million was disbursed to projects that not only lacked eligibility but also harboured conflicts of interest. The government's response, or I should say lack thereof, is also troubling.

Despite the government repeatedly boasting about Canada's robust ethics and conflict of interest laws, the AG findings expose a consistent failure to adhere to those standards. The disconnect from the government between rhetoric and reality is stark. The AG herself emphasized that her recommendations will only carry weight when the government starts walking the talk and following the rules that are already in place, indicating a clear need for action rather than mere lip service.

The members opposite can deflect and debate all they want, but the facts remain indisputable. Long-standing conflict of interest policies were flouted in 90 instances, with one egregious case involving the Prime Minister's hand-picked chair siphoning off \$217,000 to her own company.

• (1335)

These revelations not only erode public trust, but also underscore the urgent need for accountability, transparency and a genuine commitment to upholding the ethical standards that Canadians rightfully expect from their government.

I wish to remind the House that this is far from the first time that the integrity of SDTC has been called into question. Before the Auditor General even launched into her investigation, whistle-blowers recorded hours of conversations, revealing that the federal bureaucracy itself had lost confidence in the leadership at SDTC.

The House should remember that a secret recording of a senior civil servant, the deputy minister, slammed the outright incompetence of the government. The whistle-blowers who filed compliance against SDTC had hoped for a management overhaul and a full-fledged investigation. They alleged conflicts of interest and cases of mismanagement.

Doug McConnachie, the assistant DM, emphasized that the situation at SDTC was “sloppiness”, “laziness” and “outright incompetence”. Despite these damning assessments, the government continued to permit the same management team to remain in place, asking them to rectify the very problems they created. I cannot make up this lunacy. That was the decision of the government.

During this time, common-sense Conservatives voiced that those involved in bad decision making were certainly not the best candidates to apply coercive measures. However, as per usual, the Liberals did not listen. This decision not only undermines whistle-blowers' efforts but also raises serious questions about the government's commitment to accountability and transparency.

Now here we are, around a year later, with the findings of the AG to prove what Conservatives and Canadians knew all along, and what the Liberals thought they could keep hidden under the rug. The government's handling, or lack thereof, of the issue has been nothing but a series of broken promises and attempts to contain its image rather than addressing the root problems at hand.

The issue goes beyond mere management. It is about the misuse of taxpayer money and the government's failure to uphold the highest standards of ethical governance for which Canada is known.

The only word that resonates within the Liberal Party is “secrecy”. Canadians deserve to know the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Taxpayer money was squandered, and taxpayers deserve answers. The current approach taken by the NDP-Liberal government is akin to asking the fox to guard the henhouse.

Business of Supply

The Auditor General's decision to launch an investigation last year was a step in the right direction, but it should not have come to this. We are thankful for her work, but report 6 on SDTC is one piece of the puzzle. In response to the report, the government has axed the green slush fund. The Liberals want Canadians to move on and forget about the mismanagement, their corruption and blatant conflict of interest breaches. They want us to focus on other issues. We will not let that happen.

On behalf of our Conservative leader and our next great prime minister, and for the transparency of Canadians, the Conservatives stand today to order the government, SDTC and the Auditor General of Canada to deposit all relevant documents related to the program within 14 days.

There is a culture of dishonesty and fraud that has taken over this Parliament. Ethics and Liberals, oil and water do not mix.

* * *

● (1340)

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED BREACH OF DEPUTY SPEAKER'S IMPARTIALITY

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am rising to put further information on the record concerning the matter that I first brought forward last Thursday regarding the Deputy Speaker.

This chamber has debated several times in recent weeks and months the very important issue of impartiality by chair occupants. As members will recall, I did bring forward, one week ago today, my concern about a posting from the member of Parliament for West Nova on October 31, 2023, in which he was referred to as the Deputy Speaker and in which he appeared in his Speaker robes. The posting was for a fundraising event being held by a local Conservative constituency association.

Later that evening, the member did rise to offer what I thought to be a perfectly reasonable explanation. He said that the posting was made without his knowledge or consent and that it should not have happened. I take the hon. member's word at face value and I appreciate his apology to the House.

As indicated by the NDP House leader at the time, this case is strikingly similar to another recent case that involved the Speaker and an unauthorized posting by the Liberal Party of Canada. As members may recall, at that time, we asked for and received an apology from the Liberal Party of Canada. I will remind members that when that very similar situation arose, despite the apology, regular debate was still set aside, and ultimately a vote on a prima facie matter of privilege occurred.

Despite that precedent, as our House Leader has indicated, we are prepared to consider the matter closed once that apology from the Conservative Party of Canada has been provided. However, without that apology from the relevant Conservative official, we cannot do so.

Using Speaker's office resources for partisan gain is a serious offence, whether it is done by the Speaker or by one of his deputies. If and when it is done by the member intentionally, it is of course

an affront perpetrated by that member toward their colleagues. In fact, in this case, that it would appear to have been done without the member's consent is of course material, but it does not change the fact that the House is owed an apology by those responsible.

As outlined in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*:

...the House...claims the right to punish, as a contempt, any action which, though not a breach of a specific privilege: tends to obstruct or impede the House in the performance of its functions; obstructs or impedes any Member or officer of the House in the discharge of their duties; or is an offence against the authority or dignity of the House, such as disobedience of its legitimate commands or libels upon itself, its Members, or its officers

It continues:

The House of Commons enjoys very wide latitude in maintaining its dignity and authority through the exercise of its contempt power. In other words, the House may consider any misconduct to be contempt and may deal with it accordingly.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that we take the member's statement at face value. We appreciate his apology to the House in this case, however, we do consider this matter to be unresolved and are looking for that resolution soon.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I thank the hon. member for the added comments to the question. It will be brought to the House if necessary.

* * *

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—DOCUMENTS REGARDING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT TECHNOLOGY CANADA

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is important for us to recognize that the SDTC has been around for over 20 years, and it is an arm's-length foundation.

When the issue became live, we had a government that proactively took actions that ultimately, I would suggest, even led to the Auditor General's report. We have taken tangible actions, such as the freezing of new funding and now replacing the board.

I would like to think that the Conservative Party would in fact recognize, at the very least, that as an arm's-length foundation, we have even taken tangible actions to date so we can ensure that sustainable development and technology in Canada continues to grow and continue to receive funds.

Could the hon. member indicate whether he supports the change in governance to the NRC?

Business of Supply

• (1345)

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague is woefully wrong in the approach he takes. He indicates this was arm's length, and initially it was established as arm's length. However, when we have the Prime Minister handpicking the chair to sit on the board and to excuse numerous, close to 100, conflicts of interest, it is no longer arm's length. It becomes another Liberal-friendly entity, and taxpayer monies were misused, consistently, year after year.

To the member's point that the government reacted swiftly, that is garbage. It did not happen. The Liberals only reacted when they were embarrassed by these whistle-blowers coming forward and releasing details of all the conversations with the ADM. Then it was, "Whoops, we got another scandal on our hands, better tamp this down as quickly as possible, call for investigations." That is my response.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, as a former Crown prosecutor, my colleague understands the Criminal Code better than anyone. One of the reasons we want to ensure we get to the bottom of this is to ensure there was an accountability based upon the misappropriation of these funds, \$123 million, that failed to observe our conflict-of-interest rules.

We have an Ethics Commissioner, and public servants and those who are appointed to serve on boards like the SDTC have a responsibility, a fiduciary duty, to ensure the proper use of taxpayer money. Therefore, I ask my colleague, as a former Crown prosecutor, to talk about the violations under the Criminal Code that could be applicable through this RCMP investigation, whether it be fraud or breach of trust.

Mr. Larry Brock: Madam Speaker, the Conservative Party of Canada is asking the RCMP ultimately to investigate criminality surrounding the misuse of taxpayer funds.

To the member's question, hearkening back on my career, if I were approached by any detective or chief of police from any police service and asked what I think about a particular allegation and if I think there is any criminality involved, I would absolutely say to that chief or detective that, at the very least, we have fraud over \$5,000, we have breach of trust and we have bribery allegations. These are serious, indictable criminal offences that, if convicted, would land an accused, or several accused in relation to SDTC, in prison for several years.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened to my colleague carefully. I know that he had a brilliant career as a Crown attorney in the past. We participated together in a mission last summer, and we had a good time discussing legal matters.

I have often said that we agree with the intention of the motion, with the principle behind it. However, it includes some problematic elements. Honestly, that is why I want to ask him a question.

In light of his experience as a Crown attorney, why would elected officials introduce an interventionist motion, point the RCMP in a certain direction and immediately mention offences? Why not

simply ask that the documents be sent to the RCMP so that it can determine whether or not to open an investigation?

• (1350)

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Brock: Madam Speaker, I had a great time last summer with my colleague as well.

The problem with that approach is that we are assuming that we are getting the full documentation from the Liberal government. We cannot assume that without bringing forward this motion. We cannot simply hand over allegations without concrete evidence and documentation from the Liberal Party, which is at the heart of this motion.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is, as always, an honour to be able to stand in this place to talk about the issues that are so important to Canadians.

If I could, for just a brief moment, talk about something that is so important, and that is today being the 80th anniversary of D-Day, the Battle of Normandy. I specifically note, in terms of a milestone anniversary, that there are only a few of those brave men and women, those men who marched those beaches, 80 years ago today, who are still living. Also, I would take a moment to note what an important and defining moment this was in the fight for freedom and how that battle turned the tide in World War II, breaking through what was seen to be an impenetrable Nazi beach. It was Canadians who led the way on Juno Beach. I stand here today to pay tribute to those men who defied the odds and to the so many who made the ultimate sacrifice. I am thankful to acknowledge the 80th anniversary of D-Day here today.

The motion before us is an important one. It speaks to the very fundamental principles of accountability that Parliament should be seized with. Let us unpack a bit of what we are requesting. Parliament is asking, through this opposition day motion, a motion that Conservatives have brought forward, for answers. Common-sense Conservatives are simply saying that it is time to get answers to some very serious, outstanding questions about the actions taken at Sustainable Development Technologies Canada.

Liberals will say it is an arm's-length development fund to support clean-tech investments, but here is the problem. While the Liberals are quick to say that it is an arm's-length organization that made its own decisions, let me highlight for Canadians a very important fact. SDTC is an entity that is still accountable to a minister. That is a fact. When it comes to the president and the chair of that entity, those are appointments made by the Prime Minister, which we see stacked with Liberal friends and allies.

Business of Supply

What ended up happening over the course of the last nine or so years is an increasing trend of Liberal insiders being appointed to these high-profile positions and making decisions that led to Liberals getting rich. That is truly what it came down to. In the recent Auditor General report that was released, we see some incredibly troubling allegations.

I am a member of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, and I have watched carefully the development of some of these things. We have been clawing for answers and trying to get the most basic answers from the Liberal government so that Canadians can see where the money went. It is not the government's money, which is something that is so often forgotten. It is not the government's money that is being spent, wasted and making Liberal insiders rich. It is the hard-earned dollars of Canadians that are collected in taxes by the government.

Canadians see millions upon millions of dollars being misappropriated and conflicts of interest that are truly an embarrassment to what is supposed to be the most basic level of accountability. Therefore, we are asking for all the documents to be handed over, with a timeline on that of 14 days, so that Canadians can ultimately get answers. It is simple, and it is common sense. We have introduced this motion to try to bring forward that accountability.

Let me highlight what the Auditor General found that is so troubling at SDTC, the Liberals' green slush fund. There are 90 cases where the conflict of interest rules and policies were not followed. We are not talking about one or two mistakes; we are talking about 90 cases. There was \$76 million in projects connected to Liberals' friends appointed to run the SDTC. That is \$76 million, which is more money than most Canadians could ever dream of seeing.

• (1355)

Further, the Prime Minister spent \$59 million on projects that were not allowed to have been awarded any money. We are not talking about only conflict of interest. Maybe somebody called somebody or whatever the case is, but \$59 million was spent on projects that were not even allowed to have been awarded any money. There was \$12 million spent on projects that were both a conflict of interest and ineligible for funding. It is absolutely astounding.

There is an instance that ethics committee members had a chance to talk a bit about. It is that the Prime Minister's hand-picked chair awarded herself and her company, a company she was a principal of, \$217,000. Can anyone believe that? There was \$217,000 given to the chair of SDTC. When we talk about it being a Liberal green slush fund, it truly is just that. It is an entity that, in dozens and dozens of cases, used more than \$100 million of hard-earned taxpayers' money, which was paid to the government through taxes, to pay Liberal insiders.

The response thus far has been the minister saying that we should not worry because they have solved the problem. They are folding it into the ministry. We should not worry about it. There is nothing to see here. We have seen, time and time again, that Liberals simply cannot be trusted when it comes to accountability and when it is their management of this organization that led to the disaster we have before us. It is hard to believe, in the context of

where we are today, that this even needs to be said, but no one in Canada is above the law.

I know there is a host of issues that Canadians are faced with. With the crime and chaos in our streets, the out-of-control inflation and all these other things, there seems to be not just one new scandal but multiple scandals that break each and every day in this country, and the Prime Minister is at the centre of it, or his hands and his top people are involved. It needs to be said that no one is above the law, and we need to make sure that we are getting answers for Canadians.

When it comes to the role this place plays, there needs to be document production, and the Liberals need to understand that. I encourage the Liberals, especially those on the Liberal backbench, to not forget the simple fact that Parliament is the supreme law-making authority of the land. It is not the Prime Minister's Office, and it is not the cabinet. It is Parliament itself, and the Liberals have a very clear choice on this matter.

That is why common-sense Conservatives have made it so clear that we have to get to the bottom of this. We have to get the answers that Canadians ultimately deserve. That is why we brought forward the motion today. The Liberals may not like it. This is inconvenient and uncomfortable for the Liberal-NDP coalition because we are talking about millions of dollars that has been wasted by going to their friends. However, it is fundamental for the future functioning of our democratic system that we get those answers.

To conclude my speech, while the NDP is quick to prop up the Liberals at every turn, including covering up their scandals, there is a very clear option that the Liberal backbench, the NDP as the fourth party and the Bloc Québécois as the third party have. They can join with Conservatives, not as members of a particular party, but as members of Parliament, who are here to, first, serve the best interests of Canadians. They can stand up and say that enough is enough. It is time to get answers. A basic level of accountability is required in this Parliament and in this country, and Canadians deserve answers.

I will conclude with that. This is a chance for MPs in this place to take a stand for what is right and for accountability, and to ask for the answers that Canadians desperately need. Let us make sure we get those answers for Canadians because that is the very least and absolutely what every member of Parliament in this place should do. They should vote "yes" to the common-sense Conservative motion to demand answers on the Liberal green slush fund.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[*English*]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Madam Speaker, 80 years ago today, 381 Canadians were killed on Juno Beach during D-Day. They gave their lives to defend the values Canadians cherish.

Today, while remembering their sacrifices, we also know that Canada's democracy and its democratic institutions are still under attack. It is an insult to the memory of our soldiers that we know the extent to which foreign operatives have gone to undermine our political systems. One wonders why the government refuses to release cabinet documents concerning the interference. Can it also explain why members of its own party, including a current minister, accepted money, paid volunteers and bused in supporters to win nominations and an election? Is it because those documents incriminate Liberals who accepted foreign money and instant supporters to win at all costs?

Canadians and our brave soldiers deserve better.

* * *

GRADUATION CONGRATULATIONS

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is graduation season. Today, I rise to congratulate all graduates, but especially those in my riding of Don Valley West. Graduation marks the culmination of years of hard work. It opens the door towards a future filled with endless possibilities. The graduates' teachers, parents, guardians and school administrators have played an integral role in their success. They have supported and believed in them through elementary, middle and high school. The graduates will carry their words and acts of support with them all the days of their lives.

A shout-out to the graduates of Leaside High School, Mark Garneau Collegiate Institute, York University, York Mills Collegiate Institute, École secondaire Étienne-Brûlé and Northern Secondary School. I hope the graduates stay curious and courageous while they pursue their dreams. They will make a difference in the world.

Congratulations to all. May their futures be filled with fun, happiness and much success.

* * *

ONTARIO'S BEST BUTTER TART FESTIVAL

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the legend of the butter tart can be traced back to Quebec in the late 1600s, but the first documented recipe came in Simcoe County, in Barrie, in 1900. The butter tart is truly a national treasure, and this Saturday in Midland, we will celebrate these little sugar pies as tens of thousands of enthusiasts will descend upon downtown in search of the perfect tart. They come in every shape, size, taste and colour. When it comes to butter tarts, one might say that diversity is our strength. Come early, and bring a cooler because we will start with

Statements by Members

200,000 butter tarts. By the end of the day, not one will be left standing.

This Saturday, everyone should come join us in Midland to celebrate the butter tart and satisfy their sweet tooth. Let us bring the butter tart home.

* * *

ABBAS HADIAN

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise with a heavy heart, but with much admiration, to pay tribute to a member of the medical community in Toronto. On May 26, Dr. Abbas Hadian, a remarkable physician and a distinguished leader of the Iranian Canadian community, passed away. For over 40 years, Dr. Hadian provided health care to countless patients by operating a bustling medical practice and by serving at North York General Hospital. He was passionate about medicine, passionate about people and passionate about his family. From the youngest child to the oldest of seniors, Dr. Hadian treated every patient with exemplary care and with good cheer and humour. I do not think it would be an exaggeration to say that he was among the most widely known and admired members of the Iranian community in Toronto.

I would like to thank his family for having generously shared Dr. Hadian with countless patients and wish them well during this particularly difficult time.

* * *

[*Translation*]

WHARF IN VERCHÈRES

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last week, more than 500 Verchères residents banded together to show how much they love the Verchères wharf, which is in desperate need of some TLC.

For almost 30 years, the Verchères wharf has been abandoned by the federal government, gradually falling into such disrepair that access has been restricted since the pandemic. The people of Verchères cannot understand why the federal government is allowing this widely loved wharf in the historic heart of their village to decay. The people of Verchères cannot understand why the federal government has money for all sorts of interference and frivolous expenses, but not for their wharf. The people of Verchères cannot understand why the federal government is telling others what to do but neglecting its own infrastructure.

The people of Verchères have waited almost 30 years, and cannot wait any longer. They are no longer content with a mere acknowledgement of receipt from Fisheries and Oceans Canada. The people of Verchères are tired of being ignored when they pay taxes like everyone else. They exist, they love their wharf, and they deserve to be heard by the federal government.

Statements by Members

● (1405)

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION ACTION PLAN

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the impacts of suicide extend far beyond the individual. Each life lost sends ripples of pain through family, friends, and communities.

The new national suicide prevention action plan is our comprehensive, evergreen plan to address suicide in Canada. Preventing suicide requires collaboration across all levels of government, partners and society as a whole.

Working together, we will enhance data collection and monitoring, advance research, deliver services to Canadians when, where and how they need them, and continue to collaborate. By joining forces, we can have a greater impact. We must work together to save lives.

As a reminder, anyone thinking about suicide or worried that someone they know may be thinking about suicide can call or text 9-8-8. Remember, we are never alone. Help is always available.

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*[English]***ARRIVECAN APP**

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there has been more explosive testimony on the ArriveCAN scandal. Yesterday, the committee heard from Minh Doan, the former CBSA vice-president who is at the centre of this controversy. Not only was he the person responsible for hiring GC Strategies, but it is also alleged that he deleted 20,000 emails pertaining to arrive scam. When pressed on the issue of the lost emails, he said that he changed the battery in his computer and, poof, 20,000 emails were gone. How convenient.

We also received text messages of a conversation he had with a colleague about his committee summons where he admitted that he could not “throw ministers under the bus” and that there is a gap between what he wants to say and what he can say.

There is still a dark cloud of secrecy that hangs over arrive scam. Who is Mr. Doan protecting? Who is he covering for? Conservatives will continue to ask the tough questions to get to the bottom of this boondoggle of a scandal.

* * *

STAN SMURTHWAITE

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise in tribute to a resident of Kitchener—Conestoga, Stan Smurthwaite, a Royal Navy signalman who on D-Day sailed the SS *Cresco*, one of almost 7,000 vessels that was the largest amphibian invasion ever assembled, in an operation that changed the course of history.

Signalman Smurthwaite, affectionately known as “steady light” by his D-Day comrades, risked his life to deliver ammunition to the brave soldiers storming the beaches of Normandy. Stan and others were a beacon of courage among the chaos of war.

In 2019, Stan travelled to France for the 75th anniversary of D-Day. Unfortunately, he did not live to witness today's 80th D-Day commemoration, as he passed earlier this year, at the age of 98.

Stan was the last D-Day veteran in the Waterloo region, so let us not forget our veterans' sacrifice, courage and indomitable spirit. Let us keep veterans like Stan etched in our hearts and memories to remind us that freedom is not free. It is earned.

* * *

ARCTIC INSPIRATION PRIZE WINNERS

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the 12th annual Arctic Inspiration Prize took place in Whitehorse earlier this month, continuing the celebration of people working on groundbreaking projects from across northern Canada.

I congratulate Yukon's Young People's Theatre festival and the Youth Coalition 4 Food Security in the North, which each took home \$100,000 to continue their projects. Thay K'i Anint'i received \$499,000 for its efforts in offering recovery and wellness programming, balancing both traditional knowledge and western practices to support real healing from the opioid crisis. Congratulations as well go to the Therapeutic Farm School for winning the \$500,000 prize. It is a wonderful farm-based project, including horses, that lights up the world for neurodiverse youth.

These are some of the brightest lights from Yukon, celebrating with northern brothers and sisters in a show of innovation and excellence that we in the north are rightly proud of. I congratulate all who took part in the AIP. I thank the many sponsors who make the prizes possible. Together, they are changing lives and communities in the north.

* * *

● (1410)

CARBON TAX

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians understand that the carbon tax is not an environmental plan. Rather, it is a tax grab by the NDP-Liberal government that makes everything more expensive, causing higher inflation and the cost of living crisis. When it taxes the farmers who grow the food and the truckers who transport the food, that inevitably increases the cost of food for all Canadians.

For years we have been saying this, but the government has refused to accept the truth. Now the Prime Minister knows that we were right all along and is desperately trying to hide the evidence. Recently, our Conservative team asked the independent Parliamentary Budget Officer whether the government had conducted an economic analysis of the cost. He confirmed that it had. However, the NDP-Liberal government is blocking the release of the analysis, placing a gag order on the budget watchdog.

Canadians demand transparency. The Prime Minister must stop hiding the real cost of his inflationary carbon tax and release the report.

* * *

RAINBOW CONNECTIONS CONFERENCE

Ms. Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last month, I had the pleasure of joining attendees for the inaugural Rainbow Connections conference in Sudbury. The conference brought together members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community, as well as seniors, older adults, elders and allies from across northern Ontario. It was a chance to celebrate, discuss and learn from each other about how we can do more to support the 2SLGBTQI+ community, especially seniors.

Protecting the rights of 2SLGBTQI+ people is how we build a more inclusive Sudbury and a more inclusive Canada. As allies, we must continue to do our part to ensure that we are creating safer and more supportive communities. As we celebrate Pride Month, I want to thank members of SQUAD and the Réseau ACCESS Network for organizing this important conference. It was a timely discussion that holds much promise for much-needed change.

* * *

ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today marks the 80th anniversary of Canadian Forces bravely storming Juno Beach to defeat the Nazis in the fight for freedom, human rights and human dignity. On that day, 124 Royal Canadian vessels, 10,000 sailors, 39 Royal Air Force squadrons and a total of 14,000 Canadians took part in D-Day with our allies.

[*Translation*]

It was a day that changed lives, and history, forever. On this day, 359 Canadians perished so that millions could be freed from Hitler and the yoke of Nazi Germany.

Today we honour and thank our Canadian comrades who fought on land, at sea and in the air, under circumstances that defy the imagination and with a courage that none of us, save for those who were there, could ever understand.

[*English*]

We will always be indebted to this generation of brave Canadians and their families. Their determination will forever be remembered. Their story must never be forgotten, and their cause should serve as a reminder to all of us that, sadly, in these times, the forces of hatred still exist. On behalf of a grateful nation, I thank them from the bottom of our hearts, for their courage, their sacrifice and their results on this day, 80 years ago, which changed the course of history. We will remember them.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is hard for Canadians to keep track of all the Liberal scandals. Every week, they add new ones. This is a scandal that would define any other government in the history of Canada. I am talking about

Statements by Members

the mysterious “Randy”, who the government claims is not the same person as the Minister of Employment and the former associate minister of finance.

They might be saying, “These aren't the droids you're looking for”, but this is the “Randy” the government is watching and looking for. The minister holds a 50% share in a global health import and wants us to believe that “Randy” was just some guy who nobody knows the last name of and who just happens to have some big ideas about the company that everyone took seriously.

Who is Randy? Where is Randy? Who got rich and why? Canadians deserve to know. It is time to give up on the cover-up.

* * *

ATTACK IN LONDON, ONTARIO

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, three years ago today in London, Ontario, a normal Canadian family was killed in a terrorist attack. They were targeted because of who they were, visibly Muslim. Yumna Afzaal was a student. Her mother, Madiha Salman, was an engineer, and her father, Salman, was a physiotherapist. The family matriarch, Talat Afzaal, was a teacher. Only an orphan boy survived after a terrorist deliberately drove their truck into this innocent family.

This attack terrorized an entire community across our country. They were just out for a walk. When my family went for a walk, I could not help but look over my shoulder. It shattered the sense of safety we all take for granted. This is terrorism. This is Islamophobia. We all have a responsibility to do better. Hate does not exist in a vacuum.

As leaders, we must bring people together and not stoke fears of those who are different. We must remember our London family.

* * *

● (1415)

ADDICTIONS

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I rise wishing I could speak to happy occasions, knowing that June is National Indigenous History Month. Sadly, I stand to give rise to the despair that still exists. There are too many of us who are being lost to alcohol abuse. There are too many that I represent in Nunavut, and those indigenous peoples outside of Nunavut, who are affected by alcoholism.

Oral Questions

There are too many of us losing to alcohol. I am told, for instance, that \$16.7 billion goes towards national health burdens such as addressing diseases, disorders and cancers due to alcoholism. We know, in Ottawa, that the Inuit population has reached about 5,000. Unfortunately, Inuit are disproportionately represented when it comes to substance-related deaths.

I am aware that the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction works in partnership with Ottawa Public Health and Inuit service providers. They recommend implementing the “Canada’s Guidance on Alcohol and Health” report to address issues.

I remind my fellow Inuit to stand strong, to help and love each other, even during the hardest of times. They can ask for help and make sure to have a hopeful future.

[Translation]

NORMANDY LANDINGS

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this year we commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Normandy landings.

We have a duty to remember the soldiers who took part, those who are still among us and those who have left us or who fell in combat, many of whose names have been lost to history. It took a lot of courage for those young men to land on the beaches of Normandy under Nazi fire and to press ahead tirelessly, even when it meant stepping over the bodies of their fallen comrades. Press ahead they did, however, until the enemy was vanquished.

Living in comfort in a nation at peace, we must always keep alive our gratitude toward the men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom. May we always stay on the right side of history by continuing to defend freedom and democracy today.

To all those fallen soldiers and to all the veterans who experienced the horrors of war and paid the price for their devotion to the rest of their lives, I say thank you. Lest we forget.

[English]

ETHICS

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP-Liberals poison and corrupt everything they touch. In 2017, they inherited a green government program with a clean bill of health from the Auditor General, and then they took it to the depths of corruption only the NDP-Liberals are capable of.

The Auditor General found that Sustainable Development Technology Canada is now a slush fund for NDP-Liberal swindlers, with \$123 million having been awarded corruptly, including \$76 million that was funnelled to projects connected with the Prime Minister's friends. Conflict of interest policies were not respected in 90 cases. That is \$76 million spent corruptly.

A secret recording from a senior government official described this slush fund's actions as “a sponsorship-scandal level kind of giveaway.” Another \$59 million was allocated to projects that did

not meet the slush fund's own rules. Another \$12 million was spent on projects that were in a conflict of interest and/or ineligible for funding.

The Prime Minister is not worth the cost nor the corruption. We are calling for the release of all the documents for this slush fund. Will they let the sunshine in and call the cops, or do we need another judicial inquiry?

● (1420)

ATLANTIC CANADA OPPORTUNITIES AGENCY

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am excited to rise today to celebrate the 37th anniversary of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency.

Since 1987, ACOA has been a real game-changer for our local economies here in Atlantic Canada. Whether it is creating jobs, supporting small businesses, or funding innovative projects, ACOA has been there every step of the way. In my riding of Cape Breton—Canso, ACOA has helped kick-start so many important initiatives. ACOA's work in diversifying our economy and promoting sustainable development has really put Atlantic Canada on the map, both nationally and internationally.

I send a big shout-out to all the hard-working folks at ACOA and its partners. Their dedication has made a huge difference in the lives of so many Atlantic Canadians. As we celebrate this milestone, I am excited about what the future holds. Cheers to 37 fantastic years of ACOA, and to many more years of growth and success for Atlantic Canada.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, governments from countries that are hostile to Canada, that actively try to harm our citizens and our country, interfere with the most fundamental aspect of our society: our democracy.

An intelligence report claims that there are members of the House whose loyalty is not solely to the people of Canada, but also to foreign governments that wish us harm. What has been the Liberals' response so far? They will not release the names, and the Liberal member for Pickering—Uxbridge has said, “Boo hoo, get over it.”

Oral Questions

Instead of telling Canadians to just walk it off, why do the Liberals not release the names of MPs who are working against Canada?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my friend from Regina—Qu'Appelle knows very well that no government is in a position to release sensitive information about particular pieces of intelligence.

I have a suggestion for the member. He sits a couple of seats away in this place from his leader. If the Conservatives were sincere in understanding some of the information underlying the public version of the report of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, then his leader could avail himself of the offer I am happy to reiterate again today. It is to get the security clearance, get all the information the committee of parliamentarians had, and then he could come to a reasoned judgment in this place.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is not about offering secret briefings to MPs who have to keep all that information secret. It is about releasing the names so Canadians can know which MPs are working against the interests of Canada.

I have a very simple question and the minister should be able to answer it: Are any of the MPs listed on this report of compromised members who are working against the interests of Canada currently sitting in cabinet? Yes or no?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will give full points to my friend from Regina—Qu'Appelle for trying to get me to do indirectly what he knows very well I cannot do directly.

I will remind my friend that our government is the first government to take this issue seriously. The previous Conservative government did absolutely nothing to secure our democratic institutions in spite of public warnings from CSIS for the last two years it was in government.

I worked last summer with my friend from Regina—Qu'Appelle to set up the Hogue commission. We look forward to Justice Hogue's recommendations and we would be happy to work with the member in terms of implementing them.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals sat on warnings from our intelligence agencies so they could protect their own partisan interests. They have refused to hand over cabinet confidences to the Hogue commission.

This next question should be really simple. Cabinet ministers get to see everything. They get a say on everything the Government of Canada does, and they get to personally lobby the Prime Minister any day they want.

Can the minister assure Canadians that nobody who sits around the cabinet table today is on this list of compromised MPs who are working against Canada?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my friend from Regina—Qu'Appelle should know very well that

our national security and intelligence agencies, including the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, take all of the issues of national security very seriously.

My friend should know very well that our government has taken more steps than any other government to ensure that our democratic institutions are protected, and he should have confidence that we will continue to do that work, which is something the previous Conservative government did absolutely nothing about.

• (1425)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he knows. Cabinet knows. They know the names, just like they knew about Communist China's interference in the Liberal nomination in Don Valley North.

The Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security has revealed that members of Parliament helped hostile foreign states. The Prime Minister knows it. He knows these members.

He protected the member for Don Valley North in the past for partisan reasons. Is that also why he is now refusing to divulge the names of the members who are collaborating with foreign states?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is a serious parliamentarian. He knows full well that under Canadian law, no government would disclose the type of intelligence he claims he wants to know today.

I do have a suggestion for him, though. He should talk to his leader. We told his leader, and I want to reiterate it today, that we are willing to give him access to the intelligence underlying the committee of parliamentarians' report, intelligence that has been kept confidential under Canadian law. We can share this with him if he is sincere about wanting to see the intelligence underlying this report.

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MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a pregnant woman picking up her child from day care was chased by a woman screaming at her.

"I was so scared. I ran into the street to get away," she told Benoit Dutrizac. This is what Montreal looks like after nine years of soft-on-crime policies, supported by the Bloc Québécois, that send repeat offenders home instead of to prison.

Will the Prime Minister listen to the Leader of the Opposition's request and refuse exemptions for supervised injection sites near schools and day cares, yes or no?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be unequivocally clear. We always put a lens of public health and public safety on everything we do in addressing this deadly overdose crisis, but in that frame, also to be clear, the safe consumption site in Montreal is managed and run by the Province of Quebec. It is under their jurisdiction. There was no Montreal proposal on our table, but with anything that comes to us, we want to make sure kids, families and communities are safe, while we save lives.

* * *

*[Translation]***DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS**

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians has issued a warning that some MPs here in the House are under foreign influence. This is extremely serious.

When we asked the Deputy Prime Minister about the matter yesterday, she flatly refused to address it. She did not want to talk about it. It held no interest for her. She acted the same way when the NDP asked questions on the same topic. Our democracy is under attack, but the Deputy Prime Minister could not care less.

If an elected official promotes foreign interests to the detriment of his or her country's interests, that elected official should be shown the door. This is serious.

What is the government going to do to make sure that happens?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from La Prairie for his question.

I am pleased to let him know that our government implemented a series of measures in 2015 that have evolved as the threat has evolved. Based on expert advice and independent reviews, we strengthened these measures.

A very important bill is currently before Parliament. I welcome the Bloc Québécois's support for introducing enhanced measures to protect our institutions.

We will continue to deal with the matter appropriately.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, now is the time for action.

While public concerns are growing, what has been done here in Ottawa since the report was released? What has the government put in place or announced to address the fact that some members here in the House are collaborating with foreign powers?

Nothing at all has been done. It is still in the starting blocks.

When we point out that our democracy is under threat, the response we get is about interest rates and the Bank of Canada. What a joke.

Does the government take democracy seriously?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speak-

er, I would like to think that all parliamentarians take democracy seriously, that everyone who is fortunate enough to be elected to the House to serve their constituents and Canada takes democracy seriously.

That is why I am very pleased to have worked with my colleague from La Prairie on establishing the Hogue commission, for example. I really enjoyed working together last summer. I look forward to seeing the Hogue commission's report. I look forward to working with members to pass bills like Bill C-70, which will strengthen our ability to resist foreign interference.

We will continue to pursue this approach.

* * *

● (1430)

*[English]***LABOUR**

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, border workers keep Canadians safe. They are critical to keeping illegal firearms out of the country and protecting our border, but when it comes to their pensions, CBSA workers are not treated like other public safety officials. CBSA employees are relying on the minister to keep her promise and give fair retirement benefits.

When will the minister treat CBSA officers fairly and offer them an equitable pension so that they can get the respect they deserve?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by saying that we are committed to reaching a deal that is fair for employees and for Canadian taxpayers. That deal will be reached at the table. We are committed to negotiation. However, negotiation is a process of give and take. We are more than willing to make concessions, but we expect that to happen on the other side as well. Of border services workers, 90% are essential. That means they have the responsibility and duty to provide uninterrupted services, but I will reiterate that the best deals are made at the table, and that is where we will remain until a deal is reached.

* * *

*[Translation]***CLIMATE CHANGE**

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the UN Secretary-General asked countries to tax oil companies heavily, but this Prime Minister and his Minister of Environment and Climate Change want no part in that.

Wildfires are ravaging our communities. Temperatures are getting hotter and hotter. People are suffering because of climate change. Meanwhile, big oil is making record profits. When the government suggested actually taxing oil companies, the oil lobbyists said no, and the Liberals backed off.

Oral Questions

Why are the Liberals letting oil companies get away with that when our planet is burning?

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I certainly share his desire to see Canada do more to reduce the effect of greenhouse gases on global warming.

That is why we are the only G20 country to have eliminated subsidies for oil and gas companies, which we did two years ahead of schedule. This week, we also announced a \$530-million fund with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to work with our communities across the country to improve resilience to climate change. We know that we need to do more, and we will do so.

* * *

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know that the carbon tax is costing them in a big way, but what the Liberals are covering up is just how much. There is a secret report that is out there. It is in the possession of the budget watchdog; except, he is under a gag order by the Liberal government, so he is not able to reveal exactly what it shows. It is time to stop that cover-up. Will the minister quit using his ludicrous talking points that mislead Canadians and finally release the report so that Canadians can know just how much the carbon tax is costing them?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been clear all along. The Conservatives are really the only people who continue to mislead Canadians, particularly on the case of the PBO report. The PBO released a report on April 17 that indicated that they actually overestimated the economic impact of the carbon tax and re-emphasized the fact that Canadians get more back than they pay through carbon pricing.

On July 15, Canadians will receive their next installment of the Canada carbon rebate, reaffirming our commitment to lowering our emissions and fighting for affordability every step of the way.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question was about the gag order that has been placed on the Parliamentary Budget Officer. He has been prevented from releasing the report that is in his possession, but that is no surprise to us because, of course, we know that the Liberals appreciate transparency about the same way they appreciate an enema. The budget watchdog would like to release this report; he just needs the go-ahead from the Liberal government. Therefore, would the Liberals finally agree to be transparent with Canadians, let the sun shine in and have the report made public?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us do a little history lesson. The PBO once said that eight out of 10 Canadians are better off under the pollution pricing scheme. Flash forward to today and the PBO says eight out of 10 Canadians are better off under the pollution pricing scheme.

Do members know where they are not better off, though? They are not better off in that member's constituency, where the premier

increased gas prices by 13¢ a litre. I do not see her in front of her constituency office protesting.

● (1435)

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, sunlight and transparency are what Canadians were promised and yet, after nine years, here we are at the heart of another Liberal cover-up. This time, the government has been caught red-handed putting a gag order on the Parliamentary Budget Officer. The Liberals do not want Canadians to see the secret report that proves that Canadians pay more for the carbon tax than they get back. Will the government end the carbon tax cover-up and lift the gag order on the Parliamentary Budget Officer; or are the Liberals just going to tell the PBO and all Canadians, “Boo hoo, get over it”?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House respect the work of the Parliamentary Budget Officer. The office provides independent analysis to the government and to Canadians. Canadians rely on that information for insight into how these programs impact our economy and their pocketbooks.

However, Conservatives are misleading Canadians. Our government will continue to support the PBO to fulfill the role of his office, but what this report correctly confirmed is that eight out of 10 families receive more money back through the Canada carbon rebate than they pay for the price of pollution. On July 15, the Canada carbon rebate will be arriving in mailboxes and bank accounts.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, sunny days have given way to a cover-up craze, but Canadians instinctively know the true cost of the carbon tax.

They feel it when they fill up at the pump. They feel it when they go get groceries. Our farmers know it when they get their energy bill. The Parliamentary Budget Officer sure knows it, and that is why the Prime Minister put a gag order on him.

If the government will not admit what Canadians already know, then why not let Canadians decide in a carbon tax election? What are the Liberals afraid of?

Oral Questions

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, I will give a history lesson. The PBO once said eight out of 10 Canadians are better off under this carbon pricing program. If we flash forward to today, the PBO says eight out of 10 Canadians are better off under this carbon pricing program.

In the member's riding, it got even better. Despite the vote of the hon. member and against his wishes the rural rebate is doubling. It is doubling on July 15, as my colleague just said.

Why does he not talk to Premier Smith about her oppressive gas pricing in Alberta?

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, Canadians are weary. Their bank accounts are bare. People are tired of being gaslit by the Prime Minister. Canadians already knew that the carbon tax would cost more than Liberals cared to admit.

Now it sounds as though the government also knew better. That is what the Parliamentary Budget Officer said at committee. The government has damning data, but it would not let him release it. It is time for the Liberals to quit using these unbelievable talking points.

When will the Liberals release the secret report that confirms that Canadians were right all along?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the summer, Conservatives could consider taking a math class to brush up on their Conservative math. It really does not seem as though their math is adding up these days.

Conservatives from Saskatchewan and Alberta should talk to their premiers, who jacked up the price of gas on April 1 by over 13¢. There is no Canada carbon rebate for provincial gas tax, and there is no rebate for excess oil and gas executives taking home millions of dollars in pay.

We have said it before, and I will say it again: Who needs an oil sands lobby when we have the Conservative Party of Canada in the House?

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the gaslighting continues over there. Those wacko talking points show just how desperate the NDP-Liberals are to cover up the true costs of the carbon tax.

Here is what the budget watchdog said: “The government has economic analysis on the impact of the carbon tax itself... We’ve seen that, staff in my office, but we’ve been told explicitly not to disclose and reference it.”

The Prime Minister is gagging the budget watchdog as he bankrupts Canadians. Again, when will he release the secret report that confirms that Canadians were right all along?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, I will give a bit of a history lesson. The PBO used to say eight out of 10 Canadians were better off, with more money in their pockets, as a result of

the carbon pricing program of the government, including in Saskatchewan.

If we flash forward to today, according to the PBO, eight out of 10 Canadians are better off, including in Saskatchewan. There is a bonus: A doubling of the rural rebate is starting on July 15. The hon. member should talk to his premier and tell him to start rebating consumers in Saskatchewan.

* * *

● (1440)

[*Translation*]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, “Quebec is no longer able to welcome asylum seekers with dignity”. This quote from a support centre for immigrant communities appears on the front page of a newspaper. The director talks about families with children living in cars and families crammed into bachelor apartments. The director says that “these people deserve some measure of dignity, and right now, especially with the housing crisis, I don't think that's happening”.

When will the federal government understand that by not dragging its feet on forcing all provinces to share the responsibility of welcoming asylum seekers or reimbursing the related costs, it will be responsible for a humanitarian crisis?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have met with many organizations in Montreal that do their best to welcome asylum seekers. They frequently tell me that they do not receive much money from Quebec, despite the fact that we have handed \$5.2 billion over to Quebec since 2015.

It is clear that extra effort is needed. That is what we have done by meeting with our counterparts. I just had a meeting with my provincial colleagues. The work will continue.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, here is another quote from the director of the Centre d'appui aux communautés immigrantes de Montréal, who said, “Maybe we need a more balanced distribution of asylum seekers among all Canadian provinces.”

She is right. It is deeply unfair that she and community organizations in Quebec end up shouldering this burden. It is unfair that people like her are forced to say no to families who have no resources and need help because Ottawa has abandoned them. Enough talk. When will the government take action?

Oral Questions

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said very clearly, we have invested \$5.2 billion in Quebec since 2015. We have not asked for any accountability. Maybe Quebecers need to ask more questions about this. It is also very, very, very clear that we are making an extra effort, and that is because the woman who was quoted in the newspaper article is right. We need to better coordinate the distribution of asylum seekers across Canada. That is what we are doing. I just wrapped up a meeting about this very issue half an hour ago.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there are meetings, but no action. While the minister does nothing, community organizations on the ground are unable to find housing for families. They are forced to put people on wait lists for food hampers. How does one begin to explain a wait list to a hungry child?

The premiers are meeting on Monday. Quebec is calling for an even distribution of asylum seekers and the reimbursement of \$1 billion for welcoming them. Will the Prime Minister of Canada leave this meeting with a cheque and a start date for the even distribution?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member will have to wait until Monday to get an answer to that question, just like everyone else. The party that is doing nothing is the Bloc Québécois. For six months it has been asking for asylum claims to be fast-tracked. Yesterday, the geniuses in that party rose in the Standing Committee on Finance to oppose the measures to streamline the asylum system. It is shameful and utterly incoherent. Their ignorance knows no bounds.

* * *

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the budget watchdog has released a report stating what Canadians already know, that they pay more in carbon tax than what they get back. They pay more for groceries, more for food, more for home heating, more for transportation and more for everything. The Liberal la-la math is just not adding up.

When will the minister quit using made-up talking points, remove the gag order on the budget watchdog, release the secret report and end the carbon tax cover-up? Canadians have a right to know.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is not what the PBO said. It is the opposite. The PBO has overestimated the economic impact of carbon pricing on Canada. It means that probably even more than eight out of 10 families are getting more back through the Canada carbon rebate than they pay in carbon pricing. This is just another opportunity for the Conservatives to deny climate change.

Denying the effectiveness and proven impact of carbon pricing is just another form of climate change denial. It suits the Conserva-

tives, and it suits their big oil and gas friends. Who do they really work for, Canadians or big oil and gas execs?

• (1445)

Mr. Terry Dowdall (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have long known that the carbon tax costs them more than they get back. Who else knows this? The Liberals do. That is because the Parliamentary Budget Officer revealed this week that the Liberals commissioned a report that confirmed what Canadians already know, that the carbon tax costs families more than they get back. Now the Liberals refuse to release the taxpayer-funded report. Let us end the carbon tax cover-up.

When will the minister quit using unbelievable talking points and release the secret report that proves once and for all that Canadians are right?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is not a secret is the Conservatives' climate denial. That is no secret. Canadians know that Conservatives continue to vote against any action on climate change. Our government is implementing solutions that work. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has confirmed multiple times that carbon pricing is the most cost-effective market-based mechanism. I would remind the Conservatives that they actually campaigned on it in the last election.

Our government will continue to address climate change while putting more money in the pockets of Canadians.

The Speaker: I ask all members not to take the floor during questions and answers unless they are recognized by the Chair. Doing so makes it very difficult for members to hear.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal cover-up is in full swing, and I have another example that proves it. The Parliamentary Budget Officer very clearly stated at the Standing Committee on Finance that the government has its own economic analysis of the carbon tax's impact, but he was told not to release it and not to refer to it. Worse still, the Bloc Québécois is dancing with the Liberals. It voted against our proposal to give Quebecers some tax relief for their vacations.

When will the Prime Minister release his secret report on the carbon tax so that Canadians can know the truth?

Oral Questions

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me say it again: There is no federal carbon tax in the province of Quebec. Quebec is a leader in the fight against climate change. The Conservatives are finding more and more reasons to deny climate change yet again.

The government regularly shares confidential information with the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who uses it to produce its own reports.

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[English]

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have seen 12 straight months of record-breaking temperatures, more extreme wildfires and more extreme weather events. This is a climate crisis. The Liberals have been asleep at the wheel, letting oil and gas CEOs pollute more and more each year, and the Conservatives cannot even agree on whether climate change is real.

The UN Secretary-General is calling for a windfall tax on oil and gas profits to help fund climate action. New Democrats agree with this.

Why are the Liberals letting big oil rip off Canadians and destroy our climate?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past two years, we have introduced a new clean fuel standard, something Conservatives pledged to do during the last election campaign. However, they changed their minds to please their leader and voted against.

We have also raised the price on pollution, and we are putting a cap on greenhouse gas emissions from the oil and gas sector. We are the only major oil-producing country in the world to do so. Our emissions are so low that the last time they were this low in Canada was shortly after the Canadiens won their last Stanley Cup. It would be nice if, when the going gets tough, the NDP did not vote with the Conservatives on carbon pricing.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one loses someone and is trying to grieve and then somebody else dies. This is the feeling of the Piikani Nation, which has seen an unfathomable amount of death because of the toxic drug crisis. First nations in Alberta are dying from toxic drugs eight times faster than the rest of the province's population. The Alberta Conservative model is just not working, and the federal government has shown no leadership.

When will the Liberal government have the courage to intervene in dangerous Conservative policies and save indigenous lives?

• (1450)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member opposite. It is a tragedy that we are losing our brothers, our sisters, our mothers and our fathers to this toxic, polluted drug supply that we see all across the country, including in and predominantly among first nations. That is why our government has invested billions of dollars to support indigenous-led approaches to mental wellness. We will continue to work with first nations leaders on the solutions that will work for them. This crisis has to end.

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INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the world has seen unprecedented scientific and technological advancements in artificial intelligence in recent years, but this change is plagued by misinformation and disinformation targeting hard-working Canadians from coast to coast. We recently saw how Conservatives, such as the member for Portage—Lisgar, intend to misuse this technology to mislead Canadians.

Could the President of the Treasury Board explain how our government is working responsibly to adapt to these changes and to protect Canadians, their information and the country as a whole?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, now more than ever before, researchers and companies are using AI to create innovations and job opportunities, from drug discovery to energy efficiency and housing innovation. That is why we have begun to develop the first-ever government strategy on AI for the public service, removing barriers and filling gaps for the responsible, transparent use of AI. Instead of spreading misinformation, our side of the House is committed to embracing new technologies that allow local businesses, educators and our broader economy to flourish.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there has been \$123 million handed out to ineligible companies. There have been 186 conflicts of interest, and 76 million taxpayer dollars have been given out to well-connected Liberals. After nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, it is clear that the Prime Minister is not worth the cost or the corruption of his billion-dollar green slush fund.

Conservatives are calling for the evidence of corruption to be handed over to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, so will the NDP-Liberal government end the cover-up and call in the Mounties?

Oral Questions

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Sustainable Development Technology Canada is an independent organization that has been around for over 20 years and that was supported by all members of Parliament at the time. I understand that the Conservatives' opposition to fighting climate change gives them an ideological bent against the organization.

However, notwithstanding the governance structure of the organization, when we learned of mismanagement, we investigated. We triggered numerous independent reviews, including the Auditor General's report, which we collaborated with, and now we are actioning a new governance framework for the organization.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we almost could not hear that answer over the paper shredders that are running over at the billion-dollar green slush fund.

We know that in 2017, the Auditor General gave a clean bill of health to the organization, which Conservatives stood up to fund clean green tech, but the Liberals got into office and decided to line the pockets of well-connected Liberal friends. What did we see in the Auditor General report that the Conservatives called for and the Liberals opposed? We saw 186 conflicts of interest and over \$100 million being misappropriated.

Conservatives want the Liberals to end the cover-up. Will they turn over the evidence to the RCMP, yes or no?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as soon as allegations of mismanagement of Sustainable Development Technology Canada surfaced, our government acted immediately. We triggered an independent review of the governance model and an independent review of the HR practices in the organization. We issued a management response action plan. We have done everything right along the way to address the concerns. Rightfully, Canadians should expect the highest standards of governance when dealing with public funds.

That is exactly what we are doing and are committed to. The organization is going to be reconstituted within the National Research Council in order to have better oversight.

• (1455)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for years Canadians have been struggling because of this Liberal government, yet close friends of the Liberals have been profiting.

What is the latest discovery about those Liberal friends? It involves the use of the Sustainable Development Technology Canada green fund. Liberal friends have taken it upon themselves to dip both hands in the cookie jar. According to the Auditor General, \$123 million of taxpayers' money was misused. To get to the bottom of this, those documents need to be seen.

Is the government going to give the RCMP access to all the documents so it can get to the bottom of this scandal?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that question has already been answered many times. Perhaps I will just add that the Canadian government will, obviously, always co-operate with the RCMP and any other agency to help them do their work.

Perhaps the member is not yet aware of the fact that this week has been a very good week for Canadians, since it was announced for the first time in four years and for the first time in the G7 that interest rates are starting to drop.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us be serious. Does the minister realize that the Liberal scandal involving Sustainable Development Technology Canada's green fund is reminiscent of the sponsorship scandal?

I am not the one saying that. It was a public official who testified during the Auditor General's investigation and who also said that the government is completely incompetent.

Will the minister rise again and say that he did not see anything or some such thing? The reality is that Canadians want the truth and they want all the documents. Will the government give them to the RCMP, yes or no?

The Speaker: Before I give the floor to the minister for his answer, I would like to encourage all members, particularly the ministers, not to speak when someone else has the floor.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my esteemed colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent is talking about information. Unfortunately, the first piece of information he did not adequately convey is that all the reports, including the Auditor General's latest report, made it very clear that there was no political interference of any kind. Anyone who claims otherwise is, unfortunately, spreading disinformation.

Speaking of disinformation, my colleague is from the Quebec City area. Could he ask his Conservative leader to apologize for misleading people and, unfortunately, discouraging the tens of thousands of seniors in the Quebec City region from enrolling in the new Canadian dental care plan?

The Speaker: Before moving on to another question, I would like to remind the member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, who had the opportunity to ask a question, to speak only when he is recognized by the Chair.

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AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last year was disastrous for our farmers. One in five farms is unable to pay its debt. After months of demonstrations, the farmers have been heard by their government, the Government of Quebec.

Oral Questions

Now it is Ottawa's turn to listen, warned the Union des producteurs agricoles. Quebec already asked the federal government in November for a one-time relief payment through the AgriRecovery program. The farmers needed it in November. We are in June.

When will the minister offer reasonable compensation through the AgriRecovery program without unnecessary red tape?

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously our hearts go out to the farmers who went through some tough times last year.

As my hon. colleague is well aware, AgriRecovery is a partnership between the province and the federal government. We are working to determine whether the program will apply and will have a response very soon.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, while Ottawa drags its feet, the processor Saladexpress in Châteauguay—Lacolle has just shut down its operations. When workers arrived this morning, the doors were locked. This means that a lot of our growers found out just this morning, after the planting season, that they had lost their one and only buyer.

This comes on the heels of a disastrous season in 2023 and repeated natural disasters. Unless Ottawa wakes up and adapts to climate change, one in 10 businesses will close within the year. Is the minister finally going to launch AgriRecovery?

We need a date.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague knows, AgriRecovery involves an analysis conducted not only by the federal government, but also with the province. This is done in collaboration with the Government of Quebec. The two work in partnership. I am sure they will have an answer very soon. However, I understand all too well that, in times of crisis, an answer can never come fast enough.

In the future, we will keep working with all the provinces to ensure that our programs respond more quickly to these climate change crises.

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• (1500)

[English]

ETHICS

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is another day, and we are still waiting for the Minister of Employment to introduce us to the other Randy, the one who was cashing cheques from a company that was lobbying the government, winning contracts and using the minister's name to do it. That is not allowed; it is illegal. The text messages reveal that someone named Randy at the minister's company was part of a \$500,000 fraud.

Will the employment minister finally get up on his feet and tell everyone the supersecret identity of the other Randy?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am all too happy to set the record straight. I have had no role in the

company since being elected in 2021. Regarding the day in question, I have shared my phone records with the committee and with the commissioner, which confirm that I am not the person in the story.

I have said it and the companies have said it, and now I have proven it: I was not involved. Let us get back to working for Canadians and focusing on the real issues.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister has not proven a single thing.

We are looking for whom he called the other Randy. I am pretty confident that we do not actually have to look very far, because the other Randy might be right here, the one who broke the conflict of interest law, who broke the Lobbying Act and who broke the Criminal Code, so will the employment minister from Edmonton let us know if Randy is in the room?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister just answered that question.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker,

Here is a story that is a bit randy
about a Liberal's excuse that seemed just too handy:
Blame others for failures; they just could not resist,
but if one is going to blame someone, be sure they exist.

The employment minister continues to blame the mysterious other Randy for his ethical trouble. Meanwhile, after nine years, all of this country's problems have actually been caused by the other Justin.

Will the person responsible for the scandal, the real Randy, please stand up?

The Speaker: I encourage members not to go too close to the line in terms of referring to other members by their first names. I understand that it made sense with the first name that was mentioned, but the second name skated a little bit too close to the line.

The hon. leader of the government in the House of Commons.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we just got an interesting little behind-the-scenes insight into how things work over there. The minister stood up and comprehensively swatted away all the questions. What followed were two more questions that the members are so proud of wittily writing in the morning and rehearsing in front of the mirror that they just have to get them off their chest, even though the questions were answered two minutes ago.

That is what is going on in the House. The Conservatives do not want to talk about lower interest rates. They do not want to talk about eight out of 10 Canadians being better off. The opposition just wants to talk about its own stuff.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I got into politics in 2015, it was the end of a decade of the Conservatives betraying Quebecers' trust time and time again. They started by excluding the Davie shipyard from the national shipbuilding strategy, only to top it off by hiding behind the courts for 10 years to justify their inaction over the Quebec City bridge, when Stephen Harper was not going to Quebec City just to sneer at it, that is.

Now that we have corrected the injustice against the Davie shipyard and bought back the Quebec City bridge, could the Minister of Public Services and Procurement tell us how we are going to guarantee the sustainability of this unique part of our heritage for generations to come?

• (1505)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will do so with pleasure.

It is hope and hard work. What good news the Prime Minister announced on May 15 about acquiring the Quebec City bridge. What good news it was that this piece of strategic infrastructure that is unique in the world and critical to the Quebec City region will be saved, restored and upgraded.

On behalf of my colleague from Louis-Hébert, I thank the Prime Minister for his leadership, and I also want to thank the Quebec caucus, all the ministers involved, our great negotiator Yvon Charest, the Chambre de commerce et d'industrie de Québec, and everyone in Quebec City who supported us over the past few years so we could achieve this fantastic result.

* * *

[English]

ETHICS

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, contrary to the minister's representation, he has not turned over all of his phone records and text messages. Text messages reveal that someone named Randy from a company that the Minister of Employment has a 50% interest in was involved in a business deal now mired in allegations of fraud. The minister says it was not him but that it was some other Randy, the trouble is that no one can identify who that other Randy is.

Has the minister, in the past 48 hours, pored over the employment records of the handful of employees at his company to find Randy?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just when we thought we had heard from the final member who was practising all morning in the mirror, up pops another one to look straight into the camera and relay a question that was just answered several minutes ago. I think the people over there need to be a little more agile.

The minister has answered the question.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the minister is the Randy in the text messages, then the minister broke the law, including contravening the Conflict of Inter-

est Act. It should not be difficult to find the other Randy if he exists.

If the minister did not break the law, then where is Randy?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I just want to remind the member that I am over here, not over there—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I would like to remind all members that questions should be addressed to the Chair and that members can look where they wish to ask or answer questions.

The hon. leader of the government in the House.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, the minister has responded comprehensively to all of these questions. What I find a little off-putting in the tone and tenor of the member's question is that in this place we are all to presume each other to be honourable. That is not what the member did and he should carefully consider the kinds of words that he uses in the House.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Superman, Batman, Randy, we know the identity of these fictional characters, but Canadians want to know who Randy is. The mysterious Randy is in control of a fraudulent company called Global Health Imports. His business partner, Stephen Anderson, says that he is a public official.

By pure coincidence, the Minister of Employment, by the same name, founded Global Health Imports and is a 50% shareholder. We just heard the minister say that he is not involved, but is he not at all curious about who this Randy fellow is who is committing fraud in a company he owns 50% of?

Why will he not tell us who this Randy is?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): I am glad, Mr. Speaker, that this segment has been brought to us by what goes on in the House of Commons.

Here we have yet another Conservative member who toiled over this witty text all morning, looked in the mirror and hoped that the leader was there, because if the leader were there, he might be noticed by him. Then he is going to put it on Facebook, but what he will not do is put this answer on Facebook, happily saving me from a thousand trolls online.

The member should know better than to ask those questions in his pursuit to dishonour—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1510)

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Northwest Territories.

*Oral Questions***TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government works every day to ensure that communities have the vital infrastructure it takes to be successful. From houses to bridges to community centres to broadband Internet, I know our government is investing in communities in ways that truly matter.

Could the Minister of Rural Economic Development and Minister responsible for ACOA share with the House the ways in which broadband infrastructure and a stable connection to the Internet can bolster communities?

Hon. Gudie Hutchings (Minister of Rural Economic Development and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my friend from the Northwest Territories knows that reliable Internet is so important for rural, remote and indigenous communities. It is a necessity.

This week in La Ronge, I announced that our government was bringing high-speed Internet to over 13,700 households in 55 communities in northern Saskatchewan, and that includes 3,200 indigenous homes, as well as cell service along 500 kilometres of roads.

We are on track to connect 98% of Canadians by 2026 and 100% by 2030. This week's investment is a game-changer for friends and folks in rural Saskatchewan.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, troubling allegations were revealed this week that some MPs have been willing participants in foreign interference. Despite this, and instead of giving Canadians answers, the Liberals are withholding more than 1,000 documents from the inquiry. The Conservative leader continues to refuse to get the security clearance that will allow him to be properly informed.

Both Liberals and Conservatives are trying to protect themselves instead of Canadians. It is unacceptable.

When will the Liberals release all the documents and ensure that compromised politicians are not on the ballot?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows very well that our government and the senior public servants in the Privy Council Office and the national security agencies obviously work with either the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians or the inquiry led by Justice Hogue. Those senior public servants work to ensure that they have access to all of the documents necessary to do their important work. Any redactions or any decisions with respect to the documents that are made available are made by senior public servants, and elected people are not involved in that process whatsoever.

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, artists and creatives are deeply underfunded in my community and much of the gap is federal.

While Waterloo region received just over \$3 a person from the Canada Council for the Arts last year, other communities received up to \$21 a person. It adds up to a \$13-million gap last year alone. This gap has real implications. The KW Symphony filed for bankruptcy last year and THEMUSEUM is in dire straits.

Will the Minister of Heritage commit to working with all interested MPs to ensure all regions get their fair share of federal arts funds?

[Translation]

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would be pleased to work on this with all of my colleagues who care about culture and the arts.

That is why our government has invested more money than ever before in arts and culture. We understand how important this is in all communities across the country. We added \$31 million to the Canada music fund. We put in an additional \$32 million for festivals. We have added money for audiovisual production.

We will always be there, unlike the Conservatives, who made cuts to the arts across the country when they were in power, and who are still opposed to tech giants paying their fair share.

* * *

[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I wish to draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of this year's recipients of the Governor General's Performing Arts Awards.

The laureates of the Lifetime Artistic Achievement Award are Measha Brueggergosman-Lee, Ronnie Burkett, Diane Juster, Andrea Martin and Wes "Maestro" Williams.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

● (1515)

The Speaker: I would also like to draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of the recipient of the 2024 Ramon John Hnatyshyn Award for Voluntarism in the Performing Arts, Jenny Belzberg

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

The Speaker: Finally, I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the recipient of the National Arts Centre Award, Mélanie Demers.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

[English]

The Speaker: I invite all members to meet the recipients at a reception to be held in room 233-S immediately after question period.

*Business of the House***80TH ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY**

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That the House commemorate the 80th Anniversary of the tremendous sacrifice, valour and victory of Canadians Soldiers, Sailors and Air Crew at Juno Beach as part of the D-Day invasion and subsequent liberation of Europe.

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

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

(Motion agreed to)

The Speaker: Following discussions of representatives of all parties in the House, I understand there is an agreement to observe a moment of silence to commemorate the 80th anniversary of D-Day, the first day of the Battle of Normandy.

I would invite members to rise.

[*A moment of silence observed*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, after our House leader answered a question and spoke of the experience of troll swarming that occurs online, the member for South Shore—St. Margarets shouted out at him “Thank you for the ammo.” This violent language does not help in a climate where there is an 800% increase in threats of violence toward elected officials. I ask that the member apologize and retract his comment.

The Speaker: I am going to ask all members to be mindful of the language they use. I have a different interpretation of what that statement might have meant, so we will just leave it there.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

• (1520)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order arising from question period, following my question in which I referred to the other Randy, you made some comments about skating close to the line in terms of using the first names of members in the House. I wonder if you could just clarify your ruling. Is your ruling that the other Randy is a member of the House of Commons?

The Speaker: I am certain the hon. member understood when I made mention of it in that intervention. If he listened to the first part of it, I said first part was fine; it was the second reference that was skating to the line in terms of making reference to the Prime Minister.

Now we come to a favourite part of the week, the Thursday question.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week, there has been a lot of secrecy in the House during our debates.

First, there were the disclosures regarding foreign interference and secret names of MPs. Some names have remained secret, and according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, there is a secret report that cannot be released. There is also a certain Randy whose surname remains secret.

These days, another thing that seems to shrouded in secrecy is the government's agenda as we approach the end of this sitting. In the Thursday question, we ask what topics will be discussed the next day and the following week. Unfortunately, it seems as though a lot of changes have been made.

Could the leader of the House give us the actual agenda for the business to be done tomorrow and next week?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is indeed a secret in the House, and that is the Conservative Party's true intentions when it comes to cuts. “Chop, chop, chop,” as my colleague from Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine so aptly puts it. That party wants to cut social programs and the programs that are so dear to Quebeckers and Canadians: women's rights, the right to abortion, the right to contraception. The Conservatives want to scrap our government's dental care and pharmacare plans. The secret is the Conservative Party's hidden agenda, which will do great harm to all Canadians.

With our government's usual transparency, this evening we will proceed to report stage consideration of Bill C-20, an act establishing the public complaints and review commission and amending certain acts and statutory instruments, and Bill C-40, an act to amend the Criminal Code, to make consequential amendments to other acts and to repeal a regulation regarding miscarriage of justice reviews, also known as David and Joyce Milgaard's law.

Tomorrow, we will begin second reading of Bill C-63, an act to enact the online harms act, to amend the Criminal Code, the Canadian Human Rights Act and An Act respecting the mandatory reporting of Internet child pornography by persons who provide an Internet service and to make consequential and related amendments to other acts.

[*English*]

I would like to inform the House that next Monday and Thursday shall be allotted days. On Tuesday, we will start report stage of Bill C-69, the budget implementation act. On Wednesday, we will deal with Bill C-70, concerning foreign interference, as per the special order adopted last Thursday. I wish all members and the House staff a good weekend.

*Business of Supply***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**OPPOSITION MOTION—DOCUMENTS REGARDING SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT TECHNOLOGY CANADA

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting, as the Conservatives try to portray a false image that the government has not been acting. Nothing could be further from the truth, when one takes a look at SDTC and the fact that it is an arm's-length foundation that has been there for over 20 years now. When the government did discover what had taken place, a number of initiatives to rectify the problem were also initiated by the government, which ultimately led to the Auditor General doing the report that we have today. The board is no longer in existence, as it is in a transition to the NRC.

I am wondering if the member could provide his thoughts on what he believes the NRC is going to be able to do in order to keep the program moving forward.

● (1525)

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, here we have a Liberal member who continually props up the corruption exhibited by the Prime Minister and the government opposite. Their response is not demanding answers for Canadians. It is not suggesting that transparency is key. It is not daring to criticize the governing prince of his party. Instead, his response is to say, "Do not worry about it. There is nothing to see. Just trust us."

The reality is this. Canadians deserve better. Canadians deserve an answer, and Conservatives are working hard to get it. The question I have for every Liberal backbench member, every member of the New Democratic Party and every member of the Bloc Québécois is this: Will they stand with Conservatives in demanding the answers that Canadians deserve?

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are definitely fighting against having this motion carried and having the production of papers. There are \$123 million that the Auditor General has identified that did not follow the rules under the conflict of interest declarations. The SDTC actually continued to use funds to benefit themselves and their friends, and the Liberals stuffed this board with their colleagues. We are talking about patronage, and we are talking about pork-barrelling.

Are the Liberals voting against this because it is another Liberal cover-up? Is it Liberal incompetence? Is it Liberal corruption? Is it Liberal complicity in what could be under an RCMP investigation that ends in charges under the Criminal Code? Is it all of the above?

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question that my colleague from Manitoba just asked, because I think it speaks to something that should not be controversial: simply asking for us to shed light on the circumstances, asking for these documents so that all Canadians can make that judgment for themselves. If charges should be laid, then charges should be laid. If there are further de-

tails that need to be examined, then those further details should be examined.

What is so disgusting is that it seems like the Liberals, propped up by the fourth party in the corner there, a weak NDP, seem to cover up the corruption no matter what the cost is. Canadians deserve better.

This motion is simple. This motion is straightforward. This motion simply asks that we can have the documents so that Canadians can see for themselves where the money in the Liberals' green slush fund went. I think that is common sense. I would ask every member of the House to join in promoting that very common-sense idea.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, our colleague wants to know if we are going to support the motion. I will answer his question.

We completely agree in principle with the substance of the motion on transparency. However, there are things in the motion that simply do not work. For example, the motion imposes a 14-day deadline on the production of documents and makes a recommendation directly to the RCMP. I am not sure that is the role of Parliament.

I have a constructive suggestion for my colleague so that we can get more work done on the motions. It might be wise to consult the other parties if we want motions to be adopted, unless the Conservatives just want to create sound bites. Those are two very different things. Nonetheless, I would say that transparency is fundamental.

[English]

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the motion before us, 14 days is a very reasonable timeline. These documents exist. They can be tabled so that Canadians can get the answers they are entitled to. When it comes down to it, the corruption, the scandal, the pork-barrelling and the conflicts of interest are an abuse of institutions that Canadians should be able to trust. Transparency is very key.

We have laid out a very straightforward motion that is an important first step in ensuring that Canadians get the answers they deserve.

● (1530)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I actually do not mind addressing the House on this particular issue, but I thought I would start off in the same manner in which the former leader of the Conservative Party, today's opposition House leader, did. I can understand why he wanted to talk about the economy, interest rates, inflation rates and concerns that he had with the government on those issues. Before he actually got to the motion itself, he spent probably about 50% of his time talking about that issue.

Business of Supply

I like to think that the member has some valid points in some of the things that he was saying in terms of concerns that Canadians have in regard to some of those key indicators, and that is why I thought that maybe, given that the former leader of the Conservative Party started the debate talking about the economy, I would participate by sharing some thoughts, some actual facts, on that issue.

Yesterday was actually a very good day in Canada. Yesterday, the Governor of the Bank of Canada actually reduced interest rates. We are the first country in the G7 to actually see a reduction in the interest rate. That is good news, and I want to reinforce that to members opposite. This will be the first reduction in four years, and we have to put it into the context of what is happening around the world.

When we take a look at interest rates and inflation rates around the world, Canada is doing relatively well, especially if we compare our economy, interest rates and inflation rates to other G7 and G20 countries. Canada is doing quite well, and yesterday, with the announcement from the Governor of the Bank of Canada, we actually saw a decrease. Canada is the first country in the G7 to do so.

I address that point to my friend, the Conservative House leader, who started off by talking about concerns regarding interest rates. I thought that was some good news, and I wanted to share that with the member opposite.

Now let us talk about the motion that we have today. If we take a look at Sustainable Development and Technology Canada, better known as SDTC, which has been referred to throughout the day, I believe it is important that we highlight the fact that SDTC has been around for over 20 years. That is a very important fact. Next to that, we need to recognize that it is actually an arm's-length foundation, meaning that it has a very independent nature.

When we think of the board that members continuously make reference to, the Government of Canada does not appoint all the board members. We are not solely appointing the entirety of the board members to SDTC, and I think that is another very important thing to realize.

When we think in terms of what SDTC has done over the last 20 years, it is important that we reflect on the hundreds of projects that have been initiated, and as a direct result of that initiation, Canada has done relatively well on a number of fronts. When I think of Sustainable Development Technology Canada over the years, I think of quality air, clean water, enriched soil and the type of technology that needs to be developed in order to provide that quality, as well as to look at environmental initiatives that will have an impact not only here in Canada, but around the world.

● (1535)

As an arm's-length foundation, many of the investments have allowed Canadian companies not only to create jobs in Canada, not only to ensure that we have a healthier environment, but also to lead the world in many areas, and so we are contributing to technological advancements around the world through SDTC.

When we think of how the government provides funds to support Canadian companies that have the potential to be world leaders in

technology, as a political entity, the Liberal Party has valued and recognized the importance of the government being involved indirectly, which is why it is in support of the foundation. The foundation, as I pointed out, was created 20 years ago. Obviously, it has survived a good number of years, even under Stephen Harper. We recognize the fact that the foundation continued to receive support. I suspect, with the millions of dollars that it has received over the years, that many of those Canadian-based companies, and the fine work they have done in terms of the advancement of technology, have contributed in many different ways, not only here, but abroad.

If we look at some of the companies that have benefited by it, three things come to my mind. I think of water, whether it is water treatment or whatever it might be. I think of energy with Manitoba and Quebec, two provinces that have so much development in hydro. There is so much potential in that industry and Canada, on many fronts, leads the way, because, in good part, of agencies such as SDTC, along with other levels of government and their investments or the national government's investments. When I think of water, energy and agriculture, all one really needs to do is take a look at the last few years to see how those three items come to the top of mind for me personally and why I believe it was important that the government take action on the issue.

Let us put it in perspective in terms of what has actually taken place. There were concerns raised a couple years back in regards to how SDTC was being governed, and employees and others had legitimate concerns. That was brought to the attention of the government. The government intentionally chose to look into the matter with not one, but two internal-type reviews, one being an external third party from within the department. An assessment was done and that report came out last fall. The government was concerned about the report and ultimately froze the new funding going to SDTC. The report, at least in part, caused the Auditor General of Canada to take note and to look into the matter. As a direct result of that, what we saw was the report that was just released earlier this week.

● (1540)

When the report was released, the government, as it has in the past, consistently acknowledged that we have independent offices of the House of Commons to support members and to ensure that there is a higher sense of transparency and accountability. Through that report, we get a much clearer sense of the serious issues that had to be addressed. We are taking actions based on many of the report's recommendations. The government respects the recommendations and continues to follow them and the thoughts flowing out of that report.

Some tangible actions have already been taken. There is no longer a board and we have put into place a transitional board with retired deputy ministers; I believe there are three retired deputy ministers. We are looking at how ensure that there is ongoing governance that will reinstate public confidence in a program that, generally speaking, has delivered for Canadians. We recognize that there have been some issues. We are not denying that. That is why we are dealing with the governance issue today and it is now being transferred over into the jurisdiction of the NRC.

Business of Supply

We are taking it away from a foundation-type of board model, which is arm's-length from the government, and we are putting it into a Crown corporation, where there is the opportunity to ensure more direct accountability. I see that as a very strong, tangible action. When we first heard about the issue, the minister took action to ensure that we could find out more information as to what was taking place. For the Conservatives opposite to try to give an impression that the government has not been taking action, I think, is somewhat misleading.

At the end of the day, when a government spends a great deal of money, sometimes money is spent in an inappropriate fashion. When that takes place, I would suggest that it is important to watch the actions of the government to ensure public confidence, transparency and integrity of the system, a higher sense of oversight and a better sense of accountability. Changing that governance, ultimately, is going to ensure all of that.

The NRC has done some wonderful things in Canada. It has an infrastructure that is already in place. I suspect that many individuals from SDTC will have the opportunity to continue, to ensure that those jobs are in fact being taken into consideration. Think about the programs that are out there. I do not know all of the Canadian-based companies that have received support, but there are quite a few of them and many of them are ongoing. We are talking about hundreds over the years, so it is important that we continue with the program itself. This is where it will be interesting to hear from members of the Conservative Party in terms of where they see the program or the initiative.

• (1545)

Stephen Harper supported it, but we know that there has been a hard right turn within the Conservative Party. Just like Erin O'Toole supported a price on pollution, today's Conservatives do not support a price on pollution. Do they support having greener grants and support programs? Is that part of the motivation? They have not been clear on that issue.

Instead of having a substantive debate in regard to the benefits that have been realized, whether it is the jobs, the economics or the environment and the world-leading technology that is being developed, the Conservatives' sole focus is to try to shift the blame and say that the government has not been responding to the issues as they have been coming up, and then they try to label our government as corrupt. Nothing could be further from the truth on this issue.

It is interesting, when we do a comparison. When Stephen Harper was the Prime Minister, we had the ETS scandal, and I made reference to it earlier. A number of people across the way had that shell shock-type of look, or one of a deer caught in the headlights. Maybe they should look it up. That was a technology service contract and, indirectly, the Conservative leader himself would have been somewhat associated with it, at least for a portion of his time with the Stephen Harper government. That was a \$400-million contract.

If the Conservatives want to talk about corruption, they should take a look at the allegations that were being made back then. Now contrast how the Conservative Party approached that mega-scandal with what they are saying today. We can see that it is quite differ-

ent. Today's Conservative Party looks at things in a very different light. What we see is a Conservative Party that really has one or two issues that they want to focus on, and if we try to change that focus, the Conservatives get upset.

Conservatives want to focus on personalizing politics. They want to divide Canadians. They want to try to give the impression that Canada is broken, and that the institution of Parliament is not working. On the one hand, that is the type of messaging that we see time and time again. Character assassination is on the top of that list. The Conservatives are trying to feed the far right, and get them upset, angry and motivated to do the things that we are seeing today, which is somewhat disappointing in many ways.

On the other hand, the Conservatives go around, spreading misinformation on issues, such as the carbon rebate versus the carbon tax. I would suggest that the issue we have before us today is an issue the Liberal government is taking seriously. It has demonstrated that by the actions that we have taken to date.

• (1550)

We are going to ensure that there is a high sense of accountability and transparency on the issue. We are going to ensure that, at the end of the day, Canadian taxpayers are protected, so the program will lead to ongoing clean energy and worldwide recognition of the advancements that Canada is making on technology.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberals talk a lot about climate change, day in and day out. They use it to justify imposing a carbon tax that does nothing to change the climate but essentially impoverishes Canadians and shuts down industry.

Sustainable Development Technology Canada was doing a good job under the appointees by Harper. As a matter of fact, it was examined by the Auditor General and got a AAA rating, a great record. However, since that time, more recently, the Auditor General has released a report saying that it is a mess. It is a scandal. They are Liberal insiders. This was supposed to be for green technology, but it is a slush fund. They cannot even trace where a lot of the funds are going.

Could the member admit that it is really about making Liberal-friendly appointees and their companies rich and has nothing to do with climate change at all?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, first and foremost, I would like to think that all appointees under this administration, whether Conservatives, Liberals, New Democrats, independents or possibly the odd separatist, though hopefully not too many, would be responsible in that position and take actions that are in the best interests of Canada as a nation. That is my expectation.

If they do not meet the expectations, then there is a need to take action. That is, in fact, what we have seen the government do. Tangible actions have been taken on this particular issue, and we will continue to move forward in making sure that Canadian taxpayers are in fact—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): There needs to be time for more questions.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, the tragedy in all this is that every time there is a Liberal scandal, they quickly cook up a fresh scandal to bury the previous one. There is no end to the mismanagement and lack of transparency.

I think that, in this matter, there are reasonable doubts that justify making these documents available to parliamentarians. Will the parliamentary secretary commit to providing them, as we are requesting? It is important that this be clear, in the name of transparency.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, we have a system in Parliament that enables standing committees to be very productive. It is the will of standing committees to meet and build up relationships that ensure a higher sense of accountability and transparency. Nothing prevents standing committees from calling before them the ministers responsible and others to take a deep dive into what has taken place. That is all good. I would encourage and support standing committees doing that.

At the same time, from my perspective, it is also important for departments and ministers to do what they can. I am satisfied that we have a minister and a government that continue to ensure there is a higher sense of accountability, having found the degree to which there were problems. We saw that more specifically this week, as the board no longer exists.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, the hon. member said there are some issues at Sustainable Development Technology Canada. Let us go over the basics. Annette Verschuren, the former board chair, as well as being CEO of a Toronto-based energy storage firm called NRStor Inc., participated in approving grants totalling \$217,000 to her own company. She refused to recuse herself.

SDTC awarded funding to projects that were ineligible. It did not follow conflict of interest policies for directors 88 times. The legal requirements for the number of foundation members were never met; the board was required to have 15 members, but, by 2020, there were only two. Decisions were also made without quorum. These are not “some issues”. This is a board that is colossally compromised by corruption.

Given facts such as these and more, would my hon. colleague really describe the situation at SDTC as one where there were “some issues”?

• (1555)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would not want to attempt to marginalize the serious issues that the Auditor General has brought forward, and this is why I provided comments regarding the appointment of board members. There are many boards that are appointed. Whether the government appoints Liberals, Conservatives, New Democrats or people who are really and truly independent to boards, I expect, as I like to think every member should, that they would behave in an appropriate fashion and respect conflict of interest and so forth. When that does not happen, I expect

the government to take action, and the current government has done so. It demonstrated that as far back as two years ago in freezing new funding.

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member opposite seems to have a really bad case of political amnesia. He always wants to change the focus and forgets that it is actually nine years of the Prime Minister and his party in power. They are in power for now; I hope a Conservative government will be back in office in short order. He talks about history lessons and how “Stephen Harper did this.” He probably goes back and even talks about John Diefenbaker. I am surprised he did not invoke Sir John A. Macdonald and blame him for the government’s latest scandal.

I want to go back just a shorter amount of time than that to when the Prime Minister and the NDP Liberal government came into office. The Liberals said, in their 2015 election platform, “Liberals will also make government information open by default to all Canadians”.

The member talks about the high standard he is holding his government to and says that anybody who questions this is a radical, an extremist or on the fringe. Simply, given what he ran on when he came into office in 2015, if he has such “high standards” that he holds himself to, is he going to vote for the motion?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I was with the Prime Minister when we were in third party, where he talked about things such as proactive disclosure. We, in fact, put in proactive disclosure even before we were elected into government. I know the member will recall that.

As a government, we have consistently been very transparent and accountable for the many different programs we brought in, even when it came to the pandemic. Then, governments around the world had to develop and promote programs and spend a great deal of money. Whenever there has been opportunity to ensure we can have the documents required, at one point or another, the government has been bringing forward the information in a reasonable way.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, with all due respect to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, he cannot deny that the Auditor General released a report. The findings of that report are absolutely devastating and require an in-depth review.

Taxpayers expect accountability. They expect us, as elected officials, to be able to shed light on this type of scandal.

Is he prepared to ensure that we are given access to all of the documents?

*Business of Supply**[English]*

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I have more confidence in our standing committees than some members maybe do. In fact, one may have a standing committee that is effective in building relationships and trying to get to the bottom of everything that has happened. I would encourage members to work with those who are on the most appropriate standing committees in order to take that deeper dive into the situation.

I am not trying to undermine the seriousness of the Auditor General's report. I recognize it, as the government has. The government has taken direct actions, as would have been expected. Just because the official opposition feels it has to attach the words “scandal” and “government” to anything and everything that moves in Ottawa or across the country, it does not necessarily justify every demand the Conservative Party has. It would likely cost into the hundreds of millions of dollars to provide all the documents the Conservatives would want to see, especially if we factor in—

- (1600)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

Before I begin, I want to share some very bad news with the House. After nine years of this Prime Minister, the cost of housing has never been higher. Rentals.ca reports that rents have increased 9.3% year over year. That means the average rent reached \$2,202 in May. This is an all-time high for rents paid in Canada. In Vancouver, rent costs \$2,671; in Toronto, \$2,479; in Halifax, \$1,925; in Montreal, \$1,763; in Winnipeg, \$1,416. No one has been spared.

The cost of housing keeps soaring because this government is not building enough of it. Only the Conservatives have a plan for building homes, not bureaucracy. I wanted to take this opportunity to pass that message on. Why? We witnessed something quite incredible this week. We received not one, not two, not three, but four damning reports about this government's management.

A damning report has been released on this government's management of foreign affairs. We learned about it this week. The National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians also released a scathing report, which revealed that the Prime Minister repeatedly tried to cover up, deny and then downplay the impact of foreign interference on Parliament and on our elections.

It was probably a terrible day for the Liberals, but I would say that it was an even worse day for Canadians when they saw the Auditor General's reports on McKinsey, the Liberal green fund, which we are talking about today, and cybersecurity.

There have been three reports showing that this government is simply incapable of managing the affairs of the state and the money that Canadians entrust to it. It is not the government's money. It is Canadian taxpayers' money. Unfortunately, the government no longer deserves the trust of Canadians when it comes to managing the money people earn by working hard day after day, and night af-

ter night for some folks, seven days a week. Reading these reports, one cannot help but wonder how the Liberals manage to do so much so poorly.

Why am I mentioning that? The reason is that the government continues to spend freely with \$61 billion in new inflationary spending that was supported by the Bloc Québécois in the last budget. What did that do? It drove up the cost of housing in a way that has never before been seen in Canada.

Food also costs more. All a person has to do is go to the grocery store on a daily or weekly basis. One has to be there to see people passing up the nicer cuts of meat for something cheaper. People have to make tough choices like that, and sometimes they cannot even buy food that is essential for staying healthy. Why? They cannot afford it. They are worried that, when they get to the register, they will find out they do not have enough money in their bank account to cover their groceries. That is what things are like now in Canada after nine years of this Prime Minister.

Last week, we moved a motion that neither the Bloc Québécois, nor the Liberal Party, nor the NDP supported. We asked the government to suspend the gas tax this summer to give a little breathing room to Quebeckers and Canadians who have been struggling with the cost of living and inflation over the past year. We wanted to give them a break and a chance to dream of taking a little vacation. Unfortunately, the other three parties rejected the idea out of hand. For purely ideological reasons, those people no longer want us to use cars. They want us to travel by bike, through bike paths or whatever, even though they know perfectly well that we do not have the infrastructure.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

- (1605)

Mr. Luc Berthold: It is true, Madam Speaker, that we do not travel through bike paths; we travel on bike paths. The NDP member himself is very much in favour of increasing carbon taxes. He himself voted against our motion to suspend the taxes. He is against Canadians and Quebeckers taking vacations this summer.

Today we are talking about the sixth report of the Auditor General, the subject of which is Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC. As I said, this report is damning for a number of reasons. This report covers the period from March 1, 2017, to December 31, 2023. During that time, the board of directors approved 226 projects worth \$836 million. That is a lot of money.

It all started after a whistle-blower exposed what was going on by recording a senior public servant who criticized the Liberal government's total incompetence because it inappropriately awarded contracts worth \$123 million.

Business of Supply

I am going to take the liberty of repeating the statements made by this whistle-blower, given that they are the reason we are here today. Thank goodness at least one person dared to stand up and make it clear that the minister responsible, and his office, knew about the corruption within the Liberal green fund and were helping spread it. According to the whistle-blower, they then lied repeatedly. "The minister said...multiple times, that he was briefed on the outcome only on August 27, but that's definitively not true."

These are comments from the whistle-blower who broke this scandal. Thanks to him, Canadians were able to learn about what was going on within this organization, this Liberal green fund.

The Auditor General noted that the SDTC did not comply with conflict of interest policies in 90 cases. That means that people voted on funding when they were directly involved in the companies receiving it. That is unbelievable. Unfortunately, a departmental representative attended most of those meetings but turned a blind eye. He seems to have done absolutely nothing to help prevent these conflicts of interest.

Some \$76 million was allocated to projects with ties to Liberal cronies, appointed to the leadership of this organization. Some \$59 million was allocated to projects that should not have received money. We are talking about money that should have gone to innovative environmental projects but instead went to projects that had nothing to do with environmental innovation. How was anyone okay with this?

The thing that stands out from the Auditor General's report is that this all started when former minister Navdeep Bains decided to dismiss the former chair and appoint one of his friends to head the fund. All the problems started there. Before that, there was no problem at the SDTC.

The other thing to keep in mind is on page 23 of the Auditor General's report and reads as follows:

We found that Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada had not received records of conflicts of interest at Sustainable Development Technology Canada...

That is understood. Further on, the report states as follows:

We found that the department had not asked for or received such information and did not determine what actions it should take when informed of conflicts of interest by the foundation.

The Auditor General concluded the following:

Sustainable Development Technology Canada did not always manage public funds in accordance with the terms and conditions...

Most importantly, she stated the following:

Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada's oversight did not ensure that the administration of public funds was in accordance with the terms and conditions of the contribution agreements and with relevant government policies.

That is squarely the minister's responsibility. He did not do his job. He could have and should have put a stop to this spending spree a lot sooner. Unfortunately, he did not.

• (1610)

Today, we are asking that all of the material examined by the Auditor General be turned over to the RCMP so that it can get to the

bottom of this matter and, most importantly, tell us whether any fraud was committed.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, certainly there were policies governing conflicts of interest at SDTC. Not only were there policies, but those policies did not even comply with the legislation. They were inadequate.

That is not all, however. In addition, within SDTC, these policies were not being respected, and were themselves illegal. Furthermore, SDTC's conflict of interest policies were less stringent for the board of directors and management than for SDTC employees.

I would like to know how that can reasonably be explained. In my colleague's opinion, is that in itself enough to request additional documents so that taxpayers can get a straight answer?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, which is so relevant. After the new chair was appointed, resignations followed as people got caught. Afterwards, it was funny to see these folks denying all the conflicts of interest, as though it were normal to vote to give themselves money and then profit from it.

The chair voted to give \$217,000 to companies in which she was a shareholder. If her lawyers advised her that she could do that, the rules must have been wrong. The rules did not apply to her, but they applied to everyone else at SDTC.

My colleague is absolutely right. Changing the rules to benefit oneself is illegal. I think it is perfectly legitimate for Canadians to ask the RCMP to get to the bottom of this, because the Auditor General does not have the mandate to lay criminal charges.

Unfortunately, this whole affair smacks of criminal behaviour.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments.

Obviously, the NDP agrees that the more transparency and accountability, the better.

Furthermore, as far as accountability and responsibility go, my colleague and the Conservative leader recently discovered an interest in Montreal and the tragic events that unfolded there. The opioid and addiction crisis is a real crisis happening across the country, including in Montreal. The Standing Committee on Health went to Montreal to study the overdose crisis and meet with experts and groups working in the field to save lives. Do members know how many Conservative MPs were sent to study the situation in Montreal? Zero.

Business of Supply

Why is my Conservative colleague unwilling to go visit Montreal and meet with organizations on the ground and doctors at the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal to find out what is really going on with Montreal's opioid and overdose crisis?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I would gladly go to Montreal.

However, I do not need to go to Montreal, because I know from reading the newspapers that tragic events are unfolding every day in Montreal. The most recent story involved a pregnant woman who was picking up her child from day care and was followed by someone. She was frightened. That is the reality we read about every day in the papers. This just goes to show how nine years of inaction on the part of this government have brought crime to a point where people are afraid to go out on the streets.

That being said, I understand why my NDP colleague did not want to ask a question about the report, because it is a very important report and, unfortunately, he will probably have to support whatever recommendations come from the top.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am going to tie in with what my colleague from Montreal just said.

Yesterday, his colleague who sits on the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology, the member for Windsor West, spoke with officials who were there. He asked them a question about the fact that it was whistle-blowers who finally exposed the truth and that these people were never protected in any way. Some lost their jobs and were unable to find another job in the public service.

It is thanks to their efforts that the truth was exposed. I would like my colleague to tell me how we might protect them in the future.

• (1615)

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague completely. We absolutely must protect whistle-blowers.

This week, I saw the Minister of Industry boasting that an investigation had been done and that SDTC had been shut down. Unfortunately, while he was boasting, he forgot to mention that the whistle-blower, the one who really brought the facts to light, is in trouble right now. The government failed to protect him.

In my opinion, it is important that we take care of whistle-blowers and that we get to know what is really going on inside the machinery of government.

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

Nine years with this Prime Minister in power has meant nine years of scandals. The scandals are piling up here in Ottawa at an unbelievable rate. There is a new one every day. This week, the Auditor General of Canada discovered that the Prime Minister turned Sustainable Development Technology Canada into a slush fund for Liberal Party insiders.

This is taxpayers' money, more specifically, \$123 million that SDTC awarded to close associates who were not only in a conflict

of interest, but in some cases were not even eligible for funding. A total of \$59 million of Canadians' money was awarded for ineligible projects, and \$76 million was awarded for projects with a connection to Liberal cronies who had been appointed to positions within SDTC.

There is more. The Auditor General's report further indicates that long-standing conflict of interest management policies were completely ignored in 90 of the cases. We are not talking about one or two cases. We are talking about nearly 100 cases where conflict of interest policies were not followed. This is serious.

I was a member of the board of directors of the Port of Québec, and I owned a company. Obviously, the Port of Québec could not do business with my company. It was out of the question. It was not allowed. I do not understand how the members of this organization's board of directors were able to give themselves so much money. It is unbelievable.

More specifically, the SDTC chair, who was chosen by none other than the Prime Minister himself, misappropriated \$217,000 for her own personal gain. She blatantly exploited public resources and behaved incredibly irresponsibly with regard to the ethics rules and with regard to the trust of Canadians.

Is no one in the government able to allocate those funds properly? One has to wonder. Who is responsible for preventing this type of scandal? One also has to wonder about that.

Whistle-blowers are the ones who tipped us off. They made sure that we, the official opposition, moved this investigation forward until it reached the point where the Auditor General was asked to investigate to get to the bottom of things.

The Auditor General made it clear that the responsibility lies squarely with the industry minister. This minister failed to adequately monitor contracts awarded to Liberal insiders and, in so doing, he seriously failed in his duty to protect Canadian taxpayers as well as Canadian dollars. He completely neglected the essential task of ensuring that public funds are managed with integrity and transparency. This scandalous situation is equally unacceptable.

The abuse of power and corruption are unacceptable. Canadians deserve much better after nine years of scandals from this Prime Minister. The Prime Minister and his government have betrayed the trust of Canadians with every misallocated dollar. We pay taxes. We send money to the federal government in the hope that the federal government will spend it wisely and, more importantly, offer services and products that we could be proud of. That is not the case right now.

Business of Supply

They betray our trust with every dollar wasted and every dollar taken out of Canadians' pockets. Public funds are not there to line the pockets of Liberal cronies or to make the rich richer. Canadians are suffering and are having an extremely tough time meeting their most essential needs, namely food and shelter. While hunger and homelessness are a reality for more and more Canadians, while they cannot even live in dignity, while they are faced with choices such as buying food or paying the rent, living in a motel or living in the street, the government is turning public funds into a slush fund for its friends. How could such an abuse of power happen? How could there be such a misappropriation of funds?

The Auditor General noted that Sustainable Development Technology Canada did not comply with conflict of interest policies in a hundred or so cases; spent nearly \$76 million on projects with ties to highly placed Liberal cronies in the organization; and spent \$59 million on projects that should not have received money. Think about it. There is a special fund that is supposed to be used to help the environment and help the country become carbon neutral by 2050, and it is being used to fund projects that have nothing to do with the green fund. It is quite incredible.

The Auditor General also noted that SDTC also spent \$12 million on projects that involved a conflict of interest and were also ineligible for funding. What is more, its chair diverted \$217 billion to her own company.

● (1620)

Talk about a total and outrageous lack of accountability. The Liberal government is neither transparent nor accountable. It should always be held responsible for its actions, and it should always answer Canadians' questions, especially when their money is being misappropriated, wasted, invested in a corrupt and negligent way. I think I speak for all Canadians when I say that we need answers. The most important thing is making sure Canadians get answers. That is why we think this matter should be handed over to the RCMP so they can find out the truth.

Once again, we are disappointed for Canadians, disappointed for our country and disappointed in this Liberal government. However, our disappointment merely reinforces and confirms what we already knew. We need to bring common sense back to Ottawa, and we need to do it now. Only the common-sense Conservatives can put an end to the corruption, the irresponsibility and the negligence. Respecting conflict of interest policies does not seem like mission impossible to us. It should not even be an issue. At the risk of repeating myself, it is just common sense.

I took a course in business administration at Université Laval. That was in 2013, if I am not mistaken. Anyone who wants to have a governance role must absolutely ensure that there is no conflict of interest in anything they are going to do. Allocating millions of dollars to one's own companies within an organization like that is completely and utterly unacceptable.

I can guarantee that we will bring common sense back to Ottawa. Serving the interests of those who elected us, representing them properly, answering their questions correctly, ensuring they can live with dignity, all without abusing their money, now that is common sense, and that is what we will stand up for on this side of the House. Nine years of scandals is nine years too long. Canadians de-

serve to see an end to this long and difficult era of scandals. We want to help bring this chapter to an end. Democracy depends on peoples' trust in their representatives. Without that trust, we have nothing.

Today, we are speaking out against the irresponsible corruption that has taken place at Sustainable Development Technology Canada, an organization where a failure of governance and a continuous cycle of mismanagement have led to very serious violations of conflict of interest policies. This has led to the mismanagement of over \$123 million of taxpayers' money. An RCMP investigation is absolutely crucial. As usual, the government claims to be surprised and will waste even more money on overly generously paid consultants to cover up yet another scandal.

We know that the minister was informed years ago that there were concerns regarding Sustainable Development Technology Canada, so why did the problem continue? How did the mismanagement get so out of hand? This investigation is urgent. Action is urgently needed. It is imperative that we take action as quickly as possible. Therefore I move, seconded by the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable, the following amendment:

That the motion be amended:

(a) by replacing the words "14 days" with the words "30 days";

(b) by adding the word "and" at the end of paragraph (f), and by adding, after paragraph (f), the following new paragraph: "(g) in the case of the Auditor General of Canada, any other document, not described in paragraphs (a) to (f), upon which she relied in preparing her Report 6—Sustainable Development Technology Canada, which was laid upon the table on Tuesday, June 4, 2024;"; and

(c) in paragraph (h), by deleting all the words after the word "Police".

● (1625)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is my duty to inform hon. members that an amendment to an opposition motion may be moved only with the consent of the sponsor of the motion. If the sponsor is not present, the House leader, the deputy House leader, the whip or the deputy whip of the sponsor's party may give or refuse consent on the sponsor's behalf.

Since the sponsor is not present in the chamber, I am asking the deputy House leader if he consents to this amendment being moved.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I do consent with pleasure.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The amendment is in order.

[*English*]

Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Business of Supply

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, unfortunately some Conservative members are calling it nothing more than a slush fund. I am wondering whether the member could provide some clarity. Does the member believe that the Conservative Party would in fact cut the funding aspect to the fund?

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Speaker, the question is not whether we are going to abolish a fund like this.

The reality is that we are all well aware of the fact that we must continue to invest in technology. What is more, it is part of the Conservative government's policies to bring new technologies on board to deal with the problem of climate change in Canada.

Inevitably there will be and continue to be investments, but not with people who are appointed by friends of the Liberal fund who make sure that Liberal cronies can line their pockets.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncass (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Conservative Party seems to have some good ideas. It recently had one. It wants to lower federal gas taxes. That sounds interesting. I wondered why they had not come up with it sooner if it was such a good idea.

I did some searching. In 2008, the Harper government said that higher gas prices were unavoidable and that Canadians would have no choice but to reduce their dependence on oil and gas. He said, and I quote, "I believe you will see, over the next few years, the general trend of gasoline and other energy costs will continue to rise".

Stephen Harper, the former leader of the Conservative Party, refused to cut federal gas taxes. I will quote him again. He said, "The ability of governments to affect the price of gasoline *per se* is so small that it's not worth doing. What you've really got to do is lower costs for consumers generally, rather than try to fight the upward trend in the price of gasoline."

One member who was around under the Harper government is the current leader of the Conservative Party, the member for Carleton. I would like my colleague to explain in concrete terms who is telling the truth. Was it the former leader of the Conservative Party or the new leader of the Conservative Party?

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Speaker, it is a little odd that my colleague would ask me a question about that, because we have been extremely clear for months and months. We still want to pause taxes on fuel for the summer to give Canadians a break. Unfortunately, the Bloc Québécois does not want this and has spoken out against this idea.

However, the member is not asking me about the nearly \$200 million that was put into a fund managed by friends of the Liberals, who allocated funds to themselves while sitting on the board of directors of that organization. That is completely unacceptable. It is beyond belief. He is not even asking me anything about that.

Does this mean the Bloc Québécois is okay with what those people were doing?

• (1630)

[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, one thing that popped into my mind as my colleague was speaking was that he talked about the fact that only Conservatives would be able to stop the corruption and the secrecy. That did make me laugh a bit because perhaps the member forgets all of the secrecy and corruption under the Harper government. Many of the people who were part of that government are still sitting in this place as part of the Conservatives today.

We talk about the scandal with the Senate. We talk about the 170 times Harper refused to give information to Parliament about budget numbers. We talk about when Bev Oda falsified documents. The scandals that the Conservative Party has actively participated in make me wonder how its members have the audacity to stand in this place to criticize the Liberal Party.

Today, it does feel a bit like the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party are both saying that the other party is worse, when Canadians should probably be aware that they are both pretty darn bad.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Speaker, once again, I cannot believe it. Questions like that prove the NDP-Liberal coalition wants to protect its Liberal cronies. They are all one and the same. I cannot believe the questions we are hearing today.

We are not the ones saying so. The Auditor General of Canada said so. If I am not mistaken, she was appointed by the current Prime Minister. She is independent. She has been doing an outstanding job for months. This is not her first report. She released three more reports like it this week.

I do not understand why the NDP is still working so hard to protect the Liberals. It is absolutely unacceptable.

[English]

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Newmarket—Aurora. I am pleased to rise to speak to today's opposition motion with the hopes of addressing the findings and finding a path forward.

The Government of Canada is committed to supporting the growth of the clean-technology sector. Our clean-technology sector is a powerful engine for economic growth. In recent years, Canadian companies have generated revenues and achieved accolades on the global stage. Encouraging innovation in the sector not only drives the creation of new businesses but also attracts significant international investments.

Business of Supply

On Tuesday, the Auditor General released her report on the audit of Sustainable Development Technology Canada. The audit's objective was to determine whether funds were managed in accordance with the contribution agreement between SDTC and Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada and with proper oversight. The report identified issues around project eligibility and conflict of interest at SDTC. The report recommended enhanced oversight by ISED to ensure SDTC's full compliance with its contribution agreement and the proper allocation of funds.

The Auditor General did not report evidence of criminal behaviour. The Auditor General's findings and recommendations are in alignment with the results of the independent fact-finding exercise undertaken at the request of the government by Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton. That exercise resulted in significant actions being taken at SDTC to enhance accountability and transparency.

Following allegations of a toxic workplace and inappropriate practices at SDTC, the government appointed a third party law firm to undertake a fact-finding review of alleged breaches of labour and employment practices and policies at SDTC. It conducted voluntary interviews with current and former employees, and the report concluded that SDTC's leadership did not engage in the type of repetitive, vexatious or major-incident conduct that would constitute harassment, bullying or workplace violence under applicable standards.

Those are three reviews conducted by independent, impartial experts in their respective fields. The very same documents requested in the motion before us would have already been examined. I would ask what the members of the party opposite think would be uncovered in the duplicative exercise that is being proposed. The government took action. The Auditor General took action. We appreciate and accept her findings.

Neither the Auditor General's audit nor any of the other fact-finding reviews found evidence of fraudulent or other criminal activities by any officer, director, member or employee of SDTC. While some of the reviews concluded that there were lapses in SDTC's governance, including its management of a conflict of interest, these findings did not include suspicion or evidence of fraud or other criminal activity that would warrant a referral to the RCMP.

The government has taken steps to directly address the lapses that were identified, and it is ultimately moving the programming to within the National Research Council to ensure the future stewardship of the programs. Leadership has been stabilized with the appointment of a new board chair and two new directors. The new appointees have been chosen for their expertise in governance and organizational transformation. This reflects the mandate to transition the programming and personnel to the NRC.

Furthermore, ISED, through its contribution agreement with SDTC, has put in place measures to strengthen the conflict-of-interest processes and capacity as part of its enhanced oversight, which will continue. Consistent with the responsibilities established in SDTC's enabling statute enacted by Parliament, SDTC is an arm's-length organization that is responsible for the selection and management of projects and the associated agreements. The Govern-

ment of Canada does not have any evidence of willful misconduct or deliberate unethical behaviour in the establishment of contribution agreements between SDTC and the funding recipients.

The government has taken significant steps to ensure transparency and accountability through increased oversight of SDTC's operations, and following the findings on conflict-of-interest, ISED has implemented enhanced standards for disclosure, documentation and management of conflict of interest, as it should. Furthermore, active reporting requirements have been established to track conflict of interest, disclosures and recusals. This includes measures specific to SDTC employees, external consultants, senior management and the board. These measures will increase accountability, ensuring that any potential conflicts are managed effectively.

The government is committed to ensuring that public investments continue to advance the commercialization of clean technologies in support of Canada's climate change priorities. Efforts have begun to ensure a smooth transition of SDTC programming to the National Research Council under new leadership. Work over the past year has rightly involved a lot of attention on fact finding, due diligence, governance and renewal. My hope is that this can now allow us to move forward and have the House ensure ongoing support for clean tech in Canada as we face down the climate crisis.

• (1635)

Other countries are not waiting to accelerate the growth of their clean technology industries. Whether we look at the United States, Europe, Asia or beyond, governments are enhancing their efforts to position their clean technology companies for success. With the announcement this week, the government is putting the focus back on serving Canadian clean technology innovators and positioning homegrown technologies to compete and win in the global marketplace.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague what she thinks of the Auditor General's report.

This report is very clear and straightforward. The people were appointed by the government, by both the former minister and the current one. They knew that these people had a conflict of interest. There was no doubt about it, but they decided to go ahead anyway, especially the former minister, Mr. Bains, who appeared before the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology yesterday.

Business of Supply

Does my colleague think it is okay that these people were appointed even though everyone was well aware they owned companies in this sector and might give themselves some of the money?

Does my colleague accept the report? Does she agree that this matter should be referred to the RCMP?

[English]

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Madam Speaker, the various reviews conducted, including the Auditor General's report, have revealed the serious lapses in the SDTC's governance. This prompted a new delivery approach to the government support for the clean-tech sector. On June 4 of this year, the minister announced a new governance approach that will strengthen oversight and accountability to meet today's expectations of stewardship. As soon as the allegations were brought forward, the government acted swiftly to address the situation. Funds were frozen, and there was new funding for the SDTC. We initiated two separate independent reviews to thoroughly examine the claims and invited the Auditor General to conduct the audit. I do accept the findings, and I certainly stand for transparency, for accountability and for upholding the highest standards of integrity for the House.

• (1640)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague made a good speech and underlined the fact that Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC, was necessary for the development of many technological innovations.

I want to remind her that that is why the Liberals should not have scrapped the foundation by allowing wrongdoing and putting up with it for so long. The government cannot dissociate itself from what happened at SDTC for a very simple reason. Under the law, Minister Bains had the power at the time to request specific audits every year to verify whether the funding agreements and the rules were being followed. During all those years, that Liberal minister never once got up in the morning and decided to request an audit and check for himself.

How is it that this Liberal minister of innovation, science and industry at the time did nothing when he could have done something? How is it that with this government it always takes a report by the Auditor General for it to finally rise in the House and say that something was mismanaged?

[English]

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Madam Speaker, of course we take conflicts of interest very seriously. Recusals should be done, and in light of the findings of the report of the OAG, over the coming months, SDTC programming will transition to the National Research Council of Canada. We believe that the NRC's vast experience in supporting innovative, tech-focused, small and medium-sized enterprises under programs such as the industrial research assistance program will make it the ideal choice to responsibly steward these homegrown clean technology companies. This structure will help rebuild public trust, while increasing accountability and transparency.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech, although it feels as though she had to stick to a script today. She was repeating talking points. Personally, I am very concerned about the Liberals' lack of transparency on this issue. The NDP is worried.

On the subject of transparency, in March she voted in favour of the NDP motion on the crisis and genocide taking place in Gaza. Among other things, the motion called for an embargo on arms sales to Israel and the Netanyahu government while it is bombing Gaza. The Minister of Foreign Affairs has not issued a notice to Canadian arms exporters about their continuing to sell weapons to Netanyahu's genocidal regime.

In the interests of transparency, how can my colleague explain her government's inaction when she voted for this motion?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would like to remind the hon. member that we are considering an opposition motion. I regret to tell him that his question has very little to do with that. However, I will give the parliamentary secretary a chance to answer, if she so wishes.

[English]

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Madam Speaker, I welcome the question from my hon. colleague. First and foremost, it is a very complicated issue, so I am being careful with my words today, absolutely.

With respect to my support for Gazans and for citizens facing atrocities in the Middle East, I have signed a letter to support an arms embargo. Therefore, I support ongoing efforts to ensure that this tragedy comes to an end.

[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 Shepard, Housing; the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Carbon Pricing; the hon. member for Spadina—Fort York, Finance.

[English]

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to the motion. On Tuesday, the government announced that it would be transferring Sustainable Development Technology Canada's programming to be based within the National Research Council of Canada. I will speak more about this in a minute. However, I would first like to highlight the events and the independent reviews that have led us to this decision.

Business of Supply

The government expects organizations that receive public funds to be held to the highest standards. When allegations of mismanagement at SDTC first came to light, the government took immediate action to undertake the proper due diligence to understand the facts. These were serious allegations, and they warranted a careful assessment of all the evidence. It is only with the facts that we can take the appropriate steps to return to the business of supporting our Canadian clean technology sector.

As the first step, the government engaged an impartial third party, Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton, or RCGT, to undertake a fact-finding exercise. This focused on organizational policies, procedures, program governance and project approval processes. At its conclusion, the fact-finding exercise did not reveal any clear evidence of wrongdoing or misconduct at SDTC. However, RCGT did make a number of observations that showed that SDTC was not in full compliance with the terms and the conditions of its contribution agreements. These findings warranted a deeper examination, and again, the government took action. Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, ISED, worked collaboratively with the Office of the Auditor General in support of a full audit.

Just as the government has high standards for the use of public funds, it also expects employees to benefit from a healthy and a respectful work environment. Given this, in addition to the RCGT fact-finding exercise, the government took action to address allegations that related to human resources practices. ISED requested the Department of Justice to appoint a law firm, McCarthy Tétrault, to undertake a fact-finding review of alleged breaches of the labour and employment practices and the policies at SDTC. Current and former employees were permitted to speak freely to the law firm without violating any applicable settlement agreements or non-disclosure agreements. The fact-finding review, which is publicly available, concluded that SDTC's leadership did not engage in the type of repetitive, vexatious or major incident conduct that would constitute harassment, bullying or workplace violence under the applicable standards.

Turning now to the Auditor General's audit, as mentioned, the government welcomed the Auditor General's decision to undertake the audit and fully co-operated with the auditors. Evidence collected from all of these independent reviews have revealed lapses in SDTC's governance model. We are taking definitive action anchored in facts, as established by independent parties, most notably the Auditor General. To be clear, the Auditor General did not report evidence or suspicion of criminal behaviour. The government is confident in the rigour and the expertise the Auditor General and her office brought to this issue, and we accept her findings and recommendations.

Measures have been established for stronger governance and oversight at SDTC. These measures, which will remain in place, ensure increased transparency and accountability. With the changes in leadership, the government will maintain that confidence as the programming transitions into the next phase. While SDTC has been instrumental in developing a successful clean technology sector in Canada over the years, a new delivery approach to support this vital sector of our economy is now needed. That is why the government took decisive action by announcing a new delivery approach that includes transitioning SDTC and its employees to the NRC.

In addition to its proven track record of providing tailored support to Canada's innovative small and medium-sized businesses, the NRC is a Government of Canada organization, and it is subject to rigorous and stringent oversight of its personnel and finances. This move will help rebuild the public trust while increasing accountability and transparency in program delivery.

● (1645)

The decision to transfer the programming is not just about sound government, it is about people and the clean-technology industry. Canada's clean-technology sector is world-renowned for developing innovative, clean-technology solutions.

In 2024, there were 13 Canadian companies named to the Global Cleantech 100 list. This is a clear testament to Canada's innovative ecosystem and the clean-technology sector's ability to compete against leading innovative countries, such as the United States and Germany.

The Government of Canada also recognizes the importance of retaining subject matter experts. These employees have a wealth of experience and knowledge, and have been integral in helping Canada's clean-tech companies move from seed to start-up to scale-up. Their transition to the NRC will help ensure Canada's clean-tech companies will be at the forefront of efforts to address climate change, continuing much-needed federal support for businesses to innovate, grow and create well-paying sustainable jobs. This support will continue. SDTC is resuming funding for all new eligible projects in a sector vital to our country's economy and clean-tech growth.

In line with the Auditor General's findings, ISED will enhance the oversight and monitoring of funding through this transitional period. We know that clean-tech companies have felt the impacts of the funding pause as the government took the time it needed to uncover the evidence and to put in place a robust governance solution.

Business of Supply

We have done what we set out to do, and we thank the clean-tech sector for its resilience and patience as we shaped a new way forward. The government has done its due diligence, and neither the OAG nor any other independent review found any evidence of fraudulent or criminal activities by an officer, director, member or employee of SDTC. While some of these investigations concluded there were lapses in governance, including their management of conflict of interest, these conclusions did not identify fraud or criminal activity.

We are focused on restoring governance at SDTC and getting back to the business of supporting our Canadian innovators. I encourage all members to support the government's actions to advance homegrown clean-tech solutions and achieve Canada's climate goals.

• (1650)

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member talked about some lapses in conflict of interest management. That is a pretty gentle way to describe what happened.

There was gross mismanagement of funds. We know that whistle-blowers have been raising serious questions for years about how these public funds were managed. Their complaints were never taken seriously. It was not until this became public that the government chose to act.

Could the member explain to me why it has taken the government so long to take action on something that it has known about for years?

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments, observations and questions from my colleague.

I do not have a chronology in front of me, but I do know that when it was appropriate, the government did take action. It made sure that it took thorough action. It did not just react to parts of the story. The government did a very thorough analysis and responded appropriately.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Madam Speaker, standing here in the House of Commons is important on behalf of all Canadians.

Canadians really want to know where the \$123 million in the green slush fund is. Will the NDP-Liberal government commit to handing over the documents and allowing the investigation to go forward with the RCMP?

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: Madam Speaker, the government has taken the appropriate steps to make sure that the organization is transparent and accountable, that there is a review, as appropriate, for all of the undertakings within the organization, and that the Canadian dollars invested in these corporations have, as we have shown earlier, created some very terrific responses as far as innovation in the clean-technology sector goes.

In large measure, our funds were well invested and produced great results and jobs for the Canadian people.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Auditor General's findings are devastating and call for a comprehen-

sive review. This story cannot be allowed to end with the end of SDTC's operations. It is imperative that all documents are preserved to help determine what really happened.

Does my hon. colleague agree?

[*English*]

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: Madam Speaker, the government will do what is required to do and will produce what is required to produce.

• (1655)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have listened to the member speak, and the member before him, who laid out very clearly in terms of what the investigation revealed, which is that no criminal activity occurred, that they are confident the investigation was thoroughly completed and that, at this point, they have made various recommendations as to how to proceed moving forward, despite the fact that our colleagues across the way just seem unwilling to accept this.

Would the member comment on the thoroughness of the investigation and perhaps remind everybody of what he was saying during his speech?

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: Madam Speaker, there were three independent reviews. All of the recommendations of those reviews were undertaken.

It is interesting, and I see some of my colleagues who were present at the INDU committee last night, where we did talk to people from the industry, and they said that we need to be very careful that we do not throw the baby out with the bathwater. Again, I remind members that 13 of our Canadian innovators were on the top 100 world, global and innovators awards list. So, we are doing some good things. Let us not throw the baby out with the bathwater.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, is this member telling me that there are 90 cases of conflict of interest, not reported, \$123 million missing, and he is like, "It's okay. It's been done well"? Is that literally what his speech is about?

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: Madam Speaker, I indicated what actions the government has taken and what actions the government will undertake to make sure that we strengthen the governance model, transparency and accountability. I am focused on going forward, of course. This is an important industry for our country. It creates jobs.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to stand in this place today to speak to the Conservative opposition day motion introduced in the House, which calls for the following:

That the House order the government, Sustainable Development Technology Canada (SDTC) and the Auditor General of Canada each to deposit with the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel, within 14 days [although I understand an amendment has been made] of the adoption of this order, the following documents, created or dated since January 1, 2017, which are in its or her possession, custody or control:

Business of Supply

The motion goes on to detail the nature of the documents and the process for obtaining them and ultimately the submission of these documents to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for “its independent determination of whether to investigate potential offences under the Criminal Code or any other act of Parliament.”

Before I go any further, I will note I am splitting my time with my colleague, the MP for St. Albert—Edmonton.

Earlier this week, the Auditor General of Canada tabled three damning reports in the House of Commons, including “Report 6—Sustainable Development Technology Canada.” Under the scandal-ridden Liberal government, the SDTC has become plagued by conflicts of interest as the corrupt nature of the government has taken hold of this organization.

Let us take a look at the “At a Glance” page of her report, which reads, “Overall, we found significant lapses in Sustainable Development Technology Canada’s governance and stewardship of public funds.” As well, “Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada did not sufficiently monitor the compliance with the contribution agreements between the foundation and the Government of Canada.”

The Auditor General found that SDTC had awarded funding to projects that were ineligible, even though “they did not meet key requirements” and where conflicts of interest existed. In total, 123 million dollars’ worth of contracts were found to have been given inappropriately, with \$59 million being given to projects that never should have been awarded any money at all.

On top of this, the Auditor General discovered that conflicts of interest were connected to approval decisions. Because of this, nearly \$76 million of funding was awarded to projects where there was a connection to the Liberal friends appointed to roles within SDTC, while \$12 million of funding was given to projects that were both ineligible and had a conflict of interest.

In fact, the Auditor General discovered that long-established conflict of interest policies were not followed in 90 cases. That must be a record for a single organization managing hundreds of millions of dollars. In one instance, the Prime Minister’s hand-picked SDTC chair siphoned off \$217,000 to her own company.

At a time when Canadians are struggling to pay their mortgages, put gas in their vehicles to go to work or feed their families, the Liberal government is doing what Liberals do best, which is wasting taxpayers’ dollars. They make a big show of creating the appearance of doing something while blatantly disregarding the policies and rules in order to funnel money into the pockets of Liberal insiders.

The Auditor General made it clear the blame for this scandal lies directly at the feet of the Prime Minister’s industry minister, who did not sufficiently monitor the contracts that were being awarded to Liberal insiders. The minister utterly failed in his duty to protect the Canadian taxpayer.

The Auditor General also released a damning report into the taxpayer-funded contracts that the Prime Minister awarded to his well-connected friends at McKinsey. The AG discovered that over the past few years, McKinsey has been awarded almost \$200 million in

contracts and that 90% of the contracts awarded to McKinsey were given without following the appropriate guidelines. Are we seeing a pattern here? In many cases, it was unclear what the purpose of the contract was or if the desired outcome was even achieved.

• (1700)

It gets better, or should I say, it gets worse? In one case, the Canada Border Services Agency saw that McKinsey did not qualify for a contract. Can members guess what it did? It revised the statement of work so that McKinsey could qualify. That is not all. The Liberal government often sole-sourced these contracts directly to McKinsey and never even bothered to explain why a non-competitive process was justified. Can members imagine that? This is a multinational, billion-dollar company. This is absolutely concerning.

About 70% of all contracts awarded to McKinsey were non-competitive. Worse still, in 13 out of 17, or 77%, of the contracts involving sensitive data given to McKinsey, the Liberal government allowed McKinsey to operate without the necessary security clearances.

What is going on here? Why did the government go to such great lengths to break the rules? At that time, McKinsey was led by Dominic Barton. That might explain it. He was a close friend and adviser of the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister. I guess it should come as no surprise that the Liberals gave McKinsey hundreds of millions of dollars.

Barton was the key figure in the Liberals’ Advisory Council on Economic Growth and their Indo-Pacific Advisory Committee. It was also Barton’s idea to create the failed, scandal-plagued Canada Infrastructure Bank. It was Barton and McKinsey that had to pay nearly \$600 million in damages for helping create the opioid crisis. Despite this, the Prime Minister appointed Barton as Canada’s ambassador to China.

We cannot forget arrive scam and the damning Auditor General’s report that came out in February of this year. It is a report that resulted from a motion put forward by Conservatives that called on the Auditor General to conduct a performance audit, including the payments, contracts and subcontracts for all aspects of the Arrive-CAN app, and to prioritize this investigation. What did the Auditor General find? Members guessed it. She found a glaring disregard for management practices and an inability to assess the true cost of this app given the lack of information available to do a proper audit. It is an app that should have cost Canadians \$80,000, but it ballooned to \$60 million, and probably more.

Business of Supply

The outrageous spending habits of the government have put the futures of Canadians at risk. It has created a cost of living crisis, making it difficult for Canadians to put food on the table and a roof over their heads. It has failed to deliver for Canadians on every level. A record two million Canadians are visiting food banks in a single month. Housing costs have doubled. Mortgages have doubled. Over 50% of Canadians are \$200, or less, away from going broke, yet the government continues to refuse to take any responsibility for its failed nine years of governance.

After nine years of the Prime Minister, life has never been more difficult for Canadians. For well-connected Liberal friends, life has never been so good. The Prime Minister turned Sustainable Development Technology Canada into a slush fund for Liberal insiders. This was made clear through a secret recording of a senior civil servant who slammed the outright incompetence of the Liberal government, calling the SDTC's actions "a sponsorship-scandal level kind of giveaway."

The Prime Minister is not worth the cost and is not worth the corruption. It is incumbent on the House to shine light on the failures of the government and its corruption, and to deliver answers for Canadians. That is why I hope all members in the House will vote in favour of this motion, which would deliver more transparency for Canadians.

When we get elected, common-sense Conservatives would end the corruption and fix the budget by firing the high-priced consultants.

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his very powerful speech.

The Bloc Québécois was in favour of the principle of the motion, but we had concerns about its wording. However, with the amendment that the Conservative Party proposed a few moments ago, it would be entirely appropriate for us to lend our support. I am confident that the House will be able to adopt this important motion. We need to get to the bottom of this.

We had concerns about the 14-day deadline for the production of documents. Just having the documents translated requires more time. Also, we were uncomfortable with Parliament making a recommendation to the RCMP. In our view, it is not up to politicians to recommend to the police that they investigate or suggest to them that offences have been committed. They are truly independent. However, thanks to the amendment that has been proposed, we now support this important motion.

I would like to hear my colleague's comments on the importance of getting to the bottom of this issue.

[*English*]

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments made by my hon. colleague. We look forward to the vote coming to this place and to having the support of the Bloc. I am glad that we were able to address their concerns.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. I would simply like to remind her that the first government to be found in contempt of Parliament in the history of Canadian politics was Stephen Harper's government when it refused to provide members with budget details on law and order bills.

Today, it is all well and good to talk about transparency and accountability, but I would like to remind the House of that black mark on the record of the Conservative Party, which was found guilty by Parliament at the time.

The NDP agrees that transparency is important, and we have doubts about the Liberals' willingness to be transparent. I would like to know what measures my colleague would put in place to ensure that members of the House and the public, the people who we represent, get all of the necessary information.

[*English*]

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, I have to say that it is always rich to hear the NDP pretend to be an opposition party when it is more critical of other opposition parties than it is of the scandal-ridden government. The NDP leader and this member have sold out their party for a pension. The polling reflects how Canadians feel about his decision.

Today, that member has a chance to vote in favour of a motion that would actually hold the government to account. We would like to see the member support this motion to get to the bottom of this issue and provide more transparency to Canadians. The only question is if he will do it.

• (1710)

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I am sure my hon. colleague did not mean to cast this aspersion, but the phrase she used about selling out for a pension would suggest that one of her colleagues in this place was trading their political beliefs or ideas for money. I am sure she would not want that aspersion to be cast. I think it is unparliamentary, and I would ask her to retract it.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That may be subject to debate, and I do not think it is necessarily a point of order. I will leave it at that.

Continuing with questions and comments, the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester has the floor.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Madam Speaker, I really appreciate my learned colleague's comments here. It would appear to me that this is an ongoing problem with a government that is not careful with other people's money, everybody's money, in this entire country. I wish we were here debating something that was confined to the green slush fund. This clearly is not.

I wonder if my hon. colleague would comment a bit on the lack of prudence with others' money that the government continues to portray to Canadians.

Business of Supply

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, the fact is that numerous investigations have taken place into the actions of the government and the departments that serve it, and it is not only STDC, but also others, as I mentioned in my remarks. Some of those investigations are still under way, and some of those investigations are being undertaken by the RCMP.

The bottom line here is that, to date, all of the reports that have been tabled have been damning to the government when it comes to how it is spending taxpayers' money and what it is allowing to continue, which is glaring mismanagement, complete disregard for the rules, conflicts of interest and no value for money.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak in support of our Conservative motion that calls on the Liberals to end their cover-up and produce for the House, as well as turn over to the RCMP, all documents relating to corruption and self-dealing with respect to the Liberals' billion-dollar green slush fund, otherwise known as Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC.

The staggering level of corruption, conflicts and self-dealing was revealed in the Auditor General's report that was tabled in the House earlier this week. It is a direct result of a culture of corruption embedded in the rotten Liberal government. That is demonstrated by the fact that, before the Liberals took office, under the previous Harper Conservative government, SDTC was functioning well. That is evidenced by a 2017 report of the Auditor General that went back into the Harper era and gave SDTC a clean bill of health.

The ethical spiral downward at SDTC occurred exclusively under the watch of the Liberals, and more specifically, under the former minister of industry, Navdeep Bains, and the current minister of industry. To put a timeline on when that began, I would submit it happened when Navdeep Bains, the Prime Minister's good buddy, decided, for purely political reasons, to fire the Harper-appointed chair of SDTC, who had presided over it when it received a clean bill of health from the Auditor General, and replace that chair with Ms. Annette Verschuren.

There was a major problem with the appointment of Verschuren because she had a major conflict of interest, namely that her company was receiving money from SDTC. That is a major conflict of interest that Navdeep Bains was warned about multiple times, including by Annette Verschuren herself, who, to her credit, said that she had a conflict of interest. Navdeep Bains did not care and, conflicts of interest be damned, he appointed Annette Verschuren as chair. The culture within any organization begins at the top, and the culture that was set by Navdeep Bains at SDTC was a culture where conflicts of interest did not matter.

Looking back at what has transpired since that time, and the decisions that Navdeep Bains made, both with respect to the appointment of Verschuren, as well as several other directors, it is now evident to me that Navdeep Bains wanted to turn SDTC into a slush fund where Liberal insiders could rig the system to line their own pockets by ripping off taxpayers. That is precisely what has happened at SDTC, and Navdeep Bains is the architect of that.

For years, Navdeep Bains, as the former industry minister, and the current minister turned a blind eye to all kinds of conflicts of interest, and tens of millions of dollars of taxpayer money was be-

ing funnelled improperly out the door at SDTC. The only time the minister pretended to take some interest in the corruption at SDTC was when a whistle-blower sounded the alarm over nearly \$40 million in so-called COVID relief payments being approved by the board. The Auditor General, in her report, determined that those COVID relief payments contravened the contribution agreement with the Department of Industry, and that there were 66 cases of conflicts of interest in which board members voted to approve funds that were funnelled into companies that they had an interest in.

• (1715)

I have to note that Annette Verschuren, the chair, actually moved both motions to funnel monies into her own companies from SDTC. The rot and corruption was blatant. They were not even trying to hide it. However, it gets a lot worse than the COVID relief payments, because the Auditor General found 186 cases of conflicts of interest involving board members and consultants. In 90 cases, board members voted to approve funds that were funnelled into companies they had an interest in and benefited from, and they did not even so much as declare a conflict. Some \$76 million went into those companies, voted for by board members at SDTC.

It is not just \$76 million, and I should not say "just" \$76 million. Tens of millions of taxpayers' money was also funnelled into companies of SDTC board members while those members served on the board. I note, for instance, that the Minister of Environment's good friend and former colleague Andrée-Lise Méthot, at the time as she served on the board, benefited to the tune of \$42.5 million in SDTC funds, which went into her companies. Then there are Guy Ouimet, another board member, whose companies received \$4 million in funding from SDTC, and Liberal insider and former Liberal staffer Stephen Kukucha, whose companies received \$25 million from SDTC when he served on the board.

Business of Supply

This speaks not only to major and serious conflicts of interest, but to the fact that members of the board broke the law. They broke the Conflict of Interest Act. Board members are public office holders. They are bound by the Conflict of Interest Act and the Canada Foundation for Sustainable Development Technology Act, which the Auditor General determined. The Canada Foundation for Sustainable Development Technology Act very expressly, in subsection 12(2), provides that board members shall not profit or benefit from decisions of the board, and they profited handsomely.

In addition to that, \$59 million improperly went out the door to projects that contravened the contribution agreement with the Department of Industry, and that is just scratching the surface because those are only the projects that the Auditor General audited. The Auditor General concluded that there were likely many more projects to which money went out the door improperly. Through it all, an assistant deputy minister sat in on each and every board meeting in which these decisions were made, when board members had conflicts of interest and when money went out the door in contravention of the contribution agreements, and former minister Bains and the current minister did nothing. The current minister turned a blind eye until he was caught.

One current senior industry official said that things are so bad at SDTC, he compared them to “a sponsorship-scandal level kind of giveaway”. Based on what we know from the Auditor General's report, which likely just scratches the surface of the corruption and self-dealing at SDTC, it looks to be a lot worse than the sponsorship scandal. We are talking about potentially hundreds of millions of dollars that were improperly funnelled out the door from which board members profited.

In closing, let me simply say this is why it is time for the Liberals to end the cover-up. It is time to turn over the documents to the RCMP. It is time to call in the Mounties.

• (1720)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to hear my colleague's take on something.

As I said earlier today, we have before us a government that keeps piling up scandals in a rather spectacular and surreal way. The Liberals never have to account for the previous scandal because it gets buried by a new scandal in the news.

Does this situation not help to dispel the suspicions that we have about some members of the House of Commons being involved in foreign interference, for example? Does this not hamper the government's management of international relations files?

I would like my colleague to share his overall understanding of that.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, this week alone we had three Auditor General's reports, all of which are an indictment of the management by the government. Frankly, what they illustrate is a culture of corruption.

We have a government that has been in office for nine years, and there has been a consistent pattern of mismanagement, entitlement,

self-dealing, conflict and corruption. As bad as SDTC is, it is only one example of the corruption that we have seen from the Liberals. It is why Canadians are so hungry to see the Prime Minister call an election so that Canadians can rid themselves of this corrupt government.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, as this story has been unfolding, up to and including the debate today, we have seen the Liberals claim they dealt with the problem as soon as they became aware of it. We know that this is a terrible mistruth.

We know that former minister Navdeep Bains was warned about the board appointment, which he went ahead and made anyway. We also know that senior staff were present when these votes and the self-dealing took place.

Could the member debunk the government's defence and absurd claim that it dealt with this in an expeditious fashion?

• (1725)

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, the government turned a blind eye to corruption at SDTC until a whistle-blower came forward and said there were real problems with the COVID relief payments. The Auditor General concluded that there were 66 conflicts and that the contribution agreement was violated. The notion that the Liberals got ahead of this is absolutely false. The assistant deputy minister was there when all of these conflicts occurred and all of these improper expenditures were approved by the board.

They also claimed that they are not to blame because it is an arm's-length foundation. Well, I would suggest they read the Auditor General's report, which found that they completely failed to provide appropriate oversight with respect to expenditures and monitoring conflicts of interest.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member spoke quite a bit about the ongoing corruption. We know that with this particular fund, there was a conflict of interest, and the government seems to lack an ethical compass. It seems like so many of these different departments are not following processes and procedures and have conflicts of interest, with Liberal friends getting ahead. We can go back to the We Charity scandal and the arrive scam. There is just so much.

Can the member speak to the lack of governance, management and ethical compass?

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, I think the Auditor General's report with respect to SDTC showcases all that is wrong with the government. We had a situation where the former minister knew that the person he was appointing as chair was in a conflict of interest and appointed her anyway. Then we had ministers who turned a blind eye to the self-dealing and corruption that occurred repeatedly throughout—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to resume debate.

The hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock has two minutes.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years, the Liberal-NDP government has demonstrated a pattern of corruption. Just this week, the Auditor General confirmed widespread Liberal corruption in her shocking report on the billion-dollar green slush fund at Sustainable Development Technology Canada. Specifically, the Auditor General found that SDTC did not follow conflict of interest policies in not one, not 20, not 50, but 90 cases.

The government spent nearly \$76 million on projects connected to Liberal insiders and their friends appointed to run the slush fund. It also spent \$12 million on projects that were both in a conflict of interest and ineligible for funding. In one instance, the Prime Minister's hand-picked slush fund chair siphoned off \$217,000 to her own company. Its pattern of disregard and disdain for the Canadian taxpayer is outrageous.

The Liberals would like Canadians to believe that this is arm's length and has nothing to do with them, which is patently false. Our motion would order the Auditor General to turn over all documentation related to the green slush fund scandal to the RCMP. The only question now is whether the NDP will vote to protect its political master from that investigation or follow the Conservatives' lead to ensure that this corruption is fully investigated.

The AG has the evidence that the RCMP needs to investigate. It is time to do the right thing. Canadians deserve to know the truth.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It being 5:30 p.m., pursuant to order made Wednesday, February 28, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

• (1730)

[*Translation*]

The question is on the amendment.

[*English*]

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

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, we request a recorded division.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the recorded division stands de-

Private Members' Business

ferred until Monday, June 10, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

NATIONAL STRATEGY ON BRAIN INJURIES ACT

The House resumed from May 1 consideration of the motion that Bill C-277, An Act to establish a national strategy on brain injuries, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to pick up where I left off when we were last debating Bill C-277, introduced to the House by the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

Specifically, this bill is about bringing forward a very interesting proposal as it relates to setting up a national framework for dealing with brain injuries. I would note that I will be supporting this bill. It is very timely, and it is important that we bring this forward.

Each year, over 20,000 people are hospitalized for traumatic brain injuries, caused by something from outside of the body, including concussions. Traumatic brain injuries represent between 8% and 10% of all brain injury hospitalizations. The leading causes of traumatic brain injury hospitalizations include falls among the elderly and motor vehicle collisions among young people ages 15 to 19 and those over 65 years of age.

Work is being undertaken across governments, with stakeholders and health care professionals, to prevent, detect, treat and raise awareness for traumatic brain injuries.

I would also add that another aspect of this is intimate partner violence, and in particular gender-based violence. A pervasive form of gender-based violence can result in brain injuries. Women account for the vast majority of people who experience intimate partner violence. People experiencing brain injury and family violence concurrently can face unique barriers in treatment and support services, which may prolong cycles of violence and put survivors at risk of repeat brain injury and potential disability.

Private Members' Business

All this being said, I would like to talk very briefly about what the federal government has done. In terms of federal action, the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, and Health Canada currently support initiatives related to brain health, brain injury prevention, and surveillance and research, such as providing funding to support brain health innovation, including technology that evaluates cognitive brain health across diverse conditions.

They provide funding to support women survivors of gender-based violence experiencing traumatic brain injuries, as well as initiatives that build the service provider capacity. They are also conducting surveillance and research on a broad spectrum of traumatic brain injuries among various populations, including populations that are underserved, and supporting academic research and knowledge mobilization through various government agencies to improve prevention, diagnosis and treatment of traumatic brain injury.

All of that being said, in terms of what the government has currently been focusing on, Bill C-277 specifically calls on the Minister of Health, in consultation with representatives from other levels of government responsible for health, indigenous groups and relevant stakeholders, to develop a national strategy to support and improve brain injury awareness, prevention and treatment, as well as the rehabilitation and recovery of persons living with a brain injury. It also sets out specific requirements for reporting to Parliament. The resulting strategy would identify high-level guiding principles to foster a national coordinated approach to brain injuries for people living in Canada.

Notwithstanding the fact that the federal government is already doing a lot in this field of research, this field of study, this field of health care, what is being proposed by my NDP colleague specifically is to bring this all together. We might have various agencies and different levels of government working on strategies for how to help and assist people with brain injuries, but what we are lacking is what he is proposing, which is to bring that together holistically so that everybody is working off the same page, so to speak.

• (1735)

I do think this is really important because, unlike so many other challenges people have, brain injuries are not always widely understood. With other injuries or diseases people can be affected by, quite often we can see something physical and we are able to associate that with something going on in somebody's life or a challenge they are having. With brain injuries or concussions, for example, it is not the same. They are not that easily identifiable.

I would even argue that there is some public education in all of this that perhaps the strategy could help develop. It could become part of informing and educating people on what traumatic brain injuries are all about and how, as a society, we can help elevate conversations around them so people can be properly supported.

Once again, I thank the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford for bringing forward this really important piece of legislation. I look forward to concluding today's debate on it and then getting to a point where we can have a vote on it.

• (1740)

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to rise on behalf of the residents of Kelowna—Lake Country. Briefly, just before I start my speech, I want to honour and remember the sacrifices the Canadian military heroes made as we commemorate the 80th anniversary of D-Day and the Battle of Normandy.

Today I rise to speak to Bill C-277, an act to establish a national strategy on brain injuries. Brain injury is an important issue I have heard about from residents in my community, as well as from meeting with individuals here in Ottawa as part of my role as shadow minister for disability inclusion. It is a positive step to see legislation brought forward to develop a national strategy on brain injuries for those living with brain injuries, as well as for those who support them. I am sure this is an issue that all of us in this place care about.

As such, this is something that I am glad to have the opportunity to speak to and lend support to. I also want to thank my Conservative colleagues, especially the member for Regina—Lewvan, who spoke in support of the bill previously and specifically mentioned how 5,500 women who are suffering injuries to the brain are, shockingly, suffering these injuries as a result of domestic violence. This is an eye-opening statistic that we legislators must not shy away from addressing.

Brain injuries having a national strategy is an issue that requires our attention for good reason. There are many who are affected by brain injuries across Canada. I am sure many of us know someone in our personal lives who has suffered a brain injury and who requires our support. Many of us likely have friends or family members who have been in an accident, have had a sports injury or health issue, or have been the victim of violence that has caused a brain injury. Many of us likely have also had to, or know someone who has had to, care for an individual suffering from a brain injury. The role caregivers play, who are most often a close family member, is a significant one, and one that warrants our gratitude, admiration and respect.

In Kelowna—Lake Country, just like across Canada, many are affected by brain injuries, both directly and indirectly through people they know. My community of Kelowna—Lake Country, and in fact our region, is fortunate to have many leaders who care deeply about the issue. Braintrust Canada organized bringing to Kelowna community leaders, public health officials and brain injury specialists for the West Coast Brain Injury Conference. It is there that experts will discuss brain injuries in the context of health, governance and societal fairness and inclusion.

Private Members' Business

Someone suffering from a brain injury can have it affect every part of their life. A brain injury can cause substantial disruption to a person's independence, abilities and work life. It can cause significant issues in interpersonal relationships with family, friends, co-workers or caregivers. Oftentimes, because it is an injury that is not always visible externally, brain injuries can go unrecognized. They can be episodic. This exacts a heavy toll on those suffering and their families, as it is often not given the same recognition as other, more outwardly visible, conditions.

A brain injury can affect many parts of a person's health. It can affect behaviour and how someone acts and makes decisions. It can affect cognition and how a person learns, processes and remembers. It can affect emotions and can lead to a number of related mental health challenges. Lastly, it can affect one's physical health and can cause mobility challenges and potentially physical conditions such as headaches, fatigue, pain and sensory problems.

Be it a traumatic brain injury caused by sports or a vehicle accident or violence, or a non-traumatic brain injury caused by a stroke, overdose or another reason, one thing is clear: It is a very serious injury that has long-lasting consequences and effects on a person's life.

Brain Injury Canada has determined that close to 4% of the population lives with a brain injury. That equates to a staggering 1.5 million Canadians who live with a brain injury, with 165,000 Canadians suffering a new brain injury every year. It is untenable not to have a strategy in place to support all those affected by these injuries. We also know that those living with a brain injury can face additional societal challenges.

● (1745)

According to Brain Injury Canada, those with a brain injury have an increased risk of homelessness because of many factors, including job loss and the lack of accessible treatment and supports. Those suffering from a traumatic brain injury can also have greater rates of incarceration.

Information provided by BrainTrust Canada shows that an individual has a significantly greater chance of developing a diagnosable mental illness after sustaining an acquired brain injury. As well, about half of people with traumatic brain injury are affected by depression within the first year after injury; nearly two-thirds are affected within seven years.

Traumatic brain injury is reported to increase the risk of post-traumatic stress symptoms. A Canadian study found that adults with concussion committed suicide at three times the population norm. Fifty per cent of patients with a concussion experience personality change, irritability, anxiety and depression after concussion.

Something that is especially worrying is the convergence between substance use and brain injuries. I am referring to overdosing leading to brain injury. This really must be talked about more. The opioid epidemic has greatly worsened under the NDP-Liberal government. While not always recognized in this regard, it is greatly contributing to brain injuries. Not all overdoses, thankfully, lead to death. However, opioid overdose can cause hypoxic brain injury, a very serious type of brain injury caused by a lack of oxygen to the

brain. Between January 2016 and June 2020, Canada saw over 21,000 opioid-related poisonings in hospitals that resulted in hypoxic brain injury. The huge rise of these injuries warrants an immediate strategy to address their occurrences and to help with treatment. In addition to contributing to this, some people with a brain injury find themselves self-medicating after their injury as well. Many have turned to substance abuse to cope with their injury. It has been reported that someone with a brain injury is four times as likely to develop addiction issues. It becomes a vicious cycle. This is tragic.

Through the development of a national strategy on brain injuries, which Bill C-277 aims to create, the issue of overdoses in the context of brain injuries can be better addressed. This issue must be part of the strategy. We all know well that the Prime Minister has done too little to address the toxic overdose crisis. It is hoped that the bill will provide another avenue to address the shortcomings of the Liberal government in terms of the substance abuse crisis that has been impacting our communities so terribly. Members of Brain Injury Canada, who are the leading experts on brain injuries and the impact these injuries have on Canadians, have given their support to the bill and its intentions. This collaboration will have to remain ongoing, to best ensure that those suffering from brain injuries are at the table for discussions.

Conservatives hope that, with their support of the bill, a strategy will soon be in place that adequately supports Canadians who sustain brain injuries. Even though the administration and operation of health care is provincial, there can certainly be federal leadership on a national strategy.

I hope the Liberal government will take this seriously. The Liberals have a track record of photo ops on announced strategies and frameworks, which then take years to make. They do a lot of plans for plans, which lead to reports for reports, with little results-oriented actions or analysis. People with brain injuries need our attention.

My Conservative colleagues and I support this issue being elevated here.

Private Members' Business

[Translation]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the perfect is the enemy of the good. This saying may well apply to the current situation and to Bill C-277, an act to establish a national strategy on brain injuries, which I have the opportunity to talk to members of the House about today. I would like to thank my colleague for his hard work to bring this proposal before us today. Unfortunately, as with all previous national strategies, it is nothing but smoke and mirrors to make people believe that the government is doing something for them. At the end of the day, it is like putting a band-aid on a wooden leg. It serves no purpose.

We have talked about national strategies for diabetes, firefighting cancers and eye health; now we are talking about a brain injury strategy. The Bloc Québécois wants to make it clear that it is uncomfortable with these national strategies. For one thing, they tend to disregard the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces. One thing the bill would do is identify the training, education and guidance needs of health care and other professionals related to brain injury prevention and treatment and the rehabilitation and recovery of persons living with a brain injury. Yes, it is well intentioned.

Despite my colleague's goodwill, I repeat that professional associations and the training of health professionals are not under federal jurisdiction. Brain injuries in particular are treated by hospitals, which are under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. Therefore, the federal government cannot identify anything, but it can certainly help identify needs and participate in the collective effort to address the concussion epidemic.

The fact is that Quebec has developed its own organizational model to address brain injuries, known as the trauma care continuum. It has been around since 1987, which is nothing to sneeze at. We already have 37 years of expertise in this area. In addition, Quebec has its action plan for the prevention and management of concussions in sports and recreational activities.

The bill also endeavours to promote awareness and education with particular emphasis on improving public understanding and protecting the rights of persons living with a brain injury. For an awareness campaign to be effective, it must be adapted to its context. Given that the Quebec government provides the services and resources, it is in the best position to run those campaigns. In fact, there are many websites and brochures available to the public that are designed to prevent or recognize the symptoms of brain injuries.

Our second concern with this bill is that, rather than offering concrete solutions to help people who are truly suffering, it serves more as a communication tool. In fact, the only thing it proposes is to have public servants produce a report the following year, with recommendations that are often unenforceable. If this bill had more teeth, it would propose measures that would have an immediate impact rather than a document that proposes measures after the fact.

Finally, the Bloc Québécois believes that the bill ignores all the work that Quebec, the provinces, health professionals, researchers, organizations and so many others are doing on brain injury. Its objective is to make the federal government the puppet master, when Quebec has already had its own expertise for more than 30 years, as

well as a unique approach to treating traumatic injuries, which include brain injuries. If the member wants to win the support of all parties for his bill, as he said he did, we urge him to recognize the efforts made by health care networks to help fight the effects of brain injury. We suggest that he avoid using his leader's sanctimonious and paternalistic tone, as he did on pharmacare, because Quebec did not wait for a national strategy to take action on that front.

It is clear that this bill does nothing for people with brain injuries and serves only to ease our consciences. Concrete action is sorely lacking. That said, the Bloc Québécois will still vote in favour of the bill, provided that the federal government co-operates with Quebec and the provinces and does not impose another centralizing program that encroaches on our autonomy and sweeps aside our hard-earned expertise. It is good to set the record straight and force the federal government to fulfill its obligations. It has a duty to ensure that brain injuries are prevented wherever it can, both as an employer and as a contributor to a number of sports organizations and events.

• (1750)

It is also the federal government's duty, through the three research councils, to fund scientific research. It is important to remember that, because it is so critical to support those who work in the universities and hospitals on treating brain injury, and the rehabilitation and recovery of individuals living with a brain injury and many others.

As vice-chair of the Standing Committee on Science and Research, I can only encourage the government to increase and support on an ongoing basis its participation in funding research. For 20 years it has under-funded scientific research compared to the other G7 countries and we are now suffering the consequences.

Canada is the only G7 country that is seeing a decline in the retention of researchers because they are drawn to other countries where science is better supported financially and better conditions are offered. I also want to remind the House that Canada is the only G7 country that was unable to produce its own COVID-19 vaccine. These are two tangible examples that demonstrate that this chronic under-funding has adverse effects.

If the federal government wants to use tax tools to help families deal with additional costs or loss of income resulting from brain injuries, the Bloc Québécois will encourage it.

In short, this and future governments can take up many non-invasive and non-intrusive responsibilities without descending once again into interference.

To sum up, the Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of this bill. However, it urges the federal government to take a cautious approach to any future recommendations made by officials examining this matter.

As long as the federal government is willing to collaborate, rather than set conditions, we will gladly support the initiative. If it crosses a red line, we will be there to set things right. Although the federal parties might be tempted to centralize power, the Bloc Québécois will continue to defend our areas of expertise and our vision of how things should be done. We will remain vigilant, we will show no tolerance for any abuse or attempted interference, and we will defend against any encroachment on Quebec's powers.

Finally, I will conclude by saying that we would be happy to consider any tangible, meaningful contributions that would really help people with brain injuries. In the meantime, we will settle for this strategy. This bill alone will not be enough to support these people. Yes, it is good to encourage consultation, but we believe that access to health care is the real problem. Quebec needs more resources in order to provide its health professionals with better working conditions, to keep them in the public system and to improve access for patients.

The federal government has health care commitments that it is not fulfilling. It was supposed to pay 50% of health care costs in Quebec and the other provinces, but it currently covers only about 22%. If my colleague really wants to help our constituents with health care, he should push the government, which his party is propping up, to transfer the money owed to support the health of Quebeckers.

The consequences of underfunding health care make it difficult to maintain effective, high-quality service. I see the devastating effects of that in my riding. For example, people have a hard time accessing specialized treatment, which is concentrated in urban centres several hours' drive away from my constituents. Add to that the wait times for an appointment with a health care professional and the working conditions that we can offer those professionals.

We cannot accept this. It is vital that Ottawa honour its commitments so that everyone can have decent access to health care.

• (1755)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my Bloc Québécois colleague is making a not-so-subtle attack on the leader of my party regarding the gains we have made in pharmacare for people with diabetes and for women who want oral contraceptives. Soon, all of that can be negotiated with the provinces, at the time of their choosing, obviously.

I would like to remind the member that the Union des consommateurs, the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec, the Confédération des syndicats nationaux, the Centrale des syndicats du Québec and the Alliance du personnel professionnel et technique de la santé et des services sociaux are all calling for public universal pharmacare. It bears repeating that Quebec civil society is in favour of this approach, which is the best way of controlling and lowering the cost of prescription drugs. I would invite my Bloc Québécois colleague to read the Hoskins report, which provides a lot of insight on this issue.

I would like to commend my NDP colleague, the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, for his private member's bill, which will be a big help to Quebeckers and Canadians. I am going to talk about more than just concussions, which are a major health

Private Members' Business

issue for many young athletes. Concussions are a real problem in many sports. I would obviously invite the sports federations to be diligent and responsible when it comes to these young people's equipment, training and games. Unfortunately, young Quebeckers, young Montrealers, are sometimes getting brain injuries.

Obviously, my NDP colleague's bill is not limited to concussions. It is a little-known fact that for every National Hockey League player who gets a concussion while playing hockey, over 5,500 women in Canada unfortunately experience the same type of injury as a result of domestic violence. I think it is worth pointing out that my colleague's initiative will help expand research, awareness and education on this particular scourge as well.

After reading up on brain injuries and this bill's noble objective of establishing and developing a national strategy to “improve brain injury awareness, prevention and treatment as well as the rehabilitation and recovery of persons living with a brain injury”, I can confirm that this affects a huge number of people.

More than 165,000 people suffer traumatic brain injury every year in Canada. It is not always visible. Sometimes it is not the result of an accident, shock, domestic violence or abuse. I was fascinated by the idea that brain injury is a silent epidemic, that it can happen at any time, at any age, that it can strike children, teens and adults. It is a much bigger problem than most people realize. Traumatic brain injuries are 44 times more common than spinal cord injuries, 30 times more common than breast cancer and 400 times more common than HIV-AIDS. This affects a lot of people.

This bill has an absolutely clear objective. It is important to note that this is being done collaboratively and in partnership with others. What my NDP colleague wants is for the federal Minister of Health, in consultation with representatives of the provincial governments, indigenous groups and relevant stakeholders, to develop this national strategy to support and improve awareness, prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and recovery for people living with a brain injury.

It is hard to argue against the virtues of this dialogue, this partnership, which is designed to identify best practices and pool research to find solutions together, that is, with the federal government, provinces, indigenous groups and the relevant associations all working together. A number of groups across Canada have been consulted and support this bill. In particular, the Regroupement des associations de personnes traumatisées craniocérébrales du Québec supports the idea of a national strategy championed by the federal government in partnership with the provinces. I would like to emphasize once again the importance of this private member's bill introduced by my NDP colleague.

Private Members' Business

• (1800)

I am not going to use up all my speaking time. That way, there will be some extra time for my colleagues who will be closing this debate in the next few minutes.

I would like to congratulate my colleague on his work. I hope that his bill will receive the support of all parliamentarians so that we can find solutions for everyone who has the misfortune of dealing with a brain injury.

[*English*]

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to speak to this important private member's bill. I thank the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford for bringing forward Bill C-277. I suspect I will echo many of the comments made already this evening. I believe there is broad support for this bill. It is definitely great to see an important step forward.

The bill would provide for the development of a national strategy to support and to improve brain injury awareness, prevention and treatment, as well as the rehabilitation and the recovery of persons living with brain injuries. Brain injuries, unfortunately, are becoming exceedingly common, and there are a number of factors for that. Perhaps part of it is that we are getting better at detecting and diagnosing these injuries, but I understand that a lot more work needs to be done to address the treatment aspect and how it would be monitored going forward.

Unfortunately, we do not understand brain injuries as well as we should or as we need to, and how that pairs with mental health. Many Canadians struggle with the negative impacts of mental health. There are 165,000 Canadians who suffer a brain injury each year. That is a staggering number of Canadians who are impacted by brain injuries, which speaks to the need for Bill C-277. An estimated 1.5 million Canadians are living with these injuries presently. I will repeat that 165,000 Canadians suffer an injury each year. That is why we need a strategy, more treatment and a better understanding through a national framework.

The member who brought the bill forward touched on a number of important aspects intertwined with brain injuries and health, one of which is opioids. Nearly 22,000 opioid-related hospitalizations have resulted in brain injuries from 2016 to 2020. We also know that brain injury survivors are four times more likely to develop addiction issues. I applaud the member for bringing this bill forward. He has commented in this place on the importance of how this is impacting opioids and addictions.

Taking a step back, the issue of addictions is, unfortunately, far too prevalent across the country. We are in a mental health and addictions crisis. That is seen in northwestern Ontario where I am from, in the district of Kenora. Far too many people are struggling with mental health and addictions that lead them to homelessness or some other precarious and vulnerable situations. We are seeing this over and over again. It has led to concerns for the safety of vulnerable residents struggling with their addictions, for the safety of other residents, of tourists and of the small business community in the downtown core in Kenora. An increase in crime has accompanied this, as well as other negative health outcomes.

With the addictions crisis and the lack of treatment and recovery options that exist, people have, unfortunately, shared needles and have been doing a number of unsafe things. We have seen an increase in HIV cases across the Kenora district as well, all stemming from this addictions crisis. In 2022, statistics show there were more HIV cases in Kenora than in the previous eight years combined. That shows the dramatic increase as a result of the addictions crisis. That is part of the reason the Conservative Party has been staunch in its support for more treatment and recovery options, which are incredibly lacking in northwestern Ontario, and I think right across the country. People struggling with addictions need places they can go to hopefully break through that cycle so that they can lead drug-free lives.

• (1805)

The member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, who brought this forward, has also spoken about how domestic violence plays into this. It is another very important topic to speak about. Brain Injury Canada estimates that 35% to potentially as high as 80% of women who experience domestic violence also experience symptoms of a traumatic brain injury. These are staggering numbers. I share them here today to again underscore the importance of this legislation.

I want to now go to the bill specifically. There are many things in it that are encouraging and are positive steps forward. I want to refer to a couple that are of particular interest to me and that I think are particularly positive. The bill talks about the content of such a strategy. It mentions that it would “promote awareness and education with particular emphasis on improving public understanding and protecting the rights of persons living with a brain injury”.

As well, it would “identify challenges resulting from brain injury, such as mental health problems, addiction, housing and homelessness issues and criminality, including intimate partner violence, and work to develop solutions in collaboration with stakeholders”.

There is one more that I will end on. It would “encourage consultation with mental health professionals, particularly in educational institutions, sports organizations and workplaces, to provide persons who are suffering from the effects of a brain injury, including mental health and addiction problems, with a support system within the community”.

The bill is very well crafted, but those are three that are of particular interest to me. I want to stress this with respect to sports organizations particularly. I have had a bit of experience with that throughout my life, playing sports, and now, being back home as a football coach in my community as well. The need to recognize head injuries, concussions and how to identify them is definitely evolving and people are getting better at that, and I think sports organizations are doing great work in that. There is definitely a long way to go in that regard.

Private Members' Business

It is a bit interesting that we are having this debate today. It is also the kickoff to the Canadian Football League season today. It is a big deal in my household. I know that the defending champions, the Alouettes, are going to be in Winnipeg to take on the Blue Bombers. That is what makes me think about the importance of this bill because we have seen, both in amateur sports and professional sports, incredible measures being taken to address concussions. I will stick with football because it is one that is dear to me.

We have seen more concussion spotters, independent of any team, who are able to identify players experiencing symptoms and can have them pulled from the field and properly assessed. I know that up until that point, it was quite easy for players to be a bit stubborn about what they were experiencing and, frankly, to push off some of the stigma. There was a bit of a stigma to it. If they were not bleeding or did not have an obviously broken bone sticking out through their body, then people would tell them that they were fine. Also, the CFL, the Canadian Football League, as well as the NFL in the United States, are bringing forward the use of guardian caps, a protective shell over the helmets of football players that can now be used in games. The Canadian Football League has estimated it has seen a 42% decrease in training camp concussions, as well as a 20% reduction in head impact severity.

This is all to say that there is great work being done already, and it is important that we support that and that we advance that work. I think this bill will help address that with sport organizations in particular.

I want to thank the NDP member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford for bringing this forward, and all the previous speakers who have spoken quite eloquently on this bill. I look forward to seeing this come to fruition in the near future.

• (1810)

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy for the opportunity to speak to Bill C-277, an act to establish a national strategy on brain injuries, which was put forward by my colleague, the MP for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. I was more than eager to second the bill.

This is an issue that I am more than happy to be able to speak to today. There is so much I would like to cover. I will try to get through as much as I can.

This is an issue that is impacting Canadians across the country and very much impacting constituents in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith. We are all impacted by brain injuries in some way, whether it be ourselves, a family member, a loved one, a neighbour or somebody we know in the community. It is an issue we need to talk about more here in this chamber.

We know brain injuries profoundly affect individuals and families, disrupting their lives and requiring significant ongoing support to navigate the complexities that follow. I heard my colleagues mention these numbers, but they need repeating to emphasize the seriousness of the issue. There are 165,000 Canadians who suffer traumatic brain injuries each year, with 1.5 million Canadians living with traumatic brain injury. That is a tremendous number.

To put it into perspective, brain injury occurs at a rate greater than that of multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injury, HIV/AIDS and

breast cancer combined. I feel that this information really allows us to see just how large this is and how many people are impacted by traumatic brain injury.

There is also an extremely high prevalence of brain injury in overdose survivors. I want to reiterate that, here in British Columbia, we are seeing six deaths per day from the toxic substance crisis. These numbers may be even higher now, and I would have to find them. However, as of December, the toxic substance crisis had claimed 13,000 lives in British Columbia since it was declared a public health emergency there in 2016. Among those who are surviving these overdoses, there is an incredible number of people who are not being tracked and that we just do not know are experiencing these symptoms.

I thought the following was interesting: I was reading a story in a paper called *The Discourse*, which is a local paper that does incredible work. Julie Chadwick, a local reporter, had done a story on traumatic brain injury. She was quoting Dr. Elizabeth Plant, a Cowichan Valley-based family physician who specialized in addiction treatment. Dr. Plant pointed out that, for every overdose death, it is estimated that there are 20 to 30 non-fatal overdoses.

That is 20 people to 30 people who may very well be experiencing the symptoms of a traumatic brain injury. Currently, we do not have the systems in place to be able to identify them and ensure that the people who are getting discharged from hospital are getting the follow-ups required or getting supports and wraparound services. These things may be required to address the symptoms so that the problem does not escalate and become bigger and bigger. When we identify and address issues right from the onset, we have better long-term success for individuals and their loved ones.

Brain injuries impair essential functions necessary for everyday life, including problem solving and maintaining relationships, housing and employment. As I said, brain injuries impact entire families and communities.

I am going to move on because I realize I am already almost halfway through my time. There is a scarcity of funding resources and support for brain injury survivors, both in the health care system and in community services. This is a big problem; it is exactly why my colleague brought forward the bill. We need more than a patchwork approach. We need more than non-profits that are struggling to access funding and do not know from year to year whether they are going to have long-term sustainable funding. They are doing the best they can for communities.

Private Members' Business

• (1815)

We need to see a national strategy, a national approach to address this issue in a comprehensive way. We can then ensure that we have the right people to provide the supports and that people who are struggling with the symptoms of traumatic brain injury and their loved ones know where to turn, how to get supports and what supports are available. These are all parts of an essential strategy. This is the reason, at least to my understanding, that my colleague has brought forward the bill.

Now, there are a lot of incredible organizations across Canada doing the work required to meet the vital needs of people in our communities. One such organization is the Nanaimo Brain Injury Society, a small, local non-profit that has been serving Nanaimo for over 35 years and has been providing critical supports to individuals and families who have been impacted by brain injury. Nanaimo is, of course, within my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

As we know, brain injuries are multi-faceted. Interconnected with brain injuries are mental health issues, substance abuse, homelessness and intimate partner violence. These are all factors that need to be considered when we are looking at traumatic brain injury and how to best support people.

Such organizations as the Nanaimo Brain Injury Society provide comprehensive programs and services to brain injury survivors and their families, helping them manage daily challenges and improve their quality of life. Again, as I was speaking to earlier, despite its crucial work and increasing demand for services, we are seeing the increasing demand first-hand here in Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

The Nanaimo Brain Injury Society is an example of an organization that, despite its long record of incredible, life-saving work in our communities, is relying on year-by-year funding from grants, donations and service contracts to maintain these vital services. This is not okay. They need to know that they have long-term, sustainable funding to provide those supports and services.

Another point I want to mention is that the Nanaimo Brain Injury Society has been a leader in advocacy initiatives, collecting data in provincial and federal point-in-time homelessness surveys, and it collaborates with community partners, families, government and other stakeholders to address brain injury issues holistically. Now, one such example is its work. It brought this issue forward to the City of Nanaimo. The mayor and council of Nanaimo sent a letter to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Health, myself and my colleague, the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. What they said is very important for us to hear. The letter reads:

Canadian statistics alone paint a stark picture of the prevalence and consequences of brain injuries with British Columbia bearing a significant burden. The correlation between brain injuries and issues such as mental health challenges, substance use, and homelessness underscores the urgency of implementing effective support systems and interventions.

The letter goes on, but I have limited time to talk about the importance of having a national brain injury strategy to prevent the staggering number of preventable deaths and non-fatal overdoses that have been highlighted in the B.C. chief coroner's report.

We are seeing the impacts of brain injuries in all our communities. It is time for us to see support from all members of Parliament, across party lines. From what I am hearing so far, it sounds like we

do have support, which brings me great optimism. This is vital, and it is not only the support but also seeing the bill put through in a timely manner. Canadians across the country need to see a national strategy. They need to see the supports in place. They no longer have time to wait. I hope that all members of Parliament will support this vital bill going through today.

• (1820)

The Deputy Speaker: Seeing no further speakers, I recognize the hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford for his five-minute right of reply.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by saying that I am joined in Ottawa today by two very special individuals: Janelle from my riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, with whom I started this conversation all the way back in 2018, and Michelle from Brain Injury Canada. The bill was not solely my idea. It has had many authors, and many people have been involved in mounting a campaign to bring it to where it is today.

I am so heartened by the speeches I have heard from colleagues right across the House, and I really want to take time to recognize those individuals. They are the Liberal member for Yukon, the Conservative member for Regina—Lewvan, the Bloc member for Montcalm, the NDP member for Courtenay—Alberni, the Liberal member for Kingston and the Islands, the Conservative member for Kelowna—Lake Country, the Bloc member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, the NDP member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, the Conservative member for Kenora and my New Democratic colleague from Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

I thank each of them for sharing their personal stories and the stories from their ridings. I really think that helped illustrate what a pan-Canadian issue this is. Especially at this time of year, the House of Commons can become quite a partisan place. On an issue such as this, where we had members from all parties speak in support of the bill and share personal stories, it is really a moment for me to personally reflect on and be thankful for. I thank all those members. I hope that, next week, when we come to a vote, the bill will receive unanimous support to be sent to the health committee.

I do not want to repeat a lot of things, because I think I outlined a lot of this in my introductory speech. In Canada, the societal consequences of brain injuries are quite profound. To my Bloc colleagues, who have always been stalwarts for provincial jurisdiction, I want to say this: I believe the bill respects provincial jurisdiction. I am fortunate to come from a province where the New Democratic Party is in government. I do not want to intrude on its obvious jurisdiction over health.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

My goal with Bill C-277 is to recognize that this issue is bigger than any one province or territory can handle on its own, just by virtue of the stark statistics we are dealing with. This is really just an effort to break out of the siloed approach to problems that are affecting people in every single province. We are trying to coordinate a strategy where we make use of best practices, find out ways we can educate the population and develop awareness, prevention and treatment plans.

People from every single province have spoken up about the bill, and they have related their personal lived experiences. We have people from Quebec, from the Maritimes, from my home province of B.C., from the Prairies and from up in the territories. There is an incredible campaign being mounted in support of the bill, and I really want to recognize those people's efforts; they are the ones who have spoken to other MPs and to the government, which has brought us to the point where it looks as though a successful vote is possible.

I will say this to my colleagues: Let us get this bill to committee, hear from witnesses and see if there are ways we can improve the language. I remain open to that. My ultimate goal here is not just for myself personally; it is for the people who are attaching real importance to this, because a brain injury is such a dominating feature in their lives. They are looking to us to lead, to pay attention to an issue that affects so many Canadians and really affects their quality of life.

I thank all the individuals with lived experience who have shown the courage to share their personal stories. I thank the organizations that do the important work of raising awareness every single day. I thank the numerous city councils from across Canada that have spoken up and urged MPs to support the bill.

With that, I thank my colleagues for lending their support to the bill. I look forward to it coming to a vote so that we can get it to the Standing Committee on Health.

● (1825)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion.

[*English*]

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

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, we would request a recorded division.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, June 12, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

● (1830)

[*English*]

PUBLIC COMPLAINTS AND REVIEW COMMISSION ACT

The House resumed from June 4 consideration of Bill C-20, An Act establishing the Public Complaints and Review Commission and amending certain Acts and statutory instruments, as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Mr. Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member is a close colleague of mine in Regina—Lewvan, home of the Depot, which I am very intimately connected with.

How does my colleague see the future of the Depot? Does he have any concerns with regard to the Depot in his riding?

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Depot should always stay in Regina.

In regard to Bill C-20, it gives some oversight to the RCMP and CBSA, and they welcome that oversight. However, whenever I go to the Depot, in the heart of Regina—Lewvan, I talk to new recruits. I was able to talk at a troop graduation ceremony. One thing that they are constantly asking for is to have more support from all leaders, whether it be provincial, municipal or federal. They sometimes feel like they are really left on their own, especially when it comes to some of the parties in this House, and when it comes to some Liberal and some NDP members in the House. They know that they are encouraging some of the anti-police or defund the police movements.

What they really want to see is a collective voice to make sure that there is support for our men and women in uniform. I stand tall and I stand proud with them. I will always support our RCMP men and women in uniform who are keeping our communities safe across the country. I want them all to know that. I really appreciate the work that they put in to keeping Canada safe.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad I caught your eye so that I could join the debate during this evening's sitting and contribute my thoughts on Bill C-20.

I have been reviewing some of the committee records, as well as some of the prior debate on what members have said about the bill. I just want to kind of run down what this bill is about, so that people back home in my riding of Calgary Shepard will know about it.

Government Orders

In my riding, I have a few former members of the RCMP. Some of them are long-time members. One member served almost 30 years. After 30 years of service to the RCMP, a person's body is not what it used to be, so they have to step back. One of our members who used to serve here, the former member for Yellowhead, Jim Eglinski, who then became the mayor of the county of Yellowhead, was also a long-time member of the RCMP. Famously, he had made quite a famous arrest on Vancouver Island of a man who had tried to assassinate an Indian cabinet minister on the island. I will always remember that Wednesday in the House when he first rose from our side to ask the question, because he actually had been the arresting officer in that particular situation. It was in the news because this particular individual, after he had served his time in jail and after he had gone through an Indian government program, had been allowed to travel again to India, but he happened to be travelling with an official Government of Canada party. It was just a memorable situation.

It was easy to tell that Jim had served in the RCMP for a long time, even while he was a member of Parliament here. He would tell us stories as well, including the time he had been in a mine collapse, and yet somehow managed to survive and make his way out.

Some of these men and women in uniform do some pretty extraordinary things. I remember when I was working in one of the provincial government departments. The chain of command went up to the minister's office. We would go back and forth over some of these odd situations that fish and wildlife officers would find themselves in, where they were assisting RCMP officers out on very remote provincial highways and doing things like busting kidnapping attempts. They were doing drug busts with RCMP officers, because at times they would find themselves without the proper equipment out in the field, so they would need the help of fish and wildlife officers. Those were very unusual situations.

I have been going through the summary of the bill and what the bill would do. Very briefly, again, it would establish an independent body that would now be called the public complaints and review commission, as a replacement for the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. It would authorize the chairperson of the public complaints and review commission to recommend the initiation of disciplinary processes, of the imposition of disciplinary measures, in relation to individuals who have been the subject of complaints. It would amend the Canada Border Services Agency Act to provide for an investigation of serious incidents involving officers and employees of the Canada Border Services Agency. It would also amend the English version of federal statutes, orders and regulations to replace references to "the force" with references to the RCMP. Finally, it would make, at the back end, some amendments to other acts. These are called consequential amendments, to bring everything into line.

At second reading, this bill was read three times in the House before it went to committee. I would say that at committee it received some pretty extensive review. Close to 20 meetings were held in order to review this particular piece of legislation. It came out in the fall, and it kind of lingered there. The government did not move it forward up until report stage on May 3 and then, once again, on June 4. I will note that the government has not seemed to be in an extreme rush, because it was November of 2022 when it went to

committee. It got out in the fall and then it was only on May 3, 2024 and June 4, 2024, that it came back to this House for further debate, and get it off to that other place.

I am sure when the House leaders are meeting that the government House leader plans things. There is a Yiddish proverb that says that man plans and God laughs. In a lot of ways, two years for this type of legislation to come to the House to be considered is a very long time. It has probably defeated all of the plans that the government made. This was also a previous piece of legislation, Bill C-98 in the 42nd Parliament, as well as Bill C-3 in the 43rd Parliament. As we know, the 43rd Parliament ended in August of 2021. The Prime Minister called a very unnecessary election on the same day that the Taliban took over Kabul and the fall of the democratic government in Afghanistan happened.

I will mention a few of the concerns I noted from committee. A few of the concerns included a lack of consultations. Some of the stakeholder groups mentioned that concern.

● (1835)

There was concern expressed, and other members have expressed concern here, that there will probably be difficulty in obtaining the specialized types of individuals they will want to appoint as Governor in Council appointees for the board for this commission because of the unique set of skills, knowledge and experience that they will need in order to make sure that they can hear the CBSA and RCMP cases. Like I mentioned, I have a few RCMP officers who are now retired from the force or have left the force, including one who worked at the Calgary airport as part of the RCMP team there, and some of the younger officers too.

Policing is a difficult job and I have a great appreciation for all those who pursue it, including my former executive assistant. She joined the Ottawa Police Service as a uniformed officer just a few months ago. She will be completing her time with the Ontario Police College later in August, will be graduating from the college there and will be back here in OPS as a uniformed police officer. I always joke that she is the first person in my office in nine years to get a real job after politics. I see a few members chuckling on that side. I think too many members here have staff who linger on or get a desk job. She is actually going to be doing something productive, and I am really happy that she found a thing that she is going to love doing. Hopefully, the rest of her life she will have a long, successful career and I wish Cheyenne all the best of luck with that.

The third concern that was expressed was the lack of independence for access to information requests. There are a few portions in there that would allow the commission to rule certain things as ineligible for an access to information request. Again, there is a lack of a mandated review period. Those statutory reviews, as we know, do not always happen on time, but even when they are missing from legislation, legislation can then linger on without having parliamentarians take a closer look at it. I do not think it is the end of the world.

Government Orders

I hope the House will indulge me for a moment. I do have a member of my riding, a very special person who is retiring. Christine McIver is a truly special Albertan and a friend of mine. She is the retiring founder of the Kids Cancer Camps of Alberta. This was her passion project for decades. I did not know her son Derek, but heard so many stories about him. He passed away from cancer. He was the inspiration for the work that she was doing. Just like Christine, I am a parent who sat in many NICUs and many ICUs with some of my kids, including the one who passed away, so I share that with her. Again, I imagine her sitting in a pediatric ICU waiting to be told that the neurosurgeon had removed a mandarin-sized orange from her son's brain. He had medulloblastoma, a hyper-aggressive brain cancer. Derek would pass away in her arms on April 26, 1991, so it has been a long time. From her grief, she started to raise funds. She built a camp and a network, and she has created over, if I count in my head quickly, 20 camp programs single-handedly, which now she has passed on to others to continue her work.

Famously, a lot of the fundraising started with giving toques with a logo of a bear that had a crooked smile on its face. It is neat because Derek, post-surgery, had a crooked smile, resulting from having so much brain matter removed, so they put the little bear picture on toques that were very popular and many of us still have them. A concept of a Derek bear was born. Christine became “Crazy Bear”, as she would say, because she was so passionate about this project. She received a lot of medals, awards and achievements over time. I just wanted to tell Christine, Crazy Bear, to rest assured that her mission is accomplished. I wish a very happy retirement to her.

With that, I go back to my Yiddish proverb: Man plans, God laughs. One never knows what life will put before us. Bill C-20 has taken a long time to get here and there have been three different pieces of legislation. I look forward to questions from the other side.

● (1840)

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member brought forward some proverbs. I have one that I would share with him. We often talk about the fact that there are two Bloc parties in this House; there is the Bloc Québécois, and then there is the “block everything party”. We know that at committee the Conservatives tabled over 75 amendments and many that they took away. They filibustered the committee for weeks and stopped Bill C-20 from coming forward.

I am just wondering how the member comes to terms with the fact that members of his own party were responsible for filibustering the committee with motions that were not even related to the bill. How does he explain that to his constituents and to Canadians?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, I obviously disagree with the member. I have been at committees where I have proposed 40-plus amendments, and I think of my amendments as being substantive. That is what we came here to do: to work the hours that are needed to make legislation better, to make sure that we make the points on behalf of stakeholders, on behalf of the residents of our ridings, and if we have good ideas to improve legislation, to propose them, to speak to them and to vote on them.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as we know, the CBSA has serious governance problems. The Arrive-CAN file exposed that, as did the lack of oversight at the port of Montreal, which is a nexus for car theft. Many whistle-blowers have identified systemic internal problems.

The Bloc Québécois believes that the CBSA should be placed under third party management while the governance problems are sorted out. What does my hon. colleague think about this proposal?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, I agree that morale among the workers, the officers who work for the Canada Border Services Agency, is rather low these days. It is hard because the Liberal federal government refuses to support them in the very difficult work that they do. This agency is being asked to do a lot of things in our country. It takes care of the ports and airports and also ensures that people who stay longer than their immigration visa allows are sent back to their country of origin. It is hard work and they need support from a federal government that is on their side. The workers do not have that support today.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when my colleague from Joliette asked the member a question about the possibility of putting the Canada Border Services Agency under third party management, his response was not really clear. Do the Conservatives approve of this measure?

Also, how do they envision the right of appeal for people who feel they received abusive or inappropriate treatment at the hands of border services officers? What might that look like?

● (1845)

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, this bill will enable people to file complaints and report incidents that happen at the Canadian border.

One of my constituents sent me an email a few months ago describing how he was mistreated. He and his wife were coming back from the United States and they felt they were treated inappropriately. In some cases, these incidents are so serious that it will be up to the commission to determine what really happened. In others, they involve service-related problems that can be resolved at a lower level by a director. I do not often see such serious cases. I think this is the first that I have seen in nine years, and it just happened in the last three or four months.

[*English*]

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise again today and speak, this time to Bill C-20, the public complaints and review commission act. It is an honour to rise on this important piece of legislation. It would establish the complaints and review commission, and it would be amending certain acts and statutory instruments as well.

Government Orders

I was a member of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security for a brief period during clause-by-clause of this bill, so there were many important amendments put forward by all parties to help ensure that we get this bill right. That is the role of committee, and it should be the role of all parliamentarians to get those things right at committee. I appreciate, though we had some hiccups along the way as we always do, the general collaboration to get that completed.

On that note of getting the bill right, it is important that we have a fulsome debate because the bill would help foster public confidence and trust in our federal law enforcement agencies, namely the RCMP and CBSA. Public trust and confidence in all of our institutions is paramount to democracy, but particularly to institutions focused on public safety and national security. It is of the highest importance to ensure that trust is there.

A related issue we are dealing with presently in this chamber is that Conservatives are asking the government to release the names of MPs who are reported to have engaged with hostile foreign nations. However, just this morning, at the public safety and national security committee, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety told us, “Boo hoo, get over it.” Comments like this do the opposite of ensuring that there is trust in public institutions, when legitimate concerns are brought forward on something as serious as foreign interference and the involvement of members of this chamber, and the government says to get over it, to look the other way and that there is nothing to see.

Coming back to Bill C-20, I will note that the bill does not really seem terribly important to the government, despite its claims that it needs to be passed. This is the third attempt the government has made to pass the bill, as has been mentioned by members. It was Bill C-98 in the 42nd Parliament, and it died on the order of paper. In the 43rd Parliament it was Bill C-3, but it died when the Prime Minister called an unnecessary early election for his political gain in the middle of a pandemic. Of course, he called that election despite having voted a couple of months before the election to do just that, and I will come back to that a bit later. Clearly, the government says it cares, and its track record says otherwise. The bill has not been a priority for the government to move through.

I want to take a bit of time to talk about what the bill would actually do. It would rename the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP to the public complaints and review commission, under its new name. The Commission would also be responsible for reviewing civilian complaints against the Canada Border Services Agency, the CBSA.

The bill would also codify timelines for RCMP and CBSA responses to interim reports, reviews and recommendations of the complaints commission. There would be information sharing between the RCMP, the CBSA and the commission. The bill would also require mandatory annual reporting by the RCMP and CBSA on actions taken in response to the commission's recommendations, and it would require mandatory reporting of race-based data by the commission. Lastly, the bill would create a statutory framework to govern CBSA responses to serious incidents.

While there would be many positive changes made, there are still a number of concerns that have been raised. First, one of the con-

cerns is that there was a lack of consultation, something that seems to be a recurring theme, unfortunately, for the government. I spoke about this just yesterday in the chamber in regard to Bill C-61.

● (1850)

The government continues to say that it is consulting with first nations and indigenous peoples across the country and that it has a broad-based bill that is supported and co-developed. However, at the same time, we continue to hear concerns raised by first nation leaders impacted by the bill that their voices have not been heard and that they do not want it move forward as quickly as it has been until they have their say and amendments are brought forward. We need to hear from experts on every piece of legislation.

In the case of Bill C-20, various stakeholders, including indigenous chiefs and the National Police Federation, which represents the RCMP, flagged a number of problems with the bill. Most importantly, they felt the current framework, which relies on the RCMP to investigate itself, is insufficient and does not inspire public trust in the process. One particular concern is having police investigate police. The National Police Federation told the committee:

First, the PCRC should end the practice of the police investigating the police. Under the current CRCC model, members of the RCMP are tasked with investigating most of the public complaints filed. It has been noted many times that our members handle these investigations of their colleagues in a professional and impartial manner. However, this does create a perception of bias and possible conflict of interest.

Grand Chief Abram Benedict of the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, whom I am looking forward to visiting this weekend with the member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, also expressed concerns about this. He noted that his community makes up 70% of the traffic at a port of entry nearby. He told the committee:

If a traveller complains about a border officer, the likelihood of them having an interaction with that officer again is very minimal, but in my community, it's very high. If somebody complains about an officer's conduct or about the service they received, the likelihood of them encountering that officer again is very high. There's no other border crossing in Canada that would be like that.

Having said that, doing this outside of the agency is definitely helpful in ensuring that it's a fair and independent process and a process where the person who is complaining—and I would argue the officers themselves—can be assured that it's more of an objective process than an internal process.

Bill C-20 would not fully address the issue, as the new complaints commission would still rely on RCMP and CBSA resources, meaning that it would not be truly independent. Conservatives tried to move various amendments at committee stage to increase the independence, but it was clear that there was no will from the other parties.

Government Orders

I want to come back to the issue that I alluded to earlier in my comments, not just about Bill C-20 but also, more broadly, about the government's approach on many bills and topics that it claims to be a priority, though their actions say otherwise. One that is interconnected in some ways to this one is with first nations and Inuit policing. The government has promised for years that first nations and Inuit police services would be designated as essential and would be allocated the proper resources.

The former minister of public safety, who, we know, was rightly turfed from his position, said in 2022 that the legislation would be right around the corner and that he was working around the clock. We have seen nothing but delays and excuses since. To this point, the current public safety minister says many of the very same things, but Conservatives will believe it when we see it.

I hope that the government takes the issues in Bill C-20 on indigenous policing, the issues in Bill C-61 and many other issues seriously, and that we are able to get the important work done.

• (1855)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in 2019, Mary Foster from Solidarity Across Borders said, “We have enough experience to know that making a complaint to the CBSA about the CBSA doesn't really lead anywhere.”

Having the ability to challenge the findings of the CBSA's investigations is essential to maintaining Canadians' trust. That is my first point for my hon. colleague.

Also, I want to know whether he is concerned that the process will be long and complicated, which could result in most individuals giving up before the end of the process and simply throwing in the towel.

[*English*]

Mr. Eric Melillo: Mr. Speaker, if I understood the question correctly, I do believe that I did touch on that a bit in my comments. Of course, we have to ensure that this process is independent and that it is free of any conflicts. It is a process that must be effective and thorough, and on the same point the member mentioned, it has to be one that people would be willing to go through.

I do share similar concerns, as I highlighted, which is why I think it is important that we continue to have these important discussions and debates so that we can ensure that the bill does what it is intended to do and that it is an effective piece of legislation, not one that continues to perpetuate some of the status quo, which is already not working.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member was talking about how this government operates and how it operates through such poor governance and mismanagement. Of course, even in the last 24 hours, we have had a new Auditor General's report talking about conflicts of interest and really serious allegations. I am wondering if the member could expand on some of the comments that he was making during his intervention on that topic.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from British Columbia is right. The scandals and the mismanagement know no bounds with the government.

However, an important aspect as well is the prioritization of legislation. Everything seems to be a priority for the government, but nothing actually ends up moving. As I alluded to earlier, with Bill C-61 yesterday, the government wanted to rush through to get to committee, and I am happy that we were able to pass a motion from the Conservative side to get that done, but there were 33 sitting days that the government had when it could have brought it forward, and it chose not to. When the clock starts to tick in June, all of a sudden it seems like it is a priority.

Unfortunately, we see that over and over again with legislation that pertains to indigenous and first nations peoples across the country. It is not a priority until time is running out for the government, and then it is scrambling to get it done.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Conservative members on the public safety committee submitted 33 amendments for Bill C-20, but they withdrew over 75% of them. Meanwhile, they dragged out the Bill C-20 meetings repeatedly by filibustering other parties' amendments and moving motions that were completely unrelated to Bill C-20. How does the member account for that?

• (1900)

Mr. Eric Melillo: Mr. Speaker, I would disagree with the characterization the member brought forward. It is important that we bring forward amendments at committee and have those important discussions to improve legislation. As I mentioned, and as my Bloc colleague mentioned, there are concerns with this legislation, and there are things that need to be improved.

Canada's Conservatives are proud to do our work in committee to hold the government to account, and we are going to continue to do that, instead of continuing to blindly support the government, as the NDP has been doing.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know my colleague's thoughts about setting up an appeal process for inspections that are deemed unfounded.

Also, does he agree with the Bloc Québécois's proposal for oversight at the port of Montreal, that is, temporarily implementing some form of third party management to find out what is going on and why this location has become a conduit for all kinds of illegal goods?

[*English*]

Mr. Eric Melillo: Mr. Speaker, there were a couple of different topics there, but I want to focus on the port of Montreal.

Government Orders

Of course, we have seen a huge spike in crime, and that includes vehicle theft, particularly down in southern Ontario in the GTA. We know that the vehicles are going out through the port of Montreal, but the CBSA does not have the resources to adequately deal with it. I think it is very simple. We need to be searching the port and the containers to ensure that we can take those stolen vehicles out and get them back to their rightful owners. I think that is common sense.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know that the NDP is bought and paid for, and that is why its members blindly support the Liberals. They do not really feel like they have to put forward amendments.

Have you seen another government be supported so heavily by an opposition party and then have it turn out well for them in the next election?

The Deputy Speaker: I cannot answer that, but maybe the hon. member for Kenora can.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Mr. Speaker, it is a very important question, and I do appreciate it being raised. I have not seen anything like this before. It is very clear that the NDP and the Liberals are one and the same here at the federal level in Canada. It has been an NDP-Liberal government for a couple of years now, formally, but we know the NDP has been supporting the Liberals for the entirety of the nine years that they have been in office.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak to Bill C-20 in this debate tonight. We have an important issue in front of us.

As we consider making changes to the oversight of the RCMP and the CBSA, it is important for all of us to recognize and honour the active members of both organizations. I grew up in southwest Saskatchewan, and our farm was about a five-minute drive to the border crossing, which is the port of Turner on the U.S. side and the port of Climax on the Saskatchewan side. There are three other border crossings in the southwest: Willow Creek, Monchy and West Poplar River. We have a few really good border crossings in our part of the country, and I can personally attest to the great work the CBSA agents have done in southwest Saskatchewan. They have been valuable, contributing members to our communities. I went to school with some of the kids of people who worked at the border crossings, and they were fantastic people who brought a lot to our communities.

The RCMP and the municipal police services again are made up of fantastic people who do great work. They have signed up to serve the country, and they serve very well in the capacity they are given. That is part of the importance of this debate here today. Anybody who enters public service is doing it because they have, or should have, a deep desire to serve their country and not to benefit themselves, which unfortunately we do see quite rampantly with these Liberals when they are in power and with a lot of the people they are putting into important positions.

For example, earlier today we were debating our opposition day motion about the green slush fund with SDTC and 186 conflicts of interest in this one area alone. It is quite mind-boggling when one thinks about it. As we go through other departments, and as we go

through other levels of government, we start to see that there seems to be a pattern.

It is important that we have a good civilian oversight for the RCMP and for CBSA. I do think what the government is trying to do here is in the right vein. We heard in the previous questions and comments period about amendments Conservatives are looking to get. There are always things we are looking to improve when it comes to legislation.

I want to go into a few examples of some issues that have arisen at CBSA over the last couple of years. Back in 2021, there was an article in the CBC. Forgive me, as I will be quoting CBC articles a couple of times tonight. One will not normally catch me doing that, but for tonight, I will. The border agency concluded that, in 2021, there were “92 founded investigations” that year. It came up with 92 investigations for which there was enough proof of evidence to pursue a certain course of action. This includes everything from somebody getting called into the manager’s office for a reprimand to people being given dismissals. There were a few different issues that people dealt with.

In 2022, there were over “500 allegations the CBSA deemed ‘founded’”. Over 500 is quite a jump from the numbers of 2021. I will read this part because there is a common thread emerging, especially given what we now know from the NSICOP report. The article states, “A Canada Border Service Agency employee opened himself up to the threat of exploitation by ‘hostile intelligence services’ after visiting massage parlours in China, Japan and Canada”.

• (1905)

This person engaged in illegal activities and put himself in a vulnerable position where hostile intelligence services could take advantage of him because of where he worked and could hold the illegal actions that he had engaged in over his head by saying, “Do this for us or else.” Having civilian oversight would allow for a more thorough examination of what was going on in some of these cases and would hopefully bring a quicker resolution to some of the issues and claims.

I had the opportunity to speak to a similar piece of legislation in the previous Parliament. At that time, the timeline for processing a complaint or a review was up to seven years. That is problematic. If I made a complaint to my banking institution, my cellphone provider or anybody else who provides a good or service and it took seven years for it to be resolved, that would be totally unacceptable in all cases. I know it is not as cut and dry with the CBSA. Obviously, there are more things it has to look into. However, seven years is absolutely ridiculous.

We have had some good comments from the Customs and Immigration Union:

There is also a glaring lack of time limit requirements for the Commission to complete an investigation, which is only amplified by the absence of time limit requirements for the Commission to submit a final report following reception of the CBSA President’s response to an interim report (Section 64). In short, we fear an investigation could take years to complete, which is neither fair to the employee under investigation nor to the complainant.

Government Orders

We recommend that Bill C-20 include clear language around time limits for every step of the process.

Along with that, the Canada Bar Association said:

It seems inevitable that as the Commission's workload increases, delays will grow. The Commission's work could then be portrayed as being "efficient" in dealing with complaints, when in fact the goal lines have been moved. The Bill imposes a one-year delay for a complainant to file a complaint. Thus, it is reasonable that the Commission be required to conclude its work in a fixed timeframe as well.

That would have been very helpful to include to clearly set an expectation as part of the complaint process. I think any civilian who would issue a complaint, or even an officer who had a complaint levied against them, would want it dealt with sooner rather than later. To have it left hanging out there for seven years or longer is a problem. That definitely needs to be brought up and dealt with.

In my remaining time, I want to emphasize how important it is that we get things right when it comes to public safety. The RCMP plays a very important role in southwest Saskatchewan. Rural crime, unfortunately, is on the rise. The rate of assault against peace officers nearly doubled between 2011 and 2021. This legislation, this oversight, would ensure that we protect both sides in interactions with law enforcement.

Rural violent crime is up 19% in the country, and the crime severity index is 60 points higher in rural Saskatchewan than in urban Saskatchewan, which is the largest gap in the country. RCMP officers do good work. There is a lot of hard work they have to do. There are lots of split-second decisions they have to make that sometimes make them vulnerable or susceptible to complaints. That does happen. They need some certainty and clarity on the timelines of the review process as well. That would have been an important component to have sorted out in this bill.

With that, I will wrap up my remarks. I look forward to hearing the questions and comments.

• (1910)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member joked a few minutes ago about quoting the CBC. I found that interesting because he is right; Conservatives never quote the CBC. I was surprised to hear him do that.

I know that he happens to be greenlit by the Campaign Life Coalition as an anti-choice member of Parliament, one of their flag-bearers here. I am wondering if he could give me his insight into what he thinks would more likely expel him from his caucus. Would it be his position on a woman's right to choose or the fact that he speaks favourably of the CBC in the House?

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Mr. Speaker, quoting the CBC does not necessarily mean I am speaking in favour of the CBC. It is a journalistic outfit. It puts articles out, and it does some studies. Every once in a while, a blind squirrel will find a nut. There is nothing wrong with quoting things that we find online or quoting journalism when it happens.

When we look at the gross misallocation of funds to the CBC, over \$1.6 billion, I can think of a lot of better ways that the money could be spent. With respect to the journalists, the odd ones who actually do good work should be able to do that without getting massive subsidies from the taxpayer in order for them to do their job.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I did not speak right away because I was waiting for the light to go on. Likewise, it would be nice to see a light to go on in the brains of some members of the House, especially those making comparisons between squirrels and the CBC.

Let us get back to the matter at hand. We know that the Canada Border Services Agency, the CBSA, has serious governance problems. The ArriveCAN file exposed that, as did the lack of oversight at the port of Montreal, which has become a nexus for vehicle theft. Many whistle-blowers have identified systemic internal problems.

We put forward a proposal. Even though the Bloc Québécois is an opposition party, we are not here to oppose for the sake of opposing. We also want to propose solutions. As we have said before, we believe that the CBSA should be put under third party management until the governance problems are resolved. That is a reasonable proposal. It is a smart proposal. Most of all, it is an actual proposal, something that some other opposition parties very rarely come up with.

Does my colleague agree with this proposal?

• (1915)

[*English*]

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Mr. Speaker, if that is an interim measure that would definitely help provide clarity, then it is something I think we could support. I was not on the committee when it heard some of the recommendations and amendments put forward by the other parties, so I do not know what the witnesses had to say about it, what some of the context around it would be or what that would look like. However, if it is a measure that is going to help provide more certainty and clarity in the short term and allow the commission to do a better job, then it is something we should consider doing and supporting.

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to ask my hon. colleague a question. I was going through some of the documents on the bill. For the most part, Conservatives know that there is a need to fix our porous border. There are way too many illegal firearms coming in, mostly from Michigan, but there are issues across the country. We support any measures that make our border that much more secure.

It is very telling that the Liberals have allotted roughly \$20 million a year for this. What is my hon. colleague's view on how small a percentage they have spent on border security versus the billions on going after old Uncle Joe's hunting rifles?

Government Orders

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Mr. Speaker, when we look at the crime rates in the big urban cities in this country and the statistics of where the weapons used in the commission these crimes come from, they are overwhelmingly illegally obtained firearms, most often smuggled up from the United States. If we reallocated the resources and money the government is using to confiscate the legal firearms that were lawfully obtained by the most-vetted citizens in this country, there is so much more that could be done to address the issues and the gaps in the CBSA with respect to border patrol. In addition, we can look at all the other wasteful spending, with the green slush fund and the corruption that has happened with SDTC. These are classic examples of funds that could have been better used for other things, such as tightening up our borders.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have heard a couple of comments from the unhinged NDP talking about how we brought an amendment to delete the short title.

I just read that, on June 16, 2018, the NDP member for Victoria seconded an amendment by the member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert to delete the short title of Bill S-18.

Does the member think that was back when the New Democrats used to be in opposition? That was in 2018, and now they are propping up the government for no reason.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Mr. Speaker, that is classic NDP. The New Democrats are doing absolutely anything and everything they possibly can to try to grasp one little of string of power that the Liberals are dangling for them to come running after. If they want to truly be an opposition party and if they want to have any clarity or certainty going into the next election and not be completely decimated, maybe they should grow some principles.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 7:19 p.m., pursuant to order made on Tuesday, June 4, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the report stage of the bill now before the House.

The question is on Motion No. 1.

[*English*]

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

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, we request a recorded division, please.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the division stands deferred until Monday, June 10 at the expiry of the time for oral questions.

* * *

• (1920)

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Deputy 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-258, an act to amend

the Canada Revenue Agency Act regarding reporting on unpaid income tax.

* * *

MISCARRIAGE OF JUSTICE REVIEW COMMISSION ACT (DAVID AND JOYCE MILGAARD'S LAW)

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-40, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, to make consequential amendments to other Acts and to repeal a regulation (miscarriage of justice reviews), as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: There are 20 motions in amendment standing on the Notice Paper for the report stage of Bill C-40. Motions Nos. 1 to 20 will be grouped for debate and voted upon according to the voting pattern available at the table.

[*Translation*]

I will now put Motions Nos. 1 to 20 to the House.

[*English*]

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC) moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-40 be amended by deleting the short title.

Motion No. 2

That Bill C-40 be amended by deleting Clause 2.

Motion No. 3

That Bill C-40 be amended by deleting Clause 3.

Motion No. 4

That Bill C-40 be amended by deleting Clause 4.

Motion No. 5

That Bill C-40 be amended by deleting Clause 5.

Motion No. 6

That Bill C-40 be amended by deleting Clause 6.

Motion No. 7

That Bill C-40 be amended by deleting Clause 7.

Motion No. 8

That Bill C-40 be amended by deleting Clause 8.

Motion No. 9

That Bill C-40 be amended by deleting Clause 9.

Motion No. 10

That Bill C-40 be amended by deleting Clause 10.

Motion No. 11

That Bill C-40 be amended by deleting Clause 11.

Motion No. 12

That Bill C-40 be amended by deleting Clause 12.

Motion No. 13

That Bill C-40 be amended by deleting Clause 13.

Motion No. 14

That Bill C-40 be amended by deleting Clause 14.

Motion No. 15

That Bill C-40 be amended by deleting Clause 15.

Motion No. 16

That Bill C-40 be amended by deleting Clause 16.

Government Orders

Motion No. 17

That Bill C-40 be amended by deleting Clause 17.

Motion No. 18

That Bill C-40 be amended by deleting Clause 18.

Motion No. 19

That Bill C-40 be amended by deleting Clause 19.

Motion No. 20

That Bill C-40 be amended by deleting Clause 20.

He said: Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise to speak about Bill C-40, the miscarriage of justice review commission act, at report stage.

Public confidence in our criminal justice system is central to a functioning democracy, to a free and democratic society. We must have confidence that our courts get it right if not all the time then at least most of the time. We do not want innocent people in jail. We do not want guilty people on our streets. However, we do not always get it right, as in the David Milgaard case.

Mr. Milgaard was wrongfully convicted of a murder that he did not commit and spent 23 years in jail, consistently maintaining his innocence. His case went through the whole process, from trial to the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada, and he was guilty at every stage.

He stayed in jail for 23 years, but David and his mother Joyce never gave up faith. Finally, after two decades, there was a breakthrough made possible by advances in DNA forensic technology, which pointed to another man who had been known to the police all along. With all the appeals used up, there was still one more course of action, and that was an application to the minister of justice under the criminal conviction review rules. She read the Milgaard file and, with the new evidence available, ordered a new trial.

By then, the Saskatchewan prosecution office realized that they had the wrong man and David Milgaard was allowed to go free. It was a serious miscarriage of justice, and it was appropriate that we named the bill after David and Joyce Milgaard. We could have named the bill after any other number of wrongfully convicted men: Donald Marshall Jr., Guy Paul Morin, Steven Truscott or Thomas Sophonow, just to name a few. Our courts do not always get it right and that is why we need a criminal conviction review process.

The Milgaard case showed us the flaws in our system. Why should the last appeal be to an elected official? Would Milgaard have seen justice sooner if the process had not been political and if the Criminal Conviction Review Group was better resourced with finances and investigative powers? The answer, I think, is probably.

These are the questions that Bill C-40 seeks to answer and the flaws that it seeks to correct. I spoke in favour of the bill at second reading, and the Conservative caucus voted to send it to committee. We saw some of what we thought were drafting errors, but we felt confident that with our reasoned arguments, we would convince the other committee members to make these few changes. We were wrong. We got some changes, all right, but not for the better. Coming out of committee, Bill C-40 is worse than it was when it went in, in my opinion.

Let me explain. The main point of disagreement is about the threshold for opening a review. How hard should it be for a convicted person who maintains their innocence to get in front of the miscarriage of justice review commission to convince it to open up a case for a new trial? Currently, with the existing legislation, that person must convince the group working in the AG's office that "there is a reasonable basis to conclude that a miscarriage of justice likely occurred". I underline "likely occurred". Milgaard met that threshold easily with new forensic evidence. What was key was the "new matters of significance" language of the Criminal Conviction Review Group.

Conservative MPs support maintaining the existing "likely occurred" language. We argued to maintain it, but the other committee members insisted on a lower "may have occurred" language, clearly a much lower hurdle to overcome. We fear that, with a lower threshold, we will have a flood of applications for review.

We are supported in that concern. One of the witnesses in the Bill C-40 study at committee was John Curtis from the United Kingdom review commission. This review commission, which has been around for about 20 years, uses the language of "a real possibility" that there has been a miscarriage of justice. Clearly that is a much higher threshold than what is being proposed in the current form of Bill C-40. Mr. Curtis pointed us to a body of jurisprudence in the United Kingdom that has arisen out of its legislation. I have read many of those cases, because I take this very seriously, and I form the opinion that they got it right.

● (1925)

The Milgaard case would have met the test, and so would all the other Canadian cases that I had read. Therefore, we propose sticking with the current wording of "likely occurred" or accepting the United Kingdom's wording of "real possibility" and benefiting from its 20 years of jurisprudence.

Why would we change the words to a lower standard? I would suggest that Parliament is sending a clear message to criminal defence lawyers and to judges that we intend to make things easier for convicted criminals to get their cases opened again. If I were acting for a person who maintained their innocence and wanted to get a review, I would argue, "Well, clearly, Parliament intended something different". Why reject the old language and adopt new language? Certainly, something new is intended. Certainly, it was the intent of Parliament to lower the standard of review and not accept the U.K. language either, because that possibility is open.

Government Orders

This is typical Liberal overreach. Why not change the things that are actually broken in our system, take the politics out of the equation, fund the commission properly and give the commission broader legislative power? We agree with all those initiatives, just not lowering the threshold. That part is not broken. That has actually been functioning well. To suggest otherwise tells the public that we do not actually have confidence in our courts to get it right most of the time.

However, there is another problem with Bill C-40 after committee. If the bill passes in its present form, a person convicted at trial does not even have to exhaust the regular appeal process before applying for a review before the commission. If one does not like the trial court's findings, one need not bother appealing but can go straight to the review commission, with its investigative powers. It is cheaper than getting one's lawyer to take it through the court of appeal.

We say to stick with the current requirement that an applicant must first exhaust all the available tools in the regular court system through all the appeals that are available. Yes, we need a review commission, and the Milgaard case showed us that; however, a review after conviction must remain an extraordinary remedy. To say otherwise would further undermine the confidence that the public has in our court system.

With these significant flaws, the unnecessary lowering of the review threshold and the ability to sidestep the regular appeal process, we cannot support Bill C-40 in its current form.

• (1930)

Mr. James Maloney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for his remarks tonight. I serve on the justice committee with him now, as I did at the time we reviewed the bill, and he has a great deal of compassion. He brings a level of fairness to the job that is admirable.

However, the member started his speech by saying that Canadians need to have faith in the justice system; they also need to have faith in the parliamentary system. He said that the Conservatives supported the bill at second reading, but they filibustered the committee for days. It was not one day, but several days. Meanwhile, victims, including the lawyers and the families who are being affected by previous miscarriages of justice and who want the bill passed, were sitting, watching and waiting. Now, he did not do that of his own volition, and I know that. He was taking orders from somebody who sits right down there, so I will give him the benefit of the doubt on that. However, how can he stand here now and support amendments that strip the bill entirely of every provision in it and say that he supports the people whose names he used tonight?

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague on the justice committee for that question.

Indeed, we take this very seriously. David Milgaard was badly served by our criminal justice system, as were many others. However, it is very important that the public maintains confidence in our court system. It actually works very efficiently. Does there have to be a review process in the event that a person feels very strongly that they have been treated badly by the court system? There absolutely does, but it must remain an extraordinary remedy. It cannot

just be something in the ordinary course of court business. That, I submit, would undermine the confidence that the public has in our court system.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I think we will disagree. Our parties are unlikely to vote the same way.

However, I found one thing rather fascinating when the bill was being studied in committee. Do members realize that the commissioners who will sit on the new miscarriage of justice review commission will not be required to be able to speak and understand both French and English? Why is that?

It is because, when the Bloc Québécois tabled an amendment calling for commissioners to be bilingual, an NDP-Conservative-Liberal coalition voted against it. This included the Liberal MP for Etobicoke—Lakeshore.

When I see the Conservatives whipping themselves into a frenzy to defend French at the Standing Committee on Official Languages, it makes me wonder how the four Conservative MPs on the committee could vote against a perfectly reasonable amendment to uphold the two official languages of this wonderful country called Canada.

I want to know why the Conservatives voted against it.

• (1935)

[*English*]

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Madam Speaker, indeed, that was debated. The Bloc Québécois member on the committee argued passionately in favour of every person on the commission being bilingual. Conservatives argued what is important is that bilingual services are available, that there be at least one person on the commission, or a number of people, who can speak French as effectively as English.

We did not think it was absolutely necessary that everybody be bilingual. That would cut out a lot of people. If that were a requirement in Parliament, I would not be a member of Parliament.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, at committee, Conservatives suggested common-sense amendments to restore crucial checks and balances to the process based on the U.K.'s long-standing Criminal Cases Review Commission, and the government voted against that.

Why did the government vote against it and is this not lowering the threshold needed to make sure that the integrity of the process is in place?

Government Orders

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Yes, Madam Speaker, the review threshold was at the centre of our debate. My hon. colleague from Edmonton Manning referenced evidence from the U.K. commission. Indeed, we thought that was very compelling evidence. I took it upon myself to read many of the cases, but not all of them as some were very lengthy. I was convinced that this is exactly what we wanted and I argued that at committee.

None of the committee members suggested I was wrong on that, so I do not know why they are not agreeing with our amendment.

Mr. James Maloney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker. I am very pleased to speak tonight to Bill C-40, the miscarriage of justice review commission act, David and Joyce Milgaard's law. This legislation would transform the process for identifying and remedying wrongful convictions in Canada. This change is overdue and would be a monumental improvement to justice in our country.

As a member of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, I participated in a study of Bill C-40. We heard from numerous witnesses, including the minister and his officials. We also heard from retired justice Harry LaForme and Professor Kent Roach, who were instrumental in the public consultation process that preceded the development of this legislation.

We heard from James Lockyer, a founding member of Innocence Canada, which has been at the forefront of the issue of wrongful convictions for over 30 years. Mr. Lockyer was also involved in David Milgaard's infamous case, and he is the namesake of this legislation. After being released from prison, where he served 23 years for a murder he did not commit, David Milgaard dedicated his life to advocating for legal reforms to make the miscarriage of justice review process more fair, open and efficient. I hope to do right by David Milgaard, as well as his mother and fierce advocate, Joyce Milgaard, and their family and get this legislation passed promptly.

I also want to take a moment to express my sincere thanks to the former minister of justice, the Hon. David Lametti. He demonstrated extraordinary dedication to the issue of wrongful convictions and was a fierce advocate for the creation of an independent commission in Canada. This bill is a testament to his hard work and careful consideration. Our justice system will be better for David's commitment to this cause, and I thank him.

Unfortunately, this critical legislation has faced opposition at every turn from the Conservative members. At the committee, the Conservative members filibustered for over 30 hours. This delay meant that the valuable work of our committee ground to a halt. It was also a slap in the face to everyone in Canada who is suffering because of a potential miscarriage of justice. Rather than do good work and change our justice system for the better, Conservatives decided to stall and play games.

At the start of this current parliamentary stage, Conservatives put on notice amendments to delete every single clause in the bill. This was a ridiculous attempt to slow down the work we do as parliamentarians, to the detriment of all of our constituents. It is also, once again, offensive to the people who are waiting desperately for access to justice. Playing games with people's freedom and their

lives is beneath all of us. I am very disappointed to have seen the Conservatives' total disregard for this important work.

I would now like to speak to the importance of this legislation and the amendments made at committee. The idea of establishing an independent miscarriage of justice review commission has been recommended in several commissions of inquiry reports in Canada, including in the case of Donald Marshall, Jr. in 1989; Guy Paul Morin in 1998; Thomas Sophonow in 2001; James Driskell in 2008; and David Milgaard in 2008.

Similar independent commissions have been established elsewhere in the world. We are not the first to reach this important step. In 1997, a commission was created for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Scotland created its commission in 1997. The State of North Carolina established a commission in 2006, and New Zealand created theirs in 2020.

At the justice and human rights committee, we had the benefit of hearing from lawyers who worked in the commissions in North Carolina, and in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It was very helpful to hear from them, given the years of experience their commissions have had in this area. It was particularly helpful to hear that the commission in England, Wales and Northern Ireland allows, in exceptional cases, applications from people who did not seek appeal.

The witnesses mentioned at committee that the mental health and marginalization of an applicant are issues they consider in admitting applications in such cases. They also consider whether the nature of the miscarriage of justice is something that requires an investigation using the commission's special powers to access evidence. A witness also highlighted that one in three of the referrals for new appeals made by the commission in the U.K. is a case that was not appealed. Therefore, a significant proportion of the claims the commissions consider to be worth pursuing are of convictions that were never appealed. This information motivated the committee to amend the bill to provide greater flexibility for our commission.

- (1940)

As amended, the commission would allow applications in respect of cases that were not appealed, but only in exceptional cases. I am pleased that the committee made this important improvement to the legislation. The vast majority, if not all, of the witnesses who appeared in the committee agreed with this important discretionary element, including The Canadian Bar Association, the Criminal Lawyers Association, the dean of law at the University of Sherbrooke, and the Innocence projects in Quebec, at the University of British Columbia and at the University of Ottawa.

Several witnesses also raised the importance of preventing miscarriages of justice and the commission's role in addressing systemic issues. When he appeared before the committee, the minister explained that there were many proactive elements included elsewhere in the bill. Nonetheless, there was interest among committee members to include a specific power in the commission's mandate provision to address systemic causes of wrongful convictions.

Government Orders

Bill C-40 has, therefore, been amended to allow the commission to make recommendations to address systemic issues that may lead to miscarriages of justice. These recommendations will be directed toward relevant public bodies, including the Law Commission of Canada; federal departments and agencies; federal, provincial and territorial working groups; and parliamentary committees. The member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke proposed that amendment, and I would like to thank him for that. He has supported this bill, as always, and has been a strong advocate for improving our justice system. This member also proposed the bill's final amendment.

We heard at committee that people who profess their innocence may face challenges before, during and after they seek a review of their case as a potential miscarriage of justice. To reduce stigma and exclusion to programs, while they continue to serve their sentences, the bill now provides that the commission will be able to raise with Correctional Service Canada and the Parole Board of Canada the importance of not excluding applicants to their programs as a result of them having made an application for review on the grounds of miscarriage of justice.

Bill C-40 is very important legislation that is widely supported by external stakeholders and by many members of the House. Many people have been waiting for decades to have an independent miscarriage of justice review commission and for the review process to be more transparent and efficient. I hope that we can pass this legislation at third reading as quickly as possible so that it can be referred to the other place and can continue to make progress through both Houses toward royal assent.

• (1945)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, I know that my friend on the other side is an expert in the legal system. The government amended the bill to allow convicts to apply for conviction review, without having first exhausted all appeals. This will undoubtedly lead to individuals applying for a conviction review shortly after being sentenced.

Does the hon. member not believe that this will not strengthen the justice system but, instead, will weaken it?

Mr. James Maloney: Madam Speaker, flattery will get my colleague everywhere, but I do not profess to be an expert on anything, frankly. On this issue, he raised a very important point. There are many cases where people do not have the ability or the means to exercise their right of appeal, or there are many more cases where facts come up later, long after their ability to appeal has expired. It is only in exceptional cases where the commission will review those cases where they have not exhausted their appeal.

This is never going to serve as an alternative route to people who are appearing before the criminal courts.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam Speaker, the nine commissioners who will be appointed to this commission will not be required to understand French. The member who gave the speech cast the deciding vote. How does he feel about the fact that he is the person responsible for the violation of the rights of Franco-Canadians and Quebecers?

[*English*]

Mr. James Maloney: Madam Speaker, the premise of the member's question is that it is unfair, and it is wrong. This is not about trampling over rights. In fact, it is about expanding rights. The whole purpose of this commission is to make access to justice easier for the wrongfully convicted.

The member wants people to have access to this body in both official languages, full stop. She also wants the best people serving as commissioners on this body who can make sure that it happens. There are occasions where people from certain aspects of society do not speak both official languages but are very competent and very capable. We do not want to exclude those members because that would actually be detrimental to the people who appear before the commission.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am really confused. What happened in committee with this bill was the Conservatives filibustering and delaying, and then the bill finally gets over to the House here. The previous Conservative speaker, who spoke to this bill, spoke so glowingly of it, but that was just moments after he introduced 20 amendments to effectively, one by one, kill the bill clause by clause. I am just in awe as to what the Conservative strategy happens to be here. The member spoke a bit in his speech about what happened in committee.

Can the member try to make rhyme or reason of what is going on with the Conservative Party when it comes to this bill?

Mr. James Maloney: Madam Speaker, the answer to the last part of the question is that I do not think anybody can. The Conservatives are playing politics with the bill, pure and simple. They supported it at second reading. They filibustered the bill for 40 hours at committee. They hauled out the name of David and Joyce Milgaard here tonight; it is shameful.

This commission would be set up to be independent and efficient, and take it out of the hands of politicians. If the Conservatives are opposing this bill, I suppose that is an endorsement of the Minister of Justice or the previous minister of justice. Something tells me that is not what the purpose is behind this.

The Conservatives stand in this House, time after time, talking about law and order, and keeping our streets safe, but we also have to stand up for people who have suffered and have been wrongfully convicted. The purpose of this bill is to make that system much better.

• (1950)

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, does my colleague agree that we could create an independent review commission that would not necessarily lower the threshold for review?

David Milgaard's problem was never that the threshold was too high, but that the system was too cumbersome.

Mr. James Maloney: Madam Speaker, the member is very thoughtful and I enjoy working with him, as I said earlier.

I do not believe this would lower the threshold. It would change the nature of the equation that the commission has to calculate when reviewing the circumstances in each case. It is up to the courts to determine innocence or guilt. It would be up to the commission to determine whether maybe there has been a miscarriage of justice. That is not lowering the threshold, with all due respect. In fact, it is making the system more open and fair, and more accessible.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to speak to a very important topic. I am referring to the creation of an independent commission to review miscarriages of justice under Bill C-40. The bill is concrete and positive, a fact that deserves mention, considering it is not always a Liberal Party specialty. That is a rare occurrence indeed, as we know.

In 2021, the Minister of Justice commissioned a report on the current criminal conviction system. The findings of this report showed that awareness about the danger of wrongful convictions has increased in Canada and the world. None of the many people consulted for this report opposed the creation of a new independent body at arm's length from the government to replace the federal Minister of Justice in hearing applications for remedies for wrongful convictions.

This bill demonstrates a willingness to ensure that decisions about people who have been convicted are more independent and to strengthen public confidence in institutions. The reform proposed by Bill C-40 is a very good initiative, and the Bloc Québécois believes that creating this commission will have several positive effects.

First of all, it will allow for greater independence between the legal and political branches. The bill takes the discretion away from the justice minister and gives it to the commission. This is a step in the right direction, although it comes a little late, given that the Liberal government waited until after the media had reported on shocking cases of prisoners waiting months, even years, to have a miscarriage of justice reviewed. In the United Kingdom, for example, this system of having an independent commission review miscarriages of justice was set up 25 years ago. We are 25 years behind. This is not exactly a reason to pat ourselves on the back and break out the champagne.

This independence was called into question by the recent revelations about former justice minister David Lametti, reinforcing the need for the power to order a new trial to be taken out of the hands of ministers and given to an independent body, specifically the new miscarriage of justice review commission.

Let me refresh my colleagues' memories. The former justice minister ordered a new trial in the case of Justice Delisle, contrary to the recommendations of the Criminal Conviction Review Group, which said that no miscarriage of justice had occurred. This finding was also corroborated by Quebec's director of criminal and penal prosecutions.

This decision also came as a surprise to Quebec's director of criminal and penal prosecutions, Patrick Michel, who suspects that

Government Orders

the minister's use of power was arbitrary rather than discretionary. To add insult to injury, the sponsor of this bill is none other than the former minister of justice and former member for LaSalle—Émard—Verdun, which proves the importance of the bill's existence because of his actions.

The Bloc Québécois would like to mention that the passage of Bill C-40 will not do anything to change its desire to investigate this matter at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. This is about maintaining the public's confidence in our justice system. Favouritism has no place in our courts.

Since Bill C-40 seeks to take away the minister's power to order a new trial and instead give that power to commissioners, we think that decisions like the one made by former minister Lametti will not happen again and that this will help increase the public's confidence in the justice system.

The bill will also guarantee everyone access to the commission and a referral to legal services so that everyone, particularly the most vulnerable, will have true access to justice. The history of our courts and the recent revelations regarding the former justice minister remind us that we need to improve the judicial review process. Once again, this is about the public's confidence in our courts and our justice system.

Let us remember that this bill is named after the late David Milgaard. The Milgaard case is important because it reminds us that our courts, like any institution, are sometimes fallible. We need mechanisms to ensure that, when mistakes are made, they can be corrected. Just as a reminder, Milgaard was a young man who was convicted and sentenced to 23 years in prison for the murder of Gail Miller, a crime he never committed.

Because Milgaard and his mother, Joyce, defended David's innocence so tirelessly, we now understand the need for a judicial review mechanism. It is thanks to their campaign and the efforts of people like Donald Marshall, Guy Paul Morin, Thomas Sophonow and James Driskell that we are now working to improve our justice system. Every one of their stories is one more reason motivating us to create this commission. We thank them for fighting for a better justice system.

• (1955)

Finally, even though the Bloc Québécois is voting in favour of the bill, we must point out the hypocrisy of the Liberals and the NDP when it comes to the French language. My colleague, the member for Rivière-du-Nord, moved an amendment during clause-by-clause review of the bill to require the commissioners who are appointed to be fluent in both official languages. That was too much to ask. For the Liberals, the Conservatives and the NDP, the official languages are good for speeches and campaign days, but within the Canadian government, the Canadian public service or our courts, they are optional.

Government Orders

The NDP boast about defending the idea of bilingual judges since 2008, but they rejected the idea of requiring the commissioners heading this independent commission to be bilingual, and they voted against their convictions. The Liberals boast about being the first government to recognize the decline in French, but they voted against the idea of bilingual judges. We saw the same thing happen with the appointment of the unilingual anglophone Lieutenant Governor of New Brunswick, which is the only bilingual province in Canada. That is not to mention the appointment of the Governor General, who does not speak a word of French. To be fair, she knows how to say “bonjour”, and I think her French has improved. Now she knows how to say, “Comment ça va?”

Anyone who believes that the Liberals are making French a priority must be dreaming. Quebec's motto, however, is *Je me souviens*, which means “I remember”. On some level, it came as no surprise to see the Conservatives' contempt for French. After all, this was the party that once appointed a unilingual anglophone auditor general and unilingual anglophone Supreme Court judges. What comes next remains to be seen.

Although this great party claims to be a champion of French, once again, it does not walk the talk. That is what we call geography-dependent bilingualism. It adjusts to voter opinion like a weather vane adjusts to the wind. Moments like this reveal, or perhaps remind us, how incidental the French language is in Canada and how utopian it is to believe that the two official languages could ever truly be equal. If anyone is unfamiliar with the word “utopian”, I encourage them to look up the definition in the dictionary.

Although we are choosing to support this bill, I feel compelled to point out once again the hypocrisy of certain parties and members when it comes to defending and supporting the French language. It is interesting when the government repeats over and over, on the campaign trail, in the Speech from the Throne and in the House of Commons, that it is the first party to recognize the decline of French, but—surprise, surprise—it will not be the last to worsen that decline.

In closing, I hope this bill will be passed for all the reasons I outlined throughout my speech. It will foster greater public confidence in our justice system, greater independence in our justice system and, above all, greater access to justice. I also hope that, once the bill is passed, the government will make an effort to appoint commissioners who are proficient in both official languages. Why not do more to ensure that francophones have the same access to justice as anglophones? That is what substantive equality should be all about. It is not just a matter of obtaining services in French on a part-time basis. It is also about access to services in both official languages in Canada's justice system.

I can assure the House that we will take a closer look at this and make sure that this genuine concern is heard.

• (2000)

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have one question for the member and I really hope he can give me a yes or no on this.

What happens if a commissioner comes forward who is overly qualified, has everything the commission wants, but only speaks French? Would the member then suggest that individual should be disqualified?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Madam Speaker, once again, we see the profound hypocrisy at play here. Nothing goes deeper than Anglo-Saxon hypocrisy, and this MP just proved that to be true. For him, someone who is capable, competent and qualified must be someone who speaks one of the two official languages.

It makes no sense for a government to appoint a Governor General who does not speak a word of French when that is one of the official languages. It is ridiculous for a government to appoint a unilingual anglophone Lieutenant Governor in the only bilingual province in Canada. It is ridiculous for a government to appoint judges who do not speak a word of French to the Supreme Court of Canada. A person would have to be high on something to believe that defending and promoting French is a priority for the Liberals. I understand that they are the ones who legalized marijuana, but they should not—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to go to other questions.

The hon. member for Edmonton Manning.

[*English*]

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with the bill before us, the Liberals would lower the threshold for a review. Does the member agree that this would increase the risk to an overburdened and understaffed justice system that is under extreme strain right now and facing unacceptable delays, yes or no?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Madam Speaker, when a member of the Conservative Party, the party that brags about standing up for francophones, asks me to respond with a yes or no, it is hard to take that seriously. I wish I could ask my colleague whether he is comfortable with the fact that his party, which claims to recognize both official languages, is not in favour of having bilingual judges on this commission.

Again, I cannot take this seriously. As I said earlier, the Conservative Party appointed a unilingual anglophone auditor general. I have to say that he did learn French afterward. Who appointed unilingual anglophone justices to the Supreme Court? It was the Conservative Party. Who appointed a unilingual anglophone minister of foreign affairs who did not speak a word of French? A francophone who does not speak English would never be appointed minister of foreign affairs. That would just be too bad for the anglophones.

In terms of credibility, we cannot trust the federal parties to promote and defend French.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, as usual, I was impressed by my colleague's speech. That is to be expected, since he is a Bloc Québécois MP, after all.

Government Orders

I want to make one thing clear. We hear the same argument every time: If a unilingual francophone were to apply for the job, would we not want them to have the job because the incumbent should be proficient in both official languages? They make the same argument every time. However, what is the reality? Has there ever been a unilingual francophone Supreme Court judge? Has there ever been a unilingual francophone governor general? The answer is always no. It is not surprising. French is in the minority here, in this great land my friends call Canada.

I would like to ask my colleague if he thinks they are serious when the only argument they raise against the idea of requiring someone in an important position to be proficient in both official languages is to say that it would prevent a unilingual francophone from getting that position.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques has 40 seconds to respond.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncass: Madam Speaker, it will take me more than 40 seconds to explain how discrimination against francophones has been going on for as long as Canada has existed. We were promised reconciliation and substantive equality. We were promised that institutional bilingualism would be the salvation of francophones.

The Liberal Party, the Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party are federalist parties that are stacked with and controlled by the anglophone majority. Sometimes they feel generous and toss Quebeckers and francophones a bone now and then. However, when the time comes for concrete action to establish substantive equality between the two official languages, then the bones stop coming and all attempts at appeasement end.

• (2005)

[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise this evening to speak in support of Bill C-40, an act to amend the Criminal Code. This miscarriage of justice bill represents a critical step in our ongoing efforts to reform the criminal justice system and to address the systemic inequities that have long plagued it, particularly for indigenous people, racialized communities and marginalized Canadians.

For the better part of a decade, the New Democrats have called for the establishment of an independent commission to investigate wrongful convictions. In late 2021, we supported expediting Bill C-5 in return for the Liberals' promise to create this commission, which Bill C-40 finally delivers on. Justice delayed is justice denied, so we must act swiftly to ensure that those who are wrongfully convicted have a pathway to justice free from the delays and limitations of the current system.

The current process, where the Minister of Justice reviews applications for miscarriages of justice, has proven inadequate. Each year, dozens of applications are filed, yet only a handful proceed to investigation. Bill C-40 would address this by shifting the review power to an independent miscarriage of justice review commission, which would have the authority to direct new trials or hearings, or refer matters to a court of appeal. This independent body would not

be an alternative to the criminal justice system, but an essential adjunct that would create a fair and impartial review process.

The commission would consist of a chief commissioner and four to eight other commissioners appointed to reflect the diversity of Canadian society, considering gender equality and the overrepresentation of indigenous and Black persons in the criminal justice system. This diverse composition is crucial for building a commission that understands the unique challenges faced by marginalized communities.

Indigenous women in particular have disproportionately suffered miscarriages of justice. They are often charged, prosecuted, convicted and imprisoned due to systemic failures within the criminal justice system and the broader societal failure to protect them from racism, sexism and violence. According to the Senate report on the injustices experienced by indigenous women, expert witnesses have repeatedly highlighted these systemic issues. Bill C-40 is a necessary step toward addressing these deeply rooted injustices.

New Democrats worked tirelessly to improve Bill C-40 at the committee stage. We supported amendments that would ensure applicants can apply to the commission without having to receive a verdict from a court of appeal or the Supreme Court of Canada. This would remove a significant barrier for those who are wrongfully convicted but lacking the resources to continue lengthy legal battles. We also proposed amendments to empower the commission to make recommendations addressing systemic issues that lead to miscarriages of justice. This proactive approach can help prevent future injustices. Additionally, we ensured that Correctional Service Canada and the Parole Board of Canada would be informed of the importance of not obstructing applicants from accessing programs and services due to their review applications.

It is important to note that the last significant reform to Canada's conviction review process was in 2002. Since then, we have seen the establishment of similar independent commissions in the U.K. and New Zealand, demonstrating the efficacy of such bodies in addressing wrongful convictions. Canada must follow suit and ensure timely justice for those who are wrongly convicted.

Bill C-40 has received support from various stakeholders, including the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, the University of British Columbia's innocence project, and Innocence Canada. These organizations, along with experts like Dr. Kathryn Campbell from the University of Ottawa, have been instrumental in advocating for this crucial reform.

While we commend the Liberals for bringing this bill forward, it is long overdue. The delays in tabling and debating this bill are unjustifiable, particularly given the urgency of addressing wrongful convictions. Many individuals continue to serve lengthy sentences due to miscarriages of justice, and every day of delay is a day too long for them.

Government Orders

The Conservatives have obstructed this process at every turn with filibusters and threats of further delays. We urge all parties to put aside partisan differences and work together to ensure the swift passage of Bill C-40. Time is of the essence, and we must ensure that this bill receives royal assent before the summer parliamentary recess.

• (2010)

Bill C-40 offers a long overdue pathway for those wrongfully convicted to seek justice. It represents a significant step in addressing the historic and systematic injustices within our criminal justice system. New Democrats are in support of this bill and call on all members of the House to do the same. Let us move forward with a shared commitment to justice, equity and the rule of law.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague from Edmonton Strathcona so much. We work together on several files involving international injustices and human rights. We work together amazingly well.

Now, however, we may have a disagreement over Bill C-40. As we have mentioned throughout this debate this evening, we were very disappointed with the way the NDP members voted on a Bloc Québécois amendment that simply called for the commissioners of this future commission to be proficient in English and French, the two official languages.

Since we have spent all evening talking about justice, equity and equality, does my colleague not believe that, unfortunately, there may be an injustice when some francophones apply to this commission to defend their rights and are faced with commissioners who do not speak their language?

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, I apologize to my friend. I do not speak French very well, so it is hard for me to express myself on this issue. I will therefore speak in English. I am sorry.

[*English*]

The importance of the French language is vital. The riding of Edmonton Strathcona, which I am so happy to represent, has the French Quarter in it. In fact, 20% of our population identify as francophone in our communities.

When I spoke today of Bill C-40, one of the things I addressed is that there is a disproportionate impact on indigenous women. For me, it is important that every Canadian, whether they are francophone, indigenous or whatever region of the country they are from, is able to be represented adequately. I would need to ensure that there were services available in both official languages.

I would also want to make sure that all of those people who are on the commission adequately represent the population of Canada, particularly those who are marginalized and who are deeply impacted by our criminal justice system.

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, would the member for Edmonton Strathcona agree that we could pass legislation that would create an independent commission that is fair, open and efficient, but does not necessarily lower the threshold for review? The member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore said it does not lower the threshold at all. That then leaves me asking why we would change the wording.

How is the bill better with the language that we say lowers the threshold unnecessarily?

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, I think the member was not listening when I said what we have in Canada has not been updated since 2002. That means that, for 22 years, we have not looked at this judicial process.

It is not working. It is not working for marginalized people, particularly indigenous women in this country. It needs to be updated. It needs to be made more relevant so that justice is not denied to those people who are particularly marginalized.

The work that the committee has done makes this a better piece of legislation. It makes it stronger. I am upset that it has taken us so long to get to the point where we can pass this bill. I hope that we can get it through the House before the parliamentary break.

By all means, we do not need to put more barriers around justice for indigenous women in this country. We need to work to remove those barriers so there is justice for every Canadian equally.

• (2015)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to order made on Wednesday, February 28, the motion is deemed adopted.

[*English*]

Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 8:18 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Thursday, June 6, 2024

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Privacy Commissioner	
The Deputy Speaker	24515
Export Development Canada	
Ms. Ng	24515
Foreign Affairs	
Mr. Turnbull	24515
Government Response to Petitions	
Mr. Lamoureux	24515
Connected Care for Canadians Act	
Mr. Holland	24515
Bill C-72. Introduction and first reading	24515
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	24515
Interparliamentary Delegations	
Mr. Sorbara	24515
Haida Nation Recognition Act	
Mr. Anandasangaree	24515
Bill S-16. First reading	24515
(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time)	24515
Petitions	
Carbon Tax	
Mr. Brock	24516
Rare Diseases	
Mr. Brock	24516
First Responders Tax Credit	
Ms. Gazan	24516
Poverty	
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	24516
Natural Health Products	
Mrs. Gallant	24516
Gaza	
Mr. Angus	24516
First Responders Tax Credit	
Mr. Angus	24517
Public Safety	
Mr. Mazier	24517
Gaza	
Ms. Idlout	24517
Climate Change	
Ms. Idlout	24517
First Responders Tax Credit	
Ms. Idlout	24518
Questions on the Order Paper	
Mr. Lamoureux	24519

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Business of Supply	
Opposition Motion—Documents Regarding Sustainable Development Technology Canada	
Mr. Scheer	24519
Motion	24519
Mr. Lamoureux	24521
Mr. Masse	24521
Mr. Perkins	24521
Mr. Perkins	24522
Mr. Lamoureux	24523
Mr. Garon	24523
Mr. Masse	24524
Mr. Turnbull	24524
Mr. Williams	24526
Mr. Lemire	24526
Mr. Masse	24527
Mr. Perkins	24528
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	24528
Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné	24528
Mr. Vis	24530
Mr. Lamoureux	24530
Ms. Idlout	24530
Ms. Normandin	24530
Mr. Patzer	24532
Mr. Lamoureux	24532
Mr. Masse	24532
Mr. Kelly	24534
Ms. Larouche	24534
Mr. Williams	24535
Mr. Desjarlais	24535
Mr. Patzer	24536
Mr. Savard-Tremblay	24536
Mr. Lamoureux	24537
Mr. Vis	24537
Mr. Lamoureux	24538
Ms. Normandin	24539
Mr. Angus	24539
Mr. Barrett	24539
Mr. Lamoureux	24540
Ms. Larouche	24541
Mr. Williams	24541
Privilege	
Record of the Proceedings of the House	
Ms. Gazan	24541
Business of Supply	
Opposition Motion—Documents Regarding Sustainable Development Technology Canada	
Motion	24542

Mr. Sorbara	24542
Mr. Bezan	24544
Mrs. Desbiens	24544
Ms. Idlout	24544
Ms. Sgro	24544
Mr. Williams	24546
Mr. Lemire	24546
Ms. Idlout	24546
Mr. Brock	24546

Privilege

Alleged Breach of Deputy Speaker's Impartiality	
Ms. Mathysen	24548

Business of Supply

Opposition Motion—Documents Regarding Sustainable Development Technology Canada	
Motion	24548
Mr. Lamoureux	24548
Mr. Brock	24549
Mr. Bezan	24549
Mr. Savard-Tremblay	24549
Mr. Kurek	24549

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Democratic Institutions	
Mr. Vuong	24551
Graduation Congratulations	
Mr. Oliphant	24551
Ontario's Best Butter Tart Festival	
Mr. Chambers	24551
Abbas Hadian	
Mr. Ehsassi	24551
Wharf in Verchères	
Mr. Barsalou-Duval	24551
National Suicide Prevention Action Plan	
Mrs. Brière	24552
ArriveCAN App	
Mr. Brock	24552
Stan Smurthwaite	
Mr. Louis	24552
Arctic Inspiration Prize Winners	
Mr. Hanley	24552
Carbon Tax	
Mr. Maguire	24552
Rainbow Connections Conference	
Ms. Lapointe	24553
Anniversary of D-Day	
Mr. Brassard	24553
Ethics	
Mr. Tochor	24553

Attack in London, Ontario	
Mrs. Zahid	24553
Addictions	
Ms. Idlout	24553
Normandy Landings	
Ms. Normandin	24554
Ethics	
Mr. Kmiec	24554
Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency	
Mr. Kelloway	24554

ORAL QUESTIONS

Democratic Institutions	
Mr. Scheer	24554
Mr. LeBlanc	24555
Mr. Scheer	24555
Mr. LeBlanc	24555
Mr. Scheer	24555
Mr. LeBlanc	24555
Mr. Berthold	24555
Mr. LeBlanc	24555
Mental Health and Addictions	
Mr. Berthold	24555
Ms. Saks	24556
Democratic Institutions	
Mr. Therrien	24556
Mr. LeBlanc	24556
Mr. Therrien	24556
Mr. LeBlanc	24556
Labour	
Ms. McPherson	24556
Ms. Anand	24556
Climate Change	
Mr. Boulerice	24556
Mrs. St-Onge	24557
Carbon Pricing	
Mrs. Thomas	24557
Mr. van Koeverden	24557
Mrs. Thomas	24557
Mr. MacKinnon	24557
Mr. Calkins	24557
Mr. van Koeverden	24557
Mr. Calkins	24557
Mr. MacKinnon	24558
Mr. Patzer	24558
Mr. van Koeverden	24558
Mr. Patzer	24558
Mr. MacKinnon	24558
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship	
Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe	24558
Mr. Miller	24558

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe	24558
Mr. Miller	24559
Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe	24559
Mr. Miller	24559
Carbon Pricing	
Mr. Epp	24559
Mr. van Koeverden	24559
Mr. Dowdall	24559
Mr. Turnbull	24559
Mr. Godin	24559
Mr. van Koeverden	24560
Climate Change	
Ms. Collins (Victoria)	24560
Mr. van Koeverden	24560
Indigenous Affairs	
Mr. Desjarlais	24560
Ms. Hajdu	24560
Innovation, Science and Industry	
Mr. Jowhari	24560
Ms. Anand	24560
Mr. Barrett	24560
Mr. Turnbull	24561
Mr. Barrett	24561
Mr. Turnbull	24561
Mr. Deltell	24561
Mr. Duclos	24561
Mr. Deltell	24561
Mr. Duclos	24561
Agriculture and Agri-Food	
Mr. Perron	24561
Mr. Drouin	24562
Mr. Perron	24562
Mr. Drouin	24562
Ethics	
Ms. Lantsman	24562
Mr. Boissonnault	24562
Ms. Lantsman	24562
Mr. MacKinnon	24562
Mr. Genuis	24562
Mr. MacKinnon	24562
Infrastructure	
Mr. Lightbound	24563
Mr. Duclos	24563
Ethics	
Mr. Cooper	24563
Mr. MacKinnon	24563
Mr. Cooper	24563
Mr. MacKinnon	24563
Mr. Lloyd	24563
Mr. MacKinnon	24563
Telecommunications	
Mr. McLeod	24564
Ms. Hutchings	24564

Democratic Institutions	
Mr. MacGregor	24564
Mr. LeBlanc	24564
Canadian Heritage	
Mr. Morrice	24564
Mrs. St-Onge	24564
Presence in Gallery	
The Speaker	24564
80th Anniversary of D-Day	
Mr. Bezan	24565
Motion	24565
(Motion agreed to)	24565
Business of the House	
Mr. Berthold	24565
Mr. MacKinnon	24565

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Business of Supply	
Opposition Motion—Documents Regarding Sustainable Development Technology Canada	
Motion	24566
Mr. Lamoureux	24566
Mr. Bezan	24566
Mr. Perron	24566
Mr. Kurek	24566
Mr. Lamoureux	24566
Mr. Dalton	24568
Mr. Perron	24569
Mr. Davies	24569
Mr. Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	24569
Mr. Thériault	24569
Mr. Berthold	24570
Mr. Garon	24571
Mr. Boulerice	24571
Mr. Généreux	24572
Mr. Généreux	24572
Amendment	24573
Mr. Lamoureux	24574
Mr. Blanchette-Joncas	24574
Ms. McPherson	24574
Mrs. Atwin	24574
Mr. Généreux	24575
Mr. Garon	24576
Mr. Boulerice	24576
Mr. Van Bynen	24576
Ms. McPherson	24578
Mr. Ellis	24578
Mr. Ste-Marie	24578
Mr. Gerretsen	24578
Mr. Steinley	24578
Mrs. Block	24578
Mr. Ste-Marie	24580
Mr. Boulerice	24580
Mr. Ellis	24580

Mr. Cooper.....	24581
Mr. Perron.....	24582
Mr. Kelly.....	24582
Mrs. Gray.....	24582
Ms. Findlay.....	24583
Division on amendment deferred.....	24583

Mr. Perron.....	24595
Mr. Steinley.....	24596
Mr. Patzer.....	24596
Mr. Gerretsen.....	24597
Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.....	24597
Mr. Tochor.....	24597
Mr. Steinley.....	24598
Division on Motion No. 1 deferred.....	24598

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

National Strategy on Brain Injuries Act

Bill C-277. Second reading.....	24583
Mr. Gerretsen.....	24583
Mrs. Gray.....	24584
Mr. Blanchette-Joncas.....	24586
Mr. Boulterice.....	24587
Mr. Melillo.....	24588
Ms. Barron.....	24589
Mr. MacGregor.....	24590
Division on motion deferred.....	24591

Message from the Senate

The Deputy Speaker.....	24598
-------------------------	-------

Miscarriage of Justice Review Commission Act (David and Joyce Milgaard's Law)

Bill C-40. Report Stage.....	24598
------------------------------	-------

Speaker's Ruling

The Deputy Speaker.....	24598
-------------------------	-------

Motions in Amendment

Mr. Van Popta.....	24598
Motions Nos. 1 to 20.....	24598
Mr. Maloney.....	24600
Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.....	24600
Mr. Aboultaif.....	24600
Mr. Maloney.....	24601
Mr. Aboultaif.....	24602
Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné.....	24602
Mr. Gerretsen.....	24602
Mr. Van Popta.....	24602
Mr. Blanchette-Joncas.....	24603
Mr. Gerretsen.....	24604
Mr. Aboultaif.....	24604
Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.....	24604
Ms. McPherson.....	24605
Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.....	24606
Mr. Van Popta.....	24606

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Public Complaints and Review Commission Act

Bill C-20. Report stage.....	24591
Mr. Tolmie.....	24591
Mr. Steinley.....	24591
Mr. Kmiec.....	24591
Ms. McPherson.....	24593
Mr. Ste-Marie.....	24593
Mr. Perron.....	24593
Mr. Melillo.....	24593
Mr. Ste-Marie.....	24595
Mrs. Gray.....	24595
Ms. McPherson.....	24595

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