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Monday, May 6, 2013

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, May 6, 2013

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1100)

[*English*]

AN ACT TO AMEND THE CRIMINAL CODE (PRIZE FIGHTS)

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill S-209, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (prize fights), as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.) moved that Bill S-209 be concurred in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Massimo Pacetti moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to open the third reading debate of Bill S-209, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (prize fights).

No changes were proposed in committee, so Bill S-209 has not been amended. Since the bill is rather short, that is not surprising. We heard from several interesting witnesses in committee. Most of them were in favour of this bill, and only one opposed it.

I think it is important to take everyone's opinions into account so that we make the best possible decisions. The concerns that were raised were not about the bill itself, but about combative sports in general.

This is not a matter of promoting a specific sport. All sports involve their own risks. Many Canadians participate in certain sports knowing full well the associated risks.

This bill would modernize the Criminal Code to reflect what is really going on in our society by decriminalizing several extremely popular combative sports, such as karate, tae kwon do and mixed martial arts.

Although they are illegal under the Criminal Code, these sports are widely practised by Canadians across the country. The provinces tolerate these sports by designating them as boxing matches. Since the combative sports section of our Criminal Code has not been updated in 80 years, the provinces have had no choice but to tolerate them.

This situation is all the more ridiculous considering that certain combative sports are now Olympic sports, but they are illegal in Canada if we enforce the Criminal Code word for word. Young children participate in these sports.

No one in the House is questioning a person's right to participate in these sports. We are not trying to promote these sports or discourage Canadians from participating in them. All we want to do is modernize our laws to reflect today's reality.

The Canadian Medical Association told us that it thinks we should ban mixed martial arts and boxing, but it did not have a problem with other combative sports, such as karate or tae kwon do, which also involve hits to the head.

However, with the exception of boxing, these sports are all officially illegal, but tolerated. Doing nothing would not change anything. People would continue to participate in these sports, even though they could technically wind up in court for doing so.

Other sports, for example skiing and hockey, cause many serious injuries such as fractures and concussions. If we had to ban every sport involving risks, only sports such as curling and badminton would be left.

During the same meeting of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, another doctor who works in the world of combative sport, told us that he supports the bill. He explained that the health risks for participants can be reduced considerably by implementing safety regulations and measures. This particular doctor believes that by decriminalizing these sports we will foster regulated rather than underground competitions, which occur more frequently than we might imagine.

Private Members' Business

Researchers at Johns Hopkins University faculty of medicine published an article in the *Journal of Sports Science and Medicine* in 2006. They studied injuries sustained in mixed martial arts, which they found were similar to those in boxing and other combative sports. What is more surprising is that they believe fewer brain injuries are sustained in mixed martial arts than in boxing, because fewer mixed martial arts competitions end in knockouts compared to boxing.

As members probably know, a knockout usually occurs when the brain hits hard against the skull. However, mixed martial arts fights frequently end as a result of an armlock or choke. The competitors are often less inclined to punch because they want to avoid being pinned to the ground. In short, given that boxing is legal, we really do not have any good reasons to ban mixed martial arts.

This bill will decriminalize these sports and allow the provinces to regulate them.

• (1105)

A province could pass much stricter regulations for amateur mixed martial arts contests, such as not allowing a competitor to hit an opponent who is down. The bill does not aim to dictate rules for the sport; it aims to give tools to the provinces. The situation is ambiguous right now. If we do not amend the Criminal Code, there will be a threat hanging over the heads of the organizations involved in these disciplines because someone could contest their legality in court.

The bill will also have a positive impact on the growing industry of professional fights, which has been incredibly successful in Canada in the past few years. UFC is unbelievably popular across the entire country. Canadians represent approximately 25% of the global fan base. Organizers would obviously like to arrange fights in Canada as often as possible, which would inevitably bring a large number of tourists as well. There will be significant economic spinoffs for Canada. The provinces and cities will no longer have to creatively interpret the bill and will have more flexibility in allowing these types of competitions.

People are likely wondering why this bill adds only feet to the current definition of a prizefight. The reason is simple: there are no combat sports that do not use fists, hands or feet in some way, but there are sports, such as football and hockey, where contact is permitted with other parts of the body. By adding more descriptors, we would simply be adding more problems. That is why the proposed definition mentions only fists, hands and feet.

While this bill might not spark a revolution, it is still important. The prizefight section of the Criminal Code has not been amended since 1934, despite the fact that the world of combat sports has changed dramatically in the past 80 years. It is important that we, as parliamentarians, update the Criminal Code to reflect that reality.

This is one of those rare bills that we can all agree with, and I hope that all members will support it.

• (1110)

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech and also for bringing this Senate bill back to the House. He did a great job of explaining why it was so important to clarify the legislation in order to provide a clear

framework for a sport that can indeed be very dangerous. If we want this sport to be properly regulated, it is important to update the legislation.

I would like to give him the opportunity to elaborate on one thing he mentioned. People are sometimes surprised to learn that the incidence of concussion is lower in mixed martial arts than in boxing, for instance. Those who practice martial arts blend several disciplines, so participants are not limited to just hits to the head. Wrestling is also part of it, so various holds can be used during a match.

I wonder if the member could elaborate on some of the studies done on this. Perhaps he could also talk about the emotional aspect of this debate, since this sport is quite violent and extreme.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Chambly—Borduas for his question. I know that he has been working very hard on this issue. I am grateful for his support.

Indeed, this is a relatively new sport, which the UFC is actively promoting. The UFC has begun regulating the sport and trying to make it safer, relatively speaking, given that participants are not allowed to fight without first passing a medical. In addition, they cannot fight in a competitive match more than once every six months. Regulating the sport will also help eliminate illegal fights.

The bill gives us good reason to decriminalize this part of the Criminal Code and the legislation by adding the word “feet” to one section of the existing Criminal Code.

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his presentation.

Personally, I am not really a big fan of these types of fights. If I have understood correctly, the bill introduced this morning will update the rules and make this type of fighting legal, but not promote it. I would like to hear what he has to say about that.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

This is not about promoting a sport, but about regulating it. It will be up to the provinces to regulate and approve these fights. Furthermore, municipalities will have to decide whether they will allow these fights in their areas. The laws across Canada are all different. Some provinces and municipalities have such laws, others do not.

I will say it again: the idea is to update the Criminal Code. The bill does not promote the sport; it simply updates a section of the act that has not been updated for over 80 years. That is the purpose of this bill. It is a technical detail, and it is about time that Parliament took action.

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his presentation.

Private Members' Business

My colleague said that the bill does not promote the sport. However, there are real repercussions in this regard, whether in Montreal or Toronto. He talked about how this bill will affect tourism, but could he now talk about its legal ramifications? We know that the bill was studied by the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights and that some provinces allow the sport. Can he talk about what the Criminal Code does in this regard?

● (1115)

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, who is a good hockey player. It is a pleasure to respond to his comments about sports.

The bill aims to decriminalize sports where feet are used in combat, for example karate, taekwondo and other martial arts. Sports must be regulated at the federal level in order to ensure that participants are able to practise them in a safe environment. I do not believe that we should criminalize these sports, which is why the bill seeks to update the Criminal Code. Parliament has not examined this issue for 80 years, so it is time to review this technical detail.

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Goguen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to speak today in support of Bill S-209, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (prize fights).

Most of the attention given to Bill S-209 has focused upon the professional mixed martial arts matches that are contemplated by the bill, and that will be my first area of focus. Somewhat less attention has been given to the aspects of the bill that deal with amateur combative sports. I will speak later about that aspect of Bill S-209.

When the prizefight offence was first enacted by Parliament in 1892, there were no exceptions to the offence. In the Statutes of Canada, 1932-33, exceptions were made for boxing prizefights. Currently section 83 of the Criminal Code bans all prizefights, and then lists the exceptions to the offence. The first exception is for amateur boxing matches that meet the minimum glove weight. That is the requirement, the minimum glove weight. Each amateur boxing glove must weigh at least 140 grams.

The second exception is for a pro boxing match that is licensed by a province or an amateur "under glove weight" boxing match that is licensed by a province. Throughout my remarks, please understand that when I say province, this includes territories, which is exactly how the Interpretation Act defines it.

The amateur and professional boxing exceptions that I have just spoken of are the only exceptions that currently exist within section 83 of the Criminal Code. Former Bill C-31, introduced during the second session of the 40th Parliament, died on the order paper. This included a proposal to expand the exceptions in section 83, but only for amateur combative sports. An exception to the section 83 ban on prizefights for professional mixed martial arts was not a feature of the former Bill C-31.

Some provinces have chosen to license professional mixed martial arts contests as professional boxing matches under section 83 of the Criminal Code. While not all provinces have interpreted professional boxing in this way, it is clear that it is the responsibility of the Attorney General of the province to determine whether section 83 of

the Criminal Code has been breached, and if so, whether to prosecute those involved with a mixed martial arts contest.

In any case, Bill S-209 will certainly clarify that provinces may license professional mixed martial arts contests, and the matches will clearly fall within the section 83 exceptions to the prizefighting offence. Some provinces are awaiting this clarity before they will move to license professional mixed martial arts matches.

Under Bill S-209, a professional boxing match that is licensed by a province and a professional mixed martial arts match that is licensed by a province would be the only forms of professional combative sport that would be exempted from the section 83 prizefighting offence. Bill S-209 does not contemplate other professional combative sport exceptions.

I want to note that professional wrestling has not been considered to engage the prizefight offence provisions in section 83 of the Criminal Code. Although professional wrestlers are trained athletes, professional wrestling is viewed as entertainment that is carefully choreographed and therefore not as a prizefight.

The Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights has heard about the many safeguards that exist in the world of professional mixed martial arts, including the use of medical doctors who are independent of the athletes and who do assessments before, during and after the matches. Moreover, unlike boxing, the athlete may tap out, thereby signalling submission. Most importantly, under Bill S-209, the province would determine what additional safeguards and conditions it will attach to the provincial license for a professional mixed martial arts contest.

Professional mixed martial arts and professional boxing each carry a risk of injury. While a knockout is one way to win a match in boxing, a match can also be won on points that include blows to the body. In mixed martial arts, matches can be won by submission holds or by an athlete tapping to signal submission.

It seems to me that it is better to allow provincial regulation of boxing and mixed martial arts, because a regulated environment is a safer environment than one that is not regulated. Conditions can be inserted that promote health and safety of athletes. I am satisfied that the provinces are best placed to determine the acceptance by the provincial public of pro boxing and pro mixed martial arts matches, and to determine the conditions to granting a provincial license for a prizefight. If Bill S-209 is adopted, the police will continue to have investigative responsibility for prizefights in combative sports that are unsanctioned and therefore illegal.

● (1120)

With regard to prosecution, the Attorney General of each province, as I have noted earlier, is responsible for the prosecution of Criminal Code offences within the province. Bill S-209 would not in any way change this investigative or prosecutorial responsibility. I am confident that the police and prosecutors will be vigilant in investigating and prosecuting prizefights that are not sanctioned by a province.

Private Members' Business

There has been recent media attention to an unsanctioned martial arts contest in the United States in which a Canadian athlete died. Amending the Criminal Code, section 83, would encourage professional athletes in Canada to participate in licensed boxing and mixed martial arts events where there is medical supervision before, during and after the match, and also in situations where rules and conditions of licensing are carefully considered by the provinces.

Let me speak now about amateur combative sports. With one small addition that I shall soon discuss, Bill S-209 reproduces the proposed amateur combative sport amendments to section 83 that were found in former Bill C-31. That bill would have amended section 83 of the Criminal Code in order to expand amateur prizefights beyond amateur boxing to include any amateur combative sport contest that is sanctioned by the province. Similarly, Bill S-209 would expand the range of provincial decision-making related to amateur combative sports.

The key concepts in Bill S-209 relating to amateur combative sports are the following:

First, a province would be able to authorize a prizefight in an amateur combative sport that is on the Olympic program. The addition, found within Bill S-209 but not found in former Bill 31, which I mentioned earlier, adds that a province would be able to authorize amateur prizefights in a combative sport that is on the Paralympic program. Moreover, if the province so chooses, it could require licensing for prizefights in Olympic or Paralympic amateur sports.

Second, a province would be able to authorize a prizefight in an amateur combative sport that the province chooses to place on a list of designated amateur combative sports. Here again, if the province desires, it could require licensing.

Third, Bill S-209 adds an exception for any amateur combative sport prizefight if the province has granted a licence. This gives a province the ability to license an amateur combative sport prizefight even if the amateur combative sport is not on the Olympic program, the Paralympic program or the provincially designated amateur combative sport list.

Bill S-209 would introduce far greater provincial choice on the range of amateur combative sport prizefights that could occur than currently exists under section 83 of the Criminal Code. This seems entirely fitting, because provinces are best placed to determine whether there is public acceptance and what measures need to be in place to assure athlete safety in a particular amateur combative sport or for a particular competition.

In this day and age it is entirely appropriate to update the Criminal Code to ensure that amateur combative sport prizefights are clearly on side with the law. I believe that amateur athletes in combative sports beyond boxing should clearly be able to participate in prizefights if the province has sanctioned the matches.

Members will have noticed a small change in Bill S-209 relating to amateur boxing when compared with the existing section 83 of the Criminal Code. Currently an amateur boxing match that uses the minimum glove weight does not need to have any provincial sanction. If “underweight” gloves are used, currently the match must

obtain a provincial licence. With Bill S-209, even if the current minimum glove weight is used for an amateur boxing prizefight, the province will decide whether it will simply allow the match because amateur boxing is on the Olympic program or whether it will require that the amateur boxing prizefight obtain a provincial licence.

While not everyone enjoys watching professional mixed martial arts matches, the sport has reached the point of great popularity in Canada for both fans and athletes. I am much happier to see these events clearly legalized so that whenever a province grants a licence for a match, we can be assured that athlete safety is top of mind.

Having provincially sanctioned matches will make it very clear that a mixed martial arts prizefight that does not hold a provincial licence is an illegal activity. I want to underscore that promoters, participants, surgeons, aides, referees, attendees and even reporters at illegal prizefights are subject to police investigation and to prosecution under section 83 of the Criminal Code.

In closing, I encourage all members to support the bill.

● (1125)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill S-209. As the previous speaker pointed out, this issue was also addressed in Bill C-31, which was introduced in a previous Parliament.

Bill S-209 seeks to update section 82 of the Criminal Code to include mixed martial arts and, more generally, prizefights. Debates on this issue can get quite heated, since some people disapprove of these sports for reasons that are sometimes emotional, but nonetheless legitimate.

As my hon. colleague from Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel so eloquently stated, this is first and foremost a legislative issue, not a sports-related one. This distinction must be clear, since sporting activities can become a social issue. As legislators, I believe that our role is to ensure that there is a clear legal framework in place to properly regulate sports.

What does “properly regulate” mean? That is a very important question. At this time, we all know that mixed martial arts fights take place throughout most of Canada, in most municipalities, provinces and territories, where the athletics commissions that have been created apply their own definitions to the sport in order to circumvent section 82 of the Criminal Code and make these fights subject to provincial legislation.

For instance, when the UFC—the most popular and largest mixed martial arts league—championships were held in Montreal, Quebec, the Government of Quebec logo appeared on the referees' jackets, sending the message that the provincial government is very involved in regulating the sport and can impose sanctions.

We are in a rather odd situation, given that the sport is practised regardless, even though the Criminal Code is rather vague about it all. This means that major leagues like the UFC have to carefully watch over and protect their athletes, for insurance reasons, among others. Nevertheless, smaller leagues are less subject to this obligation.

Decriminalizing these fights will give the provinces the discretion to decide whether such fights can take place within their borders. Furthermore, bringing the smaller leagues and all fights into the spotlight will help ensure that they are all properly sanctioned and regulated.

The example given by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice is very interesting. Historically speaking, and even more recently, the most tragic incidents have occurred during illegal or underground fights. Given that this sport will continue to be practised regardless of the outcome of our vote on this bill, we do not want to see these fights go underground. In order to properly regulate this sport, we want everything to be clear. I cannot emphasize this enough, for it is truly key. This is really a legal issue, not a sports-related one, as the various members who have already spoken on the matter have pointed out.

I would like to bring up another interesting point. We asked people why they oppose this sport, and their reasons were often emotional ones. People seem to think that the injury rate is very high, yet studies have shown the opposite. There are fewer concussions in mixed martial arts than in boxing, for example.

● (1130)

That shows that people sometimes forget that mixed martial arts blends a number of disciplines—some of which are permitted at and part of the Olympics—such as tae kwon do, judo and wrestling. Boxing is legal in Canada and it involves only hits to the head. There are various ways of winning a fight in mixed martial arts, including by submission. It is important to point that out because certain studies have shown that there are far fewer injuries than in other sports, such as football and hockey. People need to take that into consideration before they write the sport off as being more dangerous.

The witnesses heard by the Senate committee were divided, particularly those in the medical community. I would be remiss if I did not mention those who oppose this type of contest and only mentioned those who are in favour. The Canadian Medical Association, for example, has spoken out against this bill. I would like to talk more about why. Doctors are stakeholders in this issue, but they do not have reason enough to oppose the sport. The Canadian Medical Association opposes all sports that aim to incapacitate an opponent. However, there is a grey area there.

The same goes for football, where there is blocking, and hockey, where there is checking. A person playing defence might be tasked with neutralizing his opponent in a certain way. In that context, we understand the association's position, but in this case enough studies show and enough doctors agree that there is no conclusive evidence to suggest that the injury rate is higher in combative sport. In fact, quite the opposite is true. I thought that was very important to point out.

Private Members' Business

In mixed martial arts, the rules in place ensure that the athletes are in good health and that they do not suffer serious injuries, such as concussions. The current rules are better than the ones for football and hockey. Other sports should consider adopting similar rules. For example, an athlete who has participated in a fight cannot participate in another before a significant period of time has passed. What is more, the provincial governments are responsible for making the rules. When we are talking about the rate of injury and concussions, we have to keep in mind that there is already a solid set of rules in place.

Speaking of the provinces, only a handful of them still do not allow this sport. I wonder what they have to say about all this. The bill is interesting in that sense because it leaves the final decision to the provinces and does not tell them what to do. It is all there in black and white. If a province decides to allow this sport to be practised in its jurisdiction, then it is up to that province to set up an athletic commission to govern this sport. We are not talking about legalizing a sport. We are talking about decriminalizing it and then leaving it up to the provinces to use their sound judgment and wisdom in their own jurisdiction to oversee the whole thing.

Finally—and I cannot stress this enough—this is not a matter of promoting one sport over another. This is a legal issue. It is a question of removing an ambiguity that currently exists and decriminalizing a sport so that the provinces can regulate it better. This sport already exists, and the athletes who practise it—and we know that their numbers are growing in Canada—need to be properly monitored and kept safe.

● (1135)

That is what we are trying to do today. For that reason, I will support the bill.

[*English*]

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to rise today in the House to speak in support of Bill S-209. I want to applaud the hard work of the Liberal member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel. He has worked very hard with other members from all parties and with the mixed martial arts community to make this happen. I am also very pleased that the government is in support of this Liberal initiative in the House of Commons.

The purpose of this bill is to legalize certain combat sports that are currently illegal under the Criminal Code. Mixed martial arts is a growing sport, and its popularity is clear. It is, therefore, critical that we amend the Criminal Code so as to remove any uncertainty regarding the legality of the sport. By way of background, the provisions of the Criminal Code that deal with prizefighting have not been amended since 1934. Much has changed, obviously, since then.

During the early decades of the last century, these sports were primarily boxing and wrestling. Following the conclusion of the Second World War, mixed martial arts and combat sports saw significant growth.

Private Members' Business

Let me give a few examples of the growth in this industry, in particular the influence of martial arts such as judo, karate and tae kwon do. The influence of Asia in this regard is remarkable and a direct result of our Allied soldiers having been stationed overseas in Asia. Soldiers brought those sports back home, and today we can see how far they have come in becoming mainstream. Young and old, all appreciate these sports. Even more enjoy watching them, either in person or on television. Likewise, these sports are recognized by the Olympic organizing committee.

While these sports are somewhat new and popular, some are still illegal because the only exception to prizefighting set out in the Criminal Code is boxing. There can be a situation then, for example—and this happens—when, let us say, two women trained in the sport of tae kwon do decide to have a match for a prize in a basement. This fight would be only legal so long as they do not use their feet. The definition, therefore, is too restrictive and needs to be expanded. That is why Bill S-209 intends to change the definition to include feet.

As it was established in the Senate committee, adding more descriptors to this definition, such as elbows and knees, is not necessary and could even be counterproductive since contact sports such as hockey could then be considered prizefighting sports. That is why the definition is limited to fists and feet. By modernizing the Criminal Code to permit combative sports such as mixed martial arts and karate, we would go a long way to encouraging wider acceptance of these activities as legitimate and mainstream sports.

One other feature of this bill is to provide greater uniformity and, again, clarity from one jurisdiction to another. Currently, some provinces call mixed martial arts “boxing” to ensure compliance with the Criminal Code. They do so because the code provision specifically references hands and fists. In other provinces, these sports are not permitted simply because those provinces apply a more stringent standard to the application of the Criminal Code.

As a result of this lack of uniformity, many groups organize underground contests that are not governed by provincial commissions. This, as everyone can imagine, is very dangerous. In underground contests, there are seldom any safety standards or, if there are safety standards, they vary from contest to contest. This bill would hopefully lift these underground matches to the public arena where they belong and where they could be properly regulated by the provinces. In fact, the bill would free provinces to construct or develop safety standards as they see fit, and we assume the provinces would look to each other for best practices in this regard.

Likewise, as my colleague from Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel noted in an earlier speech, these proposed changes to the Criminal Code would provide amateur and professional level organizations enhanced stature and public approval through appropriate legislative oversight, when needed.

• (1140)

It is true that some Canadians have raised concerns about the perceived violence contained in these sports. Injury in sport is common. We see it time and time again in hockey, when a clean check on an opponent can cause great damage. How often do we see in hockey games concussions and injury resulting from a hard check? We need only recall the Montreal-Ottawa game just this past

Thursday, when we saw Lars Eller knocked out, injured as a result of a check. Depending on which team one roots for, that particular check was either clean or dirty. The point is that in most sports, contact sports particularly, the risk of injury exists.

As noted by the mover of the bill, we have heard from experts who appeared at committee and referred to a study from Johns Hopkins University that compared injuries resulting from mixed martial arts to those occurring in other major sports. The rate of injuries is not inconsistent with that of other sports, for example, hockey. In fact, it suggests that the injuries in mixed martial arts are generally less serious than those in boxing.

The reality is that mixed martial arts sports exist and a significant number of Canadians participate in them. These sports should not be confined or relegated to underground contests away from public scrutiny and proper regulations, and that is exactly the point. The sport of mixed martial arts must be regulated, not banned. Prohibition only leads to more underground fights and, as I mentioned, this is dangerous. Prohibition also means that the illegal underground economy is allowed to benefit. Revenues from underground prizefighting go undeclared, which again does not benefit the public nor taxpayers.

We know that when we watch a UFC contest, we are watching athletes. We are watching individuals who take their sport seriously. We are watching athletes who train hard. We are watching athletes who respect each other. We also know that every precaution is taken to limit injury. However, when injury does occur, medical teams are ready to intervene. My colleagues will know that Canada is the home of the world's most accomplished mixed martial arts athlete. Quebec's Georges St-Pierre is a world champion and an example of professionalism. He is a true athlete.

Bill S-209 would support both fans and organizers, which will in turn help improve the Canadian economy. Expanding the scope of what is permissible under the Criminal Code is important.

For all these reasons, I support the bill and congratulate my Liberal colleague for his efforts to modernize the Criminal Code to reflect the new realities of these popular sports.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill S-209, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (prize fights).

I think it is important to start by making one thing perfectly clear about this bill. Everyone who has spoken about this bill today has said the same thing. The purpose here is not necessarily to promote a sport like mixed martial arts over another, but simply to update the Criminal Code to reflect current practices.

Private Members' Business

Personally, like many people from my generation, I was a Bruce Lee fan growing up, but that does not mean I wanted to go out and hit everyone just to be like him. However, I did take lessons that were very interesting. They gave me discipline and taught me to take care of my body. I was not going to hit everyone just for the sake of doing so or so that I could emulate Bruce Lee.

Things change and that is what we are seeing now, in a way. Mixed martial arts are a little more structured. This sport is quite new. The members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights had a chance to study the bill and many witnesses appeared before the committee, including members of the UFC.

I would like to point out that the UFC is a league. It does not necessarily represent the entire sport. It is a well-organized league. Georges St-Pierre, who is famous in Quebec, Canada and around the world is a member of that league. Again, I am not here to promote this sport, but to say that society has changed and adopted this sport.

At the federal level, the objective is to decriminalize this sport. We do not want to regulate it by proposing rules. We want to leave it up to the provinces to regulate it. In fact, that is what is happening now, even though the sport is technically illegal under the Criminal Code. Subsection 83(2) of the Criminal Code legalizes or decriminalizes boxing, but it does not cover sports like karate, kung fu or, in this case, mixed martial arts.

Our objective is to come up with a certain definition. I am not going to get into the details of that definition, because I think everyone agrees on this. There was no real discussion with regard to the amendments because we all agree on this point. A few questions were asked and the experts who came to committee answered those questions.

We are happy with this bill. I thank my colleague, the member for Chambly—Borduas and the NDP's sports critic. He has worked very hard on this issue.

What I am saying is that society is changing. More and more people are participating in this sport. Although the sport is prohibited under the Criminal Code, such events attract tens of thousands of spectators at places such as the Bell Centre in Montreal and bring in a lot of revenue. Toronto hosted the largest mixed martial arts event in Canada.

Once again, as my colleagues have said, this is not about promoting the sport. We simply want to look at the facts. The provinces already regulate the sport with certain protocols. For example, they require athletes to have a certain skill level. Not just anyone can walk into an arena to fight.

However, if we continue to ignore the facts and say that we are against mixed martial arts and do not want it happening in our backyard, nothing will change. The sport will remain a crime or remain technically illegal, and there will be a black market. That means that people will continue to fight, but the fights will not be properly regulated.

The purpose of the bill is to decriminalize this sport at the federal level and to let the provinces create their own regulations. Several provinces—though not all—have already developed regulations for this sport. However, things are evolving. This sport is very new on

the international scene. We are seeing a change within Canadian society.

• (1145)

We know that the people of Quebec have accepted this sport. When there is a major public event, the police do not try to interfere or to stop it. Of course, I am not saying that everyone supports these sports. I am not a big fan myself. I would rather watch a Bruce Lee movie than see people fighting for real in a cage, something I find quite violent.

That being said, I am not passing judgment, and I do not necessarily wish for the federal government to intervene and decide that, based on its moral values, these activities are wrong and must be regulated and criminalized. Things have simply evolved.

The bill introduces legal changes to the Criminal Code. One change adds the word “feet” to a definition, in order to include some mixed martial arts sports. It reflects a societal change.

I will use karate as an example. My four- and seven-year-old nephews are both learning karate. This does not mean that they are particularly violent kids. On the contrary: their parents chose this sport as a way to direct their activities. That is exactly our message to the provinces: they can direct how these sports are practised. They have agreed to have these sports in their territory, so they should be responsible for regulating them.

Meanwhile, the federal government must make sure it does not create obstacles. It must also decriminalize these activities. We know that society has evolved, but the Criminal Code did not evolve in the same way. As a result, provinces may wonder whether they can regulate these sports. We have already seen cases where provinces worked around the problem, either by deciding to treat an event just like an ordinary boxing match or sport event, or by using other solutions. Provinces have tolerated the sport.

When we studied the bill in committee, all parties supported it because they saw it as a good option.

I would like to draw a parallel with another bill that was introduced. Bill C-290 addressed bets on individual events. I want to mention it because it was unanimously passed in the House. Unfortunately, the Senate has not gotten around to dealing with it yet. Now we have a bill from the other chamber. I am wondering how legitimate the Senate really is.

Bill C-290 was introduced by one of my NDP colleagues. The House agreed to it unanimously. Now it is at the Senate. People seem to be waking up. I even heard a Conservative member say that he did not know it passed and that he did not support it.

The bill is at the other chamber. I do not know what is happening with it. We heard that some Senators are not in favour of it. I am mentioning this because the same principle comes into play here. Certain provinces want to legalize both mixed martial arts and betting on individual events. It generates revenues. However, revenues are not the main argument. They simply want to legalize something that is currently illegal and take the money out of the black market and the underground economy.

Private Members' Business

Will not changing the Criminal Code immediately result in prohibition? Will that fix the problem? No. Society—be it the provinces, the people who watch the sport, or people in general—has changed and now accepts these sports.

I hope that Bill S-209, from the other chamber, will receive majority or unanimous support here. If the bill passes, we hope that Bill C-290, which was passed unanimously here, will make progress in the other, supposedly “wiser”, chamber. I put that in quotation marks because I am not entirely sure that is the case.

• (1150)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before I recognize the hon. member for Sudbury on resuming debate, I will just let him know that there are about seven minutes remaining in the period for private members' business. Of course, he will have the remaining time when the House next resumes, presuming he takes that time.

The hon. member for Sudbury.

• (1155)

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thank you for informing me about the time. I will do my best to get the seven minutes in. I will take my remaining time at the next sitting.

I am very proud to stand today to offer my support for Bill S-209, an act to amend the Criminal Code (prize fights). The rules governing prizefights have not been updated since 1934, and the current legislation simply does not represent the reality of what is happening in Canada.

In the Criminal Code as it stands, boxing is the only combative sport permitted, and even then, only in certain circumstances. Having this law that we turn a blind eye to is bad on two fronts. First, it can begin to undermine the legitimacy of other laws, which is bad for our legal system as a whole. Second, it creates uncertainty for people who organize or participate in sports such as mixed martial arts, commonly referred to as MMA. It is therefore timely for the House to address the discrepancy between what is written in statute and how the law is applied.

In my opinion, the bill strikes the right balance by allowing provinces and municipalities or designated regulatory bodies, such as an athletic commission, to allow MMA, as defined by the bill, in their territories without breaching the Criminal Code.

What exactly does the bill do? Prizefights would remain illegal in Canada. The bill goes further in defining a “prize fight” by adding “feet” to the definition. It would include fights in which combatants use their feet as well as their fists and hands. The bill then lists four exceptions to the definition of “prize fight”. These exceptions are not “prize fights” but rather are authorized combative sports.

The first is a contest between amateur athletes participating in sports in a program of the International Olympic Committee or the International Paralympic Committee. This exception covers sports including boxing, fencing, Greco-Roman wrestling, freestyle wrestling and taekwon do.

The second and third exceptions are for contests between amateur athletes in sports designated by a province or a body appointed by a

province. These exemptions cover sports such as karate, kick-boxing and mixed boxing, depending on the province.

The fourth and final exception covers professional contests. The bill states that they are exempt from the prizefight ban only if the fight is “held...with the permission or under the authority of an athletic board, commission or similar body established by or under the authority of the province's legislature for the control of sport within the province”.

A number of provinces, such as Ontario, Quebec and Manitoba, as well as municipalities such as Edmonton and Calgary, have already acted and have changed their definition of combat sports to allow MMA. By passing the bill, Parliament would simply be updating our legislation to make it consistent with the laws in these places.

It is important to note that no province or municipality, depending on which level of government regulates combative sports in a province, would be obliged to allow MMA. The ultimate choice would still rest with them.

There is significant growth in the popularity of MMA in Canada. Like many Canadians, I spent last Saturday evening watching UFC 159 on TV. UFC events have filled arenas such as the Bell Centre in Montreal and the Air Canada Centre in Toronto.

The Ultimate Fighting Championship, or UFC, is the largest mixed martial arts promotion company in the world. Georges St-Pierre, one of the biggest stars in UFC and the current welterweight champion, is from St. Isidore, Quebec. He boasts a 24-2 record in MMA and was named Sportsnet's athlete of the year in 2008, 2009 and 2010.

However, while GSP may be the most renowned Canadian in the UFC, he is not the only one. For example, Mitch Gagnon trains in my own riding in Sudbury. After having an 8-1 record in MMA, he recently joined the UFC. His first contest was in July last year at UFC 149 in Calgary, and he recorded his first win at UFC 152 in Toronto last September.

• (1200)

Mitch trains with Team Shredder, which is housed in the Northern Ontario Multi Discipline Athletic Arts Academy in Sudbury. NOMDAAA, for short, trains students in mixed martial arts, tactical Sambo, Brazilian jiu-jitsu, Muay Thai kick-boxing, Russian Systema, wrestling, judo and Yu Shin Do, and it offers cardio circuit training and athletic development as well. It has a proven track record of training champions and of ensuring a positive, motivating and fulfilling experience for all students, including me.

I spoke this week with Yves Charette, the owner/operator. They have over 150 students, both adults and children. He is very focused on providing confidence-building for the young children who are participating in many of these martial arts. I know that this is helping my own daughter with confidence.

Government Orders

We talk a lot about anti-bullying programs. When we provide children with confidence, it actually goes a long way in ensuring that bullying at school will not happen. These are some of the things that are important when we are talking about karate or any type of sport in which children can gain confidence. Whether mixed martial arts, hockey, football, basketball or canoeing, if it provides confidence for children, it is doing something right.

NOMDAAA is a not-for-profit organization that has received funding from the chief of police youth initiative fund, which also takes kids off the streets and provides them with training. It gives them something to do with their time and something to learn, which again builds that confidence. I am very proud of what NOMDAAA is doing in Sudbury.

I will save my final piece for next time, but I want to thank organizations such as NOMDAAA and the other amateur athletic groups that are doing great work from coast to coast in this country.

I think this bill will allow us to see it at the professional level and will hopefully inspire kids to get involved and gain confidence.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Sudbury will have three minutes when the House resumes debate on this motion.

The time provided for consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

* * *

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to update the House on the schedule of business for this week.

I am pleased to report that as a result of very productive discussions the government has been having with the official opposition, Bill S-9, nuclear terrorism act, will now be debated on Friday. I am also pleased to report that I anticipate that as a result of those productive discussions, the debate will actually conclude on that day. This is important, as it is an important issue. I underline that it is combatting terrorism, which is of increasing relevance in the news these days, and it is important to see this bill in place.

As a result of these discussions, I can also say that the next allotted day, which is the seventh allotted day of this period for the NDP, will now take place on Thursday, May 9.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN 2013 ACT, NO. 1

The House resumed from May 3 consideration of the motion that Bill C-60, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget

tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in my last introductory speech on Friday, I laid out the history of prior budgets to stress the importance of having a good fiscal position. As a result, it is possible today to speak of a budget that is the right budget for this time.

I spoke about the action our government took early on. It lowered taxes, for instance, so that today's average family of four pays \$3,400 less in taxes. Our federal corporation tax has been reduced from 21% in 2006 to 16% and will go to 15% to make businesses more competitive and allow them to invest in their businesses. That will give them an edge in global competition.

We also paid down our debt by \$34 billion between 2006 and 2008, while still increasing transfer payments to the provinces. We gave our municipalities much needed revenue by way of gas-tax sharing and made it permanent to ensure predictability. We began tackling red tape and other irritants that have hindered businesses in the past and helped create a healthy economic climate so that Canada could position itself against global competition.

I could go on explaining why these measures have helped make Canada the envy of our G8 trading partners. It was because of these pre-emptive measures that this government was able to provide the necessary stimulus by way of the economic action plan, announced in budget 2009, when the world faced a financial meltdown resulting in a shocking recession, which some even called a depression, that still afflicts much of the world today.

The stimulus money from this economic action plan has helped thousands of communities right across Canada update or replace aging infrastructure. For example, in my riding of Chatham-Kent—Essex, this money has been used to repair roads and bridges, since this area has one of the highest concentrations of bridges in our country. We have reached a crisis point, with many bridges in need of repair and a municipality stretched to its full extent. There is water treatment in Leamington, community projects, and the list goes on.

Bill C-60 would build on all these past budgets. This budget would include a new building Canada plan with over \$53 billion in new and existing funds. The gas tax fund would be indexed. There would be \$14 billion allocated for major economic infrastructure projects that have national, regional and local significance. This is good news, again, for Chatham-Kent—Essex.

In addition to all this, the federal government would invest over \$10 billion in bridges, meteorological services, national parks, VIA Rail, small craft harbours, ports, military bases and other federal infrastructure assets. Again, this is good news for Chatham-Kent—Essex.

Government Orders

The Windsor–Detroit crossing is critical to the economic well-being of my riding. Every day, for instance, trucks ship produce from our greenhouses in the Leamington area. Eighty per cent of what is produced in Leamington and the surrounding area, which is incidentally the largest collection of greenhouses in North America, is shipped to the U.S.

Anyone who has been on the Ambassador Bridge knows why it is so important to replace this aging bridge. Work has begun on the approach, and the project is well under way. This was made possible by budget 2009. I was pleased to be able to help open the Huron Church parkway project, and last fall I was also present when our Prime Minister signed the important agreement with Governor Snyder from Michigan to make the twin-span bridge a reality. All that was left was a presidential sign-off, and that was completed when President Obama signed off on this project just last month. This project will provide thousands of jobs in the next few years and until 2020, when the bridge is to be completed.

Included in budget 2013 would be additional monies to keep this process going, making sure that there would be funds for permits, necessary licences, et cetera. They would be just part of our ongoing commitment to this important project.

Another part of our federal infrastructure asset fund that would affect Chatham-Kent—Essex would be the small harbour component. Few people know that the riding of Chatham-Kent—Essex has the largest freshwater fishing port in the world.

• (1205)

Wheatley Harbour is an important part of our community. Freshwater fishermen rely on the harbour, as does a shipbuilder named Hike Metal, which has built some very impressive ships throughout the years. The commitment by this government to freshwater harbours will enable me to go back to this community and continue to plan toward the success and improvement of Wheatley Harbour.

Like many places in Canada, my riding of Chatham-Kent—Essex was severely affected by the economic downturn in 2008-2009. As was the case in many other areas, the measures enacted by our government helped to get people back to work, but we are not finished yet. Budget 2013 will help Canadians connect with jobs through such measures as the Canada job grant. This will connect skills training directly to employers.

Budget 2013 will also help create opportunities for apprentices by working with the provinces to reduce barriers through using practical tests as a means of accreditation. A new generation of labour market agreements for persons with disabilities is also going to be introduced, along with new programs for first nations youth. All this will be supported by programs connecting Canadians with available jobs.

These are a few of the exciting benefits of budget 2013 and a description of how they will affect my riding of Chatham-Kent—Essex. The budget also contains measures to strengthen major manufacturing industries across Canada and investment in research and innovation, and it will support leading-edge research and infrastructure.

I wish I had more time to speak about how the budget will help promote entrepreneurs, as this is an area near and dear to my heart. If we look at any package in a grocery store, at name brands of automobiles, at electronic equipment, et cetera, we see one thing emerge: the name of a individual or a group of individuals who had an idea and went to work, and after falling down and getting up and trying again, they brought this idea to market. This required an entrepreneur, capital and a market.

I am proud that this government recognizes and will encourage entrepreneurs, including youth, to create a healthy economic climate the some assistance to help spawn the next Research In Motion or Westport.

Of course, none of this would be possible without our government's continued commitment to free trade, and we are aggressively pursuing it. We are very close to signing an agreement with the European Union that would give us access to 500 million people. Our government, our manufacturers, our farmers and business people who rely on free trade will be able to compete.

Our government understands the need to help stimulate the economy, but just as importantly, we understand the need to get back to a balanced budget. Our commitment continues: jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. This budget delivers on all of those.

• (1210)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to the speech given by my eminent colleague.

I think it gave an excellent summary of the debate we are having here today. This is really a third omnibus bill. Of course, we agree with a few of the measures presented in this bill, but they are mixed in with many a bitter pill that will be difficult to swallow. This is becoming a real problem.

For example, I wonder if the member could explain how it is that a government that raised the retirement age from 65 to 67, telling people they will simply have to plan better, could at the same time take away one of the most important measures available to small investors, a tool that allowed them to put money aside for a decent retirement.

Of course, I am referring to the removal of special tax treatment for workers' funds.

[*English*]

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Mr. Speaker, as laid out in my speech, having a continuum is important. We have demonstrated that since 2006. This government has a plan for economic growth or stimulus, and part of that was to recognize that Canadians were living longer, which is a good thing; however, as a result, our demographics are such that fewer people are coming into the workplace. That caused a problem. As a result, we are getting people ready. With that in mind, we warned them about the necessity of changing our age of retirement from 65 to 67. We did that over a measured time to give Canadians an opportunity to do that.

Government Orders

As for the measures that the member spoke about in relation to small business, the best thing we can do for small businesses is to give them strength so that they have a good, solid business. I am a small businessman; I know that our nest egg is that business itself. We want to make sure that small businesses remain strong, and the measures we have enacted and put into place will ensure that will happen for a long time to come.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech with great interest. I would acknowledge that, yes, there are some positives in the budget, but I do need to ask a question considering his emphasis on small business, his background in small business and his claim that this budget is about making small businesses stronger.

Could he please explain how taking \$2.3 billion out of the pockets of small business owners over five years through changes to the dividend tax credit is actually going to make those businesses stronger?

Clearly, the facts would suggest that there is \$2.3 billion less that those owners can utilize to invest in technology and growth for their enterprises.

• (1215)

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Mr. Speaker, again I would emphasize that the best thing we can do for small businesses is lower their taxes. We have done that. We have repeated that process.

The other thing that is so important, as we often forget, is that as important as lowering taxes is, we need markets for our businesses. This government is actively engaged in opening new markets. We have a great standing relationship with the United States and Mexico. We have expanded that and we are looking at other countries in the western hemisphere, but now the most exciting thing that has happened since the North American Free Trade Agreement will be the European free trade agreement. We are very close to doing that. Just think of the possibilities that our businesses and small businesses will have when they are able to reap the benefits of a trade deal that has expanded to a huge market like that.

That is where the answer lies for success for our small businesses.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity contribute to the debate on Bill C-60, which is a budget implementation bill, and to provide my comments.

It is difficult, really, in the time available to do justice to a bill like this, because once again we have a bill that has a huge variety of measures. Some of them are new policy measures and some of them are not even in the budget speech. To actually do justice is very difficult.

What I would like to do is think about how this bill contributes to a sustainable future for our country and the opportunities and freedoms that we enjoy today. How does this bill help our children and their children in the future to enjoy those same kinds of opportunities and freedoms?

I want to start by saying that one of the things that is important for the health and well-being of society over time is transparency and honesty in government policy and government measures. One of the reasons the Liberals will not be supporting this bill is the tax

increases, but beyond that, it is because of the lack of transparency in terms of these tax increases.

We call them “stealth tax increases” because the government continues to deny that it is increasing taxes, while it is absolutely clear that with this budget implementation bill the government is actually increasing net taxes over the coming five years.

In fact, in each and every year, the net impact on middle-class Canadians would be higher taxes. By the end of five years, \$3.3 billion more would be coming out of Canadians' pockets through this net increase in taxes. We cannot support a budget that would do that.

I want to focus initially on the impact on small business. Like the speaker before me, I am from a small business background. In fact, I spent 25 years building a business into another category, as a mid-sized business. I know the challenges of small business, especially in securing capital for their growth and in securing investment to upgrade and update their equipment.

What small businesses do is utilize the retained earnings of that business itself, and in many cases they utilize the paycheques or savings of the business owners. That is why this dividend tax credit was so important to small business owners: they could use those funds to help grow their businesses when the market was not available as it is to public corporations.

That is why it is so mystifying to me that a government that claims to be pro-business and that claims it wants to make a healthier economy is side-swiping the very people—small business owners and their employees—who are so critical to achieving that goal.

This change to the dividend tax credit for small business is only one of many ways in which small businesses are paying for some of the Conservative government's mismanagement of budgets and unaccountable spending.

It is also surprising to me that large corporations have enjoyed an approximately 7% reduction in their corporate taxes under the current government, yet the small business rate has only dropped one percentage point in that time. In the meantime, \$600 million a year, each and every year for the past three years and going forward, is loaded onto businesses for an EI payroll tax increase.

Small businesses account for 42% of private sector GDP. That is an enormous part of our economy, yet we are undermining those enterprises' ability to invest and grow their businesses.

Between 2001 and 2005, Canada's small and medium-sized enterprises created 467,708 jobs. That is almost half a million jobs.

• (1220)

What is the comparable figure under the current Conservative government? Between 2006 and 2010, under the Conservatives, the overall net number of jobs created by small and medium enterprises was negative 10,831. We are seeing a government that is failing the small and medium business community.

Government Orders

Here is a snapshot. In 2005, Liberals helped small businesses create almost 40,000 net jobs. In 2011, small businesses created 21,000 net jobs.

It is the government that has been failing small businesses, and this particular bill, Bill C-60, this budget, is a huge extra hit on small businesses. Certainly, that is not something we can possibly support.

Let us take a look at some of the other impacts of this bill on sustainability.

However, before I do that, I do want to acknowledge that there are elements of the bill that I think are positive and that I support, and certainly the Liberals support.

[*Translation*]

With respect to social sustainability, we support enhanced allocations for our veterans by putting an end to the deduction of disability payments, and we are indexing the gas tax fund by 2% a year.

[*English*]

Indexing the gas tax would certainly be helpful in my community of Vancouver and my riding of Vancouver Quadra.

[*Translation*]

As for economic sustainability, I support the measures to fight tax evasion, because no one likes cheaters. It is important to have measures in place to stop people from cheating.

Furthermore, the tax credits for mineral exploration will be very important to my province, British Columbia. As for the environment, the bill includes a \$20 million investment in the Nature Conservancy of Canada.

[*English*]

That \$20 million to Nature Conservancy of Canada is one small amount of funds. It is so woefully small.

In terms of sustainability, that is \$20 million to one organization, when the government has cut hundreds of millions from Environment Canada, Parks Canada and climate change. The Experimental Lakes Area is just one example of so many program cuts. This is a government that, unfortunately, is untruly claiming that it is at a certain level of reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, whereas it is on track to actually having higher levels of greenhouse gas emissions than in 2005, while the Conservatives' target is 17% below.

I think everyone should take notice of what the Keeling curve is telling us today. Now, the Keeling curve is the world's longest unbroken record of atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations. This record, which is from a facility operated at the Mauna Loa Observatory near the top of a volcano on the Big Island of Hawaii, shows that carbon dioxide has been increasing steadily from values around 317 parts per million, when Dr. Charles D. Keeling began measurements in 1958, to nearly 400 parts per million today. That means that we are coming close to the level that this world saw in the Pleistocene era, at a time when the Arctic was 10° hotter than it is today and the rest of Canada was 6° to 8°.

We have an emergency with respect to climate warming, and the government is not only ignoring that, not only not funding anything

to deal with that, but is in fact pretending it is accomplishing advances that it simply is not.

In conclusion, some of the important elements of social, democratic and environmental sustainability, as well as business sustainability, that I would like to see are not in the bill. In fact, the key measure that jumps out from the bill is a woeful attack on small businesses through a massive increase in their costs. That is money taken out of their pockets that they need to expand and update their enterprises.

• (1225)

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech and, frankly, it was a speech about what the Liberals did not get done under their agenda.

First, when she talks about climate change, we know that after they signed the Kyoto accord, the Liberals allowed emissions to increase by 33%. Our government is getting it done. We have lowered emissions. We have a plan and we are working toward it.

For most of my adult life, I have created my own job. I am a small business owner, so I know what it means to create jobs for other people. I look at what the budget is doing. It is strengthening the competitiveness of the manufacturing sector, providing tax relief for new manufacturing machinery and equipment and investing in world-class research and innovation.

When she talks about putting problems in place for small businesses, my question for my colleague is this. Why is it that the Liberals stole \$52 million out of the EI fund, which put a tax on small businesses?

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, my response to the parliamentary secretary opposite is to ask why the government continued to put those funds into general revenue if it felt so strongly about it. It did exactly the same thing.

I would like to point out to the parliamentary secretary that in her department there has been a massive 39% cut to CIDA by 2014-15. Therefore, in terms of democratic sustainability, our very organization for development assistance overseas, which ties into Canada's reputation as a member of the international community—or used to—has had a 39% cut. Also, now that organization has essentially been swallowed into the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade to simply be another arm of the government's attempts to improve trade. We are not seeing the results yet and we have a massive trade deficit, so whatever the government is doing on the trade file is not working.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I agree that the Liberals had 13 years to get the job done at a time when they had a big surplus but still did not get the job done.

Let us look at the Conservative side now. The Conservatives like to crow about their record on job creation, but there are still almost 1.4 million Canadians out of work. There are still 240,000 more young people unemployed today than before the recession, and the only job creation measure in Bill C-60 is for more cabinet members.

Government Orders

I bring this up because the two members on the Conservative side who just spoke said that they are small business people, and my colleague talked about the fact that she is a small business person. I will talk about the small business people on Manitoulin Island and the fact that the Conservative government did not do the job of making sure that the ports were in order, and now that whole economy is about to fall apart. We are talking about anywhere between \$25 million and \$35 million that the government is willing to see go down the pipe.

Maybe my colleague could speak to the fact that small businesses are about to fold if the *Chi-Cheemaun* ferry does not continue. Does she think this will increase jobs and the government's stand on the economy, or does she think this will be detrimental and there will be a higher rate of unemployed people and people on welfare?

● (1230)

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, I agree completely with my hon. colleague that the Conservative government has been a failure in terms of job creation. There are still hundreds of thousands fewer jobs than there were when the Conservatives came into office. Youth unemployment is far worse than it was five years ago. In my constituency of Vancouver Quadra, where we have the world-class University of British Columbia, that hits young people coming out of university who cannot find a first job.

Another aspect of the problems with job creation is the tourism industry. The Conservative government has made cuts to the tourism marketing arm. There has been a 41% plunge over the last decade that has led to Canada slipping from 7th to 18th in international arrivals over the last 10 years. There are many fronts on which the government is failing and is, in fact, exacerbating the problem. It is making it harder for young people to get jobs.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy and proud to stand today as the elected member for the riding of Mississauga East—Cooksville and speak to Bill C-60, which is designed to implement the measures in the jobs, growth and long-term prosperity act, 2013.

Economic action plan 2013 is focused toward Canadians. Speaking to my constituents, I consistently hear time and time again that their top priorities for our government are jobs and economic growth. I truly believe the same holds true for all Canadians.

Our government has earned international praise and recognition for its economic results. Canada has the strongest record for job creation among the G7 countries, with more than 950,000 new jobs created since the depth of the global recession. Our government is delivering what we promised Canadians, careful and competent stewardship to improve our employment rates and strengthen our economy to benefit all Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

As strong as our economy is, there are many external factors that we cannot control and that may pose a threat to the global economy. We are not immune. It may affect us as well.

I would like to talk about some important measures that are included in economic action plan 2013 that focus strongly toward increasing and aiding employment possibilities by building support toward Canadians jobs and growth.

Building from 2006, the 2013 economic action plan has introduced many important initiatives to help boost job growth, create jobs and build toward an even greater Canadian economy. Our government is committed to helping job growth, but we are also trying to make sure Canadians are able to connect with the available jobs by ensuring they have the correct skills and expertise to obtain high quality and well paying jobs by means of initiatives such as the Canada job grant, which is expected to help about 130,000 Canadians access the training they need to fill available jobs.

The government will create opportunities for apprentices by investing financial resources, introduce measures that would support the use of apprentices in projects receiving federal funding and reduce barriers to apprenticeship accreditation.

While recognizing the contributions persons with disabilities make to our economy, economic action plan 2013 announces the government's intention to bring forward a new era of labour market agreements for persons with disabilities by 2014.

The government will invest \$222 million per year, and Canadians will find their government providing extensive agreements that will positively meet the needs of Canadian businesses and meet the employment needs throughout the nation, therefore contributing positively to the economy while providing greater opportunities for persons with disabilities. For both sides, it is a simple win-win situation.

The government will also continue supporting the opportunities fund for persons with disabilities and provide additional funding of \$40 million a year for the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Canadians with disabilities have great skills, and we are fully committed to improving their employment possibilities.

Economic action plan 2013 aims to reform and employ tact by modifying Canada's temporary workers program. The purpose of the program is to allow employers to temporarily utilize foreign workers in sectors where there are labour shortages. New reforms assist the Canadian job market and in turn the Canadian economy by ensuring citizens of this country are given priority for available jobs and employment opportunities. Significantly, the proposed reforms would ensure the program is being operated appropriately and in the way in which it was intended.

● (1235)

Amendments to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act provide stricter regulations, as they sanction authorities to revoke permits issued by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The amendments also allow authorities to suspend and revoke labour market opinions provided by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada if an employer is found to be exploiting a program.

Government Orders

Moreover, the Government of Canada will introduce user fees for employers applying to hire temporary foreign workers through the labour market opinion process. Existing regulatory authority under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act will introduce a user fee for potential employers wishing to request a labour market opinion. The government's aim is to ensure employers are accountable to authorities, and in addition, ensuring employers are accountable to the Canadian economy and our taxpayers.

I am very proud to serve on the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. Canada has a very strong sense of respect and love for the men and women who make up a significant aspect of our society, men and women who served our country, the veterans. In keeping with this notion, the war veterans allowance program is available to provide assistance to the veterans of low income, and survivors of the Second World War and the Korean War. Also, it is very important to mention that the proposed changes will find that the determination of eligibility and calculation of benefits no longer take the disability pension into account during the calculation of eligibility and benefits provided under the war veterans allowance.

Economic action plan 2013 also proposes to simplify and enhance the funeral and burial program that is delivered by the Last Post Fund corporation on behalf of Veterans Affairs Canada. It will amount to about \$65 million over two years and will double the reimbursement rate, from \$3,600 to \$7,376.

Our government is working hard to maintain low taxes for Canadian families and individuals. Since 2006, the government has successfully provided significant tax relief. The average family of four in Canada now receives \$3,200 in extra tax savings as a result of this hard work. Our government's long-term agenda sheds light on many positive aspects that will help provide relief to Canadian families as well as individuals. Here are some examples.

First, the government has fulfilled its commitment to reduce the GST by 2%, seeing it fall from 7% to 6% to 5% in order to benefit all Canadians. Second, we have successfully introduced the tax-free savings account, a flexible, registered and general purpose means of savings which is available to allow Canadians all across the nation to earn tax-free investment income in order to meet their lifetime savings needs.

Our government recognizes the difficulties that Canadians face, while trying to achieve peace of mind by ensuring their loved ones are taken care of. Therefore, the registered disability savings plan is another great initiative presented by the government to help secure a better future for those with severe disabilities. This tax-assisted savings account allows individuals as well as families to save for the long-term financial security of those with a severe disability. Since it became available in 2008, over 65,000 Canadians have chosen to open a RDSP either for themselves or for those in their care.

•(1240)

With Bill C-60, we are taking further steps forward for the constituency I represent, for the constituencies each of us represent, and for all Canadians. Therefore, I urge all parties and all members to support the bill.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that my colleague spoke about creating opportunities and creating jobs. He talked about the

positive economic impact on both sides and that it would be a win-win situation.

I would like to bring back the issue of the Chi-Cheemaun ferry on Manitoulin Island. We have a government that is wasting millions of tax dollars doing partisan advertising while the future of small businesses on Manitoulin Island are hanging by a thread. Does the member believe that the government's refusal to put in \$300,000 for the fenders and the dredging of the port in Manitoulin Island will have a positive or a negative impact on the economy and on jobs?

I can tell him that people are quite concerned. The students and full-time and part-time employees are extremely concerned that they are about to lose their jobs for the summer.

Can he talk about that?

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, what the member is referring to is a very important issue, but it is also a very difficult issue. It is an issue of low water levels in the Great Lakes.

The hon. member probably knows that a study was just completed. There are some solutions that are available, and our government together with the local and provincial governments are willing to work together to address the problem of low water levels in the Great Lakes. It does not only affect Manitoulin Island; it affects all the people on the Great Lakes.

It is a difficult issue. The hon. member mentioned that dredging is available in some instances and not others, but we should all work together to help the businesses—

•(1245)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Westmount—Ville-Marie.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague speaks a lot about reducing taxes in certain areas, and everybody is in favour of reducing taxes, particularly when the economy is in a good state and we are in a surplus.

However, when we reduce taxes in a deficit situation, there is a downside to doing that. We are currently aiming for over \$150 billion of added debt in 2015 due to this government.

I would like to hear what the member or the government have in mind in terms of taking care of this massive debt, for which interest payments are going to continue to increase over time.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, I am surprised that the member expresses that view.

We have a very competitive market and we are working very hard to bring businesses to Canada, not to export them out. Therefore, one of the measures to attract businesses is to lower taxes.

I do not believe, and our government does not believe, that increasing taxes actually increases revenue. Increased taxes might actually result in decreased revenue for the country and for the government.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we heard from the NDP and we heard from the Liberal member.

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The NDP member, of course, tried to fire off blame instead of saying how she is rolling up her sleeves and working with the residents there. The CFDC is using a whole plethora of federal agencies that are designed to work with the member of Parliament to excite the community and get the community ready to work. She failed to state that the Government of Ontario has indicated a willingness to make the necessary repairs to the ferry, which is a provincial jurisdiction.

To the hon. Liberal member, perhaps he would comment on what the government did before the last recession, paying down our debt and positioning the government so it could weather the economic storm.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, as the member very well knows because he was in the House, the government took very quick action to address the issue of the economic downturn and invested heavily in our economy and our businesses. We have achieved results because we saw that this was the right way to approach the issue. We have had positive results for all Canadians and for the Canadian economy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before I recognize the hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London, I see that as more members join in today's debate there is a great deal of interest and comments. We can get more members participating if members and respondents keep their interventions to just under the one-minute mark. I will be watching for that closely.

We are now resuming debate. The hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am here to speak about, and in favour of, Bill C-60, the economic action plan 2013 act, no. 1.

I would first like to discuss Elgin—Middlesex—London and southern Ontario. I will be sharing how this budget relates to and assists the people of Elgin—Middlesex—London.

The area of southern Ontario in which I live is very unique, very beautiful and a very hard-working part of this country. It includes 80 miles of Canada's south coast, the shore of Lake Erie, only 50 miles across to where Cleveland sits, and miles and miles of great farmland. The 401 Highway, the most travelled transportation route through southern Ontario, cuts through the riding of Elgin—Middlesex—London. Large manufacturers cluster along this highway, as goods come and go, into the United States and from the United States. In our area, almost everything we make, almost everything we service, almost everything we assemble, is either sold to a United States customer or shipped there for further processing.

It has certainly meant that since the United States has slowed, its economy sputtering, our area has also felt the decline, not the demise but a decline. The decline in manufacturing in our area has led to even more innovation, more entrepreneurship, more vision and more desire to succeed.

Let me share some of the great ideas that have happened. First of all, we have seen the gathering of Canadian businesses. As I shared, most of our economy in that area of southern Ontario used to have a real north-south edge to it. The economy was southern Ontario to the United States, and the United States to southern Ontario. Since the

decline in the United States, we have had to go looking for other customers. We found them right here in Canada. Western Canada is flourishing, for those members across the way who have not noticed.

Recently, and thanks to the member for Edmonton—Leduc—I wish he was here so I could thank him in person—we had a large group of Canadian oil producers from the west come to southern Ontario, into small communities in southern Ontario like St. Thomas, put together by the economic development officers in southern Ontario and the oil producers from the west.

They came looking for stuff; gaskets, gauges, pipe, steel. Just about everything we make in southern Ontario that used to be made for the auto industry fits perfectly in the oil industry too. They brought their order books, and they came to southern Ontario. We matched Canadian company with Canadian company, and we are moving forward with this process and continue to do so. It is entrepreneurship at its best.

We have other auto-related companies in southern Ontario that are currently converting or have converted through the recession to products that are not always auto-related. Some are now making solar panels or brackets for solar panels. Some are making blades for windmills or parts for the wind energy industry. This is the innovation of the manufacturing community of southern Ontario.

What else do we do? We have food. We are great farmers. We have a fantastic growing area in southern Ontario. What else have we done from an innovative point of view? We have started to process the stuff we grow, right there at home. It is phenomenal. We have great producers of corn and dairy and whatever else we can grow in Canada.

Dr. Oetker is building a very large frozen pizza factory right there in the south part of London in the riding of Elgin—Middlesex—London. It is under construction right now, but will be opening soon. The company will buy wheat for flour cheese made out of dairy from our farmers and produce for toppings on those pizzas, all grown right there in southern Ontario. That is the productivity of the farmers and the food distribution piece.

We continue to look at food distribution. Most of the food grown in southern Ontario gets shipped to Toronto where it is sent to the food terminal, bought by people in southern Ontario and brought back. That does not make sense to most people, so why not put a food terminal right there in southern Ontario? That is what we are working on.

I think I spoke about this House. It is very unique. Right there, enclosed in farmland in southern Middlesex County is a tilapia farm. Aquaculture right there in southern Ontario, not on the lake but inland. A great entrepreneur realized there was millions of dollars of tilapia being sold in the Toronto market from the United States, and said that we could do that in Canada, right there in southern Ontario.

● (1250)

What else have we asked for?

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We have heard speeches in the House this morning about tourism in southern Ontario and how it is thriving and newer than it used to be. We knew we lived in a beautiful place, and now we are telling other people about it. We are okay if tourists come to visit and take up some of our space. The 80 miles of Lake Erie shoreline, ports and beaches are fantastic.

If one goes to the beach at Port Burwell along Lake Erie, one will now find a 300-foot submarine. The HMCS *Ojibwa* has been landed and will open on the long weekend in May for tourists. I have been through it, so anyone can fit. This is the type of entrepreneurship that is happening in tourism in southern Ontario.

Here is another piece we are doing that was never thought of before. Rural Canada has always had the issue of its youth, after high school, having to go somewhere else for post-secondary education. They always went someplace bigger—not always better, just someplace bigger. However, we now have a branch of Algoma University right here in St. Thomas, Ontario, teaching undergraduate studies in what used to be a historic old schoolhouse. Also, Fanshawe College, a community college branch in St. Thomas, is there to teach skilled trades in the new skills program. It teaches people the skilled trades that will be needed to move Canada forward. We will keep our youth at home. Not only will our youth stay at home to go to school; others will come. We are attracting dollars into our community by people coming here for post-secondary education.

We cannot talk about entrepreneurs without talking about those in southern Ontario. Sure, it has had its troubles in manufacturing, but to many who would see a problem, thousands have seen opportunities from an entrepreneurial point of view; they have seen this as a time to move forward and open a small business.

With John and his people at the Elgin Business Resource Centre and their business incubator program, the community futures program and the mentorship programs they are developing, we are returning jobs to southern Ontario. It may be two, three, five, ten or twenty jobs at a time, but they are returning to southern Ontario. The great economic development teams of Elgin County, Middlesex County and the City of St. Thomas are all doing the same thing and attracting small and medium-sized businesses.

How does the budget help all this?

Each of the things I have mentioned has a piece in the budget that has helped move these things forward. I am sure I will not have a chance to cover them all unless the Speaker forgets what the clock looks like, but I will talk about some.

How about creating the Canada jobs grant for training skills for the needs of youth and employers?

As both a small business person, and my business is small, and volunteer president of the Youth Employment Counselling Centre for some 10 years before politics, I have recognized the need to ensure that youth are available and trained for the jobs of today and tomorrow. It seems like a no-brainer, but including employers in that mix of the Canada jobs grant program means that employers will be sharing their needs, and not just today's needs but tomorrow's needs too, so that the training programs for youth will be there and will be the right ones to create the jobs.

For years, we have talked about apprenticeships as an area of concern, certainly in southern Ontario's manufacturing belt, and the skilled trades workers. I remember having a conversation with a principal of a community college some 15 years ago. I asked him how many millwrights would be trained this year. He said that there would be 41. I said, "Wow, that's fantastic. How did you come up with that number? Did you talk to the local manufacturing association? Did you talk to the schools to see how many people were graduating?" He said, "No, that's how many seats there are in the classroom."

That is how we used to determine how many skilled tradespeople we used to train. How about getting out and talking to employers about their needs? How about getting out and talking to the schools and finding the youth who want to move into those careers? We can merge the two and make it so that employers have enough people to hire.

Also, there are opportunities for those with disabilities. My friend, the member for Brant, has a great private member's motion coming up that will help move forward opportunities for people with disabilities.

● (1255)

I wish I had a great deal more time to talk about other things such as options and what we are doing for infrastructure. I am sure during questions I will be able to talk about some of those.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as MPs, we have to do a good job and we have to take our work very seriously

The government presented a notice of motion to the Standing Committee on Finance requiring it to complete, in just five meetings, its study of Bill C-60, which contains 18 sections and 233 clauses. If we take these clauses and divide them by five, that is 40 clauses per meeting.

Does my colleague believe that five meetings of the Standing Committee on Finance is enough to properly study the bill?

● (1300)

[*English*]

Mr. Joe Preston: Mr. Speaker, in my time here I continue to be told the opposite. When I am at home for weekend events, I share with people what work happens in the House. Someone asked, "Are you still discussing the budget? How many days does it take? Does everyone not agree it is a great idea?" The answer is yes, there is always a need for debate in this House and that is what we are doing today. We debated last week and we will do it this week. As far as debate goes, I say fill your boots, get the stuff you want to talk about out and let us talk about it, but let us not go on forever trying to just talk out the clock rather than talk out ideas.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I can assure the hon. member my boots are full.

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Questions and comments, the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is a lot to talk about in regard to the budget. Many, including myself and the leader of the Liberal Party, have said this is really an assault on our middle class. Hundreds of millions of dollars in tax increases are what we have witnessed by the government and we need to emphasize that. Millions and millions of dollars of tax increases. That is what the Conservative government has done over the years, attack the middle class.

My question is very specific and it relates to ads for the economic action plan which makes Canadians irate. How much money does it cost to have one of those ads televised during NHL playoff games?

Mr. Joe Preston: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Winnipeg North. I apologize for not quoting him in my speech; I believe I quoted him in my last speech. First of all, I love the opportunity to speak about the Leafs and I will take every opportunity to say that I am happy to have them back. I remember the last time they won the Stanley Cup, the game was in black and white, if I remember right, and I was my father's remote.

We have cut taxes for business in this country time after time. As a small business person and an entrepreneur, I am thankful that there is a government like this that is willing to take care of cutting taxes for small business and for business in Canada.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member to expand on his entrepreneurial comments and the fact that he headed up an organization and what he has seen over the years. He described what is happening in southern Ontario. When we look at what the budget is providing in trying to match the skill sets to the jobs available, could he expand on what entrepreneurial small and medium-sized businesses' needs are?

Mr. Joe Preston: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to. Spending many years as the president of a youth employment counselling centre and the moving of youth between school and employment and skills training was very near and dear to my heart. We have continued to move forward from an apprenticeship point of view to the skilled trades piece for 20 years. As far back as I can remember, being in business as an entrepreneur, I mentored some of those youth as they moved into small businesses of their own. When somebody would go out and get a skilled trade as a plumber, but was not trained on the business side, I used to do the mentoring for those types of businesses.

It is important to fill that gap, to make sure that what the employer needs is available when he or she needs it, so skills training is out there and we are spending the right dollars to make sure that happens and skilled trades are there for students and the unemployed as they need a new skill, if they are looking for something to move to. The training must be there and matched to provinces, businesses, employers and employees; they all have to work together to make this work right. If we do not talk to each other, we will not do it properly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I compliment all hon. members in keeping their interventions right on time. We had time for three questions and comments in that round.

The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

● (1305)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek unanimous consent to move the following motion: That notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, clauses 174 to 199, related to the proposed department of foreign affairs, trade and development act be removed from Bill C-60, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures, and do compose Bill C-62; that Bill C-62 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for the second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development; that Bill C-60 retain the status on the order paper that it had prior to the adoption of this order; that Bill C-60 be reprinted as amended; and that the law clerk and the parliamentary counsel be authorized to make any technical changes or corrections as may be necessary to give effect to this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Does the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Yes.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): There is no unanimous consent.

The hon. member for Trois-Rivières has the floor.

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this debate on Bill C-60 is another sad day for our ailing Canadian democracy. The only reason I can rise today is that I am very fortunate. I am fortunate not because I have the pleasure of being a member of Parliament, which is already a great privilege, but because even though a 32nd gag order is depriving the House's 308 members of their right to speak, I am one of the lucky few who has a chance to rise and to state, loud and clear, his many reasons for voting against this bill.

Although the bill includes some good elements, the Conservatives' now-notorious habit of using omnibus bills forces us to vote either yes or no. For example, voting "yes" would mean that I support the adoption tax credit, something this side of the House totally agrees with, but it would also mean that I agree with all the tax increases laid out in the budget. This creates a real dilemma. When faced with such a Catch-22, we can only give one answer: "no".

Canadian voters expected much more when they voted for a Parliament as diverse as the one we have now. They expected all of their members of Parliament to be heard, and they expected ideas to collide.

Unfortunately, today is yet another dark day because, although our government has a majority, it feels the need to hide all of its plans, which likely do not reflect what most Canadians want.

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It is ridiculous that the committee had only five days to study Bill C-60, which will amend or create no fewer than 50 pieces of legislation. I will leave it at that, since I do not want to be disrespectful. I will let those watching decide for themselves how inappropriate this tactic is.

The Conservatives' Bill C-60 is unfortunately not a surprise to the official opposition, and it should not be a surprise to Canadians. Bill C-60 is part of a growing trend that spells dark days ahead for Canadians. We are seeing an increasing number of omnibus bills, the committee had little or not enough time to discuss the bill and the government is not consistent or transparent in how it manages public affairs.

We are still not used to all that, and I hope that we never will be. However, these tactics are unfortunately becoming all too common.

As I said earlier, Bill C-60 includes some positive measures. For example, it allows for two tax credits that we support: the tax credit for adoption-related expenses, which I mentioned earlier, and the charitable donations tax credit. However, there are a lot of concerns about the fairness of the provisions that aim to increase charitable donations. The NDP raised these concerns at the Standing Committee on Finance.

Charitable organizations are increasingly relying on donations from individuals to fund their activities, as a result of the countless cuts made by the Conservative government.

Despite what the Conservatives claim, this budget does not stimulate the Canadian economy. Budget 2013 will eliminate thousands of jobs and cut program spending.

More and more studies by well-known economists show that strict fiscal restraint and austerity budgets are counter-productive.

I will just quote one of them. Carol Goar of the *Toronto Star* said that^, ever since the Minister of Finance began chopping programs and expenditures, the economy has drooped, the job market has sagged, consumers have pulled back and the corporate sector has hunkered down, sitting on its earnings. She also said that the same formula has delivered worse results in Europe.

According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer's estimates, the 2012 budget, the 2012 budget update and the 2013 budget will lead to the loss of at least 67,000 jobs by 2017 and a 0.57% drop in the GDP.

• (1310)

That will seriously slow down the country's economic growth, but will we still see growth?

The Conservatives' measures put the brakes on growth and job creation. There is nothing in this budget that would create jobs; there is nothing that would make living more affordable; nothing to strengthen the services on which families depend. Not only are the Conservatives failing to create jobs, but they are still attacking working Canadians. This bill gives the Treasury Board far-reaching powers to intervene in the collective bargaining process and dictate the working conditions in crown corporations.

I want to emphasize this point, in view of the portfolio and responsibilities my leader, the hon. member for Outremont, has

given me. As the deputy critic for transportation, infrastructure and communities, I regularly rise in the House to ask the government questions about Via Rail or Canada Post, for example. Invariably, the minister or minister of state who is responsible for transport replies candidly that these crown corporations are independent corporations and that the government does not intend to interfere in their management.

The reality, however, is quite different, and we have seen this in the many pieces of special legislation that have been imposed on workers in various sectors. Bill C-60 goes even farther in this "non-interference". It would bring in changes that would allow the government to direct a crown corporation to have its negotiating mandate approved by the Treasury Board for the purpose of the crown corporation entering into a collective agreement with a bargaining agent.

I am asking the simple question: is this intervention or not? I must admit that I am starting to get a bit confused. Do we believe the words of the Minister of Transport or the will of the President of the Treasury Board? It is hard to answer this question. Still, if I must choose between a speech and a law, I know what I need to know.

Under the provisions of Bill C-60, if the government directs a crown corporation to have its negotiating mandate approved by the Treasury Board, then the Treasury Board can impose whatever it wants in terms of the crown corporation's employees' working conditions. However, let us not forget that these are independent corporations.

No crown corporation receiving such a government order will be able to reach a collective agreement without Treasury Board approval. Can we see an intervention there? Bill C-60 also authorizes the Treasury Board to establish the terms and conditions of employment of non-unionized employees, on a government order.

The amendments proposed in Bill C-60 clearly constitute an attack on the right to free collective bargaining in Canada. They violate the basic principle of the operational independence of crown corporations, since they give the government the right to intervene if a crown corporation is not managing its labour relations to the government's satisfaction. Is this still not interference? I think the answer is clear.

I will therefore conclude by saying that all members of my party and I oppose this bill, because of its content and for procedural reasons. Bill C-60 is proposing a very wide range of complex measures that should be analyzed and examined carefully. Bringing in such a huge bill on such a tight schedule makes it impossible for members to study the proposed measures and their likely effects in a satisfactory manner, and that undermines the fundamental role of Parliament.

Moreover, Bill C-60 does not reflect the real concerns of Canadians. Instead of passing meaningful legislation to create jobs, the Conservatives are imposing austerity measures that will stifle economic growth, raise the cost of living, and negatively affect employment.

Thus, we are opposed to the 2013 budget and its implementation bills, unless they can be rewritten to take the real priorities of Canadian families into account.

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•(1315)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask the member to comment on the issue of priorities. The government has committed to significant advertising of the economic action plan, well into the millions of dollars, yet, on the other hand, there are many needs within communities, particularly with regard to people who are unemployed and trying to find work.

My question to the member is in relation to the importance of government being more proactive at providing the training necessary for more people to gain employment. At the same time, we are seeing a great deal of government waste through the millions being spent on advertising. Does the member want to comment on that?

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my distinguished colleague for his question.

The first question had to do with the huge amounts of money being spent on advertising. The word “advertising” itself could spark a debate of its own: is it advertising or propaganda? It is worth asking. What is a budget, after all? That is another very relevant question.

Mr. Speaker, you and I can probably think of more things we would like to do than we have funds to pay for. Drawing up a budget means making choices. And for a government, making choices means choosing what will help all Canadians improve their quality of life.

The proposed budget falls far short of that goal. The government is presenting an austerity budget whose only goal is to work toward balancing the budget, but I am still not convinced that it will work. One thing is sure: this bill will not boost the economy the way Canadians expect it to.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his excellent speech.

Canadians are deeper in debt than they have ever been, and municipalities are having a hard time making necessary upgrades, whether they involve substandard private septic systems or the pyrrhotite used in building houses. These are serious problems, and Canadians are currently saddled with debt.

Does my colleague feel it would be appropriate to include in the budget initiatives aimed at regulating septic systems installation and addressing pyrrhotite problems? Could my colleague comment on that?

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, obviously, that would be good.

I have serious doubts about the government's empathy for pyrrhotite victims, whom I see regularly in my riding. The infrastructure measures are no different. Municipalities across Canada have strongly criticized the significant amount of catching up that needs to be done just to update existing infrastructure. I am not even talking about creating new infrastructure, just updating our existing infrastructure.

With a sleight of hand worthy of Merlin the magician, the latest budget proposed by the Minister of Finance would have us believe

that the government will be investing more in infrastructure when really, it is suddenly going to be cutting billions more from the infrastructure budget.

That leverage could have really helped what is at best a struggling economy. The Conservatives wasted yet another opportunity.

•(1320)

[English]

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member has said, not only are the Conservatives cutting millions from infrastructure and other programs, but they are also sneaking in fee increases and tax increases.

One of the ones included in Bill C-60 has to do with immigration, including visitors visas, work permits, study permits and visa and permit extensions. It would mean that under the budget the government would be able to increase fees without tabling a proposal in Parliament and without being transparent about how much revenue the fees would bring in.

Could the member comment on the impact that would have on the many people who sometimes find it very difficult to pay those fees anyway, and who would now be facing possible increases?

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for such a relevant question.

In the past few weeks, I have listened to some epic conversations and debates about the word “tax”. Whether they call it a tax or a fee, the result is the same: it comes out of taxpayers' pockets. The fact that the budget contains such a big tax grab is certainly a reason to vote against Bill C-60.

[English]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member of Parliament for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, it gives me great pleasure to speak in favour of budget 2013. I am pleased to congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance for the outstanding job he is doing on behalf of our government and all Canadians. Canada is recognized internationally for the sound economic and fiscal policies of our Conservative government. The appreciation of the world of the sound economic policy practices of Canada is a vote of confidence in our Minister of Finance. Average Canadians—those who work hard, obey the law and pay taxes—understand leadership on the economy.

There are many benefits to the passing of budget 2013 for the people in the great riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke. I intend to focus on the aspects of this important statement of federal government economic policy that are of interest to my constituents.

A number of my parliamentary colleagues are proud of the many immediate beneficial measures in the budget, such the benefits to municipalities, seniors, veterans and students. I am focused on the future and why the sound economic policy in the budget is so important to the future prosperity of the Ottawa Valley and our nation.

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Innovation valley north is what the upper Ottawa Valley will become through the adoption of the measures in the budget. Innovation valley north represents jobs of the future and the long-term economic future of the upper Ottawa Valley, eastern Ontario and Canada. Innovation valley north in the Ottawa Valley is the combined impacts of the defence, nuclear and aerospace industries as well as the historic Ottawa Valley lumber producers coming together to respond to the various initiatives announced in budget 2013. Their synergy has the potential to create new employment and sustain existing jobs as our local economy positions itself to take advantage of such budget measures as the almost \$1 billion in the strategic aerospace and defence initiative, SADI, to enhance the competitiveness of Canada's economically important aerospace and defence industries, which include businesses such as Allen-Vanguard, formerly MedEng, which produced the bomb suit in the movie *The Hurt Locker*.

By encouraging new innovation in Canada's aerospace sector and by creating the aerospace technology demonstration program, which would be \$110 million over five years beginning in 2014-15 and \$55 million every year thereafter, we would support large-scale technology projects with commercial potential for companies like Magellan, Haley Industries in Haley Station and Arnprior Aerospace just down the road.

Critical to innovation valley north is the hub, the ideas generator, which turns ideas into employers. In the upper Ottawa Valley we are very fortunate to have two hubs that form the nucleus of innovation valley north.

The first hub is Chalk River Laboratories of Atomic Energy of Canada. Budget 2013 would invest \$144 million to the continued operation of AECL's Chalk River Laboratories to ensure that Canada has a reliable supply of isotopes. This investment in the future of AECL represents a vote of confidence to AECL and its 2700 local employees to complement the previous announcement made by our government to continue the process of modernization at Chalk River Laboratories by moving to a government-owned, contractor-operated governance model.

A government-owned, contractor-operated GOCO model of governance following the United States and British practice provides for a proven, cost-effective, high-accountability approach to management and operation of a national laboratory. A GOCO partnership shares the risk between government and the private sector. It allows each partner to perform duties for which it is uniquely suited. The government establishes mission areas and sets performance targets and the private sector implements the missions, using best business practices that ensure simultaneous excellence: excellence in technology solutions, delivered by the best scientists, engineers and managers; excellent operations, protecting employees, the public and the environment; and excellent community involvement, contributing to our all-important economic needs.

• (1325)

A comprehensive program of technology transfer and commercialization implemented by the Chalk River national nuclear laboratory would sustain, attract and create companies and employment in the upper Ottawa Valley as a technology, research and development hub. Innovation valley north in the upper Ottawa

Valley is a partnership, taking advantage of the AECL platform of knowledge and assisted by many initiatives announced in budget 2013.

This is all about putting in place the conditions for Canada's knowledge industry to thrive.

During the decade of darkness under our old government, AECL was directionless and starved for funding, just as our military was. Throughout the late 1990s, AECL's future was so uncertain that it could not even complete a budget. We cannot build a future on false promises; as a consequence, the 1990s was a lost decade of opportunity for Canada's nuclear industry.

The field of nuclear science and technology has potential for innovation and clean energy technologies, both directly related to nuclear energy and in strategic areas of technology development and overlap, such as hydrogen technologies. The next generation of nuclear reactors, generation IV technologies with reduced capital costs, will enhance nuclear safety, minimize generation of nuclear waste and further reduce the risk of weapons proliferation through the use of natural uranium.

Budget 2013 would provide \$325 million to support the development and demonstration of new clean technologies in Ontario and across Canada, and that would create savings for Canadian businesses and support job creation for Canadians. One of the by-products of a generation IV power reactor is hydrogen, which can be used as a clean fuel for vehicles or be stored until needed for other uses. When hydrogen is used as a fuel in an internal combustion engine modified to use it, water is what comes out the tailpipe.

The Canadian nuclear industry has a critical role to play in climate change and the economy in keeping the price of electricity affordable and in protecting the air we breathe.

The second hub in the Upper Ottawa Valley that has the best potential is Canadian Forces Base Petawawa.

Our government committed to providing the women and men in uniform with the best equipment to do the many tasks we ask them to do on our behalf. It only makes sense for defence procurement to support economic activities and opportunities for all Canadians. As the training ground of warriors, Canadian Forces Base Petawawa has greatly benefited from the implementation of the Conservative government's Canada first strategy, as have the people of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke. Our Canada first strategy reversed the decade of darkness, the hollowing out of our military by the old government that the voters of Canada wisely replaced in 2006.

Government Orders

Our government, like all Canadians, has the utmost respect for the women and men who put their lives on the line for freedom. For their service to Canada, we must ensure that when they pass on, they receive the dignified funeral and burial they so rightly deserve. To that end, I am pleased to confirm for the soldiers and their families at CFB Petawawa and all veterans in my riding that economic action plan 2013 would improve the existing funeral and burial program by simplifying it for veterans' families and by more than doubling the current reimbursement rate from \$3,500 to over \$7,300.

The upper Ottawa Valley has benefited from the standing up of the new Canadian Special Operations Regiment, CSOR, at CFB Petawawa. This new regiment reverses the bad defence policy decision of the old government to make scapegoats of the historic Canadian Airborne Regiment. With the acquisition of new strategic airlift and the purchase of new heavy transport Chinook helicopters that will be stationed at CFB Petawawa, our local civilian economy is already benefiting from local procurement and supply contracts.

Innovation valley north is here, brimming with potential, and I, as its member of Parliament, am ready to help.

●(1330)

[Translation]

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite must know that she has no credibility when it comes to the economy. According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report, budget 2013 will actually eliminate thousands of jobs, reduce direct program spending and slow the growth of the gross domestic product.

What is more, the Conservative government has invoked closure in the House of Commons in order to prematurely end debate on this budget implementation bill. It should be noted that we have just learned that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance recently presented a notice of motion to the Standing Committee on Finance in order to reduce the number of meetings allocated to complete the study of Bill C-60.

Why does the member opposite believe that five days are enough to study this bill that amends more than 50 Canadian laws?

[English]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, what our government is cutting are taxes. Time after time, we have reduced taxes, from the GST and so on. Now the average family has an extra \$3,200 to spend or save for things they need.

All we hear from the opposition are policies to stifle job growth. For example, it brings up the issue of our trying to help Canadian businesses by increasing the tariffs on countries that are now first-rate competition for Canada. It would instead have us lower tariffs for these countries, which would cause more of our employees to lose their jobs. I am sure the NDP would not want to decrease the tariffs for our dairy farmers either.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my hon. colleague what she is telling people in her riding about the fact that by 2015, after seven or possibly eight deficits in a row, there will be over \$150 billion of debt added to the national debt. What does she tell her constituents with respect to the national debt?

●(1335)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, our party brought to Parliament the concept of balanced budgets and paying down the debt. It was a consequence of having paid down the debt to the extent we did that when the global economic downturn occurred in 2008 we were better positioned than most.

The Conservative Government of Canada will take no lessons from people who drove the debt to the limit.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am an avid reader of the World Economic Forum's competitiveness report that comes out every year. In this year's report it had Canada ranked at 82 for the category of "business costs of terrorism". From what I have seen from the government, it seems to have misplaced or does not really know how it spent \$3.1 billion in the realm of security defence. Does the member know where the money went?

How can her government be credible on the budget when it does not even know where the money goes? Where did the \$3.1 billion go?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: The estimates report where everything is spent.

Overall, let us talk about results. In Canada, unlike other countries, such as the United States and the U.K., our security forces have done their job. We have not been hit by terrorism. We find them before they injure Canadians. There was the Toronto 18 and the VIA Rail episode. We are doing what it takes to protect people and to prevent these things from happening.

[Translation]

Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today we are debating Bill C-60, Economic Action Plan 2013 Act, No. 1. However, this piece of legislation does not address Canadians' real concerns.

Ever since the Conservatives' 2013 budget was unveiled, my constituents have been calling me to say that they feel isolated and neglected by this government's economic measures.

I have to say that I feel quite privileged to be able to speak to this bill, given that the Conservatives have imposed time allocation for the thirty-second time, which is surely a record for Canada. At least I have the opportunity to voice my opinion on the subject.

Unfortunately, we have become accustomed to Conservative bills that lack depth. Instead of actually being concerned about ensuring our economic recovery, creating stable jobs and tackling the growing debt levels of Canadian households, the Conservatives are proposing austerity measures that will kill jobs. These measures will mean a higher cost of living for Canadian families and will stifle economic growth.

For instance, there is nothing in Bill C-60 to deal with household debt in Canada, which is currently estimated at a record level of 167% of disposal income. That is a staggering number.

Government Orders

The Conservatives' economic agenda does not address the needs of Canadians. Canadians need measures that are geared toward creating quality jobs. The NDP will be voting against budget 2013 and the budget implementation bill, unless they are reworked to take into account the real priorities of Canadian families.

While I do agree with some of the measures contained in this budget, I have to say that, since I have been a member of this House, the Conservatives have refused to split budget bills into components that we can vote on separately, and thus let Canadians know, through a transparent process, which measures we support and which ones we do not.

I would like to single out several measures in this budget that I think are worthwhile in order to let people know exactly which ones I consider to be important. I will then tell you which budgetary provisions I think completely miss the mark.

Budget 2013 provides for two tax credits that I endorse: one for adoption-related expenses and one for first-time claimants of the charitable donations tax credit. I believe that these are positive measures. Furthermore, the budget streamlines the process for approving tax relief for Canadian Forces members and police officers, which I strongly support. It extends the temporary accelerated capital cost allowance for the manufacturing sector. It includes measures to facilitate the collection of unpaid taxes and taxes sitting in tax havens and to streamline Tax Court of Canada procedures. It provides for changes to the GST and HST that are generally positive. Lastly, it calls for reducing the general preferential tariff, the GPT, on sporting equipment and baby clothing. These are sound measures, and I am not afraid to say so.

However, the Conservatives will not split up the budget and instead are forcing us to vote on a mammoth bill, as was the case in 2012 and 2011, which prevents me, as an MP, from voicing my true opinion of the budget to my constituents. I find it very troubling that I am unable to do so. However I do know that the Conservatives will seize the opportunity to say that we are voting against these measures when we ask any questions. Incredible.

I would now like to turn my attention to some of the important issues raised by Bill C-60 which is chock-full of various measures.

This budget contains tax increases for Canadians. It calls for changes to the bargaining mandate of the Treasury Board and 49 crown corporations. It proposes changes to the temporary foreign worker program, as well as changes related to citizenship and immigration. It announces the merger of the Canadian International Development Agency with Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada. It highlights the Conservative government's ongoing failure to address the challenges facing aboriginal peoples and the lack of viable, concrete job-creation measures for Canadian youth, the segment of the population hardest hit by the economic downturn.

Bill C-60 as tabled amends 49 laws and includes new legislation along with complex provisions containing myriad details and programs that will affect Canadians, the very people who elected us to establish a more just society and bring about wealth and prosperity for all Canadians.

For the sake of the public, we have a duty to weigh the major issues that this bill targets, but it will be very difficult to accomplish

this in such a short period of time. The fact of the matter is that the Conservatives are giving us a mere four days to debate this mammoth bill.

On top of everything else, we have just learned that the Minister of Finance has asked the Standing Committee on Finance to set aside only five days to study the bill.

● (1340)

The committee that is supposed to conduct an in-depth review of the bill will have a mere five days to tackle this job. That is outrageous.

The NDP opposes Bill C-60, not only because of the measures it contains, but also because the process lacks transparency and is unethical from a parliamentary standpoint. Bill C-60 contains a broad range of measures that warrant careful consideration, but instead, the Conservatives have tabled another omnibus bill, much like Bills C-38 and C-45 that were brought in last year. Tabling such a wide-ranging bill and imposing such a tight deadline for review undermines the very nature of Parliament, as members do not have the opportunity to learn everything they need to know about the bill and its ramifications.

Unfortunately, it has become commonplace to say that such actions weaken the nature of Parliament. Yesterday, while I was knocking on doors in my riding, I talked for 20 or 25 minutes to a man in Dorval, whose name is John and who is 50 or 60 years old. He told me that he had always voted to do his duty as a citizen but that he had become cynical in the past two years. He told me that he was dismayed and that he no longer believed in the parliamentary process because of our government. I was astounded and did not know what to say to him. I am not cynical, but I had a hard time finding good arguments, because I, too, think that what is happening in Canada is not reasonable and not healthy.

Moreover, the Parliamentary Budget Officer has pointed out several times that members of Parliament do not have access to the information they need to exercise their role of oversight. For the third time, the Conservatives are undermining the democratic process inherent in Parliament and trying to escape the watchful eyes of parliamentarians and the public.

I would like to point out another important concern. The former Parliamentary Budget Officer clearly indicated that the cuts announced in the 2013 budget are not necessary in order to re-establish a structural surplus. In his opinion, the 2013 budget will eliminate thousands of jobs, reduce direct program spending and slow the growth of Canada's GDP.

There is evidence. According to estimates by the new Parliamentary Budget Officer, the 2012 budget, the 2012 budget update and the 2013 budget will lead to the loss of 67,000 jobs by 2017 and a 0.57% drop in the GDP. Based on these facts, the Conservatives' 2013 budget will raise the unemployment rate in Canada. It is unfortunate, because when unemployment rates are high, the economy runs slowly. I wonder what logic the government is using when it talks about the economy.

Government Orders

The Conservatives love to boast about their job creation record, yet 1.4 million Canadians are without work and 240,000 more young people are unemployed than before the recession. Despite that, the Conservatives' Bill C-60 offers no job creation measures.

As the official opposition's youth caucus president, I am particularly concerned with Canada's youth and young workers. As a result, the rest of my speech—which is not much longer—will focus on the younger generation that is ignored by the Conservative government.

In today's labour market, there is a desperate lack of jobs for young Canadians aged 15 to 24. A study by TD Economics revealed that a young person who is currently unemployed or under-employed will be financially scarred for 18 years. This young person, who wants to work and often has an extensive education, not only has a problem finding work, but will be affected in the future with reduced earning potential. Right now, this young person has no job and cannot invest in the economy. As I said, it will take this young person 18 years to overcome the economic deficit that is being created today. This is not the way to make the economy work.

For these young people in their 20s, this means putting off purchasing their own property, having children later, needing more time to pay off their debt and earning lower salaries. That is what the Conservative government is offering our young people at this time.

Combining the underemployment crisis and unemployment among young people with the tax hikes announced in budget 2013, with Bill C-60, the Conservative government is in fact reducing my generation's purchasing power.

Although the Conservatives promised not to raise taxes, their budget includes new tax hikes for Canadians on almost everything, from hospital parking to credit unions, safety deposit boxes and labour sponsored investment funds, not to mention bicycles and strollers. These tax hikes will cost Canadians \$7.8 billion over the next five years.

• (1345)

Why did the Conservatives promise not to raise taxes if they knew for a fact they were going to raise them by several billion dollars? Budget 2013 is based on an ideology that is harmful to Canadians. Although economists agree that austerity measures undermine growth, the Conservatives are determined to impose these backward-thinking measures in order to achieve their political agenda of cutting the deficit by 2015.

I see my time is up. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to finish and giving me a chance to speak to this bill. I will now take questions. However, I would like to emphasize that, although there are some good measures here, it is unfortunate that we have to vote on everything at once.

[English]

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech, in which she talked a great deal about young Canadians. I think she said young people want to work and she is looking for jobs for young Canadians.

I wonder if she has read page 180 of the budget—jobs, growth and long-term prosperity economic action plan 2013—where it talks about a new bridge for the St. Lawrence, which would provide long-lasting economic benefits to municipalities on each side of the river and, more broadly, to the region as a whole, through a commitment of up to \$124.9 million from the government.

I wonder if she could tell us what she has said to young Canadians who would have the opportunity to work on this job if she would support this budget. We are looking to create jobs, and we hope the member will step up for young Canadians in her riding and say there are jobs coming with the building of this bridge.

[Translation]

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Mr. Speaker, that is what I was getting at in the last sentence of my speech. I think it is unfortunate that we are forced to vote on an omnibus bill and that the Conservatives refuse to split this bill, which does have some good measures.

I do have something to say about young people. Canada has 240,00 unemployed young people who are unable to find jobs, despite job creation measures. That is unacceptable. These young people are looking for jobs, but there are none to be found. It is not just the fact they are unemployed that is disgraceful, it is also the fact that these young people end up under-employed. I know; this is my generation. I have plenty of friends from university who are in their late twenties. They have a bachelor's degree, master's degree or Ph.D and are getting jobs that pay \$12 or \$15 an hour.

I have asked questions to the minister and parliamentary secretary several times now and they never have anything specific to offer. No, I will not vote in favour of the budget, because I find—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Questions and comments. The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

• (1350)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about good-quality jobs. Air Canada was supposed to be maintaining overhaul bases. Those were good-quality jobs that paid a relatively good wage. Literally hundreds, if not thousands, of jobs were lost in Winnipeg, Montreal and Mississauga, and the government chose to do absolutely nothing to protect those jobs, even though it was in the legislation.

My question is with regard to people in the middle class who are losing jobs. To what degree does the member believe the government is doing enough to address the middle-class people, 35 to 55, who are finding themselves unemployed because of lack of action by the government?

[Translation]

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his question.

I know that his riding was greatly affected by the closure of Aveos. Employees in my riding, in Montreal, also lost their jobs. I want to reiterate to those workers that I think it is sad that this situation still has not been resolved.

Government Orders

To answer my colleague's questions specifically, no, I do not think the Conservative government is doing enough to help the middle class, and the Aveos situation is a perfect example. We had good jobs here in Canada and now we do not. There is nothing concrete in the budget for jobs for the middle class. The government keeps talking about job creation. When we ask questions, the stock answer is "jobs, growth and prosperity", and nothing more tangible than that. The government never spells out exactly what it is going to do to create jobs and it ships out the good jobs. I do not think that these are good measures for Canada's middle class.

[*English*]

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, not only are the Conservatives not doing anything concrete for jobs, but they are doing very concrete things in terms of tax hikes. In fact, there are hundreds of tax hikes on hospital parking, credit unions and safety deposit boxes, and the list goes on and on. I wonder if the member could comment on that.

I know the feedback I get is that people are always pretty outraged at the incredible cost of parking at hospitals. We are kind of a captive audience since there is nothing we can do, yet the bill would permit increased taxes for people who have to go to hospitals and pay for parking. I wonder if the member could comment on that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Mr. Speaker, indeed, as I mentioned, the tax increases affect hospital parking, bicycles, strollers and sports equipment.

There have been a lot of questions about that, especially when it comes to hospitals. If I put myself in the shoes of a person visiting her husband, brother, sister or children in the hospital who has to pay more for parking, I think that is very sad.

The hospital in my home town charges for parking. People are already using street parking around the hospital in order to save the \$5 charge. In many cases, \$5 really eats into their budget and now the government would have them pay even more. I think that is ridiculous and outrageous.

I do not see how the Conservatives can say they are lowering taxes when they use hospital parking lots to increase taxes. It is outrageous.

[*English*]

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in the House to speak to Bill C-60, the budget implementation act, 2013.

I am proud of our government's fiscal record and how well we have come through the worst recession in a generation. Canada continues to be number one among all G7 countries in economic performance and job growth and, under the leadership of our Prime Minister, will continue to focus on what is important to Canadians: creating jobs and economic growth, while keeping taxes low, balancing budgets and balancing the budget by 2015.

The economic action plan for 2013 was well received in my riding of Blackstrap. Saskatoon is one of the fastest growing cities in

Canada, and this legislation would provide much needed infrastructure support to the city and surrounding rural areas.

Bill C-60, the budget implementation act, proposes to legislate key elements of economic action plan 2013, including indexing the gas tax fund to offer stable, predictable funding for municipal infrastructure. Canada's gas tax fund provides long-term funding for Canadian municipalities that can help build and revitalize their public infrastructure and their assets. Communities choose projects locally and prioritize them according to their needs. The gas tax fund is making a difference in communities, in my riding of Blackstrap and throughout the province of Saskatchewan.

Today, more than 3,600 municipalities have benefited from the financial support of economic growth and provide a high quality of life for families in every city and community across the country. Our government's record on infrastructure investments in economic action plan 2013 exceeds the amount of investment required to cover the cost of federal infrastructure for the next decade.

In fact, our Conservative government has introduced the largest long-term federal commitment to Canadian infrastructure in our nation's history, \$70 billion over the next 10 years. In the next two years, we are investing close to \$10 billion in infrastructure. That is more than the previous Liberal governments spent during their entire 13 long years in power.

Since 2006, we have invested more than \$40 billion, supporting more than 43,000 infrastructure projects from coast to coast. As a result of our investments, we have brought down the average age of Canada's core public infrastructure from a peak of 17 years in 2001 to an estimated 14.4 years in 2011. We can see what a significant contribution that is to our public infrastructure. It is now lower than the historical average age over the last 50 years.

Bill C-60 would also see the introduction of a new first-time donor's super credit for the first-time claimants of the charitable donations tax credit, to encourage all young Canadians to donate to charity. Canadians recognize that the charitable sector plays a vital role in our society and provides valuable services to Canadians, including the most vulnerable.

Canadians also provide generous support to the sector in recognition of its important work. Recent data from Statistics Canada shows that more than 5.7 million Canadians donated almost \$8.5 billion to registered charities in 2011. Canada's incentives for charitable donations have been described as the most generous in the world. Registered charities are exempt from tax on their income and may issue official donation receipts for gifts received, which donors may use to reduce their taxes by claiming the charitable donation tax credit.

Statements by Members

In 2012, federal tax assistance for charitable donations exceeded \$2.9 billion. The standing committee on finance reported that there is a need to foster and to promote a culture of giving and that tax incentives can play a role, both in increasing the number of new donors and encouraging existing donors to give more.

Our government has responded to the committee's report by proposing the new temporary first-time donor's super credit, designed to encourage new donors to give to charity.

• (1355)

The first-time donor super credit supplements the charitable donations tax credit by providing an additional 25% tax credit for a first-time donor on up to \$1,000 in monetary donations. An individual would be considered a first-time donor if neither the individual nor the individual's spouse or common-law partner have claimed the CDTC or the FTDSC in any taxation year after 2007. The FTDSC may be claimed only once and may be claimed in any of the 2013 to 2017 taxation years.

I see, Mr. Speaker, that you would like me to sit down.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The Minister of State for Western Economic Diversification will have four and a half minutes remaining for her remarks when the House next resumes debate on this question.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

JACK BURROWS

Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week in North Bay we bid farewell to one of our most remarkable and respected citizens, former mayor Jack Burrows.

Jack was a “gentleman's gentleman”. He was active in so many aspects of North Bay life and made the community a better place.

Jack was a successful businessman, an avid sportsman, and a community builder, who knew no bounds in assisting his fellow citizens. He was a devoted family man and took pride in the beautiful family he and his wife Elaine created. Jack was a “father knows best” type of guy who graciously extended that solid judgment for the benefit of all members of the community, always for the greater good.

Jack devoted fifteen years to municipal politics, including nine years as mayor. As a close colleague during that time, I personally witnessed his superb leadership, integrity, honesty and true love for people.

Jack Burrows was a one-of-a-kind type of citizen. He was truly a great Canadian. In North Bay, Jack will always be foremost in our hearts.

God bless Jack Burrows.

• (1400)

YOUTH SCHOLARSHIPS

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, manufacturing is a vital part of my community. It is not just about jobs; it is also about the quality of life in London. Despite the steady decline of manufacturing jobs in the area, the manufacturers in my region continue to not only provide employment but contribute back to our community.

On May 1, the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters of southern Ontario presented its annual scholarships to eight lucky London students. Alex Boothby and Robert Green received scholarships for Western University. Angela Searay and Christopher Billington received scholarships for Fanshawe College. Secondary school students, Josh Percival, Jacob Schembri, Coletyn Thompson and Nicole Williamson received scholarships to assist with their post-secondary education.

My sincere thanks go to the manufacturers in London area for supporting the next generation of skilled trades and the young people of our community.

* * *

SUTHERLAND CUP

Mrs. Susan Truppe (London North Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after over 60 years, the London Nationals have done it.

This weekend, in front of a capacity crowd at London's Western Fair Sports Centre, the London Nationals defeated the Cambridge Winter Hawks 4 to 2, to win the seventh and deciding game of the Greater Ontario Junior Hockey League's Sutherland Cup final.

The Nationals are one of many successful sports teams in Canada's London. All year they battled hard and played their heart out. Their hard work and determination was rightfully rewarded with their first Sutherland Cup championship.

I would like to congratulate the entire London Nationals organization and roster, including owner Ken Eansor, head coach Kelly Thomson and the coaching and training staff, and team captain Scott Lombardi. A special congratulations goes to Paul Hopkins, who scored two goals in game seven.

London is proud of the Nationals. Go Nats Go.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE MIDWIFE

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, On Sunday, May 5, the world celebrated the International Day of the Midwife.

Midwives and the profession of midwifery are represented nationally by the Canadian Association of Midwives. Their mission is to provide leadership and advocacy for midwifery as a regulated, publicly funded and vital part of the primary maternity care system. Midwives have been identified as key to achieving reductions in maternal and infant mortality.

Statements by Members

A recent UNICEF report found that Canada ranked 22 out of 29 developed countries for infant mortality rates. This is mostly attributed to the higher rates among aboriginal communities, where women must leave their community for weeks to give birth in urban centres, away from their families and support systems.

Midwives provide a safe, effective and low-cost solution to Canadian women and are well positioned to address the specific challenges faced by women in rural, remote and aboriginal communities across Canada.

Colleagues, please join me in celebrating the practice of midwifery in Canada and thanking midwives for the health services they provide to Canadians.

* * *

PETER DESJARDINS

Mr. Chris Alexander (Ajax—Pickering, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on April 27, Canada lost a proud and loyal officer, Lieutenant Colonel Peter Desjardins, who spent over nine decades in devoted service to his country.

In October 1940, Peter enlisted in the Canadian Grenadier Guards, at the age of 20. During the war, as the 22nd Canadian Armoured Regiment, the Guards saw action around Falaise, Belgium, the Netherlands and finally across the Rhine, earning 12 honorary distinctions. After service in France and Holland, Peter was accepted for officer training at the Sandhurst Military Academy in England. While there, he met his wife-to-be, Winnie.

Peter and his new bride came back to Canada and continued to take postings. He saw service, among other places, in Petawawa, Kingston, Germany and Ottawa. Peter served as a financial controller in NATO both in Rome and in Brussels. He retired with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel after 30 years of distinguished service.

Peter Desjardins was proud, upright, responsible, principled and clear about what he stood for and what he represented. He was the epitome of the Canadian soldier and officer who did so much to keep Europe and the world safe from World War II onwards. He was devoted to his wife Winnie, his daughters Mary and Geri and his granddaughters Sara, Monica and Leah.

On behalf of the House, I offer condolences to his family and ask that all members join me in remembering this remarkable Canadian.

* * *

●(1405)

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, volunteer week is important, but the good work of community-minded individuals goes all year-round.

This weekend I took part in the seventh annual radiothon for the Elliot Lake Society for Animals in Distress, hosted by the good people at Moose FM.

The event was a big success, bustling with artists who lent their support, volunteers, and of course donors from all around the region, including Debbie Menard from Wikwemikong, on Manitoulin

Island. Debbie's \$1,000 donation was the largest of the day and helped the society exceed last year's total.

There are other groups all over northern Ontario that work with animals in distress, for instance, Animal Rescue of Kapuskasing, and Retrouvailles D'Animaux de Hearst, just to name a few. These organizations educate our communities, rehabilitate animals and find them new homes. We have come a long way in how we treat animals, but there is still a long way to go.

I thank and congratulate these groups and encourage people to volunteer or donate to support the good work they do in our communities.

Congratulations to SAD and Moose FM on another successful campaign.

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SPINAL CORD INJURIES

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in this House in support of the sixth annual Chair-Leaders Campaign that runs in the month of May, with the goal to raise awareness for people living with spinal cord injury.

Every day I am inspired by people in my riding and throughout Canada who live with a spinal cord injury. We all believe in promoting inclusion and accessibility because everyone deserves meaningful opportunities to lead a fulfilling life.

Today and every day there will be approximately 11 new spinal cord injuries in Canada. That is over 4,000 new injuries a year, with over 86,000 Canadians affected. Historically the highest incidence of spinal cord injury is in young men between the ages of 18 and 24, but in recent years there has been an increase in the rate of new injury to seniors.

I and about 30 of my parliamentary and Senate colleagues have made the commitment to spend May 22 in wheelchairs to help raise awareness about ability. We need to do everything we can to support treatment and, importantly, research and development.

We have made a lot of progress, but there are many steps left not taken.

* * *

PREVENTION OF SKIN CANCER

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, summer is finally here and today is Melanoma Monday. My wife Kelly is a melanoma skin cancer survivor. While she was fortunate enough to beat it, not everyone is as lucky. Out of the 5,500 Canadians who are diagnosed with melanoma annually, 950 will die from it.

Melanoma is easy to prevent: avoid getting sunburns, cover up and wear sunscreen, stay in the shade, and stay out of tanning beds. Using tanning beds at a young age increases the risk of skin cancer by 75%. The WHO has ranked tanning beds as a level one carcinogen to humans, making them as dangerous as tobacco, mustard gas and asbestos. Tanning beds are lethal.

In the last two Parliaments I have pressed for tougher regulations for the tanning industry. In February, the Minister of Health and I announced that the government was strengthening the rules for warning labels on tanning beds. Some provinces have banned youth from using artificial tanning equipment. I encourage the remaining provinces to follow suit.

Today the Canadian Dermatology Association is screening parliamentarians for melanoma. I encourage all Canadians to protect the largest organ in their body, their skin.

* * *

[Translation]

AURÈLE THÉRIAULT

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to recognize the accomplishment of Aurèle Thériault from Shippagan.

On March 13, Mr. Thériault made his 117th blood donation. He began giving blood when he was 20 years old. He is now 71 and hopes to continue giving blood in order to reach his goal of 120 donations.

Every minute of every day, someone in Canada needs blood. According to a recent poll, 52% of Canadians say that they or someone they know have needed blood or blood products.

I encourage people to follow the example set by Mr. Thériault, who has undoubtedly saved many lives because one single blood donation can save up to three lives on average.

Congratulations, Mr. Thériault, on your generous gift of life. I hope that you will reach your goal of 120 donations, and that your example will make people aware of the importance of donating blood.

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● (1410)

MARC SIMONEAU

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleagues, I would like to pay tribute to Marc Simoneau, a legendary sportscaster who recently passed away.

Mr. Simoneau ruled the airwaves in Quebec sports and thrilled fans of the Quebec Nordiques. A noble and respectful man, he had a special ability to develop a connection with his audience. He worked countless hours to make sure he was delivering quality programming.

After his career in journalism ended, Mr. Simoneau moved on to municipal politics. He was elected as councillor in the Beauport borough of Quebec City in 2005, and he held that position until his death.

Statements by Members

We offer our condolences to his friends and immediate family, who stood by him while he battled cancer. We want to let them know what a profound impact Marc Simoneau had on Quebec and on everyone he encountered.

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NATIONAL NURSING WEEK

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today marks the beginning of Nursing Week.

Nurses are the lifeblood of our health care system, and they play a vital role in promoting and protecting our well-being.

Optimal use of their skills would signal that we acknowledge their professional training and autonomy. It would also increase timely access to care.

[English]

Nurses, nurse practitioners and licensed practical nurses are the backbone of Canada's health care system. During National Nurses Week, let us acknowledge and thank them for the vital role their highly trained skills play in protecting and promoting the health of Canadians in every region.

Allowing nurses a scope of practice concomitant with their skills and training is one sure way to improve access to quality health care across the country. Let us all work to make that a reality.

* * *

RED FRIDAYS CAMPAIGN

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight the seventh anniversary of the Red Fridays campaign launch in Canada. Seven years ago, Lisa Miller and Karen Boire began Red Fridays as a way to show support for the members of the Canadian Armed Forces—red to represent the blood lost by women and men in our military through injury and death in the service of our nation.

Remembering these sacrifices and commitments of our troops throughout Canada's history is very important, even if the NDP MPs do not think so. Our government will always stand up for those who volunteer to serve their country, and we thank those family members who stand by their side.

This Friday, and every Friday, wear red and support the Canadian Armed Forces at every step.

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MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week is Mental Health Week in Canada. One in five Canadians will be diagnosed with a mental illness in their lifetime, yet there are many who will never speak to a doctor.

Canada's youth suicide rate is the third highest in the industrialized world, and while nearly 20% of Canadian youth suffer from a mental disorder, only one in five will receive treatment.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

A prevention strategy and appropriate care are key to mental health care. We need to eliminate the stigma surrounding mental illness because it keeps those afflicted from seeking help before they do something that cannot be undone. We will not diminish the stigma by treating them as criminals.

[English]

The Mental Health Commission of Canada released a landmark mental health strategy a year ago, yet the Conservative government has taken no action. The government has taken credit for the MHCC's strategy for mental health in the workplace, but it has failed to implement these recommendations in its own public service.

Talking about mental illness helps de-stigmatize the issue, but talk must be backed up with action to truly help those in need.

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NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 25 days have passed since the leader of the NDP failed to retract his senior lieutenant's shocking and hurtful comments about Canadian veterans from the First World War. Unfortunately, his silence is leading to a disturbing trend. Just yesterday, a day honouring the Battle of the Atlantic, another senior NDP member from the federal riding for Québec slammed Canadian veterans by questioning the very need to remember their sacrifices.

We remember, because veterans fought for the Canadian values of peace, freedom, democracy and the rule of law. They gave so much in the face of unbelievable risks. In many ways, we owe our places in the House of Commons to the sacrifices of our veterans.

Enough is enough. Canadians and veterans are watching. One can only hope that it will not be another 25 days before the NDP stops slamming veterans and that hopefully the opposition leader starts standing up for them.

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●(1415)

LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for months Conservatives have blindly praised the Keystone XL pipeline, cheerleading for a project they admit will ship tens of thousands of jobs to the U.S. In contrast, the NDP believes that pipeline projects should be sustainable and make economic sense.

Now the new Liberal leader has jumped on the pipeline bandwagon, and just like the Conservatives, is making things up to attack the NDP leader. He is even praising the Premier of Alberta, who worked hand-in-hand with Ottawa Conservatives to delay effective monitoring of the oil sands development on the Athabasca watershed.

Since electing a new leader, Ottawa Liberals have voted with the Conservatives against the plan to fight climate change, with the Conservatives' draconian anti-terrorism law, and with Conservatives on the Canada-China FIPA.

I guess it is hard for some people to stand up to lobbyists. In contrast, people can trust the NDP for change in 2015.

* * *

THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I headed back to my riding this past weekend and met with constituents, it was clear that the economy remains at the front and centre of their concerns. For the past seven years, Canadians have placed their trust in our government to keep taxes low and to focus on jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. This is what we have done, and this is what we will continue to do.

Unfortunately, we cannot say the same for the leader of the NDP and his party. The leader of the NDP and his party plan to raise \$20 billion from a shameful job-killing carbon tax. The leader of the NDP has said that of course he has a cap-and-trade program that "will produce billions".

Hard-working Canadians cannot afford a \$20-billion job-killing carbon tax that would raise the price of everything, including gas, groceries and electricity. Canadians cannot afford the risky tax-and-spend socialist policies of the NDP.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week we found out that the Conservative government managed to lose track of \$3.1 billion. Year after year, report after report, the Auditor General asks the government to be more transparent.

Can the government tell the Canadian public what steps it has taken so far to find the \$3.1 billion it has completely lost track of?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as usual, the question from the hon. Leader of the Opposition is off base.

If he had read the Auditor General's report, he would have read: "We didn't find anything that gave us cause for concern that the money...was used in any way that it should not have been."

In other words, the money spent by all the departments was done so in a transparent manner, reported to Parliament and properly managed.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is nice to quote the Auditor General, but it is even better to provide the entire quote. This is the bit that comes afterward that they keep leaving out:

It's important for there to be...a way for people to understand how this money was spent and that summary reporting was not done.

Oral Questions

That is what the Auditor General said. The Treasury Board never provided the proper financial statements. It never submitted the documents to back what was spent.

What happened to our \$3.1 billion?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, clearly the Leader of the Opposition does not understand the report.

This matter relates to the categorization of expenses by Treasury Board between 2001 and 2009. All of the funds in question are accounted for in public documents presented to Parliament, including the public accounts.

[*English*]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, here is what the Auditor General actually said: "Information to explain the difference of \$3.1 billion between the funding allocated...and the amount reported spent was not available". He said that trying to find that money with Conservative financial systems in place is like trying to track serial numbers on dollar bills.

We get back to our question for the Conservatives. They love to snap their suspenders, claiming to be good administrators of the government purse, so let them explain to us where the missing \$3.1 billion is.

• (1420)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition knows full well that nothing is missing. He knows what the Auditor General said: "We didn't find anything that gave us cause for concern that money...was used in any way that it should not have been". He knows that all funds expended by the government are tabled in the public accounts in this House and that every dollar is approved by Parliament through the estimates process. Perhaps the member needs a remedial course in public accounting.

* * *

LABOUR

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, back in 2002, the Conservatives talked about the fact that a billion dollars missing by the Liberals was trying to be swept under the rug. The only change now is that the rug is blue.

Now, another little surprise for everyone who likes freedom of the press, who likes the CBC, is to find out that there is now going to be somebody from the Conservatives sitting at the negotiating table. Our only question is this: Is the President of the Treasury Board now responsible for determining whether Peter Mansbridge is allowed to be paid more than Ezra Levant?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, it is not surprising that it is the position of the NDP that its union boss buddies should be able to make demands on public money and have no accountability to this Parliament and to the duly elected government of Canadians. I note that the Leader of the Opposition's position was different when he was a member of a Quebec government, which actually brought in a bill requiring that the provincial government be informed of collective agreements happening within the context of

crown corporations. I guess what was good enough for Quebec then is not good enough for Canada now.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting because the very quote that the member just gave about being informed proves our point, that in Quebec there is no way Treasury Board sits at the negotiating table with crown corporations.

[*Translation*]

That is how far the Conservatives have taken this. They are the ones who will be seated at the negotiating table and who will dictate the conditions. Every time we asked questions about the post offices, their Minister of Transport told us that had nothing to do with them, that Canada Post was at arm's length from the government and free to do what it wanted.

Which is it? You cannot blow hot and cold at the same time.

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP needs to calm down. He is getting angry again. He has to be careful.

The bill he voted in favour of when he was an MLA in Quebec stated:

Before undertaking the negotiation of a collective agreement with an association of employees, a government agency [including crown corporations] submits a draft establishing, generally, the components of a policy on remuneration and conditions of employment to the minister responsible.

How hypocritical.

* * *

[*English*]

TAXATION

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in budget 2013 the government increases taxes on middle-class Canadians by close to \$2 billion every year. For example, on page 335, the Conservatives take \$550 million more every year from the profits of small business owners. On page 289, there is a recurring payroll tax hike of another \$600 million every year, an escalating, job-killing Conservative tax on every job in this country.

Why does Conservative tax policy attack the middle class and all those who are working so hard to join the middle class?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our economic policy does the opposite, which is why through some \$200 billion in tax relief we have taken more than one million Canadians off the tax rolls, providing cumulative tax relief of some \$3,200 to average families. We will continue to do so while the Liberals have called for a 45-day work year, which would cost an additional \$4 billion in EI premiums.

We will continue to cut taxes even though those members want us to raise them.

Oral Questions

●(1425)

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian economy has doubled in size over the past 30 years but median household income has grown only by 13%. Middle-class Canada is falling behind and Conservatives are making it harder by imposing more and more middle-class taxes, small business taxes, payroll taxes, new tariff taxes on everything from cancer wigs to the kitchen sink. We cannot blame the Chinese. They do not impose these taxes and they do not pay them. This is a made-in-Canada Conservative attack on the middle class and all those trying to get there. Why?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): In point of fact, Mr. Speaker, the total federal tax burden as a share of our gross domestic product is at its lowest level since 1965. Some \$200 billion in tax relief, \$3,200 for the average family and almost all of those tax cuts opposed by the member for Wascana and the Liberal Party.

Why does the member not just 'fess up? We know the Liberals want to raise the GST back from 5% to 6% to 7%. Do they not?

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after creating the largest deficit in Canada's history and running up six consecutive deficits, the government is now going to raise taxes on Canadian families in order to pay for its incompetence.

With their 2013 budget, the Conservatives are increasing taxes on almost 1,300 goods that Canadians use on a daily basis. This is a tax on everything, from baby strollers and kitchen gadgets to toothbrushes.

Why is this government bombarding Canadian families with all these taxes?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reality is quite the opposite.

In fact, this government has reduced Canadians' tax burden by \$200 billion, or \$3,200 per family.

We have reduced the tax burden to its lowest level in terms of percentage of GDP since 1965. The Liberals, however, want to raise taxes, including the GST.

* * *

[English]

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, another question period, and again the Liberals do not want to know where the \$3 billion disappeared to. Perhaps it is hanging out with the \$1 billion they lost the first time.

Clearly, a \$13-billion fund allocated to the Conservatives and \$3.1 billion cannot be accounted for. Of the money that was tracked for the Auditor General, he noted that the money went to an array of other things, including "...the services of a security expert to advise a host country on security matters related to the staging of an international sporting event."

Could any minister on the other side explain to Canadians what this involved and why, indeed, it was approved?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be very accurate with my quotations from the Auditor General. He said a number of things, both in public and to the committee as well. He had said, "We didn't find anything that gave us cause for concern that the money...was used in any way that it should not have been."

He confirmed that opposition characterization of these funds as "lost" is inaccurate. He confirmed that this money went through due diligence at the departmental level and was conveyed to Parliament for review and approval.

Those are the facts. Everything else is just their—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Pierrefonds—Dollard.

[Translation]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when we ask the Conservatives questions about the billions of dollars they have lost track of, they respond by twisting the words of the Auditor General.

The Auditor General also said that it is important for Canadians to know how the money was spent and that the reporting has been incomplete.

At the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, the parliamentary secretary said that it was a question of internal management of departmental affairs.

If the information exists, when will it be made public?

[English]

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a direct quote from the Auditor General, "We didn't find anything that gave us cause for concern that money was used in any way it should not have been."

He confirmed at committee that the anti-terrorism fund that he was reviewing was purely an internal government reporting process and that the shortcomings, which we acknowledge, did not prevent parliamentarians or Canadians from scrutinizing spending through the estimates process and through the public accounts process.

Those are the facts.

●(1430)

[Translation]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is funny how the Conservatives like to pick and choose their quotes. That does not help us find out where the money went.

The Auditor General suggested three scenarios to explain the \$3.1 billion discrepancy: first, the funding lapsed and was never spent; second, the money was used in anti-terror efforts; or third, the money was spent on other things.

Which one of these options is it? We do not know, and that is the problem.

Oral Questions

Do the Conservatives have the paperwork to prove how the money was spent, or did they really lose track of the \$3.1 billion?

[English]

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the answers to the hon. member's questions are found in the public accounts and the estimates in the years 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009.

Those were tabled before this chamber. They were debated by parliamentarians. Either she or her predecessors took part in those debates. It is a matter of public record and the Auditor General's findings speak for themselves.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since they clearly have no idea where that \$3.1 billion went, let us talk about the money they have wasted on their propaganda.

When it comes to government advertising, the Conservatives are like little pigs: they always want more. Calls for tender show that the government has decided to continue its budget propaganda until 2016.

The more time goes by, the less effective their advertising is. I did not make this up: this is from an internal government poll.

Why are the Conservatives wasting millions of dollars of taxpayers' money?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have already indicated, advertising is an essential means for informing Canadians about important issues, such as temporary stimulus measures, tax credits and public health issues.

[English]

We have been very clear. It is an essential part of any government's job to communicate to the public. This represents 0.3% of government spending.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fact is, these ads are simply partisan propaganda. The Privy Council Office survey proves they work for that purpose.

Government poll results on budget advertising are no longer public. However, it is only through access to information that it has been revealed that Canadians themselves think these ads merely promote the Conservatives. Independent polls reveal Canadians find these ads a waste of money, Conservative propaganda or simply junk.

With so many essential services cut, how can the Conservatives defend wasting yet more taxpayers' money on yet more partisan propaganda?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for

Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact, government spending on advertising was 46% lower in the last year reported than in 2009-10. That is a fact. I find it curious that the hon. member would raise these issues since, when the Liberal Party wanted to do advertising, it took illegal funds from the public sector and other unions.

* * *

[Translation]

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, instead of investing in propaganda, the Conservatives should be investing in equipment.

Since 2006, the Conservatives have been promising to replace search and rescue aircraft that are 45 years old.

Back then, they said it was a priority, but seven years later, they have yet to keep their promise. People in distress have to cross their fingers and hope that a plane is fit to fly.

Can the Minister of National Defence tell us when, exactly, search and rescue aircraft will be replaced?

[English]

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, like the Auditor General, our government recognizes that quick and efficient search and rescue service is critical to many Canadians across the country. We, too, see the replacement of our search and rescue fixed-wing aircraft as a priority. We are committed to an open and transparent process to replace our aging Buffalo and Hercules aircraft fleets. The process will result in the best outcomes for search and rescue, with a modernized replacement fleet as soon as the procurement process allows.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2006 the Conservatives promised to make replacing search and rescue aircraft a priority. Seven years later, the Conservatives have failed to get the job done. When asked about the delays, the defence minister responded, "That's a good question." The Auditor General reported that on 119 separate occasions in 2011, Buffalo aircraft were not available to help Canadians in distress.

Why is it that Canadians in distress are paying the price for Conservative inaction and poor management on search and rescue?

• (1435)

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government is absolutely committed to replacing those aging aircraft, as we have been committed to upgrading our search and rescue capability every year we have been in office. Just last week, the Minister of National Defence and the associate minister outlined a wide range of initiatives this government is taking, including a quadrennial review to make sure that the best service arrives on time to meet the needs of more and more Canadians who are using more and more parts of this country for tourism and responsible resource development.

Oral Questions

The real question is, why has the opposition, the NDP in particular, voted against every single equipment procurement for the Canadian Forces over the past seven years?

* * *

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, doing a review is not enough. It is time to act. If the Conservatives had gotten the job done on search and rescue, the Auditor General would not have had to sound the alarm.

On another matter, I would like to ask the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence a simple question. Friday was International Press Freedom Day and on that day the parliamentary secretary described Terry Milewski of the CBC as an “old Trotskyite”. Is this the official view of his government or will he now stand up and apologize for his remarks?

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite well knows, there has not been any objection to that term being used in the case of the journalist in question so far from him, and he can probably see why.

The shipbuilding secretariat provided all the costing and information related to the definition phase of the Arctic offshore patrol ships to CBC. Unfortunately, it chose to ignore it. It is not just us on this side, it is Canadians across the country, in the Royal Canadian Navy, in the Irving shipyards, across Atlantic Canada and across British Columbia who deserve better in the coverage of this important issue.

* * *

PRIVACY

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while Conservatives are obsessed with finding commies at the CBC, I think Canadians would like them to be a little more focused on finding the \$3.1 billion lost by the Treasury Board or why they are blowing taxpayers' dollars on partisan advertising or why losing the personal information of over a million Canadians is just another day in the minister's office. This is not about ideology. This is about incompetence. The minister has a pitiful track record of accountability.

Will he now commit to inform the Privacy Commissioner of every data breach that happens under his watch, no exceptions, no excuses?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I get perturbed. When I was in his riding, announcing federal funds for excellent projects in Timmins, he was gushing with his praise for me and our government. This is a different line of attack by the hon. member in this House from when he is in Timmins, I might add.

However, I would assure the hon. member that discussions are ongoing with the Privacy Commissioner and we await her advice and counsel on these issues.

SENIORS

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are not only raising taxes on middle-class families to fight the deficit, of course, that they created; they are also cutting important government services and programs. By making OAS harder to get, Conservatives have lifted \$30,000 from the pockets of Canada's lowest income seniors, yet, of course, this is not a new tack, coming from the same group that went back on its word and taxed income trusts. Do members remember that?

Just tell me, why is it that you have it in for the seniors? Why are you making Canada's seniors—

The Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. member well knows that she has to address her comments through the Chair, not directly at other members.

The hon. Minister of State for Seniors.

Hon. Alice Wong (Minister of State (Seniors), CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to supporting seniors. We took actions, which included the highest GIS increase in a quarter of a century; a low-tax plan that has helped remove almost 400,000 seniors from the tax rolls completely; additional funding for affordable housing for seniors; and increased funding for the new horizons for seniors program.

The Liberal leader seems to want to talk about seniors, as opposed to acting on their behalf. He voted against the many measures we have introduced that better the lives of our senior citizens. Is he still against them?

* * *

TAXATION

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week the finance minister said that his tax hike on credit unions would only hit “large credit unions that now rival our banks”.

However, as the Credit Union Central of Canada points out, the largest credit unions have already grown too big to access this credit.

No, the tax hike is aimed squarely at mid-sized credit unions, the credit unions that serve middle-class Canadians in rural communities when the banks will not.

Would the minister commit to learning how credit unions actually work and then reverse this tax hike?

● (1440)

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to be accurate, credit unions still have access to the lower small-business tax rate. That has not changed.

We are eliminating an outdated tax subsidy from the 1970s, when the tax system was very different.

Oral Questions

No other small businesses receive that special tax subsidy. Other governments have moved it forward before and eliminated that tax subsidy. The federal government is doing so now.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives continue to hike taxes on middle-class families. They are even adding the GST to certain health care services. For example, victims of crime who need a mental health assessment to prove their case in court would now pay GST.

Why are the Conservatives punishing victims of crime and would the Conservatives explain to Canadians, this week, during Canadian Mental Health Week, why they have decided to start taxing mental health services?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, health care services, including health care services relating to mental illness, have always been exempt from GST, and they will continue to be exempt from GST. The difference is with respect to services and examinations that are not performed for health reasons, and they will be subject to GST.

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[Translation]

LABOUR

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as we know, the Conservatives are against Canada's millions of unionized workers and their rights, which they systematically attack. However, hidden at the very end of Bill C-60, so that few people would even realize it is there, is a measure attacking the managers of crown corporations by interfering with their negotiating powers. Now the Conservatives want to be able to control the offers that management puts on the table, as though the head of the CBC needs any advice from a minister who lost track of \$3 billion.

Before putting his nose into everyone else's business, can the minister do his homework and respect the independence of crown corporations?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has the ultimate financial responsibility for crown corporations. We must ensure that these costs are sustainable. As the government, we are responsible for crown corporation and the public service.

[English]

I would say to the hon. member that his hon. leader's track record in provincial politics is very clear.

The hon. member is shaking his head, but the facts are on the table. They did exactly the same thing in the Quebec government that we are doing here, and he was part of that government.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives want to control not only overall budgets, but also how they are broken down. No one is immune to their partisan obsessions.

It is to the point where they are even changing government websites to display their party's colours, and now they are saying to CBC employees, "So, you thought you were independent of the

government and autonomous? Well, no, now you must negotiate with us".

If the government had only focused on doing its job instead of attacking the independence of crown corporations, maybe it would not have lost track of \$3.1 billion.

It should concentrate on that, to begin with.

[English]

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is only one taxpayer. We represent the taxpayer's interest in this government.

We are not going to have a situation with crown corporations, who ultimately come to government if their bills exceed their ability to pay them. They come to government. We are not going to allow them to have a situation where they have collective bargaining, which is over and above what is fair and reasonable for the taxpayers to pay.

That is our position. They are free to oppose it and to side with public sector unions' interest. We will side with the taxpayer interest.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, instead of going off on pointless rants, why do they not focus on recovering that \$3.1 billion?

The Conservatives' interference knows no bounds, especially when it comes to the CBC. They are constantly changing their minds about how to govern it.

The provinces did not need the government to interfere in how they teach history. That is what is in the news today.

Why are the Conservatives not focusing on the issues related to access to education, instead of interfering with the content?

Instead of telling teachers and school boards that the Korean War led to *Gangnam Style*, the Conservatives should cancel this study and respect the provinces' jurisdictions.

● (1445)

[English]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me first apologize to the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie. I answered a question on Friday that I was not particularly proud of, and I just wanted to take the opportunity to tell him that, of course, I am very proud of all our astronauts and our achievements in space, including our first astronaut.

To continue, a study will do no such thing. We will not be interfering in the provincial jurisdiction. We will not be telling provinces what to study or how to interpret.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that Conservatives are ramming through a study about what kind of history kids should learn in provincial schools.

Oral Questions

These Conservatives have spent over \$80 million celebrating the War of 1812, while they disregarded the 30th—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I will once again ask all hon. members to hold off on their applause until the member has finished asking the question.

The hon. member for Davenport.

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, they disregarded the 30th anniversary of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and they completely ignored the 50th anniversary of medicare.

How can a government that has such a selective view of Canadian heritage, of our shared heritage, lecture anyone on how to teach history?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, the NDP members are all over the place on this. They stopped writing letters to our Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development for temporary foreign workers long enough to ask us to send money so that they could celebrate 1812 events in their ridings.

We are going to bring people in. Today we have Lieutenant General Maisonneuve coming to us today to talk about Operation Husky. What we are going to be doing is talking about the things, the people, the places and the events that have made this country great, so that Canadians can have better access to their history as we approach Canada's 150th birthday.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with today marking the beginning of Mental Health Week, Canadians and veterans alike welcome the research and effort that our government has made to assist those who are facing this challenge.

Would the Minister of Veterans Affairs please update the House on how we are helping veterans win their battle for mental health?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning, I was pleased to announce the launch of Mental Health Week and the new PTSD Coach Canada app. It is a mobile app designed to help veterans and Canadian Armed Forces personnel to identify and manage their symptoms of mental health conditions.

[*Translation*]

The mobile PTSD app is free and available for Apple and Android products.

[*English*]

I was also pleased to announce a new initiative, involving 140 clinicians across Canada, to adopt new therapies designed to efficiently treat post-traumatic stress disorder.

With this kind of initiative, we are standing shoulder to shoulder with our veterans, their families and Canadian society.

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Atlantic region is reeling from the Conservatives' decision to gut employment insurance. The governments of the Atlantic provinces have joined forces to condemn the consequences of this reform. Quebec is concerned about the future of industries such as fishing and tourism, which require the experienced workers who are being forced to change jobs to satisfy the minister's whims.

Instead of sounding like a broken record and saying that she wants to connect people with available jobs, could the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development make her reform connect with reality?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the old employment insurance system had obstacles that kept unemployed people from working full-time if they were receiving benefits. We made changes and have implemented this process because people are better off when they are working. We also added help for job searches and training.

People are better off if they are working. However, if there are no jobs, employment insurance will be there.

* * *

● (1450)

TOURISM INDUSTRY

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, taking aim at our regions through employment insurance reforms is not enough for the Conservatives. They have let the Percé wharf fall into disrepair, which in turn has forced Fisheries and Oceans Canada to close it. At the same time that the Conservatives are asking people to find work, they are shutting down the driving force behind the tourism industry in the region.

The minister may not know this, but 400,000 tourists travel to the wharf every year. That represents a lot of jobs.

Could the minister show just a speck of interest in my region and in the iconic Rocher Percé, and reopen the wharf?

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a recent inspection by the department found the wharf to be unsafe. It is clearly marked as such. The safety of wharf users is of primary importance, as I am sure the member opposite would agree.

Engineers are on site today to conduct a fuller structural review, and with the information they provide, department officials will work with local authorities to determine the next steps.

*Oral Questions***FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of coastal communities that do not think the minister is doing a very good job, nor does this group think the minister is doing a very good job.

The Canadian Journalists for Free Expression have awarded him an F for press freedom. The report cites his department's "zeal in muzzling scientists and keeping critical research findings from Canadians".

Canadians deserve better. Will the minister now do the right thing, lift the gag order and let taxpayers see some of the science they are paying for?

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that communicating science is a priority for fisheries and oceans, and the department's record is solid on that.

In fact, here is what we do. DFO issues more than 300 publications each year documenting our research on Canada's fisheries. We respond to approximately 380 science-based media calls every year. DFO scientists publish feature stories on its website with 1,000 subscribers and an average of 73,000 hits annually.

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INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, from gutting employment insurance and punishing seasonal industries to muzzling fisheries scientists and dismantling habitat protection, time and time again the Conservatives have shown that they are not interested in listening to the people of Atlantic Canada.

The City of Halifax has been fighting the federal government around taxes for Citadel Hill for 17 years, and it has been a year since the Supreme Court actually made a decision. The Conservatives still have not paid up.

When will the minister stop stalling and pay Halifax what it is owed?

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have asked for the opinion of the dispute advisory panel on this matter. We have asked the panel to provide its services as soon as possible.

The authorities at the Halifax Regional Municipality and at Public Works and Government Services Canada met in order to try to agree on a solution for Citadel Hill.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the weekend the Minister of Foreign Affairs said that he was deeply concerned—those were his words—about the potential use of

chemical weapons in Syria. He also told the public what he was not prepared to do and listed a number of things that he was not prepared to do.

Given the seriousness of the situation in that country today, exactly what is the government prepared to do?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is concerned with the involvement of radical jihadists in the Syrian opposition groups and with evidence that they and the Assad regime are receiving outside assistance. As the minister said on the weekend, we need to see that the opposition has the broad representative support of the Syrian people, including religious minorities, before Canada would consider recognizing them.

[Translation]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, that was not the question. The question was about the problem of chemical weapons being used against the Syrian people.

At the same time, we must say that the government refused to spend the \$1 million in its pockets to help the opposition become more stable. It decided to spend the money on something else.

Canada is not providing a direct response to the situation. It is not involved in discussions with its allies. It does not have a coherent position on the violence taking place, and it is not doing anything coherent to ensure that the conditions for refugees—

● (1455)

The Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

[English]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the member is saying, let me say very clearly that our government is providing real leadership on this issue. We have given a credit of up to \$2 million for the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Our government has given humanitarian assistance and continues to do that. Not only that, our government is also working on refugee settlement in this country.

Let me say this very clearly: our government is providing leadership on the issue of Syria. However, we are seriously concerned about the Assad regime killing its own people. To make it very simple, Assad must go.

*Oral Questions***GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES**

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board was up earlier today saying that spending on public security and anti-terrorism was in the documents tabled in the House from 2001 to 2010. We went and checked all the public accounts from 2001 to 2010, and the words “public security” and “anti-terrorism” do not appear anywhere.

Could the President of the Treasury Board explain why this is, or even better still, tell Canadians where our \$3.1 billion is?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member knows, or should know, that each department, every year, must table in its public accounts each item of spending in the public accounts. That is legally obligated. That is what each department does.

If the hon. member wants to play word games, he can do so, but the facts are there for parliamentarians. If his caucus members from the years from 2001 to 2009 did not ask the right questions, then that is their problem, not the problem on this side of the House.

* * *

[Translation]

PENSIONS

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is pathetic.

CIBC sounded the alarm about pension plans being underfunded. An estimated 6 million Canadians will see their standard of living drop by 20%, and if nothing is done, today's youth will have a standard of living that is far below that of their grandparents.

The only way to offer real financial security to workers and their families is by improving public pension plans.

Canadians are asking for it. Provinces are demanding it. Pension specialists are calling for it.

Why are the Conservatives standing in the way of improving public pension plans?

[English]

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I might remind the hon. member that the NDP actually voted against a new pension plan that is now being accepted across the country, province by province. The NDP could not even see its way clear to support that.

Over 60% of Canadians in the workforce today do not have a registered pension plan that they can contribute to. The NDP thought, “That is not what we want to do. We do not want to help people save for their own pension and retirement”.

We think that is very important. It is one more option that Canadians can use. The NDP apparently does not think it is fair to Canadians.

CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the United States is, and always will be, Canada's largest and most important trading partner. Nearly \$2 billion in trade is carried on between our two countries each and every day.

Recently, proposals have surfaced in the United States recommending new fees on cross-border trade. These proposals, if enacted, would hurt job creation both in Canada and in the United States.

Can the Minister of International Trade please share with this House how our government is standing up for Canadians and promoting free and open trade across the Canada–United States border?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Souris—Moose Mountain for his hard work in promoting trade between Canada and the United States.

I can assure this House that our government will vigorously oppose any efforts to impose new border taxes. In these challenging economic times, there is no better American or Canadian job creator than trade between our two countries. New border fees send exactly the opposite message.

Canadians can be assured that our government will work tirelessly to promote their interests and the interests of Canada's exporters and job creators.

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TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Industry falsely claimed that a Statistics Canada report shows Canadians are no longer paying some of the highest cellphone fees in the world. He later admitted this report was commissioned by his own department and done by a company whose client list includes Bell and Telus. It is obvious the minister has no idea how upset Canadians are about sky-high cellphone bills. Why does he not get out of his bubble and actually talk to Canadians, or is he afraid he might lose his delusions?

• (1500)

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I invite my colleague indeed to get into reality. Since we adopted our policies with the AWS spectrum back in 2008, prices have gone down an average of 11%, and this communication report, which indeed was commissioned by Industry Canada and the CRTC, now shows the prices are lower by an average of 18%. Results speak—

The Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing.

TRANSPORT CANADA

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, tourist season on Manitoulin Island should be building steam after what should have been the first weekend of service for the *Chi-Cheemaun* ferry. However, the current government chose to fight Ontario rather than protect jobs and the economy. Now employees are waiting to be called in, while challenges mount for small businesses like the Buckhorn Motel, which had two customers and forty-one cancellations. On Friday, Ontario officials said they will argue later and pay for the work now.

Will the Conservatives ensure that there are no bureaucratic delays and do everything to expedite the process to fix these critical ports?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the preamble is wrong. Transport Canada has for months encouraged the province to explore modifications of its ferry to facilitate docking. Redesigning the wharf would go beyond Transport Canada's responsibility for inspection and maintenance. Transport Canada has received a proposal from the province, and both governments are collaborating to ensure that work can begin as quickly as possible. We were working on this issue for months before she spoke about that problem.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Bryan Hayes (Sault Ste. Marie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Ring of Fire is a mineral discovery located in the centre of northern Ontario. Through the development of these vast deposits, the Ring of Fire presents potential benefits to all groups: first nations, municipalities, the mining industry and in fact all northern Ontarians. The government has taken a pragmatic approach to this process by appointing a federal political lead to maximize the potential of the Ring of Fire for Canadians.

Would the President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario please tell this House how he has thus far engaged stakeholders in the development of the Ring of Fire?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie for a most important question for northern Ontario.

I was speaking this morning to the Canadian Institute of Mining, Metallurgy and Petroleum in Toronto to emphasize our approach of proactively engaging first nations groups as well as industry groups and other stakeholders with a view to coming to solutions and ensuring that the 15 departments and agencies of the federal government are working together to facilitate the development of this most important project, which means jobs and opportunity not only throughout northern Ontario but throughout Canada.

Oral Questions

This will be a game changer for our economy, and it is a positive development for first nations communities. However, it has to be handled correctly, and we will do our part.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Éleine Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' EI reform is wreaking havoc in my riding. Service Canada ordered an employee who had been at a summer camp for 17 years to leave his seasonal job or else lose his EI benefits. The camp owner is worried that he will lose employees and their valuable expertise.

This is not an isolated example. What will happen to the seasonal industries if the Conservatives threaten all of their skilled workers? What other kinds of abuse will we see before the Conservatives understand that they need to cancel this reform?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the changes to the system are meant to encourage unemployed workers to accept positions they are offered. They were also made because people are better off when they are working.

If the hon. member wants to discuss a particular case, I encourage her to come talk to me so that we can resolve it.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since Ottawa has been completely inept at properly maintaining the Percé wharf, the entire tourism industry of the Gaspé peninsula is now suffering the consequences, not to mention all the fishers whose jobs are more difficult because of the closure.

The Percé wharf is just the tip of the iceberg. If the federal government could neglect one of the most popular wharves on the Gaspé peninsula that badly, one can easily imagine the state of other wharves, harbours and ports that belong to the federal government.

When will the government understand the serious consequences of its negligence and come up with a credible maintenance plan for small craft harbours?

[English]

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are well aware of the impact of this situation on local parties, but the safety of users is DFO's primary responsibility.

As I said earlier, engineers are on site today, and they are conducting a thorough structural review. They will provide information, and with that information DFO officials will work with local authorities to determine the next steps.

Routine Proceedings

● (1505)

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, seven days ago we found out that the Conservatives lost track of \$3.1 billion earmarked for public safety.

Seven long days, and we still have no answer about how this pile of money disappeared. This government is making cuts to fundamental aspects of public safety, such as the police officers recruitment fund, which represents for Montreal about \$30 million over 5 years to maintain squads such as the Eclipse squad, an effective crime-fighting resource, but there is nothing about the \$3 billion.

Will the Minister of Public Safety at least have the decency to rise and tell us where the \$3 billion went?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this matter relates to the categorization of expenses by the Treasury Board between 2001 and 2009.

All of the funds in question are accounted for in public documents presented to Parliament, as I have already said, including the public accounts. There is no indication that any dollars are missing or were misappropriated or misspent.

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there was an exchange earlier involving the member for Ajax—Pickering on his use of the term “old Trotskyite” in referring to a reporter for the CBC.

I wonder, if he is not prepared to apologize for the term “Trotskyite”, could he at least stop using the word “old” as some kind of pejorative adjective?

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, none of us on this side of the House would ever dare use that word with regard to the member for Toronto Centre or indeed any of our colleagues in this House. Moreover, I would always take second place to the member for St. John's East when it comes to deciding who and who is not a Trotskyite.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES READJUSTMENT ACT

The Speaker: It is my duty, pursuant to section 23(2) of the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act, to lay upon the table the report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for the province of New Brunswick with an addendum dated April 10,

which disposes of the objections raised by members of the House of Commons.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 104 and 114, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 52nd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding membership of the committees of the House.

If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the 52nd report later this day.

Mr. Joe Preston: Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the 52nd Report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House earlier this day, be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent of the House to move the following motion: That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, clauses 213 to 224 regarding the National Capital Act and the Department of Canadian Heritage Act be removed from Bill C-60, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures, and that these clauses do compose Bill C-62; that Bill C-62 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage; that Bill C-60 retain the status on the order paper that it had prior to the adoption of this order; that Bill C-60 be reprinted as amended; and that the law clerk and the parliamentary counsel be authorized to make any technical changes or corrections as may be necessary to give effect to this motion.

● (1510)

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: No.**The Speaker:** There is not unanimous consent.

* * *

[English]

PETITIONS

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two petitions. The first petition is focused on saving the Kitsilano Coast Guard station, which is one of the busiest stations in Canada. The recent decision by the federal government to close the Kitsilano Coast Guard station is a grave mistake that will undoubtedly cost the lives of those in peril on the shores and waters near Vancouver Harbour. The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to rescind this decision and reinstate full funding to maintain the Kitsilano Coast Guard station.

SHARK FINNING

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is calling for a shark fin importation ban. The petitioners say that measures must be taken to stop the global practice of shark finning and to ensure responsible conservation and management of sharks. The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to immediately legislate a ban on the importation of shark fins into Canada.

[Translation]

CANADA POST

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to present a petition against the closure of the post office located at 4895 Sherbrooke Street, in Westmount. This post office is an important part of the community; many residents of my riding have been using it for decades and would like for it to stay open.

[English]

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish to table two petitions. The first is from Albertans calling on the Government of Canada to take action on health care to ensure that we have the same high-quality health services wherever people in Canada live, including a pan-Canadian prescription drug strategy; funding transfers to provinces and territories to ensure high-quality home care and long-term care; improved access to primary care; and in particular, improved health care access for aboriginal people.

The petitioners call on the government to fully co-operate with the provinces and territories to negotiate a new health accord by 2014.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from Canadians calling on the government to oppose the Kinder Morgan pipeline. The petitioners say that they have concerns about it going through densely populated areas and the territory of 80 first nations and that it is for export of raw bitumen, which will impact Canadian jobs. They ask the Government of Canada to oppose this pipeline.

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by over 400 of my constituents from my riding of Sydney—Victoria calling on the government to address the issue of moving cluster mailboxes to Halifax centre. These residents are concerned in relation to next-day delivery of their local mail not being maintained and also about the loss of jobs of Canada Post employees in Cape Breton.

MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions. The first one is from cyclists and pedestrians asking for the federal government to introduce a regulation under the Motor Vehicle Safety Act requiring aerodynamic side guards for trucks and trailers to prevent cyclists and pedestrians from being pulled under the wheels of these vehicles.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners note that side guards on trucks were made mandatory in the U.K. in 1986 and in the European Union in 1989, resulting in a 61% drop in cyclist and pedestrian death in the U.K. and a 20% drop in pedestrian fatalities in Germany. They also note that large trucks are involved in approximately 20% of cycling fatalities in Canada. It is about time this got done.

PARKS CANADA

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from folks in Ottawa. They want to see the Rideau Canal and Trent-Severn Waterway returned to the 2011 operating hours and length of season so that Canadians and visitors can enjoy this beautiful sight.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskaing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a petition that is quite timely, given the recent International Joint Commission report and the critical economic downfall situation residents from Manitoulin Island, Tobermory and Owen Sound and area are facing from the government's inaction on the docking ports for the *MS Chi-Cheemaun*. It basically speaks to the drop in water levels since 1999, with no sign of rebound in 13 years. It is far greater than previous fluctuations, and it has not only caused immeasurable damage to aquatic wetlands and spawning areas along the shores of the North Channel, Manitoulin Island and Georgian Bay but is also causing serious economic and safety concerns for communities in this area.

The petitioners are from across Manitoulin Island, from as far away as Edmonton and from lots of areas in southern Ontario as well. It is not just northern Ontario people who are concerned about the Great Lakes water levels. It is also people across this country.

●(1515)

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present two petitions. The first is primarily from residents of Alberta and Vancouver. They are calling on the government and this House to stand against the ratification of the Canada-China investment treaty. Their concerns are many, but they state concern with the superior ability of China's state-owned enterprises to bring charges against the Government of Canada, abilities superior to those domestic companies would have.

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from residents of the Vancouver area concerned about the protection of the CBC, which is particularly timely given the debate we are having today on provisions in Bill C-60 that would compromise the independence of the CBC.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition signed by West Islanders who are outraged by the additional fees charged by some businesses to bill their clients.

These people are asking the government to do everything in its power and in its jurisdiction to prohibit businesses from charging clients extra to send bills and statements through the mail.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 1229, 1231, 1233, 1234, 1235, 1237 and 1241.

Question No. 1229—**Mr. Ted Opitz:**

With regard to passport services, what would it cost the government, on an annual basis, to provide free passport services to veterans as defined in subsection 2 (1) of the War Veterans Allowance Act, their spouses or common-law partners and members of the RCMP and their spouses or common-law partners?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, although Passport Canada is unable to estimate the financial impact of providing free passport services to veterans and members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police together with their spouses or common-law partners, it is expected that the loss of revenue would be significant.

As a cost-recovery agency, Passport Canada does not receive an annual parliamentary appropriation and finances its operations entirely on the fees charged for passports and other travel documents. In effect, the Canadian passport program is funded by applicants, not taxpayers.

For this reason, lost revenues would need to be subsidized by means of an increase to the adult and child passport fees for other applications. In order to evaluate the precise impact of such a decision, Passport Canada would need to undertake an 18- to 24-month consultation process, in accordance with the User Fees Act.

Question No. 1231—**Mr. Ted Opitz:**

With regard to the development of affordable housing for Canadians, what would it cost the government, on an annual basis, to exempt affordable rental and non-profit housing from the Goods and Services Tax?

Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, residential rents are already exempt under the GST, meaning that the GST is not charged on residential rents paid by tenants. The Tax Expenditures and Evaluations 2012 report indicates that the exemption for residential rent reduced government revenues by about \$1.3 billion in 2012.

Qualifying non-profit organizations, or NPOs—i.e., non-profit organizations that receive at least 40% of their total revenue through government funding or charities—are entitled to recover 50% of the GST they pay in respect of certain types of housing. This situation occurs when more than 10% of the residential units in the housing

complex are intended for certain groups, such as seniors, youths, students, individuals with a disability, individuals in distress or in need of assistance, or individuals whose eligibility for occupancy or rent amount is dependent on a means or income test.

When charities or qualifying NPOs submit rebate claims for GST paid to the Canada Revenue Agency, they are not required to provide any information on the purchases that gave rise to the rebate entitlement. They just claim a rebate for 50% of the GST they paid on eligible purchases. Therefore, data are not sufficiently detailed to provide for the determination of the portion of the existing rebate that relates to this type of housing. While the value of the total rebate for charities and qualifying NPOs is known and was \$355 million in 2012, there is no way to know what portion is attributable to housing for the underprivileged.

Depending on how affordable rental or non-profit housing is defined, providing full GST relief could result in substantial additional fiscal cost to the Government of Canada.

Question No. 1233—**Mr. Randy Hoback:**

With regard to the passport services set out in the schedule of the Passport Services Fees Regulations, what would it cost the government, on an annual basis, to charge those 65 years of age or more, 50% of the fee set out in column 2 for the services set out in column 1?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Passport Canada estimates that charging those 65 years of age or more 50% of the fee for passport services could result in a loss of \$225 million in revenue over a four year period. In the event of an increase in the proportion of Canadians over the age of 65 or an increase in demand from that portion of the population, this number could rise.

As a cost-recovery agency, Passport Canada does not receive an annual parliamentary appropriation and finances its operations entirely on the fees charged for passports and other travel documents. In effect, the Canadian passport program is funded by applicants, not taxpayers.

For this reason, lost revenues would need to be subsidized by means of an increase to the adult and child passport fees for other applications. In order to evaluate the precise impact of such a decision, Passport Canada would need to undertake an 18- to 24-month consultation process in accordance with the User Fees Act.

Question No. 1234—**Mr. Randy Hoback:**

With regard to services provided for new Canadians, what would it cost the government, on annual basis, to reopen 19 local Citizen and Immigration Offices throughout Canada and reverse any reduction in staff at the central call centre?

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the loss in savings would be \$5.2 million annually, starting in 2014-15.

There are no reductions in the staff at the Citizenship and Immigration Canada call centre.

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 1235—Mr. Randy Hoback:**

With regard to protected persons, refugee claimants and other individuals not eligible for provincial health insurance, what would it cost the government, on an annual basis, to reverse any changes to the Interim Federal Health Program that took effect on June 30, 2012?

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with the changes to the interim federal health program, the government expects to save approximately \$100 million over the next five years. If the changes were reversed, the government would lose these savings.

Question No. 1237—Mrs. Kelly Block:

With regard to the Good and Services Tax, what would it cost the government, on an annual basis, to add to Part II of schedule VI of the Excise Tax Act, regarding zero-rated supplies, a supply of batteries purchased at a pharmacy or retail store that includes a pharmacy and is installed by a person employed by the pharmacy or is purchased from and installed by a medical practitioner, for a medical and assistive device described in Part II of schedule VI of the Excise Tax Act?

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, relief from the Goods and Services Tax, GST, is provided for certain medical devices that are specially designed to assist an individual. To ensure that the benefits of this relief are targeted to individuals in need of assistance, the approach has been to relieve only those items that are designed to be purchased and used by individuals with a chronic illness or disease or a disability. Parts, accessories or attachments that are specially designed for use with tax-free medical devices are also eligible for GST relief.

As part of this relief, batteries that are specially designed for use with a tax-free medical device are eligible to be acquired GST-free, as has been the case since the GST was established in 1991. General purpose batteries have many potential uses and are not considered to be specially designed parts, accessories or attachments for tax-free medical devices. As a result, general purpose batteries do not qualify for this GST relief.

There is no information of sufficient detail on use of general purpose batteries in medical and assistive devices and their costs. Accordingly, there are no data that would allow for reliably determining the cost to the government of zero-rating these goods.

Specifically, the Department of Finance does not have information on the types and numbers of batteries that would be purchased for use in medical devices. Further, the prices of batteries that can be used in medical devices can range from a few dollars for an AA battery to potentially hundreds of dollars for larger-capacity batteries similar to car batteries. As a result, there is no feasible way to estimate the cost of this proposal and its impact on the government's fiscal framework.

Question No. 1241—Mr. François Choquette:

With regard to the chemicals used for hydraulic fracturing and shale gas extraction: (a) what chemicals used for hydraulic fracturing and shale gas extraction in Canada or the United States that are being evaluated or will be evaluated by Environment Canada are not on the Domestic Substances List (DSL); (b) of the chemicals used for hydraulic fracturing and shale gas extraction in Canada or the United States that are being evaluated or will be evaluated by Environment Canada, which ones are substances subject to the provisions on significant new activities under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999; (c) what chemicals used for hydraulic fracturing and shale gas extraction in Canada or the United States that are

being evaluated or will be evaluated by Environment Canada have been added or will be added to the DSL; and (d) are any of the chemicals used for hydraulic fracturing and shale gas extraction in Canada and/or the United States that are being evaluated or will be evaluated by Environment Canada identified as persistent organic pollutants under the Stockholm Convention of 2004 and, (i) if yes, what are they, (ii) what is Environment Canada doing to comply with the Stockholm Convention?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, petroleum drilling and production primarily falls under provincial jurisdiction, except on federal land. Environment Canada has the authority to regulate the environmental impacts of oil and gas development throughout Canada. Environment Canada's role and authorities in relation to pollution prevention and habitat protection are provided for in a number of statutes, in particular the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, known as CEPA 1999, and the Fisheries Act.

Environment Canada has a number of initiatives under way toward gaining a better understanding of the substances used in hydraulic fracturing fluid and the potential environmental risks associated with the hydraulic fracturing process. At this time, the department is working with industry to confirm the identity of chemicals that are used in hydraulic fracturing in Canada. Once the department obtains this information, it will be in a better position to conduct detailed and targeted analyses based on the chemicals that have been reported. Results of these analyses will serve as a basis to determine whether further action is required from an environmental protection and/or human health perspective.

In the meantime, substances not on the domestic substances list continue to be subject to notification and assessment under the New Substance Notification Regulations (Chemicals and Polymers) under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999.

Of the more than 17,000 new substances notifications received since 1994, approximately 30 notifications have been received for substances potentially used for hydraulic fracturing in Canada, although this potential use was not always specified in the information provided. None of these substances are identified as persistent organic pollutants. Canada is committed to upholding the Stockholm convention.

Of these approximately 30 notifications, there have been three substances that have had a ministerial condition imposed on them that restricts the manner in which the substance can be disposed of. Details may be found at <http://canadagazette.gc.ca/archives/p1/2005/2005-02-26/html/notice-avis-eng.html>, <http://canadagazette.gc.ca/archives/p1/2006/2006-04-15/html/notice-avis-eng.html> and <http://canadagazette.gc.ca/rp-pr/p1/2008/2008-10-04/html/notice-avis-eng.html>.

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QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, furthermore, if Questions Nos. 1230, 1242, 1246, 1249, 1250, 1251, 1252 and 1253 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

S. O. 52

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Question No. 1230—**Mr. Ted Opitz:**

With respect to survivors of Members of the Canadian Forces, the public service, judges, RCMP or Members of Parliament, what would it cost the government, on an annual basis, to allow a survivor who married or began cohabitating in a conjugal relationship after the deceased beneficiary attained the age of sixty years or became entitled to an annuity or annual allowance, to receive an annual allowance or annuity after the death of a beneficiary?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1242—**Mr. François Choquette:**

With regard to the Customs Tariff: (a) how many complaints were there from March 1, 2012, to March 1, 2013, concerning agricultural products; (b) how many complaints were there concerning Chapter 63; (c) how many complaints were there concerning mesh bags under HS code 6305.32.00; (d) what measures did the government take to address the concerns raised by these complaints; (e) is the government planning to review the Customs Tariff; (f) are small businesses that do not have access to a specialized bagging machinery serial number in the Customs Tariff penalized; and (g) are small businesses that do not have the machinery required in the tax exemption forms subject to financial consequences?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1246—**Ms. Olivia Chow:**

With respect to aircraft leased by Canadian airlines: (a) according to Transport Canada, the Canadian Transport Agency and, where applicable, other federal entities, what is the number of passenger aircraft leased through arrangements that include the lessor providing aircraft and crew, broken down by year from 2006 to 2013 year to date, type of aircraft, including but not limited to Boeing 737 and 767, lease duration, lessor name, lessee name, application date, approval date and justification; (b) according to Transport Canada, the Canadian Transport Agency and, where applicable, other federal entities, how many aircraft are leased through arrangements that do not include the lessor providing crew, broken down by year from 2006 to 2013 year to date, type of aircraft, including, but not limited to Boeing 737 and 767, lease duration, lessor name, lessee name, application date, approval date and justification; (c) what is the number of instances in which pilots employed as temporary foreign workers have operated aircraft leased by Canadian airlines, broken down by year from 2006 to 2013 year to date, type of aircraft, including but not limited to Boeing 737 and 767, lessor name and lessee name; (d) in instances where pilots operate aircraft leased under arrangements where the lessor provides aircraft and crew, i) what procedures and safeguards are in place to ensure that they meet Canada's legal standards for aircraft pilots, ii) which statutes, regulations or other documents set out these procedures and safeguards, iii) which entity is tasked with enforcing these procedures and safeguards; and (e) in instances where pilots operate aircraft leased under arrangements where the lessor provides aircraft and crew, i) what procedures and safeguards are in place to ensure that they meet their country of origin's legal standards for aircraft pilots, ii) which statutes, regulations or other documents set out these procedures and safeguards, iii) which entity is tasked with enforcing these procedures and safeguards?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1249—**Ms. Olivia Chow:**

What are all applications submitted for federal infrastructure funding for transit-related projects from 2006 to 2013 year to date, broken down by (i) applicant, (ii) location of proposed project, (iii) approved, rejected or pending status, (iv) total federal funds requested, (v) total project budget, (vi) application date, (vii) response date, (viii) start and end dates of proposed project, (ix) reason for approval or rejection, (x) applicable federal fund or program?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1250—**Mr. Guy Caron:**

With regard to the awarding of contracts to SNC-Lavalin by the federal government: (a) what is the financial value of the contracts that were awarded to the firm between 2003 and 2013, broken down by (i) year; (ii) type of contract; (b) what are the numbers of the contracts that were awarded to the firm between 2003 and 2013; (c) for each individual contract, who signed the contract; and (d) for each individual contract, from which budget envelope the did the contract come from?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1251—**Mr. Guy Caron:**

With regard to contract approval at Public Works and Government Services Canada: (a) what are the various monetary levels of contracts that can be approved, and by which level of employees can they be approved; (b) how many employees occupy each of the levels identified in (a); and (c) how many contracts at each approval level were approved between 2002 and 2013, broken down by year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1252—**Hon. John McCallum:**

With regard to government communications since December 11, 2012: (a) for each press release containing the phrase "Harper government" issued by any government department, agency, office, Crown corporation, or other government body, what is the (i) headline or subject line, (ii) date, (iii) file or code-number, (iv) subject-matter; (b) for each such press release, was it distributed (i) on the web site of the issuing department, agency, office, Crown corporation, or other government body, (ii) on Marketwire, (iii) on Canada Newswire, (iv) on any other commercial wire or distribution service, specifying which service; and (c) for each press release distributed by a commercial wire or distribution service mentioned in (b)(i) through (b)(iv), what was the cost of using the service?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1253—**Hon. John McCallum:**

With regard to government expenditures on media monitoring, for every contract entered into since April 1, 2011, what search terms were required to be monitored?

(Return tabled)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

SYRIA

The Speaker: The Chair has notice of a request for an emergency debate from the hon. member for Toronto Centre, and I will hear him now.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am fully aware of the fact that events in other countries far away may not seem like a worthy subject for an emergency debate. Nevertheless, after the events of this weekend in and over Syria, the statements made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs with respect to the possible use of chemical weapons and reports today that no one is quite certain who exactly has access to these weapons and what their potential impact would be, and in light of the fact that over 70,000 civilians have been killed in Syria, that the violence is continuing and, in fact, escalating and that the refugee situation in Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon has become even more serious, I think this subject is worthy of an emergency debate. I would hope that you would consider it to be worthy of an immediate response by the House.

Government Orders

I do not think we can go on much longer without actually talking about this as a Parliament. I realize full well that the attention of many people is on other events that go on in the House from day to day. Still, we have to recognize that in terms of the threat to the security not only of the Middle East but of the whole world, this situation would certainly appear to be deteriorating rapidly. I think it is necessary for the House to become more engaged in dealing with its impact on civilians, its impact on Syria's neighbours and its impact on the security of the world so that, I would hope, we would be in a position to respond to it.

My colleague from Wascana has reminded me quite rightly that it is also important for us to realize the impact these events are having on Syrian Canadians and on a diaspora that is quite widespread in Canada and around the world. They have an enormous sense of frustration in not seeing an adequate response by Canada, among many other countries, to the extent of the tragedy under way in Syria.

● (1520)

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Toronto Centre for raising this issue, and I do find that it meets the test for an emergency debate. Pursuant to Standing Order 52(9), I will schedule a debate for tomorrow at the end of private members' business.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN 2013 ACT, NO. 1

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-60, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-60 on the budget implementation act.

I would like to focus my speech on the issues, concerns and priorities raised by my constituents during my annual pre-budget consultations. As a member of Parliament, I take seriously my job to represent my constituents' voices in Ottawa. In March of this year, I hosted four town hall meetings: one in Port Moody, one in Coquitlam, one in New Westminster, and a final one by telephone. I also meet with all three mayors and councils in my riding, as I believe it is important to also listen to their priorities and concerns. I also sent out a survey to every household in the riding, asking constituents for their input on spending priorities and economic concerns. In total, I engaged thousands of constituents on what they would like to see in this year's budget.

My constituents' number one priority is health care. I believe Canadians are proud of our health care system, which is the envy of countries around the world. However, we also recognize the importance of ensuring health care remains universally accessible and properly funded. I hear far too many stories from people who have to wait months on end to see a specialist or to receive a vital surgery. The government's hands-off approach to health care is unacceptable. Instead of working with the provinces and territories

to address the challenges facing our health care system, the current government unilaterally imposed a funding scheme that actually sees federal health care transfers decrease in the long term.

The high cost of prescriptions is another issue of serious concern, particularly for seniors who must also balance the realities of shrinking pensions and the shortage of affordable housing options. The current government's track record on support for Canada's seniors is dismal. The Conservatives' scheme to raise the age of retirement for the old age security from 65 to 67 years of age is disgraceful.

I also heard from a number of constituents who are frustrated with trying to find quality, affordable child care. Canada's New Democrats understand that a comprehensive national solution is required. That is why we are proposing, with the provinces and the territories, to establish and fund a Canada-wide child care and early learning program.

Another troubling issue we are seeing across our country is youth unemployment rates, which remain stubbornly high, at 13.5% for those under 25, compared to 7% for those over 25. Let us not forget that many students coming out of post-secondary education are saddled with record-high levels of student debt. Where are the jobs of tomorrow? Where are the quality jobs that enable people to support a family or pay down student debt or save for a down payment or save for retirement? Quality full-time jobs are disappearing at an alarming rate, and we are not seeing this issue get the attention it deserves in this budget.

I will take a moment to credit some of the great small businesses operating in my riding, like Resonance Technology, an innovative company on the cutting edge of new technologies. Companies like this are at the forefront of our economy, driving growth and creating jobs. We need more of this. Unfortunately, the reality is that income levels for average Canadians have stagnated while the cost of living continues to increase. From food prices and housing costs to MSP premiums and bridge tolls, British Columbians have been feeling the pinch. However, their tax burden will soon be a bit lighter, thanks to the people's successful efforts to overturn the harmonized sales tax, which was unfairly imposed on B.C. by its provincial government in collaboration with the current federal Conservative government.

I would like to focus on the claim by the Conservatives that this budget would increase funding for infrastructure. In fact, when the numbers are adjusted for inflation, over the next four years federal infrastructure funding will be \$4.7 billion lower than it was last year. City officials are asking for a long-term funding arrangement so they can plan for the needs of our growing regions.

Improved transit infrastructure is one of the greatest needs in the Lower Mainland. Residents in Coquitlam and Port Moody have waited well over a decade for the Evergreen Line, which was nicknamed the "nevergreen line", after years of delays made many people question whether it would ever be built.

Government Orders

• (1525)

The case of the Evergreen Line demonstrates that our governments are not up to the task of working together to meet the transit needs of our growing communities. At every town hall meeting I held, people expressed concern over the government's agenda to degrade environmental protections.

Let us talk about its record. Through last year's massive omnibus budget bills, Bills C-38 and C-45, the Conservative government gutted environmental protections from every act it could think of: the Fisheries Act, the Navigable Waters Protection Act, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, and many others. Canadians rallied to save the Experimental Lakes Area, which conducted world-class freshwater research. Unfortunately, the government chose to ignore these calls. A number of my constituents were particularly disturbed by the government's Orwellian attitude towards scientists, environmentalists and public servants. In March, the official opposition introduced a motion in Parliament calling on the government to defend basic scientific freedoms and evidence-based policy. I am sad to say that even the Prime Minister voted against that motion.

The government has been in power for seven years now and its arrogance is beginning to show no bounds. Its unilateral move to shut down the Kitsilano Coast Guard station flew in the face of expert opinion as well as the will of the public and municipal and provincial governments. Despite serious safety concerns raised over shutting down the only Coast Guard station in Vancouver, which is home to the busiest port in Canada, the government rammed through this closure. Consolidation of marine communication traffic services will put B.C.'s coast at greater risk. The government has also cut oil spill response centres. Given the number and scale of proposed resource development projects, this is the worst time to be cutting enforcement monitoring and emergency response.

This budget has announced \$108 million in cuts to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. While the government claims that this will be found through efficiencies like travel and printing, we know this will have a serious impact on DFO front-line services, including its ability to carry out its mandate to protect wild fish. Last year's cuts left DFO with only five offices in B.C., and the smallest staff level since 1983.

It has been almost seven months since Cohen's recommendations were released and we have yet to hear a single word from the government on how it will respond. Following the \$26 million Cohen report, the government should be responding to the 75 recommendations rather than turning its back on B.C. salmon and fish habitat.

All of the concerns I have highlighted speak to the serious feeling of neglect that has been brewing on the west coast. The Conservative government has been ignoring the priorities of British Columbians for far too long.

I would like to conclude my remarks on the budget by focusing on a theme that was frequently raised at pre-budget consultations. There is a feeling of restlessness and discontent among the electorate with the state of our democracy. I heard much criticism on the way the government has centralized power, limited debate and tried to marginalize the role of Parliament, not to mention the muzzling of

scientists and quality information. Taxpayers are frustrated with being on the hook for the unelected, unaccountable and under-investigated Senate.

Principles anchored within the Senate's mission, such as the protection of minorities and balancing the executive and legislative branches of government, are important principles, but they must be addressed through accountable and democratic means. Abolishing the Senate is part of the NDP's broader and progressive vision for democratic reform. This means reforming our electoral system to ensure that Parliament reflects the political preferences of Canadians. New Democrats have long advocated for a system of proportional representation. A reformed electoral Senate would go a long way toward better representing Canadians in Parliament. It could reverse dismally low voter turnout rates and improve representation of women and minorities.

• (1530)

Canadians are hungry for change. Canadians are looking for leaders who are not afraid to tackle the issues facing our communities and our regions. This was an underwhelming budget. I believe Canadians want to see their federal government build healthy, sustainable communities.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opening remarks from the member in regard to health care.

I believe in our health care system, and I value the important role it plays for all of us. Former Prime Minister Paul Martin had the health care accord. That health care accord is going to expire in 2014. That agreement ultimately led to record dollars to finance health care from coast to coast to coast, and it is absolutely critical in terms of ensuring things such as national standards and protecting what Canadians value so much.

As the member points out, it is the number one issue in his area. I would say the same thing in terms of Winnipeg North. We want and believe in our national health care system.

Does the member believe that the Government of Canada is doing a disservice by not working with the different provinces to come up with a new health care accord so we can have ongoing longevity in regard to stable funding and commitments by the federal government toward health care in Canada?

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, I certainly do feel, and I pointed it out in my speech, that the government's hands-off approach to health care is unacceptable. Not working proactively with the provinces and the territories to come up with a solution to tackle one of the greatest challenges that our country faces is simply unacceptable.

Government Orders

I mentioned that health care was a top priority from those responding in my town hall meetings. It was almost 50% that focused on health care as their concern. We absolutely need to find innovative ways, whether it is through technology or other ways, to deliver health care in the country more efficiently. At the same time, we need to retain the fact, and this was reinforced in my town hall meetings, that people want to see universally accessible and properly funded health care. That is a critical component.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is a critical bill that we are speaking about. This is about what we should be spending our money on or whether we should be wasting our money on it.

I look at what is happening on Manitoulin Island. I would just like to read something from Arlene Kennedy, who talks about the fact that the tourism revenue generated during the sailing season is the main source of income to many on both the Bruce Peninsula and Manitoulin Island:

An inability to hold to the ferry schedule for the season will deter potential passengers from purchasing tickets. The elimination of this service will ruin small businesses, eliminate jobs and create an economic disaster for the entire Manitoulin and Georgian Bay Circle Route Region.

Arlene is from Tobermory.

We are looking at a waste of taxpayers' dollars with respect to ads. I would like the member to speak about the money that is being put into the ads, compared to a little investment that would actually keep the economy going in northern Ontario and protect jobs.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's comments.

That is the kind of input that I heard, the kind of input that this member heard from Arlene. I heard it from many constituents who were very concerned about the priorities of the government and of this budget.

I mentioned health care. The member raises the issue of priorities, putting money into ads, and the government bragging about what it is doing in Canada's economic action plan.

Here is a specific case where infrastructure funding could have been used a long time ago as opposed to waiting to review the situation. We heard from the parliamentary secretary earlier today that the situation of this bridge is now being reviewed. The government should have done that a long time ago. It should be addressing the situation now so we do not miss the tourism season, which is going to happen if we do not get that funding to replace the bridge and get that tourism happening.

• (1535)

Mr. Parm Gill (Brampton—Springdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am thrilled to rise in the House and speak in support of the economic action plan 2013 act, no. 1.

Since July 2009, our government's policies have helped the Canadian economy create over 900,000 net new jobs and lead the G7 in economic recovery.

Prior to the introduction of this budget, I had the opportunity to meet with many of my constituents in order to hear their concerns on the economy and to get their input. Through these meetings, I can

report that the citizens of Brampton—Springdale strongly support the important actions our government has taken to lead Canada.

My constituents understand that our country is changing and want our government to look ahead into the future and plan for generations to come. They want their children to grow up in a country where job opportunities are plenty. It is for this reason that our government has tabled a strong and stable budget that every Canadian family can benefit from.

Like all Canadians, the wonderful people of Brampton—Springdale understand that the job of steering Canada through a troubled global economic downturn is not yet finished. There is still work that has to be done. Our government has done an outstanding job when it comes to keeping our country on the right track. In order for our country to stay on the right path, we must implement the measures introduced in the budget. This is not the time for us to rest on our hands. Our government and the citizens of Brampton—Springdale understand it very well.

During my consultations with my constituents and small business owners, there were four very clear priorities: creating jobs, support for small businesses, improving infrastructure and overall respect for the taxpayers.

Last year, small businesses across the country praised the hiring credit for small businesses. By extending the hiring credit for an additional year, an estimated 560,000 employers would be eligible to take advantage of this program. The true success of the hiring credit can be measured by the number of companies that took advantage of the assistance already provided.

Each job created represents an individual receiving a new employment opportunity. It is one more person who is given a chance to return to the workforce. These are real people with families who depend on them. I am proud to stand in the House and support a budget that is going to make their lives easier.

Over 80% of the businesses in my riding are designated as small or medium-sized businesses with fewer than 50 employees. Many of these are small and family-run businesses. The budget would increase a lifetime capital gains exemption to \$800,000 from \$750,000 and index it going forward. It would now be easier for owners to transfer their family businesses to the next generation when the time comes, encouraging the entrepreneurial spirit that makes Canada great.

However, this is not the only way that we would be helping Canadians find the jobs they need to support their families. In economic action plan 2013, our government also introduced the Canada job grant. This grant would assist Canadians by providing the training and skills they need to take on a new or better job.

There are a number of manufacturers that call Brampton—Springdale home, like Blue Giant Equipment, Magnum Integrated and Gray Tools. Our government recognizes the important role the manufacturing sector plays in our economy.

• (1540)

Since 2006, we have worked hard to help the manufacturing sector by lowering taxes, cutting red tape, and making Canada the first tariff-free zone for manufacturing in the G20.

Government Orders

With our economic action plan 2013, we would continue our support for manufacturers that keep jobs in Canada, by extending the temporary accelerated capital cost allowance for new investment in machinery and equipment. Extending this tax relief for an additional two years would provide businesses in Ontario with approximately \$562 million in tax relief and would allow these firms a greater opportunity to expand operations and create new jobs.

The budget would also invest \$18 million into the Canadian Youth Business Foundation to help young entrepreneurs start and grow new businesses, with an additional \$5 million for post-secondary scholarships and bursaries for first nations and Inuit students. By investing in the best and brightest of our youth, we would be supporting the next generation of Canadian leaders in all fields and helping to ensure the long-term prosperity of our country.

The City of Brampton has benefited tremendously from the gas tax fund for municipalities. The budget would index the gas tax fund payments to provide municipalities with reliable funding to support job-creating infrastructure projects across Canada. With this funding, municipalities would be able to build roads, improve public transit and build new recreational facilities for their residents to enjoy; residents would be able to commute to and from work much more quickly as communities expand their transit and infrastructure network to meet ever-increasing demands; businesses would save on lost productivity due to traffic congestion in our cities; and Canadians would be able to spend more of their time with their families, rather than stuck in traffic.

This is an issue of great concern to many of my constituents in Brampton—Springdale. I know that they support our government in making this a top priority.

Finally, our government would achieve these aims while ensuring Canadian taxpayers are treated with respect. The budget would improve the fairness of the tax system, align employee compensation at crown corporations, and introduce a new temporary first-time donor super credit for first-time claimants of the charitable donation tax credit.

Economic action plan 2013 would take important steps to demonstrate to hard-working Canadian families that our government remains committed to the priorities of jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.

As the member of Parliament for Brampton—Springdale, I am proud to support the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. It would directly benefit the families, children, seniors, new Canadians and businesses in my community. However, on a larger scale, this budget would help all Canadians and the plan set before us would provide a promising future for our country.

I look forward to continue working alongside every one of my constituents as a member of the government focused on creating jobs, relieving financial stress and providing the assistance that every hard-working Canadian truly deserves.

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the member who just spoke that we just learned that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance presented

a notice of motion to the Standing Committee on Finance in order to limit the study of Bill C-60 to five meetings and in order to ensure that the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill is completed by May 28, which is eight sitting days after a time allocation motion forces the bill to be passed at second reading.

Does the member opposite think it would be a good idea to divide this omnibus bill so that all members can really study it in detail along with the effects of this government's measures, which will harm our economy and kill jobs?

[*English*]

Mr. Parm Gill: Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that this budget was introduced well over a month ago. Since then all members of the House have had tremendous opportunity to debate the bill and that will continue. I understand, as my hon. colleague pointed out, a number of different committees will be studying the bill moving forward. There has been plenty of opportunity for all members of the House to debate the bill and there will be plenty more opportunity.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think we would find a consensus among most Canadians that this particular budget would collect literally hundreds of millions of new tax dollars from the middle class in particular. The government has failed to address the need for balanced budgets. It has taken huge multi-billion dollar surpluses from the Paul Martin government and turned them into multi-billion dollar deficits. The trade surplus under Paul Martin has been turned into a trade deficit. The fundamentals are starting to dramatically change and that is having a negative impact on the middle class in Canada.

Could the member tell me why the government is failing to deliver for middle-class Canadians?

Mr. Parm Gill: Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out to my hon. colleague the number of initiatives this government has taken since coming into power in terms of reducing the tax burden. I understand there have been about 150 different tax reductions. An average family of four currently saves in the neighbourhood of \$3,200 a year.

I would also like to point out that the Liberals want to raise taxes. They are on record as asking for an increase of the GST from 5% to 6% to 7%. It was the Conservative government that reduced the GST and other tax initiatives that we have taken to help Canadian families. We will continue to do that.

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, would the member like to expand on Canada's incentives for charitable donations and what that means for charities across Canada?

Canada is seen around the world as a leader when it comes to charitable donations. Could the member also expand on that?

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Mr. Parm Gill: Mr. Speaker, Canadians are very generous people who are known for their generosity right around the world. This government clearly recognizes that. That is one of the reasons why this government put a provision in our budget that encourages new Canadians and Canadians who have not donated in the past to donate. It would give them additional tax breaks and encourages first-time individuals who will be making donations. Charities are doing wonderful work across this country and other parts of the world and they will truly benefit from this.

• (1550)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege of representing a wonderful riding, the riding of Etobicoke North, the community where I was born and raised. We are proudly one of the most multicultural ridings in the country, but sadly, we also have our challenges.

Recent statistics show that almost 20% of our residents are not yet citizens. Our families face family reunification challenges and language and job barriers. Almost 25% of our families are headed by single parents who work two and three jobs just to put food on the table. Almost 20% of our riding is engaged in manufacturing, the second highest percentage for the entire country. In stark contrast, only 5% are involved in management, the 301st ranking of 308 ridings in Canada.

I am sharing this because we need real investment in our families and in our community, particularly during tough economic times. What we do not need are broken promises such as the Conservatives promising that they would not cut the rate of increase to transfers for health care, education and pensions.

The previous cuts to old age security, a move that would cost our seniors tens of thousands of dollars in support, are still causing outrage in my community. Single moms ask how the Prime Minister could do this, when he promised not to touch pensions. They have children and have to work. How will they pay for their children's education? They have no money to put away for retirement. What will happen to them?

Humber College students are saying that once they graduate they will have no job, and that is not fair. They ask why they are being treated differently by their country. Grandparents continue to come in wanting to know why their grandchildren are being targeted by the Government of Canada.

Today we are debating Bill C-60, the first Conservative omnibus bill following its 2013 budget, which impacts at least 18 different government portfolios. While there are some items in the bill that people could generally support—for example, better allowances for veterans and more incentives for charitable giving—these are mixed with many negative measures that will hurt the people of Etobicoke North. I simply cannot support these negative measures.

It is important to remind those watching at home that when the Conservatives came to power in 2006, they inherited from their Liberal predecessors 10 straight years of balanced budgets, an annual surplus that was running at the rate of \$13 billion every year, lower debt, lower taxes, a sound Canadian pension plan and 3.5 million net new jobs. The last time a Conservative government actually balanced a budget for Canada was 101 years ago in 1912.

Bill C-60 creates the illusion of action regarding jobs and training. The government proposes to claw back the \$2.5 billion per year in labour market money that it now sends to the provinces and renegotiate it with provincial governments. This amounts to recycling existing money. There is nothing new, no additional federal investment.

My community needs jobs, and each day at least one young person calls our office looking for work and we help find jobs, week after week. The youth unemployment rate remains a staggering 14.2%, nearly twice the rate for other Canadians. Today, 404,000 young people lack a job and another 171,000 have simply given up and dropped out of the labour market.

Another reason I cannot support the bill is that it increases taxes—for example, new Conservative taxes on safety deposit boxes totalling \$40 million a year, new Conservative taxes on credit unions amounting to \$75 million a year, and the list goes on. However, what I really object to is the new Conservative increase of tariff taxes, taxes on imports, which will take about \$333 million every year from Canadians.

The people of Etobicoke North do not want the cost of baby carriages to go up 3%; bicycles to go up 4.5%; blankets to go up 5%; ovens, cooking stoves and ranges, 3%; plastic school supplies, 3.5%; pillows, 6%; and vacuum cleaners, 5%. I have heard from Canadians battling cancer, who must fight their disease every day, that their cosmetic wigs will go up by an astonishing 15.5%. It is absolutely shameful.

• (1555)

When all these measures are fully implemented, as well as some other taxes that are buried in the legislation, the burden will add up to more than \$2 billion per year in new Conservative taxes on Canadians.

I did make a specific request to the Minister of Finance for budget 2013, as families in Etobicoke North asked, and respected the minister's request that ideas be cost neutral or non-spending steps. My appeal was for a joint meeting of federal, provincial and territorial ministers of health and agriculture to develop a plan of action to work with stakeholders across the country to improve student nutrition, because children in my riding and across the country go to school hungry, and hungry children cannot learn.

Forty per cent of elementary students and 62% of secondary school students do not eat a nutritious breakfast. Poor nutrition status leads to poor health outcomes for children, and Canadian children from all income brackets are vulnerable to inadequate nutrition, especially the one in five Canadian children who live below the poverty line.

Government Orders

In addition to making the human argument, to do the right thing and to honour the promises Canada has made to our children, I even made the economic argument for student nutrition. The Boston Consulting Group reports that, on average, each high school graduate contributes an extra \$75,000 to the economy. They earn higher salaries than dropouts, pay increased taxes, have lower health care costs and are less dependent on social assistance. If providing food at school increases graduation rates by only 3%, a pan-Canadian school meals program in high schools at a cost of \$1.25 a day could result in an annual net payback of more than \$500 million annually.

The potential economic stimulus for Canadian agriculture is also considerable. Realistically, 70% of the pan-Canadian nutrition program could have domestic content, with an annual return to Canadian producers of \$1.5 billion.

Not only do our children want healthy food now, but they also want a healthy environment to grow up in and raise their children and grandchildren. While no cuts to the environment are specifically mentioned in budget 2013, Canadians should remember that cutting is actually a three-year program with a \$13 million reduction this year, growing to \$31 million, then \$58 million and ultimately representing a 5% cut for Environment Canada.

Budget 2013 offers mere scraps for the environment and in no way makes up for the war on the environment and science that the government has been waging and continues to wage: for example, \$4 million for marine-based ecosystem conservation, when the government has promised to protect 10% of marine areas and yet has protected only 1%; \$10 million for the conservation of fisheries and a salmon conservation stamp after eviscerating the Fisheries Act; and a new tax credit for clean energy worth a tiny \$1 million for a global \$1 trillion industry.

Perhaps most concerning of all is the lack of action on climate change, when the government is under increased study for its environmental and climate change record, particularly by our largest trading partner, the United States, and the fact that record low Great Lakes levels, which many experts attribute to a changing climate, are mentioned but not acted upon in the budget. For a government that is desperate to greenwash its record, budget 2013 and Bill C-60 clearly show that the environment is only an afterthought for the Conservatives, although Liberals support the funding for the Nature Conservancy of Canada.

In closing, I do not support this bill because it will make life harder for the people of Etobicoke North to make ends meet and does nothing to help youth find work. My hard-working constituents should not have to pay for the government's wasteful spending.

• (1600)

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member and I would characterize much of her speech as wrong and out of context. However, one area that the member did not speak on, and that is very important, is the area of infrastructure. Our government has committed in this budget a plan of \$70 billion over 10 years. It includes indexation of the gas tax fund. It includes the GST rebate. It includes monies for P3 projects, for innovative ways to do new projects.

This is an unprecedented amount of money, combined with the \$15,000 job grant for people to acquire the skills they need. Why is the member silent on the infrastructure when FCM and every municipality has praised our government for its infrastructure program?

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, the information is not incorrect; it is very well researched. I notice he did not bring up child hunger. He did not bring up the environment. I did recognize there are positive steps, but by and large it is a negative budget and I simply cannot support it.

I will talk a bit about youth jobs. The youth employment rate is now more than five points worse than it was before the recession. Last year, Canada had some of the worst summer job numbers since Statistics Canada began measuring this in the 1970s. Despite these challenges, the only measure for youth in Bill C-60 is to encourage greater charitable donations. They cannot donate because they cannot find work.

In stark contrast to the government's inaction, Liberals would introduce a real job strategy for youth to give young Canadians the job experience they need to succeed, including a youth hiring credit for small business, significant new investment in the Canada summer jobs program and re-opening the youth job centres the Conservatives closed.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her speech. She outlined a number of issues, some of which may have been more on the budget side than on the budget implementation bill. However, that is probably one of the problems with this budget implementation bill. It does not really apply changes to the government's behaviour in a good fashion.

Right across the world, the fastest growing energy form is solar energy, interestingly enough, with investments that are expected to hit \$300 billion in the next year or so, yet within the budget there is an absolute lack of understanding about the nature of the green energy movement that is going on right across the world. The Conservatives' head-in-the-sand approach to renewable energy is really going to leave Canada in the lurch over the next number of years. Certainly, it will not make their case with our oil and gas trading partners that they are actually working to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Government Orders

What does my colleague think of the government's approach to renewable energy?

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I mentioned that in budget 2013 the government offers a \$1 million credit for a \$1 trillion industry. Canada should be having a green economy strategy, so we lead in the new economy. We should have a national sustainable energy strategy. We need a comprehensive climate change plan.

Unfortunately, the environment and sustainable development are not government priorities. Recent rankings of environmental performance clearly demonstrate this fact. For example, the 2008 climate change performance index ranked Canada 56th out of 57 countries in terms of tackling emissions. In 2009 and again in 2013, the Conference Board of Canada ranked Canada 15th out of 17 wealthy industrialized nations on environmental performance.

Our world-renowned heritage was then further imperiled by the government's economic action plan 2012 and its draconian omnibus budget bills, Bill C-38 and C-45, which destroyed 50 years of environmental safeguards.

• (1605)

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this bill today, to describe the measures that address our country's most urgent needs. The 2013 economic action plan focuses on our goals—jobs, growth and long-term prosperity for Canada. We have six major priorities and I will go over them briefly since I do not have much time.

First, we are going to connect Canadians with available jobs, and we will do that through the Canada job grant. We want to prioritize helping Canadians acquire the skills they need to obtain the jobs that are available now. Demographic trends mean that many good jobs will soon be vacant as people retire from the workforce, and we want our young people and those embarking on a second career to have all the skills required for those jobs.

We believe that involving businesses in the process and in funding the process is a key factor and a winning strategy. We look forward to working closely with all the provinces. In addition, we want to support the apprenticeship system and help people acquire the experience they need to obtain their journeyperson certificate. We also will offer more than 5,000 young people in transition an opportunity to turn their academic training into practical experience. Finally, we want to offer employment opportunities to persons with disabilities, young people, Aboriginals and recent immigrants. In order to do this, we are creating the tools that will help them find jobs.

Our second priority is the new building Canada plan, with more than \$53 billion available over 10 years. That includes \$32.2 billion over 10 years for the community improvement fund to build roads, public transit, recreational facilities and other community infrastructure across Canada. This plan will enable municipalities to plan for and achieve their priorities. There will also be \$14 billion for the new building Canada fund to support major national or regional economic projects. In addition, \$1.5 billion will be used to renew the

P3 Canada fund. Finally, \$6 billion will be allocated to the provinces, territories and municipalities under the new infrastructure program for 2014-15 and following years.

In our view, this predictable long-term funding represents the largest and longest-lasting federal investment in employment-creating infrastructure in Canada's history. We will also invest in world-class research and innovation in order to support cutting-edge research, encourage innovation in business, and improve Canada's venture capital system, which in turn will foster talent and ideas among entrepreneurs, promote an entrepreneurial culture in Canada and support young entrepreneurs.

We will continue to support families and communities. In order to support families, we will increase tax relief for families who adopt a child and those who require home care, we will eliminate tariffs on baby clothing and sports equipment in order to reduce their cost to consumers, and we will develop a new code to better protect consumers of financial products.

As for community investments, we will invest nearly \$1.9 billion over five years to create more affordable housing and to combat homelessness. We will also introduce a new, temporary, first-time donor tax credit to encourage charitable donations.

We are also thinking of helping our businesses grow and prosper in the global economy. We will provide \$1.4 billion in tax relief for manufacturers through a two-year extension of the temporary accelerated capital cost allowance for new investment in machinery and equipment in the manufacturing and processing sector.

We will also contribute to small business expansion by granting \$225 million to enhance and extend the temporary hiring credit for small business for one year.

We are thinking of our future generations and are very proud of the plan to return to budget balance. Canada is on track to return to balanced budgets by 2015-16. Our economic action plan 2013 announces more public spending savings totalling \$2 billion by 2015-16.

We will do this through many logical improvements, including cutting needless spending and waste, reducing travelling expenses through technology, pursuing measures to limit public service compensation and closing tax loopholes that benefit a few taxpayers.

Government Orders

•(1610)

We will continue supporting seniors, as we have done since 2006, because we know and acknowledge that Canadian seniors have helped build our great country. That is why economic action plan 2013 contains new measures to improve the quality of life of our Canadian seniors. We will expand tax relief for home care to include personal care provided to individuals who, due to age, infirmity or disability, require such assistance at home.

We will also provide assistance for the construction and renovation of accessible community facilities by investing \$15 million a year in the enabling accessibility fund.

Agriculture is very close to my heart, given my family roots. Our budget will also provide support for our Canadian farmers. The family farm is one of the pillars of our country. For generations, our farmers have fed Canadians and the rest of the world and generated jobs and job opportunities across the country. That is why economic action plan 2013 contains a number of measures to support Canadian farmers and agricultural innovation.

For example, we will increase the lifetime capital gains exemption from \$750,000 to \$800,000. That will not only help Canadian farmers plan for their retirement, but it will also help transfer the family farm to the next generation of Canadian farmers. We will also help part-time farmers by doubling the deduction limit currently permitted under the restricted farm loss rules from \$8,750 to \$17,500.

Lastly, we will invest \$165 million in Genome Canada, whose research work is helping to design new technologies for the agricultural sector—such as the bovine genome—which offer considerable advantages for the cattle and dairy industry.

I would like to remind hon. members that these measures are in addition to the support our government has been proud to give Canadian farmers and the agricultural sector since 2006.

The budget contains even more. It is available online, on the Internet, and it is a budgetary reference work. I am very proud because, now at the end of this laborious cross-Canada consultation process, we have a goal and a common vision: a working plan. We conducted pre-budget consultations, and we answered the call of businesses that want a skilled, qualified and engaged Canadian and Quebec labour force.

Together we are paying our fair share of taxes, and we are proud of this budget, which will not take money away from families unfairly because we are not increasing taxes. Our budget meets needs in a quick and tangible way, without further undermining our children or our country. Our budget is responsible and offers hope for the thousands of Canadians who just want to be active in the workforce.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague said that his government is trying to cut back on waste. What about the Conservative ads for the economic action plan?

I wonder if my colleague could remind the House how much money was invested in those ads. How many jobs have been created since those ads were launched? Instead of wasting that money,

would it not have been better spent on investments in aboriginal education?

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question.

I would like to tell her that the money invested in keeping Canadians informed about the various federal government's initiatives that benefit all Canadians is critically important. Canadians have a right to know what the Government of Canada is doing for them in terms of initiatives, tax cuts and services, which are very important to all Canadians.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, credit unions from coast to coast have provided an absolutely essential service to millions of Canadians over the years.

In this budget document, the government is taking a hit on our credit unions. It could have a very profound negative impact. These credit unions provide all sorts of services in our communities. They provide support to our middle class. They are there to provide competition for the big banks. They often open in communities where banks do not exist.

My question is why has the Conservative government gone against small credit unions, in the need to be able to support them from the government's point of view?

•(1615)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question.

I would remind him that Canada has the lowest tax rate for small and medium-sized businesses in the G7, which gives Canada as a whole an undeniable competitive advantage on all international markets.

Furthermore, credit unions can benefit from the low tax rate that our government is offering to all Canadian businesses.

[*English*]

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member why they are still, in the budget and for a long time, subsidizing oil companies to the tune of \$1.3 billion a year and increasing taxes on credit unions, as we have just heard?

The really big question is: when are they going to put a price on carbon, which is so clearly and desperately needed if we are to save the planet from the greed of oil companies and oil consumers?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I would remind my hon. colleague that Canada's energy sector is extremely important to our economy.

Government support for this sector helps ensure long-term prosperity and safeguards thousands of jobs for all Canadians. Without this support, if we were to follow my dear colleague's logic, Canada would have serious economic problems.

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[English]

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our whole objective in the budget is to continue the progress that we have made in creating jobs, growth and long-term prosperity for our country.

We heard from the opposition earlier. The member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine talked about not having jobs in her area, and the member for Etobicoke North talked about youth unemployment in the country. We have looked at this and we have said that it is absolutely critical that we get these young people into jobs.

I am the very proud mother-in-law of a young man who has just finished his doctorate in electrical engineering and is looking to get into the job market now. I know that these infrastructure projects that we are investing in are going to create jobs for engineers and for construction companies, and trickle-down effects for the service companies.

I wonder if my colleague could talk about how these opportunities are going to impact his riding?

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her excellent question.

I know that she does wonderful work in her riding. She is very passionate about the future of our youth, as am I. I have five children at home who are entering the workforce.

The Government of Canada cares about the future of Canadians. Our country offers tremendous opportunities for young people who want to work. We are creating more than 5,000 internships so that they can transition from studying to a work experience that will allow them to gain skills for their future and for the future of our country.

Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, drawing up a budget means making choices. In their 2013 budget, the Conservatives have chosen austerity. This government justifies its decision on the grounds that it wants to wipe out the deficit. All of us here in this House are in favour of wiping out the deficit. Nobody can argue with that, but it is all in the way you do it.

The Conservatives are proposing lean years for everyone in the hope that these cuts will return us to a balanced budget. We believe we must invest in our economy in order to wipe out the deficit. Our economy needs a little help. It needs investment to create jobs and growth. It definitely does not need utterly austere policies like those proposed by this government.

The IMF, the Parliamentary Budget Officer and many renowned economists have warned the government about the harmful effects of its strategy. The Parliamentary Budget Officer says the 2013 budget will eliminate thousands of jobs, cut direct program spending and slow GDP growth. That is not very encouraging, especially for a government that claims to champion employment and the economy.

With Bill C-60, the government is giving us version 3.0 of its omnibus bills. Like Bills C-38 and C-45, Bill C-60 amends nearly 50 acts and contains hundreds of unrelated legislative amendments.

As a parliamentarian, but especially as a citizen, I am shocked to see that this government has not adopted a more co-operative and democratic approach. Its bill is full of inconsistencies and counter-productive measures. However, the government is determined to force it down Canadians' throats without us really having the time to study it or propose improvements.

A very specific example of a counterproductive measure that will harm the economy of my region, the Outaouais, is the elimination of the 15% tax credit for shareholders of labour-sponsored funds. Labour-sponsored funds are essential to the development of Outaouais businesses. On May 2, the Gatineau chamber of commerce organized a press conference to announce its request that the government reverse its decision. The FTQ's Fonds de solidarité alone has invested \$125 million in 80 businesses in the region. Those investments have made it possible to create or maintain 6,700 jobs in the Outaouais alone.

The hardest thing to understand in the Conservatives' attitude is that the government will achieve no savings by eliminating the tax credit.

A study conducted by SECOR in 2010 clearly shows that the economic impact of the jobs created and maintained through the investments of these labour-sponsored funds enable the government to recover the tax credits in an average period of three years.

I ask myself the question and I put it to the government: what is the justification for this attack on labour-sponsored funds? These funds create and maintain employment in addition to playing a positive role in our economy.

Eliminating the tax credit will also have a direct impact on small investors. It has benefited some 23,000 people in the Outaouais alone.

By investing \$5,000 in a labour-sponsored fund, a taxpayer can currently save up to \$750 in federal income tax. Because of this government, 23,000 small investors in the Outaouais will lose a profitable savings vehicle for their retirement and for the economy. This government must open its eyes and reverse its decision.

I have looked through Bill C-60 at length and have found virtually nothing about the measures this government intends to take to combat poverty. In a developed country such as Canada, we would be wrong to believe that poverty is a marginal phenomenon. Poverty exists. It is very real. We see it on the ground, in our ridings. Many of us could describe numerous unfortunate examples of poverty.

• (1620)

Every month, 800,000 Canadians turn to food banks. A growing number of these 800,000 food bank users are working people. Despite earning an income, they cannot always afford to put food on the table. More and more workers are living in poverty, and this government's policies are obviously to blame to some extent for this situation. This is unacceptable. Fighting poverty must be one of the government's priorities.

Government Orders

In conclusion, I would like to comment briefly on this government's repeated attacks on public servants. Last year, it announced that it was eliminating 19,200 jobs, while solemnly swearing that services would not be affected. We subsequently learned that in reality, 29,000 public servants would be losing their jobs and that services to the public would be directly affected.

The Conservatives enjoy depicting public servants as privileged, lazy individuals. That is part of their strategy. They want to pit private sector workers against public servants. We would all do well to close ranks in the face of this government's attacks on workers in general.

The fact of the matter is that the average pension of a public servant upon retirement is \$24,000 a year, or \$18,500 for women and \$28,000 for men. It is time to stop implying that public servants are rolling in money. Those who are doing very well are the Conservatives' friends, those who are on the receiving end of favours and generous subsidies while they generate profits totalling millions and sometimes even billions of dollars.

I am thinking here, among other things, of oil companies that are still subsidized to tune of \$1.3 billion a year and that often use our soil, our air and our water as a free dumping ground. Natural resource development is a major source of revenue, but development must be done properly. Right now, major polluters are enjoying a free lunch. Things could be done differently, but this government is failing when it comes to fighting for the middle class and for the environment.

As I said in my opening remarks, drawing up a budget means making choices. In budget 2013, the government clearly chose to turn its back on the middle class and on SMEs. Canadians will remember this when the time comes to elect a new government.

•(1625)

[*English*]

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the best way to counter poverty is to create an economy that is full of jobs and growth and prosperity. Then we would have the ability to help those people in our economy who are most in need.

My hon. colleague said that we do not have anything in the budget that would assist people who are in need. I would like to direct her to page 228 in the budget, where we talk about investing in communities. First, we talk about our homelessness partnering strategy, where we would be contributing \$119 million per year, over five years, working with our provinces and territories.

Then, on page 230, we talk about investments in affordable housing where we are proposing \$253 million per year, over five years, to 2018-19.

Would my colleague speak to why it is she would vote against these kinds of investments for the people who live in her riding?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nycole Turmel: Mr. Speaker, when I look at the economy in my region, where many public servants live, I also see that there is a great deal of poverty. I find it unacceptable that this government plans to raise taxes in the coming years on things families need every

day to work and to provide for their children's day-to-day well-being.

As for sustainable social development, I would say to the minister and my colleague that I have worked in the affordable housing sector and I was a member of a number of boards of directors in my riding. I saw first-hand the deterioration and lack of affordable housing in regions across the country. Do not tell me that the government's proposals will help this cause.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, an unemployed individual can appreciate why the jobs issue is so critical. Over the last period of time there has been a great deal of concern with regard to how the government dropped the ball with respect to the temporary foreign worker program. If this program is utilized properly it can save industries, it can provide a great quality of life to Canadians and those people who call Canada their home. The Conservative government has now had in the neighbourhood of 338,000 jobs through the foreign worker program.

Does my colleague feel that the government needs to improve the temporary foreign worker program process in order to come up with a more realistic number in terms of the number of jobs that are being taken by individuals from abroad? Even during Liberal peak times, I believe we hit 160,000. There is no doubt that the current system needs to be fixed.

What is the NDP's position on the issue?

•(1630)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nycole Turmel: Mr. Speaker, we have debated this matter in recent weeks.

Foreign workers were allowed to come to Canada to work in various jobs that needed to be filled.

However, the government dropped the ball because Canadians could have filled those jobs.

This government opened the door without thinking about our economy or the fact that Canadians could have filled those jobs.

I acknowledge that we need foreign workers and that they must come to Canada. However, at the same time, we must provide them with decent housing, working conditions and benefits so that they can return home when they need to. That is not what happens with these types of jobs.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to speak on budget 2013 and the budget implementation act. As I prepared for this speech, I reviewed from budget 2006 onward with an eye to looking at how our government is focused on the economy, jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity. One thing I was very happy to see was that even in the early days of our government, in 2006, we have always had an eye towards providing stability and environmental stewardship.

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The Prime Minister has always recognized that environmental protection goes hand in hand with our economic future as a country. Whether it is through strategic investments in clean energy infrastructure, strong partnerships with our provincial and municipal partners, NGOs, industry and even landowners, or whether it is actually doing the tough work of regulatory reform, our government has always had an eye toward making sure we have the balance between our economic prosperity and increasing our environmental stewardship and habitat conservation. Whether it is looking for results in increasing air and water quality or reducing greenhouse gases, this government has consistently set targets and moved toward actual results in hitting those targets.

As a young boy growing up in rural northern Alberta with a grandfather who was both a trapper and farmer, I was always very close to the land. I was always in an environment where I understood the importance of environmental stewardship and good conservation, being a good Conservative. I contrast that upbringing with my niece Vienna, who was born and raised in Ottawa. I see how she would have a different opinion of what environmental stewardship and the problems of our country look like today, when she tunes in to *CTV News* or any of the news stations, as she likes to do, and sees evil oil and gas companies destroying thousands of hectares of land, and mining companies putting big holes in the ground, making it look like some kind of sci-fi moon landscape from the 1970s.

I understand how this negative connotation that people constantly receive from the media can lead this generation to perceive that these are the problems of environmental stewardship today. In fact, in the last 50 years, when it comes to issues such as wetlands conservation, air quality, water quality or greenhouse gas emissions, the largest problem in our country has been urban sprawl. More and more urban areas have taken up more and more wetlands and have increased the output of effluents.

I can remember, as a young man, going to the University of Calgary, and when I left the north end, between Calgary and Balzac and then Calgary and Airdrie, there were actual green spaces. Now there are houses from one end to the other, just like Toronto to Hamilton. It has become concrete. This is one of the biggest issues that we have to deal with. This is one of the issues we have to make sure we pass on to Vienna's generation, that it is a problem we have to engage in.

I am proud to be part of a government that has made strategic investments in partnerships, not just with municipalities but organizations like Nature Conservancy Canada. An additional \$20 million was put into budget 2013 to help them leverage it three to one so we could protect more habitat and species at risk. Since budget 2007, we know this has been a successful program. We have invested \$225 million and preserved over 875,000 acres of land over all 10 provinces in our country, and conserved habitat for up to 148 species at risk.

The fact is that we can still have growth and economic prosperity at the same time as increasing our environmental sustainability. That is a message we have to pass on. We can actually continue to grow our environmental conservation habits, not just be happy with some kind of net zero through innovative partnerships like we have already demonstrated.

●(1635)

One of the other things we have to do in these partnerships is win the hearts and minds of Canadians. We have to show Canadians like those in my niece's generation that habitat, wildlife and the environment are things worth saving, and to do that, we have to give them a value. We have to be able to attribute a value to that, and it is very hard to attribute a value to something that one has never really encountered.

We have Thousand Islands National Park, a beautiful park, about two hours away from Ottawa, but for my niece to pack up her family and go there takes a couple of hours. To go to Jasper National Park from Edmonton, it is two and a half hours. It limits the number of encounters they are going to have with nature and natural habitats.

That is why it is so important that our government's initiatives and investments in parks such as Rouge national urban park, where we are investing \$143 million over 10 years, including in this budget as well, to bring nature closer to Canadians and to that generation that has grown up in urban sprawl. This is critically important when we talk about winning hearts and minds so that they can understand the importance of habitat and species at risk.

I am proud to be part of a government that has created over 149,000 square kilometres of national parks, including parks such as Sable Island. This government has always had an eye toward making sure that we invest in the future, and not just in job training and job growth but also in environmental stewardship.

One of the other aspects that is very important, perhaps one of the most important, is working with industry and taking a real approach. If we want to continue to extract and develop our natural resources and sell them around the world, we have to have a regulatory approach that is perceived to be one of the best in the world, not just talked about as being one of the best in the world.

That is where the Prime Minister's leadership in regulatory reform is so important. Whether it is in the transportation sector, the coal-fired electricity sector, or the oil and gas sector, we have worked with these sectors one by one. It is not just to do a redistribution of wealth, which is what a carbon tax is, taking from one to give to the other, but the rich never really have to make a sacrifice. We are talking about changing the way sectors operate so that they actually become better environmental stewards and bring reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and improved air quality.

This kind of work is far harder and politically far more difficult, but it brings the benefits of real results for Canadians and for the next generation, at the same time respecting our jurisdictions and understanding that the coal-fired electricity issues in Ontario or Quebec are not the same as the issues in Alberta. We have to have some flexibility, yet have targets that we are moving forward to meet.

Government Orders

At the same time, as we see in budget 2013, we are investing \$325 million in Sustainable Development Technology Canada to help develop clean technology and help industry to continue to move forward. I come from an oil-rich part of the country where we have in situ oil sands that are nothing like what most Canadians would perceive when they think of the oil sands in Fort McMurray. These are oil sands with a very small footprint. These are oil sands for which our government has just put water monitoring in place in the Athabasca River so that we can make sure we are open and transparent and can actually demonstrate the positive results coming out of the work we have done on this sector.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the importance of working with landowners and the importance of respecting property rights when we are doing all of these things. It is important that we incentivize landowners so they are not worried about running into a species at risk on their land, yet see the natural habitat area as a value to their land. That can only happen through strong partnerships with our municipalities, as we are experiencing in Vermilion River.

To close, I would like to say it is our responsibility to look the next generation in the eye and say that we have been good stewards of both the environment and the economy. Environmental protection goes hand in hand with our economic future.

God bless Canada.

● (1640)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Before I go to questions and comments, 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 Lac-Saint-Louis, The Environment; the hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, Aboriginal Affairs; and the hon. member for Québec, Telecommunications.

Questions and comments.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in February, I actually visited Westlock—St. Paul, the member's riding. I visited a power plant there in Dapp. It was a biomass plant. I asked the people there if the member had ever visited, and they told me, "No." This is a plant that takes wood waste from Edmonton and turns it into electricity. The electricity that comes from this process is distributed to all the farmers around. It is a great community project that powers 600 houses with electricity from the grid.

When I got there, people asked me a few questions. The first one was, "When is there going to be a national energy strategy that includes renewables?" I would ask the same question to the member across.

The other thing is, I would point out that there is only \$1 million for SDTC this year to promote projects, like things that are happening in Dapp with its biomass plant. Will the government commit to funding SDTC more at the front end rather than the back end in 2018?

Mr. Brian Storseth: Mr. Speaker, I am very familiar with the project the member is talking about. In fact I grew up in that area.

The local councillor, Mr. Bert Seatter, has been a strong advocate of this project. If the member wishes, I would be happy to share information on the company that he talked about.

It is very important, as I said, when we start talking about these issues that we look at it as a balanced approach, that we look at economic development and growth of our economy in balance with the environment.

I am glad the member brought it up. My home province of Alberta is one of the leading provinces when it comes to wind and solar technology, which invests more money in renewable fuels than many of the provinces twice its size in this country. I am proud to be from a part of the country that does not just talk about environmental stewardship but actually takes a step forward and starts practising it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe the member is being very selective when he talks about practising it.

Let me talk about a petition that I have introduced on numerous occasions, and that the Liberal Party has been advocating for, that is in regard to the Experimental Lakes project.

I quote from the petition:

Since 1968, ELA has been a global leader in conducting whole-ecosystem experiments, which have been critical in shaping environmental policy and understanding human impacts on lakes and fishes...

This research is done at the Experimental Lakes Area. It provides important, critical, scientific knowledge. The government was content with seeing it completely wiped out, closed. If it was not for the Government of Ontario, there would not be an ELA, even though the benefits are immense from an environmental perspective.

How does the member justify the government's behaviour on that specific project, the ELA? Why did the government not support it?

● (1645)

Mr. Brian Storseth: Mr. Speaker, as always, I am happy to see my friend from Winnipeg North standing up. Unfortunately the Jets are not in the playoffs this year, so he has a little more time to spend here than he would otherwise. As he likes to trade quotes, and he is always prepared, I would like to read him a quote, as well.

From Mr. John Lounds, president of the Nature Conservancy of Canada, in committee last week:

You will no doubt hear many witnesses tell you where government hasn't got it right. We'd like to tell you about something where the government has got it right in our view, which is the natural areas conservation program. In 2007 the Government of Canada made a bold investment of \$225 million in this unique public-private partnership led by the Nature Conservancy of Canada.

I am proud of the fact that we are part of a government that has helped establish important habitat conservation for over 875,000 acres of land across 10 provinces of this country, including saving habitat for 148 species at risk. I think that is a record of success.

[Translation]

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by asking a question.

Government Orders

Today in the House, the member for Westlock—St. Paul talked about renewable hydrocarbons. The Minister of Natural Resources has also talked about the same thing recently.

Frankly, I would like to know what this creature is, given that hydrocarbons come from dinosaurs that lived millions of years ago. It seems to me that this is not a renewable energy source, unless the Conservatives are telling me that there may be dinosaurs somewhere in the Caribbean islands. I am trying to understand what this is.

They may be talking about the corn and ethanol business. Recently, we saw that when ethanol derived from corn was on the market, it created an extreme crisis for the corn market, to the point that a lot of people in the world could no longer buy basic products such as corn because it was being converted into renewable energy.

I quite simply do not understand why the Conservatives are trying to make us believe this renewable hydrocarbons story. I am having a hard time seeing where this thing exists. I would certainly like to hear more about it though, because frankly, I sometimes think it is coming out of the mouths of dinosaurs.

Bill C-60 contains very few things that will benefit people in my riding. I will even go out on a limb and say that it could hurt them.

We will talk about a few measures that are in the budget, and other measures that are not. What worries me most is what is not in the budget.

I would first like to talk about the investment that needs to be made at Fisheries and Oceans. The budget says that over the next five years, Fisheries and Oceans will be cut by another \$100 million. That department has already endured cuts, very recently, of over \$70 million a year. Now the Conservatives are talking about more cuts. We do not know how big those cuts will be. The Conservatives have simply announced cuts. They have not said what is going to be cut. That is the real problem with the bill we have before us. It is supposed to be Bill C-60, Economic Action Plan 2013 Act, No. 1, yet it is not a budget, or at least it is hard to believe that it is.

When I was a businessman, a budget had columns. It was a sheet with figures on it, with the money spent the previous year and the money spent during the current year. You saw how spending increased or decreased. To the Conservatives, budgets are no longer budgets; now, they are action plans. Frankly, they are works of fiction. They are books that tell a story, but do not in any way achieve the objective of managing a country in a sound and sustainable way.

I will come back to Fisheries and Oceans Canada, which is going to lose \$100 million over the next five years. Nowhere in the budget, or the Conservatives' economic action plan 2013, do I see where they are going to cut. We know the impact of the cuts, though. So much has been cut from maintenance at Fisheries and Oceans Canada that our docks are in a pitiful state. The Percé dock is closed today. The lobster industry depends on that dock. My riding also depends heavily on the tourism industry, which in turn depends heavily on the dock. We are talking about 400,000 tourists a year who visit the dock.

Last year, Bill C-38 made changes to employment insurance. In today's budget, nothing has been changed, even though every region

of Canada where there is seasonal work and people make a living from seasonal industries has called for a moratorium or a return to the starting point, and for real consultations to be held. That has not been done. The result is the bill we have before us, which makes no changes to employment insurance.

As a result, people in my region have lost weeks of employment insurance benefits and they will therefore find it harder and harder to have an income to get through the seasons and make it through the whole year.

The minister says that the reason why the government made changes to employment insurance was to help people get jobs. At the same time, however, the Conservatives have cut so much from dock maintenance in my riding that they have put people out of work. In 2013, we risk losing the tourist season in the Gaspé region, because they have cut so much from the budgets that people depend on, without consultation and without doing the groundwork.

● (1650)

They are making so many cuts that people are losing their jobs. There will be no tourists to support merchants who depend on the tourist industry and so there is a risk that we will lose an entire year of tourism, simply because Fisheries and Oceans Canada has not been able to do its job. The department has been unable to do its job because the cuts have been so deep that it has had a great deal of difficulty meeting its obligations.

In today's budget, Fisheries and Oceans Canada is being cut by \$100 million. What is going to be cut? I have a hard time seeing where the remaining cuts at Fisheries and Oceans Canada could be made. I congratulate the department for demonstrating creativity by inventing cuts that could be made in future, without specifying what is left to cut. It seems to me that there are no cuts left to be made at Fisheries and Oceans Canada, apart from the minister's salary maybe.

We absolutely have to think long-term. There is no long-term vision in Canada. The Conservatives are trying to cut all government spending, and they think that that is going to create the conditions upon which an economic recovery could be based. We saw this situation in the 1980s, in the Reagan era. It is called trickle-down economics. If the government cuts taxes and is less and less involved in the economy, the invisible hand of the market will take over and solve all of our problems. In my opinion, in 2008, when the serious crisis in the banking system happened, the invisible hand of the market simply did not work.

Frankly, credit does not go to the Conservatives for the regulations that were in place at the time and that helped us to get through that serious worldwide economic crisis and be in the condition we are in now.

The Conservatives boast about the fact that Canada has one of the best economies in the world. It is difficult to boast when we compare ourselves to Greece, for example, which is in free fall. Saying we are not in free fall is not all it takes to determine that everything is fine. That is not the case.

Government Orders

Certain conditions must prevail in order for Canada's economy to grow. The budget now before us will not create these conditions. Furthermore, Canada has 240,000 more young people out of work than during the previous recession in 2008.

There needs to be an action plan in place to help these 240,000 unemployed youths find jobs. Instead, we have cuts to Service Canada's summer jobs programs that encourage young people to return to the regions to work, settle down and create vibrant communities. Cuts are being made to the summer jobs program and a new internship program is being created. However, an internship is not a job. A job is paid, permanent employment. An internship usually involves unpaid work.

The government has just spent a considerable amount of money creating unpaid job opportunities without having in place an action plan to help young people find gainful employment.

Getting back to my riding, cuts to Fisheries and Oceans Canada programs means the future of the region's children and economy are impacted. The Gaspé is not the only region affected. All of Eastern Canada will be facing problems as a result of the cutbacks recently announced. Today's budget does nothing to alter the course this government has embarked on, one that is bad for the economy and for the regions in particular.

The government is simply unwilling to consult with people. It is unwilling to ask Canadians how they feel about Canada's growth and what they think our priorities should be. With their parliamentary majority, the Conservatives seem to think they can do whatever they like.

Destroying laws that protect the environment is tantamount to mortgaging the future. Ultimately people will end up paying a great deal more to repair the damage wrought by the Conservatives.

This budget will cost us dearly. Therefore, I urge members to vote against it.

● (1655)

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated my colleague's speech. I would like to know what he thinks the government should have included in the budget to increase job creation in his riding. What would he do to better promote job creation?

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. Investment is a given. The government has powerful tools at its disposal to help industry and the economy. Regarding seasonal work in the regions, it is essential to think long term if we want to ensure sustainable regional economies. The government must invest. The only organization capable of supporting jobs in the regions is the federal government. It then follows that the government has a very important role to play in support of seasonal industries.

Let us not forget that Canada is a northern country where seasonal industries are prevalent. When the government withdraws from these industries, not only does it create long-term problems, it also empties out the regions. The people leaving have to find somewhere else to go. When they arrive in the big city, they struggle. They do not have the means to start a life in the big city as long as the federal government does not have a long-term strategy.

Regional support is being slashed while, at the same time, these people are not getting the tools they need to settle elsewhere. What is more, the cuts being made are such that well-established regional industries get even less support than before.

Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the opposition plays a fundamental role in the parliamentary system. According to a paper I read from the Library of Parliament:

Parliament, after all, is fundamentally about debate...and the transacting of the people's business in public....A vigorous opposition in Parliament can be the chief bulwark against the temptation [for a majority government that wishes to do everything without debate].

In Bill C-60, the Conservatives are attempting for a second time to escape parliamentary and public scrutiny. Does my colleague agree with me that our democracy is suffering?

● (1700)

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, we are going through a period in which the government appears to be circumventing the idea of building consensus in the country. It disregards the parliamentary tools at its disposal to assist it in building consensus. On the contrary, it constantly seeks to oppose. The government does not want to discuss. Once again, there is very little debate about a bill as important as Bill C-60, which will amend 59 laws. Previously, there was very little debate on Bills C-38 and C-45, which amended more than 70 laws.

The same thing happened to a number of bills introduced during the 41st Parliament, or ever since the Conservatives have held a majority. They do not want to take the time to listen to the public's concerns and needs. They disregard them. This is a highly ideological government, which does not listen to the people and has difficulty justifying itself.

We cannot continue this way. We absolutely need a government that listens, that responds to needs, that has a long-term vision and that can promote sustainable economic growth. The goal was not to introduce bills full of ad hoc measures, to turn back time in order to eliminate protections previously put in place or to deregulate industries to the point where the invisible hand of the market reigns supreme.

We have seen the consequences of this kind of thinking, which was at the root of the economic crisis of 2008. We do not want to see that happen again. We want something sustainable. We have no lessons to learn from the present government.

[English]

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to be able to stand here today and speak to Canada's economic action plan 2013.

I think in the House we can all agree that there are a multitude of elements involved when a person, business or family works towards a common set of goals of success and prosperity. Of course, the individual has a lot to do with the outcomes in terms of the choices we make, our determination and how hard we are willing to work toward the objective.

Government Orders

Admittedly, we share responsibility. The government and all members here share responsibility in helping our citizens achieve those goals. We can provide either stepping stones or barriers. I am very proud to say that our government is providing the stepping stones by putting Canadians and the economy first. It is certainly evident in our latest budget, economic action plan 2013.

Undeniably, a firm base for any healthy economy is a thriving manufacturing and small business environment coupled with job-creating initiatives. Economic action plan 2013 includes our government's plan to make the largest federal investment in job-creating infrastructure in Canadian history, totalling \$70 billion over a decade. This investment would help build and repair roads, bridges, subways, rail and more, certainly in communities in Prince Edward—Hastings and across this wonderful country.

There would be a new tax break for new manufacturing machinery and equipment with the accelerated capital cost write-off, which would provide the manufacturing and processing businesses in Ontario alone approximately \$560 million in tax relief to grow their companies and create jobs.

Our government has extended and expanded the hiring credit for small businesses for another year, which would see many small businesses in Ontario and across Canada save another \$225 million in 2013. I can tell the House that as a small businessman myself with 38 years of experience, in my riding of Prince Edward—Hastings, small businesses are one of the key components of the local economic engine. I can assure the House that this particular initiative would go a long way to helping those businesses grow, prosper and ultimately create more jobs.

We are increasing the lifetime capital gains exemption to \$800,000 from \$750,000 and indexing it going forward. We are indexing it the same way we indexed the gas tax. This would provide small businesses in Ontario approximately an additional \$39 million in tax relief to grow their companies and create more jobs.

I live right next to Trenton Air Base, one of the most significant air transport capitals, not only in Canada, but in the world. We are investing almost \$1 billion in the strategic aerospace and defence initiative to enhance the competitiveness of Canada's economically important aerospace and defence industry. We have created the aerospace technology demonstration programs, which would support large-scale technology projects with commercial potential in Ontario and across Canada. We have CAE in Montreal, now with simulators around the world.

The northern regions of my riding had a very active forestry industry, which certainly suffered some severe challenges when the economic downturn hit and the housing boom in the States went off. Therefore, I am pleased that we would be providing \$92 million to help the forestry sector in Ontario and across Canada to continue to innovate new products and to expand into new markets.

We would provide \$920 million to renew the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario. Since its creation in 2009, FedDev has supported over 340 projects and has played an important role in building a stronger economy in southern Ontario. FedDev has been instrumental in the success of so many projects in

Prince Edward—Hastings and across the regions of southern Ontario.

I am very pleased as well to support the eastern Ontario development program, which would be renewed as well. It would continue to promote job creation and business development in all the rural areas of eastern Ontario. As part of the renewal of FedDev, I am very pleased that \$200 million would be invested in a new advanced manufacturing fund to help Ontario's manufacturing industry innovate and become much more competitive.

● (1705)

Another ingredient required to maintain economic health is ensuring Canadians get the skills training and the employment-seeking assistance they need. I am fortunate. I have Loyalist College, the brand new skills development centre, which will play a pivotal role in developing skills in my area. Job-seekers know that if they have the right skills and education, they are well on their way to finding a good job. I am proud to say that our government firmly recognizes that, too.

As such, we are providing up to \$15,000 per person, in Ontario, with combined federal-provincial-territorial and employer funding to help them get the skills they need for in-demand jobs. That is right; we are helping them to develop the skills for a job that is waiting for them. We know how important education is, especially, in high-demand fields. We will be encouraging students to undertake education in these high-demand fields, including the skilled trades, science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Our government is also investing \$70 million to support an additional 5,000 paid internships for recent post-secondary graduates in Ontario and across Canada. These young people are our future. We are helping them along and providing the initiative for them to get a job.

My riding of Prince Edward—Hastings includes a first nations reserve, Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte—Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, a very proud and successful local aboriginal group.

I am proud that we are helping first nations students with post-secondary education, by providing \$10 million to grant scholarships and bursaries to help them attend a post-secondary education. We realize the importance of engaging first nations youth. They are going to play a tremendous role in our country.

Finally, another very important key to having a robust economy is to limit government's interference in Canadians' wallets.

Winston Churchill once said:

For a nation to try to tax itself into prosperity is like a man standing in a bucket and trying to lift himself up by the handle.

It just does not happen.

Government Orders

Our government gets that, unlike the opposition, unfortunately, the tax-and-spend Liberals and the “speNDP”. There is just no end of spending. The solution is very simple with them. Just spend more, spend more, spend more. Unfortunately, we have to find a balance, and we have done that.

Right from the get-go, our government has been dedicated to freeing up Canadians' paycheques by lowering taxes. In economic action plan 2013, our government eliminated tariffs on important items for families, including baby clothing, sports equipment, skates, hockey sticks, golf clubs, and more.

In fact, our Conservative government has cut taxes over 150 times and is saving the average family over \$3,000 a year. That can buy a lot of groceries or clothes for the kids, or even allow families that vacation that they have waited for and that they have deserved for so long.

Our government does not put obstacles in the way of Canadians, obstacles like red tape or increased taxes. Our red tape commission said every time we bring in a regulation, we have to get rid of one. That is common sense.

So, yes, we are providing stepping stones to help Canadians achieve the happy and successful lives they want to have.

I am thankful for the opportunity today to talk on economic action plan 2013. I am proud of the initiatives in it. I have had many extensive pre-budget consultations across our riding, with so many different groups. I know our government worked closely with recommendations from the stakeholders, the businesses, the community leaders, the experts in so many fields, to achieve the best use of taxpayer dollars. We have created a budget that will strengthen our economy and solidify our economic recovery.

• (1710)

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I note that my colleague opposite would like to suggest that the Conservatives are somehow being generous to first nations when, in fact, there is an alarming 30% funding gap that exists between first nations on reserve and other Canadians whose educations are provided for by the provinces.

So, number one, nothing has been done about that.

Number two, with respect to public funding of post-secondary education, my understanding is the waiting list is so long that people cannot even get on it because there is just not enough funding. My understanding is there are something like 10,000 students waiting on a waiting list in order to get into post-secondary education. Ten million dollars would barely touch that, if at all.

How will the government actually work to create a level playing field between first nations and other members of Canadian society?

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's question takes me back. I sat on government operations and public accounts when I first came here nine years ago. The situation with regard to first nations aboriginal education was absolutely horrendous. For five to six years after, we spent more and more money and we did not improve the result.

We then formulated a working group to go forward. We said we had to get more bang from the buck, we have to create more jobs and

we have to train our first nations people. We have a strategy now in place, and of course it has been agreed upon by the first nations people themselves, who are part of the solution on the advisory council. The dollar is going forward. The member is incorrect. We are spending more on first nations education than we ever have in the history of this country.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my hon. friend for his speech, but I could not help but notice that he, like other Conservatives, speaks all the time about the taxes that the government cut, but not a peep on the taxes that the government increased.

The 2013 budget document itself says that the tax increases are bigger than the tax cuts, so there is a net tax increase imposed on Canadians. In budget 2012, what do we see? Tax increases bigger than tax cuts, a net tax increase. This is getting a bit repetitive, but it is the same thing in budget 2011 and the same thing in budget 2010. In all of the last four years, the Conservatives have raised taxes by more than they have cut taxes, thereby imposing net tax hikes on Canadians.

My question is, how can this member possibly say that his is the party of lower taxes, when indeed, over the last four years in each and every year, the Conservatives have increased the net tax load facing Canadians?

• (1715)

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Mr. Speaker, the reality is, that just is not true. The hon. member should look at the amount of taxation that has been cut across this country. I know him well. I respect him as a person. Regrettably, every now and then his orientation gets him in little challenging moments.

When we look at the overall tax reduction, the transfers that have been increased to provinces, the increased programs that have been put out there, the bottom line is, yes, we have more money coming in, but what if we did not have a growing economy?

The economy has been growing very well. Naturally, it generates more tax. It generates more income tax when people do well, when they make more money and businesses prosper. To suggest there is no reason for taxes to have a receivable that is a gain would mean we would simply have an economy that is going the other way.

Under the Conservative government we have an economy that grows, hence more taxes coming in. That is a simple equation the hon. member could understand.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I join my NDP colleagues in opposing Bill C-60, the Conservatives' latest budget implementation bill.

As has unfortunately become a trend in the House, we once again have an omnibus bill that is smaller than previous ones in terms of pages, but is just as devastating.

Government Orders

Bill C-60 amends nearly 50 Canadian laws and even creates a new one: the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act.

Bill C-60 also proposes a number of complex measures that require extensive study in committee or in the House, particularly with respect to the temporary foreign worker program, but the Conservatives are trying to rush them through after abuse was revealed as a result of their poor management of the program and the excessive flexibility.

It is completely unacceptable that the Conservatives are trying to hide their poor decisions from the Canadian public and prevent members from examining the bill, hence avoiding the oversight that all MPs should be providing, whether they are on the government or opposition side. These parliamentarians were sent here by their constituents to represent them and be their voice in the House. They should be able to carefully examine the budget implementation bill without having the Conservative government impose time restrictions as soon as it can.

Although previous omnibus bills were heavily criticized and thousands of Canadians voiced their disapproval, including many from my riding of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, the Conservatives keep persisting. They are doing everything possible to avoid an extensive study in committee, because they know very well that a close study of their bill would highlight the budget's many flaws and their gross incompetence at managing public finances.

As we already know, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance has already suggested limiting the time allotted for studying this bill in committee. The practice in the House, that is, limiting the time allowed for debate, is being reflected in committee. In committee, we find the Conservatives have the same attitude and the same bad faith, as they are still limiting parliamentarians' opportunities to do their work and represent their constituents properly.

The Conservatives are trying to make Canadians believe that they are the only ones equipped to manage Canada's economy properly, but if we take a look at their record to date, obviously this makes no sense, and Canadians across the country are well aware of it.

It is not just NDP members or members of the other opposition parties that are making these kinds of comments. Last weekend when I was walking around in my riding, the subject that was brought up most frequently by the constituents I met was the \$3.1 billion that mysteriously disappeared under this government's watch. Frankly, that has shocked and horrified people.

That is why we should be able to take a closer look at the bills this government is introducing, whether they have a direct impact on the economy or not. The Conservatives put on a great show, but if you scratch the surface a little, their façade falls apart quite quickly. The Conservatives do not have the abilities they are bragging about.

Instead of bringing in a budget with concrete measures to create jobs and stimulate the economy, the government is doing exactly the opposite. In fact, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, the Conservative government's 2013 budget is more likely to eliminate thousands of jobs, reduce direct program spending and significantly diminish growth in Canada's gross domestic product.

Canada's economic recovery is already happening more slowly than anticipated. The Minister of Finance even had to revise his predictions, before being quickly chastised by the Prime Minister, who is only thinking about the 2015 election, as though he had blinders on. On reading this budget, it is obvious that the Conservatives are only thinking about the 2015 election and that they forget that the cuts they make now will have a drastic impact on Canadians.

I do not even need to go back to my riding to hear this. I just have to walk around Parliament Hill. Since all parliamentarians use taxis, if you just take a few minutes to talk with the drivers, you quickly realize that the cuts that the Conservatives have been making ever since they came into power are having a major impact.

● (1720)

Taxi drivers already have fewer hours and fewer clients. Their income is lower, as is their chance of contributing to the economy. The same thing is happening in the restaurant business and in all the other small businesses in the national capital region. The situation in Ottawa will be matched in other cities throughout Canada. All those lost jobs mean lower incomes for families, who will have fewer and fewer opportunities to contribute to the economy.

The equation is very simple. This government is already finding it difficult to reduce its spending. Consequently, it will be cutting the delivery of essential services to Canadians. Despite it all, the Conservatives are unable to replenish their coffers because they are giving huge tax credits and all kinds of gifts to their friends in big oil companies, the gas industry and the big banks. Then they end up with deficits. We know that this government has record deficits. This charade that the Conservatives put on every day is absolutely pointless. Canadians are becoming increasingly aware of what they are doing.

For the past few weeks, people have been talking about how the 2013 budget will increase Canadians' tax burden by raising taxes on just about everything that exists, such as safety deposit boxes, baby strollers, bicycles, wigs for people who have cancer, parking at hospitals, and I could go on. The list is so long that I would squander my entire speech listing all the tax hikes in this budget.

I hear such nonsense from the other side of the House. The Conservatives talk about the carbon tax of \$20 billion or \$21 billion, sometimes \$19 billion—we do not really know anymore. Someone in the Prime Minister's Office must get his numbers mixed up sometimes. We do not have a carbon tax in our platform, but the government is accusing us of wanting to impose it. The measures in this budget are mind-boggling; the government failed to meet the public's expectations. I am almost speechless at its talent for hiding the truth from Canadians by controlling debate in the House, by limiting the time available for study of a bill in committee and by hiding tax measures that would be unacceptable to most Canadians in the countless pages of the budget.

Government Orders

I am frankly overwhelmed by the hypocrisy shown by this government, especially when I read the budget. The NDP cannot but vote against most of the measures put forward, but we must show some good faith: there are a few good things in the budget. Some money has been and will potentially be set aside for the repair of federal infrastructure, such as wharves. I am thinking that the Percé wharf may benefit, as may the wharf in Portneuf, in my riding, which is the longest deep-water wharf in Canada and one that is badly in need of repair. These funds may help my community, if, of course, political issues do not block access to funds that are critically important, both to my region and that of my colleague from Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

Despite these positive steps, most of the measures in the budget oblige us to vote against it. The Conservatives have the upper hand, saying that the NDP votes against all the measures that the Conservatives put forward, but when they wrap them in such an appalling package, we as the opposition have no choice but to speak up to defend the real priorities of Canadians and do the job for which we were sent to this House.

Let us take a look at all the measures taken by the Conservative government: withdrawing from the Kyoto protocol; crippling our environmental legislation; eliminating protection for thousands of lakes and rivers throughout Canada, several hundred, perhaps even several thousand, of which are in my own riding; increasing the retirement age to 67; and reforming employment insurance. I was talking about a case in my riding where experienced employees were threatened by Service Canada with losing their benefits if they did not give up their current seasonal jobs and take full-time jobs somewhere else. They are trying to hollow out the seasonal industries and shut down entire sectors of our economy.

When these kinds of decisions are made so dogmatically and by keeping people in the dark, it is obvious that Canadians will be better served by the NDP in 2015.

• (1725)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague across the way. She serves on the committee that I chair, where she is a new addition, and we appreciate her being there, although I am troubled by some of the comments she gave in her speech. She used words like “appalling” when she talked about the strategic plan this government has. She used some pretty tough language.

Canada has the best job creation in the G7. The International Monetary Fund and the OECD are projecting that Canada will have the strongest growth of all the industrialized countries over the next number of years. For the eighth straight year, the World Economic Forum has said that Canada's banking system is the most sound and on the firmest foundation around the world. We see many countries where financial institutions in the banking sector are faltering, and it is driving the whole economy into a turmoil with uncertainty.

Canada has a Triple-A rating. Why do you use words such as “appalling” and “no strategy”? This shows that the strategy we have is working.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Before I go to the member, I just remind all hon. members to direct their comments and questions to the Chair, rather than to their colleagues.

The hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Éline Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and his kind comments about the good work I do on the committee. I thank him for welcoming me when I arrived.

To get back to the question, the jobs created by the government—the ones that have really been created, since jobs are also being lost—are precarious and are often part-time jobs. They are not of the same quality of the jobs that existed before, and that is very unfortunate. Obviously, the Conservatives do not really have much of a strategy.

I was just talking about a case in my riding relating to employment insurance. That case is a perfect example of what I am describing. Some sectors of the economy are being undermined to try to replace some Canadians who had a job where their expertise was being put to use. That was very beneficial to the company they were working for.

Today, Service Canada is threatening that these people will lose their benefits if they do not change industries. These are the situations I am describing. It all goes to show that the Conservatives basically do not have a strategy.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the current government spends more on political spin than any other government in the history of Canada. It is truly amazing.

The previous questioner asked about Canada's greatest banking industry. We have the greatest banking here in Canada, compared to anywhere else in the world, because of former prime minister Jean Chrétien. The government takes credit for wanting to balance a budget. It is projecting to be able to do that after the next federal election. It was Paul Martin who had the last balanced budget. When it talks about taxes, the current government has had net tax increases for the last four consecutive years.

What I will concede to the Conservatives is their ability to spin. They spend endless tax dollars on spin. Does the member believe that the current government is abusive when it comes to tax dollars and putting political spin on things that are just not true?

• (1730)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Éline Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

In fact, the NDP has been criticizing the Conservatives for a long time for spending millions of dollars on party propaganda. Quite frankly, these advertisements are not providing the public with any new information, apart from the fact that they tell us a little more about the Conservatives' ideology.

Government Orders

The purpose of these advertisements is supposed to be to provide information to the public; however, in practical terms, that is not what the Conservative advertising does. The Conservative ads are pure and simple propaganda. The Conservatives are spending millions of dollars in public money on this advertising when there are crying needs elsewhere, such as in infrastructure. I am thinking of water systems, for example.

In the last budget, the government did not present a single practical measure with regard to the strategy to implement and manage municipal waste water systems. In my riding, 1,400 residents need water lines built. They are unable to cover the cost of this work, and there is nothing in the budget for that.

Rather than spending millions of dollars on propaganda advertising, why not invest it to give municipalities the resources they need to actually meet the needs of their residents?

[English]

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to put some comments on the record in regard to today's topic. It is important that we all recognize that this is about the future of Canada, the future of young people in our communities, and the opportunity to create the growth and long-term prosperity we all seek for our communities, provinces and country.

It is not easy. Tough decisions have to be made. People have to spend a lot of time making decisions that they know are going to hurt at times, but when looking at the bigger picture, people realize that some of the decisions being made today are being made with the future in mind and the opportunities that it will present.

We have constantly delivered the message to Canadians that we need to continue to work with the economy and look at the economics of our country and how it operates. We have been successful. The world recognizes Canada as one of the strongest economies in the world and suggests that our banking system is strong, committed and firm. Those key elements being in place makes the objective of moving forward and strengthening our communities a challenge but also a way forward so we can get things done.

We continually remain focused on those issues. We want to balance the budget during this Parliament, and the Minister of Finance has taken great steps toward accomplishing that. We also want to create a new opportunity for innovative skills training, the largest and longest federal infrastructure plan in our history, and new investments to support manufacturing and innovation in Canada.

A budget, along with its implementation and looking forward to the future, is like building a house. If there is not a strong foundation, everything built above the foundation will never be stable until the foundation is right. I believe this budget moves us forward on that path. We will create a strong foundation. We have done it in the past. Our jobs record and long predictable funding for infrastructure are indications that the plan is working.

I want to talk about a few issues. I know there is a lot of good news in this package, but there are certain things that are dear to my heart and I suggest are important to the people who I represent in Brandon—Souris.

One of the new programs we brought forward is the Canada job grant. It matches the needs of employers with the training of Canadians and, in turn, creates opportunities for the job seekers and employers to match up. I have had experience in this. In the past, when I sent staff for courses, there was no guarantee they would come back once they were finished. Now I have a stake in it. I am not only the employer, but I am going to put some money forward and help train people to get the skills required for the businesses that need it. It is not going to be decided by what area of a school or community college we can put the funding in just to fill spaces. That is no longer going to happen.

Employers are going to embrace this. They will have huge input into the training that is made available, but they will also have some management control over graduating students, in the sense that the students will have the opportunity to go back to work for them. It is a big step and, as I said, we need participation. It could provide up to \$15,000 per person, or even more, and it would ensure that Canadians are acquiring the skills employers are seeking.

The Canadian government would provide up to \$5,000, an amount matched by the province and/or territory, and another \$5,000 matched by the employer. It would put all funding bodies on the same level, with the same idea of matching skills to the needs.

I had the great pleasure of serving as a municipal councillor many years ago. The gas tax initiative would provide more than \$32 billion to municipalities for projects such as roads, public transit, recreational facilities and other community infrastructure.

● (1735)

My experience has been that this has been one of the best programs that has been made available to municipalities for infrastructure. Whether they are big, small or in between, they can still benefit and make plans to move forward when they know the funding is committed. It is stable and it would increase every year. That is what municipalities have asked for. That is what the Federation of Canadian Municipalities has requested for years. We have done it. It is something of which we can be very proud. They would be indexed at 2% a year, starting in 2014-15, with increases to be applied in \$100 million increments. This would allow many communities to move forward with the infrastructure projects they need.

In my area, we have a real boom in the oil industry taking place right now, and the infrastructure is in need of updating, although it is adequate, and new infrastructure needs to be provided as we are seeing communities bursting at the seams with families, students in our schools and people in our health care facilities. Everything is being utilized to the maximum, and we must move forward. This would allow those communities to do that.

I also want to mention the building Canada fund, in which we participated in the last round of funding. There is \$14 billion allocated to support major economic projects of national, regional and local significance. We all know the need is there, listening to the speeches today and in the past, particularly in communities. There is a need for fresh water, better infrastructure, sewage and lagoon sites and better infrastructure for our highways, roads and bridges.

Government Orders

It is important that we recognize the significance of national projects. Sometimes we get a little sour that someone in some part of Canada is getting a large amount of money for an infrastructure project and we say “What about me?” However, when we see the benefit that one investment makes to enhance the national scope, we all become more aware of how beneficial it is and how communities are taking advantage of it.

There is also the renewed P3 Canada fund that would provide \$1.25 billion to continue to support innovative ways to build infrastructure. I have been part of a provincial government that went into a P3 with a company. We built a bridge. There was a lot of controversy and discussion around it when we went forward with it, but at the end of the day, it has been functioning now for I believe more than 15 years. I have not heard anything other than positive feedback about the fact that it has been done.

We do want to build a stronger economy. We do want to promote job growth. In my discussions with many of the people in the manufacturing industry, one of the comments they make to me is how much they appreciate the temporary accelerated capital cost allowance. They can actually go out and buy something today and have the writeoff value in that year or the second year. I can remember, in a private business, we bought equipment and it took us 25 years to write it off. We all know that in 25 years it is obsolete, but it cannot be moved off the books in a timely fashion. The investment is there and Canadians are taking advantage of it.

I know my time is very limited, but I am very proud to support the budget. It is something Canadians have asked of our government. They want us to be responsible, but they also want us to be forward looking. I think we have accomplished that. We have created a balance where we are going to continue to create new jobs. More than 900,000 new jobs have been created since the downturn, and the majority of them have been full-time jobs, not part-time, not government jobs, but in the private sector. That is how we move our country forward. I will be pleased to support the budget when it comes forward for the vote in the future.

• (1740)

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conference Board of Canada came out with a report just recently, the 2013 Mid-Sized Cities Outlook. It looked particularly at the city of Brandon and said that since 2008 the economy of Brandon has shrunk by 1.6%. It is hardly a thing to brag about, if the economy of Brandon is hurting right now.

The report says that half of Canada's mid-size cities have not recouped the jobs they lost during the recession. These are places like Medicine Hat, Miramichi and Brandon. What is the government going to do to create real jobs and to make the economy grow? It obviously has not been doing it.

Mr. Merv Tweed: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from my colleague, but I think it is important to recognize that the Government of Manitoba for the last several years has been an NDP government. It has run deficits and debts every year. In fact, this year it imposed another 1% tax on the people of Manitoba because of reckless spending and careless spending. I welcome the opportunity to debate that anywhere in the world. Brandon has a less than 1% unemployment rate. We do not need a lesson from the NDP to tell us how to spend it. The NDP in Manitoba has taken \$600 million out of

Manitoba taxpayers' pockets in the last two budgets, and I say shame on it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with many of the member's comments in regard to the NDP in Saskatchewan. Being a resident of Manitoba, I am sure members would appreciate why I would say that, being very concerned about the future of my province.

A number of years back, the government was handed a wonderful position in the sense that it was given a huge budget surplus. Since receiving that surplus, the government has turned that multi-billion-dollar surplus into a multi-billion dollar deficit. In this budget, the government now talks about getting rid of the deficit after the next federal election.

I wonder if the member could tell Canadians why they should believe that the government can do anything in terms of getting rid of a deficit, when the opposite has been the case in every year since Conservatives formed government.

Mr. Merv Tweed: Mr. Speaker, I do gladly admit that it is a real challenge living in southwestern Manitoba on the border of Saskatchewan. Investors come to our part of the country and they drive 15 minutes and they are into Saskatchewan, into a whole new tax regime, a whole new opportunity where their investment is secured. The ability to draw those people is so much easier because they can be offered such a benefit in their tax regime.

I have been a part of this government and I am very proud of the fact that we have reduced taxes. We have given people more opportunity to spend their money. I met with a young family yesterday with a new child. They commented that it may not seem like a lot, but \$100 a month means something to them to put away for their child's future. That was brought forward by our government, and we will continue to do what is right for Canadians, families and all of Canada.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Brandon—Souris for his very enthusiastic speech. The member has done a tremendous number of good and great things for Manitoba, both at the municipal and provincial levels and now at the federal level. I wonder if he could elaborate on the infrastructure plan and how it ties in with the job grants initiative in the budget and what that would mean for a community such as Brandon or the rural areas of his riding.

Government Orders

• (1745)

Mr. Merv Tweed: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that question, because I often tell people that Brandon is the major part of my community, but I represent 40-plus smaller communities that make up the fabric of my community. The municipalities are now collectively saying they know they cannot do this themselves, but they have guaranteed income. They would like to develop a plan for a road, a bridge or some sort of infrastructure that benefits the region. That is what has happened. People are now thinking beyond their own community and thinking of the bigger picture. Similar to what I said about the national projects, we do not always see the direct benefit, but we do see the benefit to all of Canada. Brandon and Brandon—Souris have benefited greatly from the government's programs.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with its recent budget, the Conservative Party is continuing its frontal attack on Quebec. Apparently, the Conservatives did not appreciate Quebecers' refusal to vote for them, and so they decided to abandon one part of Canada's population and send the money somewhere where they would have a chance of winning some ridings. Quebecers have heard a lot of bad news and, unfortunately, the measures in this bill are only the tip of the iceberg.

Let us begin with the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec. Last year in the House, the Conservatives assured us that the expected cuts would affect only the department's operating budget, and not transfer payments. That is not the case. Not only did the Conservatives cut the department's operating budget, but worse yet, they savagely reduced transfer payments to their lowest level since the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec Act came into force on October 5, 2005.

I looked it up in the public accounts which, unlike the Conservatives, are incapable of playing with the words and numbers. I am going to list the transfer payments, which are distinct from the agency's operating costs. In the 2005 public accounts, \$286 million was paid out in transfers. In 2006, it was \$293 million. In 2006-07, \$316 million went in transfer payments. In 2007-08, it was \$286 million. In 2008-09, it was \$243 million. Here we see the numbers going down. In 2009-2010, transfers went up to \$342 million. In 2010-11, it was \$424 million. Then, in 2011-12, after the Conservative majority government was elected with only 10% support in Quebec, it was only \$253 million. Finally, in 2012-13, the prediction is \$252 million, an amount that will drop to \$212 million in 2013-14.

I would remind the House that a 2013 dollar is worth less than a 2005 dollar, because of inflation. The Conservatives promised last year that they would decrease only the administrative expenses, and not the transfers, yet at \$212 million, we have reached a very low point. Can the Conservatives tell us clearly what they intend to do with the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec? Are they abolishing it by stealth? Many businesses in Quebec need this government assistance. What is the Conservatives' plan? Do they want to abandon Quebec? Why have other regional agencies seen their budgets increase? Why is funding being increased in one place and decreased in another?

I do not suppose that the Prime Minister's office has written up answers for these questions, and so I do not even expect a response from Conservative members.

Economic action plan 2013 will reduce the labour-sponsored venture capital corporations tax credit, also known as the federal tax credit for labour funds, from 15% to 10% in 2015. The tax credit will decrease from 10% to 5% in 2016, and will be completely phased out in 2017. We all know that the Conservatives' narrow ideology dictates their policies. However, in this case, the Conservatives are directly attacking unions and they are attacking Quebec, whether they mean to or not. This tax credit is most popular in Quebec; 85% of those using it are Quebecers. Even though labour funds do not provide the highest returns in the market, they are so popular in Quebec that many people who would not otherwise invest are investing in these funds. Many small businesses do not provide any retirement plan, and for their employees, labour funds are the only investment they make.

Quebecers contribute less than other Canadians to RRSPs. We finally have a program that works, and all of a sudden it ends. How typically Conservative.

Generally speaking, this budget increases taxes more than it reduces them. It is certainly a good idea for the government to try to balance the budget, especially since the Conservatives have done nothing but increase the debt since they came to power.

• (1750)

However, the government must not try to balance the budget by gouging Canadians. For instance, taxes on small business owners will increase by \$2.3 billion over five years.

We are just emerging from the economic crisis, and our economy is still quite fragile. This is what we are hearing on a daily basis from the Conservatives across the way. With measures of this kind, we are likely to drive many companies out of business, increase the number of unemployed Canadians and weaken Canada's economy.

At the same time, the penny-pinching Conservatives are sending public servants to harass the unemployed. They are raising taxes on credit unions by \$75 million annually, an increase that will cause serious problems for economies in rural regions. They are attacking another one of Quebec's traditions.

To put it frankly, none of this makes any sense after such a major economic crisis, but we understand why this government improvises more often than not.

The crisis was particularly hard on young people, whose unemployment rate is now five points higher than it was before 2008. Young people, who have just finished their term or will soon be completing their school year, will not have any work this summer. Those young people will not save any money for the next academic year, which will push many into debt.

Government Orders

That will also have a negative impact on the economy as a whole since these young people will consume less this summer, which means less revenue for many businesses. Nevertheless, this budget contains no measures to promote youth employment.

We support some measures, but the budget on the whole does not meet Canadians' needs. What is more, the government has once again introduced an omnibus bill in order to pass measures that have nothing to do with the budget.

The Conservatives' ideological obsession is apparent throughout Bill C-60. Despite its right-wing ideology, this government has increased waste since 2006 and passed the cost on to Canadians.

We can also see from this budget that the Conservatives have completely abandoned Quebec. The elimination of the labour-sponsored fund tax credit, which is very popular in Quebec, and the significant cuts in funding for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions show that the Conservatives have given up on Quebec for the next election.

A good government should not favour one region over another. Instead it should unify the country by acting in the interests of all Canadians, which is what the Liberal Party of Canada will do when it forms the government in 2015.

We will repair the damage done by the Conservatives and will act for all Canadians.

• (1755)

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech by the member opposite.

He talked a lot about statistics and Canada Economic Development. I would like to ask him a question about the statistics since he seems to really like them.

How many chiefs of staff, senior advisers and communications directors from the former Liberal government got jobs at the Economic Development Agency of Canada around 2005, especially in the month of December?

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, I have not counted the number of people who have a job there. However, I know that there cannot be too many former Liberals there because the Conservatives are sure to get rid of them, whether they were involved in politics or not.

I did not talk about administrative costs. They reduced some of these costs, but that is fine by me.

The problem lies with the direct transfers to Quebeckers, the money that helps them. In 2011, these transfers totalled \$424 million. It is estimated that these transfers will be \$211 million in 2014. To my calculations, that represents a 50% reduction for Quebec's regional economic development budget.

[English]

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do not know if the member is aware, but yet another 350 jobs were lost in his colleague's riding of Etobicoke North when Caterpillar

decided to close the once famous and world-renowned Lovat tunnel manufacturer, which was an American company that took over a Canadian world leader. However, this Liberal colleague has voted against our motion to stop FIPA, and the Liberal leader supports the takeover of Nexen.

How does the member feel about the changes to the Investment Canada Act that would drastically reduce the number of takeovers that would be examined by the Minister of Industry, given that we have just lost another 350 jobs as a result of an American takeover?

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, again we are seeing the shortsightedness of the NDP. That is why, at the end of my speech, I said that the Liberals were going to come back into power, because we are able to balance the right and the left.

We do not look at 350 jobs. We are looking at the 350,000 manufacturing jobs that have been lost since the Conservative government took over, with the help of the NDP. That is the problem. It is not the 350 jobs. Hopefully, by signing free trade agreements, we have been able to bring in extra employment for Canadian workers. However, the current government, with its politics, has not been able to create extra opportunities so that people can find proper jobs.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the last number of years, we have witnessed the Conservative government, year after year, have a net increase in taxes collected. This is not a regime that cuts taxes. It is a regime that applies a tax wherever it gets the opportunity to apply it. It prefers to do it through the back door. One of the greatest back-door tax increases being applied this year by the Conservative government is through tariffs.

I wonder if my colleague could share with viewers and members of the Conservative Party, in this year of hiking taxes, how much money the government is going to be collecting in taxes this year from the tariffs alone.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, we are still trying to add up how much the tax increases will be, because there are so many that are hidden. However, I will answer the question directly. Based on our calculations on just the tariffs, there will be a tax increase of \$300 million this year for Canadian taxpayers.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honour to speak to the economic action plan 2013 and what it would do as a continuation of our previous budgets to help stimulate and continue to grow this great Canada in which we live.

The budget is a commitment we have made to create jobs and balance the budget. We will continue to do that. We have seen previous initiatives of the economic action plan come into play and keep our country expanding as we move forward.

Since 2006, we have created nearly 1.5 million net new jobs. From July 2009 alone, 90% of the jobs created were full time, and 80% were in private industry. That is the objective. That is what we want, full time jobs in private business, because private business hires people and stimulates the economy.

Government Orders

For the first time in more than three decades, Canada's unemployment rate is lower than that of our neighbour, the United States. That does not happen without a considerable amount of thought and strategy, not only by our Prime Minister but by our cabinet and also the Minister of Finance who, by the way, has been nominated as the best finance minister in the world, I believe rightly. We have to recognize that things do not just happen; they come because we plan and put a vision forward.

In the past, we introduced universal child care because we are interested in families. Those families with children under six get \$1,200 a year, and they get to make the decisions about how to raise their families.

We have given a family caregiver tax credit and a volunteer firefighter tax credit. I live in a rural municipality. My riding is a large rural one with very many small towns, 50 or 60, and they all have volunteer fire departments. The volunteer firefighter tax credit of \$3,000 was a huge issue for them, just to recognize some of the work they do not only in their departments but in their communities for all of us.

We decreased the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%. I remember the debate at that time. Whether an individual buys a chocolate bar or a shirt, it is only a few cents or a dollar. In my riding, for every 1%, it left \$18 million in the pockets of my constituents. We dropped that 2%. That was \$36 million that was left in the pockets of our families in Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

That meant people had that money at their disposal and at their discretion, whether it was to buy for the needs of a family, pay down a mortgage or help replace a car. Those are a lot of dollars that came into effect and were of benefit to each and every family in my riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

In this last budget we introduced the Canada job grant. This is quite a unique and a very forward-thinking proposition, which brings in partnerships. I have always believed that, if we are to succeed, very seldom do we do it on our own. We do it by embracing those around us with like minds on the way we can move forward. The Canada job grant would provide up to \$15,000 per person to help Canadians get the skills they need.

When I talk about a partnership, it is up to \$5,000 each from the federal government, the provincial government and the employer. This would give ownership of that employer in helping to get students back in the business and come out of a job with some experience. That seems to be one of the biggest issues right now. Everybody wants to have experience, but when students get out of college or university without experience, it becomes difficult to land a job.

In Lambton—Kent—Middlesex we do not have large corporations. Our businesses are small. Two or three are medium sized, but basically, we are a small business riding. We have small businesses and agriculture.

● (1800)

We extended the hiring credit for small businesses with \$225,000 invested. It assists small businesses by giving them a hiring credit so that they can hire someone, likely a student. It also gives students an opportunity to gain more experience. They can see if it is actually the

job they want to do. That has been important to the businesses in my riding.

We would also further tax relief for manufacturers through the two-year extension of the temporary accelerated capital cost allowance for new machinery and equipment. Technology and innovation are changing so quickly that businesses need some sort of accelerated capital writeoff. My colleague spoke earlier about having antiquated equipment after 20 years. It takes that long to write it off. Equipment does not last that long. We needed to make sure that if we were going to have a healthy industry in manufacturing, and if we wanted to continue to help it grow, we wanted to help that along by providing an accelerated capital cost allowance.

Something that is important in my riding, which has small businesses and agriculture, as I mentioned, is the capital gains exemption. It was established at \$750,000 and has been sitting there since we changed it. Do not hold me to the date, but I am going to say that in 2008 we moved it up from \$500,000 to \$750,000. We saw it as a benefit to those who are generating the economy in our country and in our ridings to increase the capital gains exemption to \$800,000. However, we are not locking it in at that. We are actually indexing it over the years so that it will meet the new limits through inflation.

We continue to stand behind farmers, families and communities. We introduced the first-time donor's super credit. Some may be asking what that means. As I mentioned, I come from an area of small towns. They rely so much on volunteers. They rely so much on charitable organizations to carry out the functions within their communities that governments cannot. What I have found in rural areas is that, proportionately, they dig deep into their pockets. They dig deep to help those in need, whether it is for a disease or a health issue or for a financial issue. For those making charitable donations, we have extended that super credit to give them an accelerated writeoff on their first-time donation.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities said that they needed to make sure that they had sustainable funding for infrastructure. We have been very strong in moving forward on that. We would index the gas tax funds. That amount of money will now continue to grow. It is a significant part of what the municipalities in my riding use for infrastructure funding. It forms part of the \$53 billion in long-term support for infrastructure. It is roads and bridges, water and sewers. They are the things homeowners and businesses need. If we are going to produce the products to get to market, we have to make sure that we have the roads, the bridges and the infrastructure to get them to those markets.

Additionally, we have to realize that what is important for the strength of our businesses and our individuals are low taxes. It does not matter where one goes, low taxes make it. We have the lowest tax structure we have had in 50 years.

Government Orders

This is part of the big plan of the economic action plan that has been started. It will continue to take us through as we grow Canada and our economy. It is indeed my pleasure to say that I will be supporting this budget.

• (1810)

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is also a budget that would have hundreds of tax hikes on everything from hospital parking to credit unions and safety deposit boxes. These hikes would cost Canadians nearly \$8 billion over five years. I want to ask the member about the hospital parking. I am sure he knows that there is a huge constituency out there of people who are hopping mad about how they get caught by hospital parking. It is very high. Now to know that there would be a tax on top of that from the current federal government would really add insult to injury.

How can the member, after giving that speech, defend that kind of proposition where people would get taxed even on hospital parking?

Mr. Bev Shipley: Mr. Speaker, the HST is actually already there; it is just now it would be collected. The other part of it is that when we reduced the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%, everybody in this House, except for this side, wanted to oppose that. We have reduced the taxes in this country some 1,900 times. An average family of four would pay \$3,200 less per year in taxes than it did when we formed government in 2006.

Therefore, it is pretty clear and really quite obvious. One of the things we talk about is jobs and prosperity, about families and leaving more money in their pockets to buy the things they need, and they make those priorities. It is important that we keep those taxes low so that our families and our businesses can sustain themselves and grow.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member, my colleague, spoke about keeping taxes low. Does he realize that in budget 2010 the Conservative government increased taxes by \$729 million, in budget 2011 the Conservatives raised taxes by \$2.2 billion, in budget 2012 they raised taxes by \$3.5 billion, and in budget 2013 they would raise taxes by \$3.3 billion? The cumulative tax increase is about \$10 billion, and that does not include the \$600 million-plus per year with increases in EI premiums.

Does the member realize that his Conservative government colleagues are tax-aholics, and are they willing to admit they have a problem? The first step in a 12-step program is that they have to first admit they have a problem, that they are tax-aholics over there.

Mr. Bev Shipley: Mr. Speaker, I wish I had 10 minutes to answer that question, quite honestly. The members have to know where his numbers may or may not come from. We have the lowest taxes in this country in 50 years. As I mentioned earlier, we have a savings of \$3,200 for a family of four.

His comment on EI premiums is interesting. When that member and his party formed the government, they had the EI premiums so high that there was a huge surplus of \$57 billion in the EI fund, made up of employers' and employees' money. That previous government saw fit to take that out of that fund, and they wonder how it was so easy to balance the budget. They cannot balance a budget by using other people's money that they have put in for a specific purpose. Not only that, but they gutted the Canadian Forces and cut the

transfers to the provinces, for example, in Ontario 25% to health care. We continue to increase our premiums to the health care system in Ontario, 6% across the country. We will not cut costs for our Canadian citizens.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be speaking to Bill C-60 today. I listened to my colleagues across the way and was intrigued to hear them say that they lowered taxes, when really the bill will increase taxes and cost Canadians as much as \$8 billion.

The Conservatives lowered taxes, but it will cost \$8 billion. Not bad. It reminds me of the scandal surrounding the \$3.1 billion. The Conservatives do not know where that money is. Here we are talking about \$8 billion. They did not increase taxes, but it is costing \$8 billion. As my NDP colleague said, the Conservatives are taxing hospital parking, as if people do not feel bad enough to see someone they care about in the hospital. Often, these people are not well-off, but are people in need, yet they will still have to pay a tax on parking when they want to go visit their loved ones.

The Conservatives say that they have not raised taxes. However, they have raised taxes on credit unions, safety deposit boxes and the Fonds de solidarité FTQ, one of the best investment funds in Canada. The number of jobs that have been saved because of this labour-sponsored investment fund is simply incredible. The jobs it saved still exist because the employers, the employees and the union all entered into agreements.

Companies that were about to go bankrupt worked together and this program has proven its effectiveness. No other organization has gotten the same kinds of returns. I am boasting about the FTQ fund because the same type of fund was attempted in New Brunswick, but since there are fewer people in that province—just 750,000 versus 7 million in Quebec—the fund was not the same. However, it worked in Quebec. Seeing that the program worked, the government decided to pull out for one simple reason: it is anti-union. The government treats us as though it is our boss.

I find it funny that the same is not said about chambers of commerce. Chambers of commerce are essentially employer unions. I have not heard the Conservatives say anything bad about chambers of commerce or employer unions. The Conservatives have no problem listening to them. When a business association appears in committee, the Conservatives are all ears. However, the government does not hesitate to bash workers.

Government Orders

I will now talk about the Conservatives on the other side of the House. Imagine this. The budget gave them the opportunity to cancel their changes to EI. They said that they lowered EI premiums. Indeed, they cut premiums. However, they then prevented workers from accessing EI. How smart. The Liberals increased it by nearly 3%. They then stole \$57 billion from the EI fund. The only difference between the Conservatives and the Liberals is that the Liberals stole \$57 billion from the EI fund and the Conservatives legalized that theft. They passed a bill and then it was done. The theft was legalized. That is the only difference between the two.

We live in a country that has provinces and elected premiers. Workers fall under provincial jurisdiction. The provinces are responsible for workers, their training, and so on. The federal Conservative government says that employment insurance falls under its jurisdiction and that it will decide what happens in the provinces. It is going to take that away from the provinces. During the EI reform in 1996, they decided to create part II of the employment insurance legislation. Part II was supposed to establish training and they were supposed to provide funding to the provinces. Earlier I heard my Conservative colleague across the floor say that they changed all that, because the training being given was bad and useless, because it was just sending people to college. This means that they have no respect for the provinces.

•(1815)

The premiers of the Atlantic provinces met last week. They concluded that this makes no sense at all. Accordingly, they are calling on the federal government to declare a moratorium on the EI changes and to do an impact study.

That would be a sign of respect. Four Atlantic provinces are calling for this, and so is Quebec. These are all Atlantic provinces, in a way. Five provinces of Canada are telling their federal Prime Minister that he is making a mistake and that he is destroying their regional economy.

Who is the Prime Minister to say that that is not how it works, because he held consultations? Who did he consult? New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador and Quebec are all saying that they were not consulted. It appears that Alberta was the only province that was consulted. Did the Conservatives only consult big oil?

Apart from big oil companies, who has \$5,000 to set aside for each employee? Certainly not companies in my region. Small businesses do not have this \$5,000. A new start-up that wants to hire 20 people does not have it. If the government wanted to do the right thing and connect workers, I have a recommendation, and it would not cost very much.

In Alberta, foreign workers are hired ahead of Canadians. Training could have been offered to our Canadians.

I would like to talk about a job ad that I have here. It was posted by and for the Government of Canada. It is a job for a scaffolder in Alberta. These are the requirements: education, certificates, licences, courses or memberships: not required; five or more years' experience; language of work: English; other languages: Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi and Spanish. French is not spoken. I have the ad in my hands. There is other information. It is not so bad: English is

not required because it is not a basic skill needed to work in the isolated camps located two hours north of Fort McMurray.

I have a suggestion for the government if it wants to find workers. Becoming a scaffolder takes 11 weeks of training. People in my riding would like to work there and they are Canadians. Why not allocate the money needed to provide the 11 weeks of training?

If the government is asking for five years' experience in this job ad, and no education or certification, it is because foreign workers have this experience but not the education or certification. Requiring five years' experience excludes Canadians. We no longer have scaffolders with five years' experience. They all have jobs. The government has excluded workers who could have been trained and put to work.

The Conservatives could have done much better with this budget. This government boasts about being the workers' friend. So what has it done for them? In the Atlantic provinces and Quebec, it is ruining seasonal employment. There are no more seasonal jobs.

The government is jeopardizing seasonal jobs in our regions, whether they are in the tourism or fishing industry. That is what the government is doing and it is unfortunate. The budget before us certainly is not intended for Canadians.

•(1820)

The government is increasing taxes. What is more, this is an omnibus bill. The government has put everything in it. We will debate it for five days, and that is it.

•(1825)

[*English*]

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, following up on my colleague's last comment about seasonal workers, I would like to know why it is that the member would be opposed to a seasonal worker taking an alternate job within the local region that is a good match for his or her skill set.

These are the parameters of the EI changes. The EI changes are not sweeping changes with no restrictions. The seasonal worker has to have a good skill set match with a job that is available or is being offered, and it has to be within a reasonable distance of where the person lives.

If there is a job offering in the local community, for example, why would the member be opposed to that seasonal worker taking that job when unemployed or at those times when the person is not employed during seasonal work?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his question.

Do the Conservatives know anything about business? Go talk to a company that has trained an employee and paid for that training. If that worker goes elsewhere, the company will lose him. That is what you do not understand about seasonal work.

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We see nothing wrong with people working. Do you think we live on another planet? We want people to work. Create jobs instead of having them not work. Have employees work in secondary and tertiary processing plants. Invest in the regions so that people can work in secondary and tertiary processing plants. Create real jobs instead of forcing people to go look for work when there is still work to be done in the plants. That is what is happening.

You are scaring 60-year-old women by saying that they will lose their employment insurance if they do not apply for three jobs that do not exist. That is the problem. You do not want to understand. Even New Brunswick's premier told the government. It is not working. Your—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please.

I would remind the member to direct his comments through the Chair.

The hon. member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor.

[*English*]

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague is very passionate. I have been here quite some time watching him be passionate about it.

This is more of a comment than a question. It is about the narrative being spun here, which we have witnessed time and again. On one hand, the Conservatives say that they will help the unemployed worker. On the other hand, literally a few sentences later, the Conservatives will say how dare someone work 45 days a year, despite the circumstances, despite the fact that EI was set up in seasonal areas to help maintain these seasonal industries and to help maintain these communities. They ask: “How dare you work 45 days? However, we will help you”.

This is not about help to them. It is about punishment. It is about being repeat offenders. That is the premise—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Scott Simms: I will keep talking until I get to the point, to the truth. That is exactly how they are framing it. You cannot—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. We only have five minutes for questions and comments. I would appreciate it if members could keep their interventions brief.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, all I will say to the member is that I have been asking the government the same thing.

Four premiers from four provinces in an area of the country with a lot of seasonal jobs are joining forces. They asked the government to come look at their region. The government flat out refused.

Instead, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development turned around and said that claimants should have a high school diploma to collect EI, that people back home have not changed and would rather receive EI so they can go hunting or fishing. That is an insult to workers. It is one insult after the next. People are tired of that.

We need to respect workers. People in the east are just as respectable as people from western, central Canada or Quebec. Are we all not Canadians? All we want is respect, once and for all, and not to be insulted anymore. That is what we want. Every day the government insults Canadians. It is disgusting.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the cuts and the changes to employment insurance would actually hurt jobs in the tourism sector for sure, as well as probably the fisheries, and since our hon. colleagues on the other side of the House do not understand the life in seasonal communities such as those in Atlantic Canada or in British Columbia in the tourism sector, let me ask all of us here to consider the House of Commons operations.

Do my hon. colleagues here know that the restaurant staff get laid off when we go back to our ridings for Christmas, and are later hired back? They will not be able to find a job. What employer wants to hire someone for two weeks or three weeks, knowing that staff who have been working in the parliamentary dining room for multiple years are expected back to work as soon as we come back?

The system was designed around—

• (1830)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please.

We are really running out of time.

The hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, maybe I will have a little surprise for the member here.

I like her question. Maybe she does not know that in the employment insurance rules, they are not allowed to say they work in the parliamentary restaurant. A woman is not allowed to say she is pregnant, because that would damage her chances to get a job. They are not allowed to say they are driving a school bus, because that would stop them from having a job. They have to lie to the employer. That is in the employment insurance rules—and the Conservatives say they are there to protect the employees, the workers?

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Yvon Godin: Just go and look at the rules. I will show it to the member who just said “Oh, oh!”. It is in the rules.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

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[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tonight I am rising to follow up on a question I asked in the House a little while ago on the very topical environmental issue of fracking, or natural gas fracturing, as they call it. It is a very topical issue, an environmental issue, but the answer we get to any question we ask about fracking is that it is entirely a provincial jurisdiction and the federal government does not really have anything to do with it. I find that is a very narrow interpretation of the role of the federal government in environmental policy in this country. I also find that this is part of a trend on behalf of the government to move away from involvement in environmental policy in many areas. One gets the sense that, if it can, the government will unload responsibilities for the environment to the provincial authorities at any chance.

I would remind the House that this is a contradictory position because the federal government claims, for example, to be working on regulations for emissions in the oil sands sector or in the oil sector generally, which is a natural resource sector, of course. When it comes to GHG emissions in the oil sector, it has no problem getting involved. Similarly, the federal government has brought in regulations on sulphur emissions that result from the exploitation of oil resources and so on.

I would remind the House that the federal government has a constitutional role in environmental management in this country, and that role is not given by virtue of the Constitution, by virtue of the British North America Act, but through jurisprudence. We have the famous 1997 Hydro-Québec decision, which gives the federal government the power to regulate in matters affecting the environment, not only to prohibit under criminal law, but to regulate under criminal law. So there is a role for the federal government.

When we talk about fracking, we are talking about potential impacts on ground water. Some would say that is under the ground so it is a provincial matter. Yes, it is under the ground, but any expert would say aquifers cross boundaries. They cross provincial boundaries and they cross international boundaries. Right there, even though we are talking about ground water, we are talking about an area that could potentially interest the federal government and require some kind of intervention on the part of the federal government. Again, this is another reason why one could say there is a role for the federal government.

Also, when we talk about fracking, we talk about waste water, because fracking produces waste water. Then the issue becomes what the rules are that would govern effluents of the waste water or the treatment of the waste water. I am not sure if they are true, but there have been reports of waste water from fracking being brought to municipal waste water treatment plants; yet the government regulates in this area of waste water effluents.

Again, I have trouble seeing that the federal government does not have any role whatsoever in the issue of fracking, and I would like to hear the government's response.

• (1835)

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague made several statements in his opening remarks today. He made

comments about government moving away from environmental policy and unloading responsibility for the environment, this being a contradictory position, and greenhouse gas emission regulations. I find all of his comments very interesting as he comes from a party that all but abdicated its responsibility to look at policy that would improve environmental quality in Canada.

Since the member opened the door about greenhouse gas emission regulations this evening, I would like to remind him first and foremost that when talking about environmental policy credibility in the House of Commons, it was actually his government when it was in office that failed miserably in putting forward any sort of plan to regulate greenhouse gas emissions in our country.

The data that we are starting to see through our emissions trends report, which shows the decoupling of greenhouse gas emission growth with economic growth, is very positive. It has occurred under our government's tenure. That is why we have chosen to look at a sector-by-sector regulatory approach for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The member also has to recognize that natural resource production and the rules that govern that are primarily the focus of provincial jurisdiction. Our government has done an excellent job with programs such as the chemical management plan. We assessed thousands of chemicals in the country. We have come up with ways to ensure that Canadians have safe drinking water and so on. We also understand that this is primarily an area of provincial responsibility.

We will continue on the path of ensuring that Canadians have a healthy and safe environment through our other regulatory portfolios.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, I take the member's point. We are talking about natural resources. Provincial governments play a major role in the management of natural resources. If the government really believes that it has nothing to do with natural gas fracking, then this begs the question of why it has decided to study the issue. To its own great fanfare, the government has said it will study fracking and no doubt the potential consequences of fracking.

My question was really about whether the government was applying its own rules. There is a regulation that requires companies in Canada to report their release of pollutants to the national pollutant release inventory. All industries are required to do that, whether they are natural resource industries that are mostly regulated by provincial governments or not, yet when it comes to fracking, which introduces about 800 chemicals into the soil, the government does not seem to want to stick to that requirement. I find that another contradiction.

I would like to hear the hon. member's comments with respect to that as well.

Ms. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, I find it rich that, after months of debate and questions from Liberal members about science in this country, my colleague would ask a question as inane as why study something.

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I would like to point out in my closing remarks that natural resource development is an area of provincial jurisdiction. Our government will continue to provide environmental health and safety for all Canadians through the measures that we have taken to protect groundwater, clean up our lakes and rivers, and our current greenhouse gas emissions program.

• (1840)

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to take this opportunity to express once more the need for the government to create a national food strategy.

Several months ago I rose in the chamber to question the government about the severe food insecurity issues facing northern and aboriginal communities. The difficulties relating to access to nutritious, culturally appropriate and sustainably developed food are problems that disproportionately affect aboriginal and northern communities in Canada. This is an issue that goes beyond food production and is as much about the equitable distribution of those foods.

At the time of my question, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food had just finished his visit to Canada. He expressed concern that we were not meeting our obligations under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which we had only just signed in 2010.

Certainly there are a number of factors that limit anyone's ability to access nutritional food. In northern and aboriginal communities, one of the major factors is income. In fact, over 20% of aboriginal people fall below the Statistics Canada low-income cutoff rate. By way of comparison, only 11% of the rest of our population share this circumstance.

Therefore, we see how certain factors that affect one's ability to purchase food are disproportionately felt among Canada's aboriginal population. The concerns of the UN special rapporteur are reflected in the 2007-08 Inuit health survey prepared by the Centre of Indigenous Peoples' Nutrition and Environment. That study showed that 70% of adults living in Nunavut are food insecure. These are some of the highest figures among all developed nations.

These figures also show that federal programs such as nutrition north Canada, which are aimed at addressing this issue, could be improved. For example, when the food and mail program was replaced by nutrition north Canada, 31 communities that once qualified for food and mail did not qualify for nutrition north. Also, with a lack of transparency in the program, it becomes difficult for observers to determine if the subsidies directed at food suppliers are actually being passed along to consumers.

What is really happening is that food costs in northern Canada are continuing to rise despite this federal program designed to remedy the problem. Nutrition north also misses out on the fact that some of the best and most nutritious food consumed by aboriginal peoples is available through the traditional means of hunting and fishing. This oversight amounts to an incomplete program and speaks again to the need for a strategy.

We have to remember that this issue is not limited to aboriginal peoples and is increasingly faced by more and more Canadians. Since the 1980s, we have witnessed food banks become permanent fixtures across the country, and in March of last year, they were used by more than three-quarters of a million Canadians. Worse, almost 40% of those were children.

We see that while the government does little to address the problem of food insecurity, volunteers and organizations across Canada continue to work hard to help Canadian families that struggle with the choice between rent and good, nutritious food.

However, the government has a role to play to ensure that the most vulnerable in our population have access to nutritious and culturally appropriate food. The UN report on the right to food highlights some practical ways to address food insecurity. Among them is language that encourages the federal, provincial and territorial governments to meet with northern and aboriginal communities to discuss access to land and natural resources and how this affects nutrition north Canada and the right to food.

When will the government start talking about these issues? How many more people must struggle for access to adequate food before we start developing a national food strategy?

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. I do not think I have had the opportunity to address her directly in the House before, so this is a pleasure tonight.

I will speak to a few components of the member's statement.

First of all, our government agrees that we need to ensure a safe, healthy and adequate food supply for northern Canadians. I will speak to some of the programming that we have put in place to address that in a moment, but I think my colleague opposite intimated that somehow our government was not addressing the need for economic opportunity for all Canadians.

We just spent the day today addressing budget 2013. The whole point of budget 2013 is to create jobs and economic growth for all Canadians, including northern Canadians, with programs such as the Canada job grant, which is aimed to ensure that all Canadians can get the training they need to access jobs. We understand that when Canadians have jobs they have better economic opportunity and they have better access to products. We want to make sure those opportunities are available for all Canadians, including northern Canadians.

Regarding the report the member mentioned from the UN, my colleague the Minister of Health spoke, I think, quite eloquently to it in the House. She is a member of the Inuit community and quite proud of her cultural heritage. I think she was quite disappointed that the outcome of the report was that this particular individual decided not to meet with local hunters and elders to understand the traditional way of life there. She has already addressed the House as to her opinion on the validity of that report, given that it probably did not understand the cultural sensitivity of that area. I will leave her comments to speak for themselves.

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Specifically on the nutrition north Canada program, my colleague intimated that somehow residents of the north would not benefit from this program. However, I would like to point out to her that community residents benefit directly from the program because registered northern retailers must pass on the subsidy to their customers when they buy eligible items in the store. They must do this. Also, registered southern suppliers must pass on the subsidy to individual and commercial establishments. There is a component to this program that ensures those savings are passed on.

The member also suggested that traditional foods, or country foods, are somehow not a component of this program, which is not the case. Country foods, for example, Arctic char, muskox and caribou, are important sources of nutrients, and we understand that they play a key role in the diet of that region. Under nutrition north Canada, the Government of Canada subsidizes country foods that are processed in eligible northern processing plants as well as country foods shipped from the south.

I understand that there are more than 103 northern remote communities that benefit from the nutrition north Canada program. This is a program that is designed to support this area and meet the nutritional needs of that area. We are proud to see it launched and working effectively to date.

• (1845)

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, budget 2013 is just a shell game. Let me be very clear. Under the Conservatives' NNC program, 31 communities are now ineligible for nutrition north Canada but were eligible before. Therefore, obviously, we can see that aboriginal people across the country are starving.

Also, the report indicated that Inuit are facing severe food insecurity. The report recommends a food strategy that defines the responsibilities of every level of government. Again, the Minister of Health should understand this given the fact that she comes from some of those communities. We are not talking about 31 people; we are talking about 31 communities that do not have access to that program anymore.

Will the Conservative government be part of the solution instead of the problem when it comes to safe, affordable nutrition for Inuit living in Canada's north, and will it put forward a Canadian food strategy?

Ms. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, I object to the somewhat ill-informed comment that budget 2013 is a shell game. If we want to talk about what a shell game is, it is the shadow budget that the NDP put forward that has absolutely no costing in it. How can she even speak to economic policy when she cannot even cost out her own program? It is a question that begs to be answered.

When we look at our government's overall approach to economic policy, we see it is to ensure that all Canadians, regardless of region, regardless of demographic or ethnicity, have access to economic growth and prosperity, not just now but in the long term. That is why we refuse to speak against, as the NDP has done, certain sectors of our economy such as the natural resource sector.

We want to ensure that we have a healthy environment. We want to have safe food and access to it, but we also have an eye to long-term economic growth.

I hope my colleague will charge her mind and decide to support budget 2013.

[*Translation*]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on October 11, 2012, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, or CRTC, announced plans to create a code of conduct for wireless service providers in order to address issues related to the clarity and contents of wireless contracts.

All Canadians who are watching at home right now must be thinking about the contracts that they have been stuck with that are full of fine print. That is precisely what I want to talk about.

This plan to create a national, mandatory code for all wireless service providers is extremely important because the CRTC has not looked at issues related to the wireless industry since the mid-1990s. Given that it has been quite a while since anyone has looked at this matter, it is high time someone did so, especially considering all the changes that have taken place in this industry over the past few years.

The federal Commissioner for Complaints for Telecommunications Services processed 10,678 complaints in 2011 and 2012, an increase of 35%, yet he has issued only 55 recommendations and 11 rulings. This illustrates just how much the 27 million Canadians who use a cellular telephone feel their rights are being infringed upon, and with good reason. This also means that the vast majority of complaints are resolved between the consumer and the service provider. Unfortunately, in that regard, we have every reason to believe that these matters are not being resolved in the consumer's favour, which is why it is so important to have a closer look at what is going on.

That is why I rose in this House and asked this government to look into the problem and examine a number of aspects regarding wireless services. It is not just three-year contracts that pose a problem, although this issue is often at the top of the list of the most frequent complaints. Three-year contracts are too long and are a big problem. Other problems include the locking of cellular telephones, exorbitant roaming charges and excessive service charges.

The chairman of the CRTC himself admitted that the current market is dysfunctional and that the situation needs to be fixed. I am not the only one calling for this; the CRTC also believes that progress needs to be made. The Conservatives' inaction means that telephone service in Canada is two to four times more expensive than in Europe or Asia. We have the highest fees of all OECD countries, which says a lot.

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Canadians absolutely need protection. Consumer advocacy groups have urged the CRTC to ban three-year contracts and cap them at two years, for example. They are also asking that this change be applied to all current contracts, not just new subscribers. The federal Competition Bureau also indicated that it supports measures to limit the length of contracts. However, for now, the CRTC has decided not to listen to calls for banning three-year contracts, and the federal regulator has instead focused on issues such as early cancellation fees to allow consumers to cancel their service at any time.

Many Canadians expressed their views during exploratory discussions, and they talked about more than just the length of contracts. They also talked about their concerns with locked cellphones and roaming charges. All of those contentious issues will be addressed during the hearings. I am calling on the government to take action on this issue.

• (1850)

Hon. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the comments made by the hon. member for Québec regarding protection for cellphone users. First, I would like to talk about the government's telecommunications policy.

[*English*]

The telecommunications sector is an important part of a prosperous, productive and competitive Canadian economy and society. Our government's job is to ensure that appropriate regulatory frameworks are in place to encourage competition and investment so that Canadians can benefit from access to advanced telecommunication services at competitive prices.

Our government has taken a number of important measures to build on our strong record of encouraging greater competition and consumer choice in telecommunications.

In the last wireless spectrum auction in 2008, the government reserved a portion of the spectrum exclusively for new market entrants. In 2012 and 2013, the government announced that it was taking further action to support competition in the telecommunications sector through the following measures: lifting foreign investment restrictions for telecom companies that hold less than a 10% share of the total Canadian telecommunications market, which will help telecom companies with a small market share access the capital they need to grow and compete; ensuring at least four providers in every region can acquire spectrum in the upcoming 700 megahertz and 2,500 megahertz spectrum auctions; reviewing the policy on spectrum licence transfer requests, with an eye to sustaining competition; applying specific measures in the auction of 700 megahertz spectrum aimed at seeing that Canadians in rural areas have access to advanced wireless services in a timely manner; and extending and expanding the existing policy on roaming and tower-sharing to further support competition and reduce unnecessary proliferation of new cellphone towers.

• (1855)

[*Translation*]

In the past two decades, cellphones have become a basic necessity for many consumers, whereas they were previously used primarily in the business world. Now, the vast majority of Canadians use

cellphones and many Canadians are giving up their land lines in favour of wireless devices.

These telephones are used for much more than talking and sending text messages. The use of data on smart phones is increasing at lightening speed, and Canadians are using their cellphones to stay connected, be entertained and conduct business. Wireless services are increasingly important for consumers and businesses.

[*English*]

As the minister has previously noted in this House, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, the CRTC, is currently carrying out a proceeding to develop a mandatory code of conduct for consumer wireless services.

This government recognizes the importance of both competition and strong investment in digital infrastructure. The measures we are taking will ensure that Canadians enjoy the benefits of choice and access to advanced services in the telecommunications marketplace.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, it is important to remember that regulations are imperative. We absolutely have to think a little bit about consumers. That is what we are doing on this side of the House.

We must remember that telephone services in Canada are two to four times more costly than in Europe and Asia. Our rates are too high, so we need regulations.

On this side of the House, we are not against a little more competition. However, there must be a real benefit for consumers. I will quote the Competition Bureau in that regard.

First, certain industry practices have tended to impose costs on consumers who wish to avail themselves of competitive alternatives. Second, consumers are not always provided with sufficient information in an adequately clear manner to make informed purchase decisions. These features can deprive consumers, competitors, and the Canadian economy of the beneficial effects of competition in this industry, namely lower prices, higher quality service, and greater innovation.

I will put the question to the government once more: Does it intend to take into consideration all those Canadian consumers who want much cheaper rates than those currently available?

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, our government will continue to provide an economic climate that allows Canadian firms to prosper and that protects Canadian consumers. The government has taken measures to promote competition in order to ensure that consumers have access to a wider range of options on the market.

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[English]

These measures include setting aside spectrum in 2008 exclusively for new entrants. We amended the Telecommunications Act to lift foreign investment restrictions for telecom companies that hold less than a 10% share of the total Canadian telecommunications market. We are applying caps in the upcoming spectrum option so that both new wireless competitors and incumbent carriers will have access to the spectrum up for auction.

As the hon. member knows, the CRTC is currently carrying out a proceeding to develop a mandatory code for mobile wireless services and the issue she raises is one that may be addressed.

This government recognizes the importance of both competition and strong investment in digital infrastructure. The measures we are taking will ensure that Canadians enjoy the benefits of choice and access to advanced services in the telecommunications marketplace.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a. m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7 p.m.)

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