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Monday, April 7, 2014

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, April 7, 2014

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*English*]

ELECTION OF THE SPEAKER

The House resumed from February 24 consideration of the motion.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me stand in my place today to speak in favour of Motion No. 489, in the name of my colleague, the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington.

Before I begin my remarks, it would be useful for members of this House to understand a couple of points about the motion. Number one, it is a motion, as opposed to a bill; so it is merely a motion that, if passed, would instruct the procedure and House affairs committee to study the possibility of changing the way in which we now elect Speakers of the House.

I believe that the proposal and suggestions contained in Motion No. 489 are extremely worthwhile and certainly worth a study from the procedure and House affairs committee.

Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to interrupt my own dissertation, but I noticed my colleague from the Liberal Party who came into the House a little late. I believe he was supposed to be the first speaker on the motion today.

If you wish, Mr. Speaker, I would certainly give leave to my colleague to start—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I appreciate the intervention by the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons. I think there will be some time so that we can accommodate the member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor and we will be able to get him into the rotation in the time permitting.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, as I said, this is a motion rather than a bill, so it would simply instruct the procedure and House

affairs committee to look at the possibility of changing the way we now elect Speakers. As most members in this place know, the election of the Speaker is a relatively new phenomenon, because for the first 80 years or so that Parliament was established, there were no elections for the Speaker of the House. The Speaker was basically appointed based on nominations brought forward by the sitting Prime Minister. However, in 1986, Speaker Bosley changed all that, and the rules of the House in the election of Speakers were changed.

Since that time, elections of Speakers have been done by secret ballot. While that system has worked well for the last 30 years, it is a very cumbersome process, in the minds of many people. If we looked at the voting patterns since 1986, we would find that the average length of time taken to elect a Speaker at the start of each Parliament is over seven hours. Some would suggest perhaps that is not a bad thing; it allows all members at the start of each Parliament to get together to renew acquaintances and basically enjoy the electoral spirit that comes around elections of any kind. However, from my standpoint and in my view, I would like to see perhaps a more efficient use of time. That is why my colleague's Motion No. 489 suggests that a preferential ballot be established to change the existing rules of electing a Speaker.

Most members here understand how a preferential ballot works, but for those who are perhaps a little unsure, let me try to clarify as much as I can how an election would be held using the preferential ballot.

Currently, if there are several members who wish to run for the position of Speaker, all of those names would be included on a ballot, votes would be counted, and only if one member received over 50% of the vote would an election be completed. We have seen over the course of the last 30 years that getting that 50% threshold is not an easy thing to do, and that is why we take such a length of time to elect a Speaker. It has taken several ballots in most cases. Currently, the system is that after the ballots are counted after the first vote, any candidate who receives the least amount of votes cast or, in the event of a tie, two or more members who receive the least amount of votes, or any member who receives less than 5% of the total votes cast, would be eliminated from the ballot. The remaining names would then continue to be placed on the ballot, votes would take place and be counted, and only when one name on the ballot receives over 50% of the vote would a Speaker be considered to be elected.

Private Members' Business

Starting in 1986, we have seen several ballots occur almost every time there has been an election of a Speaker. Only once in the last 30 years has there been an acclamation, and that is when former Speaker Milliken was elected in the early 2000s, perhaps 2005. However, every other time, there has been a contested election with several members seeking the position of Speaker. Again, with the number of ballots cast and the number of times the table officers had to count the ballots, the amount of time it took to elect a Speaker averaged over seven hours. A preferential ballot would streamline that process quite considerably.

A preferential ballot means that, at the start, all members who have put their names forward to be considered for the Speaker of this House would see their names on one ballot, and instead of just marking an *x* under a preferred candidate, all those people who would be seeking the position would be ranked as number 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and so on. In other words, if there were seven people seeking the position of the Speaker's chair, they would be ranked numbers one through seven. When the ballots are then counted, the same process takes place whereby they would need 50% plus one vote to be elected Speaker. However, if no name or no candidate on that ballot received more than 50% of the votes cast, those who are administering the election would go down the ranking, and the person who received the least number of votes would be stricken from that one ballot.

• (1110)

Members, however, would not be then compelled to vote again. Those who are administering the count would merely look at that one ballot. In the case of seven candidates on the ballot in the example I am using, the seventh place candidate would be eliminated from the ballot. The voters who voted for candidate number seven with their first-place ballots would obviously not see their candidate elected. On the ballot, however, those who marked an *x* under preference number one would also have marked a second-place preference. Those second-place preferences would then be reapplied to the candidates remaining on the ballot and votes would be counted again.

If one of the members then got over 50% of the vote, he or she would be elected Speaker. If not, the last-place candidate's name would be removed, an examination would take place of where the preferential ballot votes were cast, votes would be reapplied, so on and so forth, until at the end of the count, there would be one name that received more than 50% of the vote.

What this means is that, quite simply, members would only have to vote once. In other words, members of this place would only have to fill out one ballot. It might take several counts within that one ballot to determine a winner, but we would not see the process of having to mark ballots, fill out names as preferred candidates, wait for the officials to recount, and go through that process over and over again. I would suggest that, by doing it this manner, we would see the time spent on electing Speakers cut back from seven hours, on average, to probably less than two. Whether that is a good thing would be up to members of the procedure and House affairs committee to determine, but I certainly think it is worthy of discussion and review, and that is why I will be supporting this when it comes before this place for a vote.

As a last word, I will simply say this. Any time there are changes to the Standing Orders, there should be a note of caution. The wise men and women who developed our Standing Orders well over 100 years ago, did so with great thought, intelligence, and anticipation. I would suggest that many times there are unintended consequences when one starts changing Standing Orders. I mention that only because the procedure and House affairs committee right now has undertaken a review of the Standing Orders and is certainly looking at a number of ways to improve efficiency within this place. This motion may be one of those places.

This is certainly a motion that is worthy of review and consideration, not only by the members of the procedure and House affairs committee but by members throughout the House. With that, I will let people here know that, since I am a member of the procedure and House affairs committee, I am looking forward to conducting this review. In all probability, I will be casting a vote in favour of Motion No. 489.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on Motion No. 489 which requests that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs study the possibility of adapting a first past the post preferential ballot for the election of the Speaker of the House.

I would like to congratulate the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington for this motion, which I am supporting.

I would also like to thank the member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine for all his hard work, on this and other issues. He is an outstanding member of Parliament, and I am very proud to call him my colleague.

I am glad to say that I support this motion, and I support it for two reasons. First, the motion itself has considerable merit. Second, it adds to the spirit of reform that is about this place these days. There are a number of discussions, as the previous speaker mentioned, that are being considered in the House and at the procedure and House affairs committee, and this motion adds to that debate in a positive way.

It is an exciting time in the House of Commons. I am a first-term MP, proudly representing Burnaby—Douglas. It has been a great pleasure to be part of the debates about reforming or abolishing the Senate, changing our electoral system to perhaps proportional representation, establishing electronic petitions, changing our committee system in how we choose committee chairs, and giving members more power over their leaders.

It has been a great pleasure to be part of these debates. However, I must say that my excitement does not extend to Bill C-23, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act. It is an abomination by my count, roundly denounced by all election experts and democratic protectors right across the country.

Private Members' Business

However, I will not dwell on Bill C-23, but will focus more on the positive efforts that are before us today. As mentioned by the previous speaker, Motion No. 489 proposes that the PROC committee study the possibility of adapting a first past the post preferential ballot for the election of the Speaker. This would change us from our current practice of having members vote several times, with each round having members with the least of votes being eliminated, and one member receiving the majority of vote eventually elected.

This motion proposes a preferential balloting system in which members would only have to vote once, except in the event of a tie. They would do so by voting for the candidates of their choice in order of preference. This is a common system that is used around the world, and there are plenty of examples for us to draw upon, whether it is through an electoral system or through a selection of speakers.

This morning I was reading the hon. member's speech from the first hour of debate, and was very interested to note that between 1867 and the 1980s, Speakers were elected by an open show of hands, with the Speaker being chosen by the prime minister of the day. It was only in the mid-1980s that the Speaker was elected by a secret ballot vote by members of Parliament.

When we think about how large a change that was, from the prime minister of a majority government essentially hand-picking a Speaker, until now, where we have lessened the power of the prime minister and broadened it to all members of Parliament electing a Speaker by a secret ballot, that is a much better way to go.

That spirit of what was happening in the mid-1980s, to where we lessened the power of the prime minister and put more power in the hands of regular members, is what is creeping into the discussions we have been having in the House during the weeks and months that we have been debating various motions and bills coming before Parliament. Members are proposing adjustments to our parliamentary procedures in an attempt to improve the process, and in some cases lessen the concentration of power in the hands of a prime minister.

I think there is a range of bills and motions that are being discussed here. Some are more on the housekeeping side, making sure that we tidy up our procedural matters, and some are much more radical in nature. I will get to those in a second.

I noted from the speech by the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington in the first hour that he feels these changes are necessary because the current process takes too long, there is no mechanism currently on the Standing Orders for resolving ties, and he thinks it is important to destroy ballots to preserve the dignity of contestants who do not happen to win the contest.

These are all very good reasons for why we should support this bill. It is a tidying sort of measure, and of course PROC will go through it to make sure that we get the details right. However, from first glance, it does look like a good thing to do. It is something that would tidy our procedures here, save time for the members, make sure that we have written down the procedures for resolving a tie, and make sure that we preserve the dignity of all people who put their names forward to stand for leader.

●(1115)

However, also in his speech, the member mentioned Motion No. 431, the motion that was put forward by the member for Saskatoon—Humboldt. He does not say that he supports the motion outright. Rather, he said that if both motions survive a vote in the House, which Motion No. 431 did, that they would not only draw upon the same pool of experts to discuss the preferential ballot proposals before us today, but also as to how we might select committee chairs. The member suggested that we should study efficiency, which is what is on his mind here, because he suggests that this pool of experts could be used to look at both motions to inform PROC as to whether they should go ahead. It is a good suggestion that we draw upon the expertise that we develop for one motion to look at the other and perhaps save some time.

I would like to make a larger point. The motion before us is not only similar in nature to the member for Saskatoon—Humboldt's efforts to reform how committee chairs are elected, but it is also similar in spirit to my motion, Motion No. 849, with respect to electronic petitions, and perhaps Bill C-559, the reform act, put forward by the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. I look at these as a kind of range in terms of how much they would change the structure of how we do business in the House of Commons.

The motion before us, Motion No. 489, is probably the most modest change that we could make. My idea for electronic petitions, which is currently in front of PROC, would adjust our processes a little more radically. Then, when we move to Motion No. 431, with respect to selecting committee chairs from Parliament, that again changes things a little more radically. Finally, Bill C-559, the reform act, would make the most change. Therefore, I would put my motion, Motion No. 489, more in the category of what the member is suggesting here today, a minor change to modernize our processes and make them more efficient.

One of the questions is on why we do these things. Why do we take the time? I only have one motion or bill that would come forward for a vote in the House, as does the member who is putting this motion forward today, as do the other members I have just mentioned. What we are trying to do is to think of ways to make this place better, how we can improve our processes, and how we can make our democracy better for Canadians. Then we look at what is feasible in the House.

The member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington has hit the nail on the head. He has suggested a change that would be palatable to all members of the House, providing it has proper study. I think it is wise of him to do so. What I tried to do with Motion No. 489 with respect to electronic petitioning is to pick something that would perhaps please many members of the House. Hopefully, PROC will see that through.

As we move to the other motions and bills that I have mentioned, they are more radical. We will require considerable debate on those motions in order for them to pass.

Private Members' Business

What it shows is that there is a genuine spirit of reform in this place. We are trying to figure out how we can debate these things and come to a consensus, more or less, on what changes are appropriate. I support this motion because the member has correctly calculated that his changes would more than likely be adopted. He would succeed in reforming this place, maybe not quite in the current form that his motion suggests, but after a discussion at PROC there is something that would happen.

Again, I feel positive vibes in this place from various speeches. I am hoping that the member will assist the rest of us who are interested in reform in this place, just as we are assisting him. It is only through this co-operation that we can move the democracy of Canada forward. I think we are all interested in making Canada a more democratic place.

I thank you for the time, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to speak to this motion.

● (1120)

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have been in this House now for approximately 10 years. In that decade, I have witnessed a couple of Speakers being elected, all by private ballot, and I thought the exercise was certainly necessary. It was revised back in the mid-1980s, as research tells us, and I would like to reflect back on the history of this House.

One of my Conservative colleagues mentioned earlier that we should never change the Standing Orders lightly. Even though the motion seems fairly modest in its reach, at the same time we have to be very careful. However, there is a long history to this.

In the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, the version by Marleau and Montpetit, we can see the history of the election of the Speaker from 1867 up until 1985. Typically the convention was that a name was proposed by the prime minister and everyone voted. We could see who voted for whom in the election for the Speaker. Normally the nomination put forward by the prime minister, which in the early days was seconded by a leading minister, was usually accepted. Granted, there usually was a majority, but even in cases where there was a minority government, it seemed that the recommendation put forward by the prime minister and seconded by the leading minister of the day was accepted by the House and there was no tumultuous debate that followed.

In later conventions, although not written down, there was a consensus as to who the Speaker should be. The name was still brought forward by the prime minister, but by this convention it was seconded by the Leader of the Opposition, which is a far more beneficial way to bring respect to the House, and for all members, despite what party or caucus one might sit with.

This method made it much clearer as to who the Speaker should be, and there was no debate. If it was seconded by the Leader of the Opposition, then the vast majority of the House, not just the simple majority of the House, were in favour of a particular Speaker. However, we must bear in mind that this was all done through a recorded vote. Everyone was able to see where their member of Parliament or their colleague was on a vote.

In the 1980s, we realized that a vote would be better among colleagues as to who would be the most unbiased person and could administer the House as Speaker. It is not just speaking in the House and making sure the Standing Orders are followed, but there is the administration of the House over its functions and employees.

At the time it was thought that there should be a secret ballot, that we should not be coerced into voting because of what the leader of any particular party felt about who the Speaker should be. Therefore, the institution of secret ballot was brought in, and I think that was all for the better.

Recently there have been talks about having secret ballots for other positions, such as committee chairs, which by extension have the same type of job description when it comes to being unbiased. Members can see the pattern here. Any position that is assumed by a member of Parliament, such as the Speaker of the House, assistant Speaker, Deputy Speaker, or in the case of committees, the chairs or vice-chairs, it is the same sort of function. One cannot be biased towards any particular policy, and certainly not biased towards any particular party represented in this House. Therefore, a secret ballot is apt.

There was also a bill put forward and tabled in this House on the election of committee chairs by the same method, and I support that as well. I mean, if we are going to have a function of electing the Speaker by secret ballot, which has been our practice since the mid-1980s, then obviously the committee chairs, by extension, should have the same sort of thing.

● (1125)

History tells us that over the past while, we have not had a lot of debate, but as my colleagues have pointed out, there has always been an election, with the exception of 2005, I think it was, when Speaker Milliken was acclaimed. We have had these elections, and they go on for a period of time. In the last election, when our current Speaker was elected, there were four candidates. It went on for quite some time, with the counting.

The procedure by which we do it is if a candidate does not gather a simple majority of the votes, another vote takes place. The person who finishes last, or who has the least number of votes, is dropped from the ballot. It is similar to the way parties elect leaders.

Speaking of parties, that has been the function of electing the leader of a party for quite some time, where someone needs a majority vote to attain the leadership. In positions as important as that, a simple first-past-the-post system would not suffice. There has to be a situation where someone gets the majority of the votes, which is more than 50%. That is a responsible way of looking at it.

As a matter of fact, I do not mind going on the record to say that maybe that is something we should consider for democratic reform. As the critic for democratic reform, something I support is the preferential ballot idea.

Private Members' Business

A lot of people ask what the preferential ballot is and how it works. The preferential ballot is something we have been using for years, but we have never used it in a preferential ballot way. Allow me to explain. We have always voted, and voted again if necessary, to achieve a simple majority, which is 50% plus one. Doing it by preferential ballot, however, means that we are doing all of our voting up front. For example, in a typical party leadership election, if someone does not get more than half the vote, whoever gets the fewest votes is dropped from the list, and we vote again. Once that person is dropped, we vote once more, so back to the ballot box we go to cast our vote. If our candidate is still in the race, chances are that we will vote for that candidate again. If our candidate has been dropped because that person finished last, we now have to vote for someone else, or we may choose not to vote at all. In most cases, obviously, we would vote again.

On a preferential ballot, we rank the candidates. If we were asked who we wanted to be the leader of our party, we would say, "I want this person. She is my choice". If that person is not elected, is not successful, and is eliminated from the ballot, who would we like to be the leader after that? Basically, we are saying that if our preferred candidate, or first choice, is eliminated, we would choose the person who is our second choice.

Doing that saves a lot of time, because there is no going back to the ballot box, which takes quite some time. Even in a national election, it takes 12 hours. What we are saying is that all of this being done up front would save us a lot of time. In many cases, one's vote would not change. Does it mean that we would have to go over our second, third, and fourth choices? We could simply indicate one choice if we wished, but if our candidate were eliminated, our vote would no longer count. That is exactly what we have here.

I would like to congratulate the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington for doing this. Some would say that it is a mild measure, but it is a measure that is necessary. Preferential ballots are becoming very popular within the scope of parties, so why can it not be within the scope of this House? By amending the Standing Orders, we would be allowing preferential balloting to take place.

I would like to say that we will be voting in support of this. Again, I thank the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington for bringing it forward.

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the motion moved by the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington seeks to amend Standing Order 4 regarding the election of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

We in the NDP are always in favour of examining any parliamentary process that promotes democracy. That is why, like my colleagues, I support Bill C-489 going to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

The committee will therefore be mandated to examine the possibility of instituting a single, preferential ballot for the election of the Speaker of the House. I would like to go over the key elements of the proposed preferential ballot system.

Members would receive a ballot paper that contains the full list, in alphabetical order, of the names of those members who are candidates for the position of Speaker. Rather than voting for a single candidate, members would vote for their preferred candidates, in order of preference. The Clerk would then count the number of first preferences recorded in the ballots, and if a candidate had received a majority of first preference votes, then that person would be declared elected.

If, after the first count, no candidate had received a majority of first preference votes, the Clerk would eliminate the candidate who received the least number of first preference votes from further counts. The Clerk would distribute the eliminated ballots based on the second choices, third choices, and so on. This process would continue until a candidate had obtained a majority of the votes. In the event of a tie, another vote would be held with a list of the remaining members.

At present, members vote several times in each round, and the members who received the fewest votes are eliminated, until one member receives a majority of the votes. Ultimately, both methods require that one member obtain the majority of votes in order to be elected Speaker of the House.

However, the preferential ballot system has the advantage of being faster. The election in 2011 took six rounds for a candidate to get the majority of votes. I would remind the House that the Standing Orders require at least an hour to pass between ballots, and the process of balloting itself takes a certain amount of time. As it stands, the election process takes quite some time. With this system, we would have only one round of voting, except to break a tie, which would make the process much more effective and efficient.

However, I would like to qualify my support for the preferential balloting system. Each new federal election brings new MPs to the House of Commons. As a newly elected member in 2011, I can attest to the fact that we have to learn the rules and procedures of the House and become familiar with them very quickly.

The preferential balloting system is very easy to understand; there is no doubt about that. My concern is about the fact that new members do not know the candidates. To vote in order of preference, one has to know something about the candidates. The committee must take that into consideration. How can MPs rank candidates in order of preference if they do not know them very well? For virtually all of us, electing the Speaker at the beginning of each parliament is our first task as parliamentarians. This cannot be taken lightly.

Another concern I have is about the impartiality of the Speaker of the House of Commons. It is always helpful to revisit Parliament's democratic practices and assess which procedural methods are the most democratic. However, we need to ensure that the Speaker of the House of Commons remains impartial, which is why it is important that the committee carefully examine changes to the voting process.

To conclude, I would like to point out that Bill C-489 would instruct the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to study the possibility of adopting a preferential ballot to elect the Speaker and to table a report on the issue within six months of this motion being adopted.

Private Members' Business

●(1135)

The motion takes a similarly logical approach. It aims to make the process of electing a Speaker more efficient. That is why I am supporting it, and I look forward to reading the report by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Resuming debate? No.

Accordingly, I invite the hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington for his right of reply. The hon. member has five minutes.

The hon. member.

●(1140)

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all members who participated in the debate. I am very grateful that we appear to have widespread consensus in the House on the virtue of going forward to look at this issue in committee.

Following up on my colleague the parliamentary secretary's comments, I took a moment to do a little math. He pointed out that, on average, seven hours have been consumed in electing a Speaker in each of the Parliaments since the procedure was introduced back in the 1980s. I did a little math. Seven hours times 308 members equals 2,156 hours.

In case members are wondering, a person working 40 hours a week all year long, with no holidays, would work fewer hours than that, so essentially, it is an entire work year gone.

Assuming, for the sake of argument, that we returned to the worst-case scenario, 12 hours of balloting, in the next Parliament, when there will be 338 members, math dictates that we would spend 4,056 hours doing this, which is about two work years.

Not all of this time would be saved, but if we brought it down to the member's estimate, two hours, and I think that is about right, we would be saving the better part of a work year for a body of people who, I think, without engaging in undue self-praise, are engaged in important alternative activities carrying on the nation's legislative business.

Last summer I had the chance to read Boswell's biography of Dr. Samuel Johnson. At one point in the book, he mentions that Dr. Johnson once observed that nothing concentrates the mind like the prospect of being hanged in a fortnight.

By the same token, there is nothing like a month of free time between the first and second hour of debate on a motion to give one a chance to refine one's thinking. Having had that month, I have had the opportunity, with the assistance of my staff, to continue our investigation into the various alternative methods used by different parliamentary bodies in the Commonwealth to elect their Speakers.

It has come to my attention that I had, in the first hour of debate, overlooked the fact that one of the most prestigious bodies in the entire Commonwealth, the House of Lords, in the United Kingdom, has, since 2005, had the practice of electing its Speaker by means of

a preferential ballot. It is very similar to the system I am proposing here.

The exception, the difference between its system and the system I am proposing, is that in our system, we would retain the practice of keeping the vote totals confidential. They would not be revealed to anyone, including the candidates. That is, of course, our current practice.

In the British system, the vote totals are revealed at each count. It turns out that not only are they revealed and made public but that there is actually a Wikipedia article discussing them. There is a Wikipedia article on everything.

There is a Wikipedia article on the Lord Speaker election in 2006. If we were to go to Wikipedia and look that up, we would get the vote totals at each part of the count. There is a separate article on the Lord Speaker election in 2011. These are the two elections that have been conducted under this system. They reveal certain things that I think may be useful in guiding us as to how much of a change engaging in this electoral process would produce.

One of the questions that arises is whether we would see radical shifts among the candidates between counts, as candidates are eliminated from the ballot. The answer to that question is, apparently, that we would not, at least based on this experience.

In the 2006 Lord Speaker election, which involved eight counts, as candidates were dropped from the ballot, no candidate shifted position.

Baroness Hayman, who wound up winning, led on the first ballot and also on the eighth count. Lord Grenfell, who was in second place on the first count, was still in second place at the end of the process. The third candidate was still in the same position, and so on.

The same thing happened in 2011. Therefore, we are not looking at a radical change in that respect. However, in a different respect, it seems to me that we would see a change, I think, and one that is very positive.

I notice, looking at the 2006 election, that Lord Grenfell, who was in second place, rose from having 103 votes on the first ballot to 236 on the second, which was more than a doubling, whereas Baroness Hayman, who started off with 201, barely rose, going up to 263.

●(1145)

This is significant, because Lord Grenfell was an independent member of the House, whereas Baroness Hayman was a member of the governing party.

Looking at the 2011 election, we see that the leading candidate, the one who led on the first ballot and won on the end, Baroness D'Souza, was a cross-bencher—that is, not a member of either party, but what we would think of as an independent. This suggests to me that this process would likely produce the person among the candidates who is the least partisan and the most independent in their thinking, which I have to think is a profitable and beneficial change to what we have had in the past.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Government Orders

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): There being several minutes left before noon, the House will suspend until noon, at which time we will carry on with the regular orders of the day.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 11:48 a.m.)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 12 p.m.)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

•(1200)

[*English*]

ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN 2014 ACT, NO. 1

The House resumed from April 4 consideration of the motion that Bill C-31, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 11, 2014 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear the enthusiasm of my colleagues across the way.

It is my honour to stand and bring the voices of my constituents in Parkdale—High Park, but I believe my remarks will also reflect the views of many Canadians across Canada. I have heard nothing but complaints from members of my community about the fact that the government is once again bringing in an omnibus bill, cramming all kinds of measures into one very large so-called budget bill, making significant changes that would fundamentally affect the lives of Canadians, and then, for more than the 60th time in the House, restricting the time available for Canadians to look at the bill and for parliamentarians to effectively debate the contents of it. This bill is over 300 pages in length and seeks to legislate many distinct areas of the lives of Canadians. It is not simply on the economy.

I have to say that I am also very concerned about what it is not in the bill. There is nothing in this bill that would address the growing number of part-time jobs without benefits that are replacing good-paying, full-time, secure jobs that Canadians are losing and have lost, both during and since the recession. There is nothing for a generation of young people unable to find stable work and start their lives without massive amounts of student debt. There is nothing to address the apparent use of EI funds to balance the budget, as opposed to giving the majority of unemployed Canadians access to benefits that would help them make the transition from one job to another without an economic calamity taking place in their lives. This is the case for far too many Canadians, and it is certainly affecting many in my community.

This is also a government unwilling to protect our environment, even with international governing organizations, such as the UN, calling on Canada to be a leader in reducing climate change. In fact,

as parliamentarians and a growing number of Canadians well know, the government has used these omnibus budget bills to erode and attack environmental provisions that would protect our environment and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

I want to speak about jobs. Good jobs have been lost under the current government, but year after year there is nothing to help Canadians get back to work. This bill fails to renew the NDP's tax credit for small businesses, a tax credit that we know creates jobs. It would also nullify the existing agreements that identify which jobs are essential and which will effectively disrupt bargaining that is already under way. Over 1.3 million Canadians are still unemployed, and the government has chosen to waste its time legislating measures that were never mentioned in the budget speech rather than taking real action to help Canadians get back to work.

The vast majority of jobs created by the government have been part time, including almost 70% of the jobs created in March alone. As a result, Canadians who were able to recover employment after the recession often find themselves working two or three part-time jobs to try to make ends meet instead of working the one job they used to be able to work in order to support themselves and their families.

It is no wonder that we are seeing growing levels of income and wealth inequality in this country. A report that came out just last week showed that the wealthiest 86 individuals in this country control the same amount of wealth as the poorest 11.4 million. If that is not inequality, I do not know what is. This bill fails to address that growing inequality and, frankly, Canadians deserve much better.

•(1205)

[*Translation*]

I am pleased that the government has finally accepted the NDP's proposal to cap the amount that wireless carriers can charge other suppliers.

However, this is too late for many Canadian start-ups. This delay has increased convergence in the wireless market. Consumers have few options, which results in price increases.

[*English*]

We hear this concern over extremely high rates for telecom services from Canadians across the country.

Government Orders

I also want to raise the issue of FATCA. This may be something the majority of Canadians do not know much about, but for Canadians who hold dual Canadian-American citizenship, the bill is very troubling. An entire bill about FATCA is enclosed in this omnibus budget bill. It would impose the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act amid questions in the United States about the constitutionality of the act. However, the government does not seem to care if FATCA would be found to be unconstitutional because it is not bound by the U.S. Constitution. It is one of the only governments happy to give out the private details of its citizens' financials. In other words, Canadians' private banking information is to be made available to the U.S. for tax reasons to comply with—wait for it—American law. The bill would give the Minister of National Revenue the power to make any regulation necessary to carry out this highly controversial act.

It is entirely inappropriate for the government to present this legislation by burying it in an omnibus bill with time allocation so that we do not get adequate time to study and debate this bill within a bill. The government is just hoping Canadians will not notice, but I suggest that Canadians are taking notice and are very concerned about these tax changes.

I also want to speak a bit about rail safety and transparency. The government does not seem to care about keeping legislation transparent, but it also seems cavalier about Canadians' safety. For example, the bill would allow the government to change and repeal a wide variety of railway safety regulations without even informing the public. Any cabinet decisions that change the safety requirements for the transport of dangerous goods would now become secret.

This includes changes to the classification of dangerous goods, the training and qualifications of inspectors, and rules regarding the importation and transport of dangerous goods. The public would have no way of knowing the government has weakened safety measures because it does not have to be made public. The bill would even prevent experts from advising the minister before the changes would come into effect.

So much for allowing big data to inform our government policies, as the hon. member for Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam promised yesterday.

As well, the bill demonstrates to Canadians that the government thinks that our parents and grandparents are a burden. It would make it more difficult for families to reunite in Canada, and new Canadians would have to live an extended period in Canada before receiving GIS or the OAS survivor's allowance. Not only would sponsors be financially responsible for new Canadians for a significantly longer period of time, but this measure would also clearly set a distinction between those Canadians who were born here and those who were not.

[*Translation*]

Employees in the private sector work hard, whereas those in the public sector twiddle their thumbs.

● (1210)

[*English*]

Apparently wealthy single-income families deserve \$3 billion in tax breaks while the other 86% of Canadians do not. New Democrats

believe the government has a responsibility to all Canadians, no matter what their income, where they work, or where they were born. That is why, despite the cherry-picked New Democrat policies included in the bill, my hon. colleagues and I cannot support it. We believe Canadians deserve better, and New Democrats are going to keep fighting every day to ensure Canadians get the better treatment they deserve, despite this government.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question to the member is related to what I and we in the Liberal Party believe is a critically important issue to all Canadians, and that is our health care system.

As we know, at the end of March the health care accord expired. That was signed by Paul Martin back in 2004. It was the way in which we ultimately ensured that the national government played a significant role in health care through all regions of our great country.

Unfortunately, the budget and the government have failed in terms of being able to deliver a replacement for the health care accord, which raises a lot of concern about the commitment the Conservatives have toward a national health care program.

I am wondering if the member might want to provide some comment on how important it was for the government to have found a replacement for the health care accord, which actually expired at the end of March.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, health care remains the top priority of Canadians. Especially with an aging population, Canadians want to ensure that our publicly funded, publicly delivered, regulated health care system remains in place and is not eroded and does not face death by a thousand cuts.

Unfortunately, the government has not renewed the health accords with the provinces, and more than that, it will erode funding for health at a level of 6% less per year. That is going to create great hardship, and the provinces are going to have to manage that reduced amount of money they are receiving for health care. That cannot have any other impact but to affect the health care services Canadians want and need.

It is another great omission in this budget and this budget implementation bill that the Conservatives have not stepped up to the plate and provided security for health care funding that Canadians want.

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Foreign Affairs and Consular), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just want to make a correction. Canadians are not treated differently, as the member tries to suggest in her speech.

One of the areas we are working on with taxes is enhancing reporting and verification, trying to combat international tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance. That is something I believe the NDP would want to support.

To misrepresent any of our clauses in the budget by saying we are treating the American Canadians differently is incorrect, and I just want to put that on the record.

Government Orders

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, in fact that is exactly what is happening. Those Canadians who hold dual Canadian-American citizenship are in fact going to have their bank records turned over to a foreign country, which is the United States of America, which is treating Canada as though we are a tax haven.

New Democrats certainly want to go after legitimate tax havens where there are tens of billions of dollars being squirrelled away around the world. It was this party that fought for a study of tax havens at the finance committee, but it was the government that then subsequently laid off CRA staff who are the people who actually collect that money.

We would rather go after the real tax havens, the real tax evaders, than honest, hard-working Canadians who happen to hold Canadian-American dual citizenship.

• (1215)

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on the issue of FATCA, there are probably hundreds of thousands of accidental American citizens who will also be found in this great schism of sending their data to the U.S.

Those are the children who were born in Canada, who have never lived in the United States, who have never been a United States citizen, who the U.S. is now declaring are United States citizens as a result of their parents having been American. Those children would now be subject to having their banking information sent to the U.S.

It would create a divide. Two children born on the same day in the same hospital in Canada, one with American parents and one with Canadian parents, would be treated differently. Maybe the member would like to comment.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, there are all kinds of people who are just discovering that, in fact, they hold dual Canadian-American citizenship; and the member is quite right that even if they have never worked in the United States, the fact that they are American citizens because they hold dual citizenship scoops them into this net of FATCA.

My office has been deluged with calls from concerned citizens since this initiative by the U.S. was first announced. We do not believe that the government has effectively protected the interests of Canadians.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise and speak on one specific component of this bill, which is often not discussed in this place but is one that is really dear to my heart, which is the protection of intellectual property. The protection of intellectual property has a strong correlation to how we see the commercialization of innovative products in this country, as well as the economic growth and prosperity of our country.

I would like my hon. colleagues to pay attention to division 25 of this bill, which would make amendments relating to international treaties on trademarks. This is a discussion I had been following in my professional career prior to entering politics. Prior to entering politics, I did a lot of work dealing with intellectual property management and protection.

This particular issue has been consulted on by the Canadian Intellectual Property Office. I give a shout-out to the staff there from

the House of Commons. A lot of hard-working staff there deal with this issue on a daily basis. I believe there was a consultation conducted in the 2005-06 period, roughly, and then another one in 2010. Additionally, the industry committee on the House of Commons side conducted a study on intellectual property, I believe, last year.

It has been interesting to follow this discussion and then see the changes reflected in this bill today. I want to speak in favour of them.

For those of my colleagues here who are not familiar with what a trademark is, the current definition, according to the Canadian Intellectual Property Office, is:

Trade-marks may be one or a combination of words, sounds or designs used to distinguish the goods or services of one person or organization from those of others in the marketplace.

I am just going to talk a little bit about the rationale for division 25. The amendments contained therein would create the necessary authority to develop regulations that would implement the Madrid protocol. The Madrid protocol offers trademark owners the ability to obtain protections for their trademark in a number of countries through a single international application.

They would ensure consistency with the standards and rules established by the Singapore treaty on the law of trademarks. The Singapore treaty seeks to harmonize and streamline national trademark registration systems in ways that are user-friendly and reduce business compliance costs for trademark owners.

The amendments would adopt the Nice classification system that is used by most countries to categorize goods and services for the purposes of the registration of trademarks. The Nice system facilitates searching for and comparing different marks, which promotes the efficient administration of the trademark system, and effects other consequential amendments arising from adherence to the Madrid protocol or the Singapore treaty, such as simplifying the requirements for obtaining a filing date, eliminating the need to declare the use of a trademark before registration, which would greatly reduce the time it takes to obtain registration, and requiring use of a trademark in the Canadian market in order to seek injunction relief from the courts.

What does that mean in simple terms? If individuals are owners of a trademark or have something they want to trademark, they have to make the decision on where they want to file for that protection. This applies to other forms of intellectual property protection as well, including patents.

A lot of the time, people think that when they have a trademark, it means it is valid the world over, but that is not the case. They actually have to register it in separate jurisdictions. Usually, when people discuss whether or not they are going to do it in one jurisdiction or another, there are a few things that come into play. Are they going to sell their product in that jurisdiction? Do they need to have that trademark there in order to enforce their ownership of that?

Government Orders

They also have to consider the cost. When I was working in the university system, oftentimes when we had researchers come to us to ask whether or not they should seek patent protection, one of the things we had to look at was the cost of doing so. There is the cost associated with registering intellectual property protections with the various countries, but often the big cost is related to legal fees, because the owners have to use the appropriate agent or lawyer to do that.

In Canada, because we have not had adherence to these types of protocols—we are actually one of the few developed countries that has not signed on to some of them—some of our inventors and innovators are subject to more costs.

I would like to read a note. It was submitted to the Canadian Intellectual Property Office on February 2, 2010, in relation to the consultation I mentioned earlier, and it is specific to the Madrid protocol. It was submitted by somebody named Rupī Badwal.

● (1220)

It says as follows:

I have been registering trade-marks in Canada for my clients, the majority of which are small to medium-sized businesses. Many of them have success in Canada and wish to enter other markets. In facilitating their trade-mark applications in Canada, I am often asked if I can register the mark in the US or Europe or Asia on their behalf. When I advise that we cannot do so without use of a local agent, the cost for which can be quite substantial, many of them decline. Acceding to the Madrid Protocol would permit my clients the opportunity to obtain the protection they seek without paying inordinate legal fees.

So first, I have to speak in support of the intellectual property profession in this country. In Canada, we have an enormous wealth of knowledge, people who act as patent agents both in house with legal firms and at the Canadian Intellectual Property Office, et cetera. However, at the end of the day, we have to look at ways in which we can reduce barriers to entry into the marketplace for Canadian innovators. The changes we would make to the Trade-marks Act in this bill would actually be quite significant, and I believe they would make it a lot easier for Canadian innovators to protect their intellectual property.

I know this is something that is a bit technical, but it is something that I hope a lot of my colleagues will support because it is a common-sense, practical change that a lot of people have been predicting will come to pass in this country. It is nice to see this finally happen. It is a great pleasure to be able to speak to it in the House, as someone with some domain expertise on this, because I do think it is a very good change.

This change was also recommended by the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology in its June 2013 report. I am looking at the government response to that, but one of the recommendations from that report was:

...that the Government of Canada (in order to support Canadian businesses on the global stage and ensure the administration of Canada's IP regime is internationally compatible and streamlined) ratify the following key international agreements: the Patent Law Treaty, the Madrid Protocol and Singapore Treaty for trademarks, and the Hague Agreement for Industrial Designs;

...that the Government of Canada work with the Canadian Intellectual Property Office to introduce regulations and legislations that will reduce the time it takes to grant IP rights and bring Canada in line with other countries.

Division 25 of this bill would do exactly what was recommended in this report. Looking at the list of speakers and folks who

contributed to this study, we see that it crosses the range of people, from the IP profession, to people who work in law offices, to people who are in-house, to investigators themselves.

I also looked at some of the other comments that came in during the original CIPO study. A letter from Intel Corporation states, in part:

The Madrid Protocol of 1995 (in conjunction with the 1891 Madrid Agreement) enables trademark owners to obtain a single International Registration that can extend protection to any country that has signed the Protocol by a single filing in one language, under one procedure, with the payment of one fee. The Protocol also allows for 10 year registrations and a single renewal filing. Outside of Canada, Intel often utilizes the Madrid Protocol for cost savings and efficiencies in its trademark prosecution. Canada is the only developed country not yet a party to the Protocol. Its accession to the protocol would allow trademark owners to more easily and cost effectively secure and maintain trademark protection in Canada.

If we talk to a lot of the innovative companies, many of which are small and medium-size enterprises in this country, we will see that this is a common theme. I have a strong passion for seeing innovation in Canada—certainly the work that Western Economic Diversification is doing, the ministry I am responsible for—and to see that innovation spur. However, we need to have the appropriate intellectual property regime in this country—modern and standardized with other countries—to allow that intellectual property to be protected and translated into the marketplace and, more importantly, bring us into alignment with some of our key trading partners as we seek to look at other trade agreements.

Therefore this is a very good response. While this might be something that is not top of mind for many of my colleagues, I hope they will familiarize themselves with this particular part of the bill.

Also, anytime we can talk about intellectual property protection in this place, it is a good thing. It is a signal to innovators and to small and medium-size enterprises that, when they take a risk and innovate and when they take a risk as a business and say they are going to spend time and resources on developing new products and new technologies, which are the drivers of long-term economic growth in this country, that the government gets it and that we have protection that is well in alignment.

I am happy to take questions from my colleagues.

● (1225)

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the parliamentary secretary's comments. However, this piece of this budget implementation bill is actually 52 pages or more of fairly detailed, fairly complex material that, generally speaking, according to the parliamentary secretary, is good for Canada and good for Canadians and good for people who have trademarks. However, it is buried in a 350-page bill, which renders it almost impossible to have the kind of scrutiny and analysis that would be possible if this were introduced as its own bill.

We are now facing time allocation on this bill. We have another one and a half days of debate available to us, including debate on what may well be a very interesting piece of legislation were it to stand on its own. Unfortunately, the Conservatives have chosen to introduce it as part of something else, so it will not get the scrutiny it needs.

Government Orders

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, I am glad that my colleague brought this up today. It is incumbent upon us as legislators to pay attention to a wide variety of topics that are important to our constituents. That is why I talked about the long road to seeing this legislation come into place. The Canadian Intellectual Property Office has consulted on this twice. All of its responses are available online. It was also reviewed by the standing committee on industry.

I did this on my own time. I used Google and found all of the responses from the Canadian Intellectual Property Office consultations. As well, I read through the committee report. Accordingly, I was able to come to this place and engage in a relevant discussion on a particular topic that is long overdue.

I am glad to see this legislation included in this bill and I hope to see it pass.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to pick up on the debate here, I appreciate the hard work that the parliamentary secretary has done to inform herself about the changes to trademarks. As my NDP colleague said, they may well be positive changes, but that is the parliamentary secretary's job. She is the parliamentary secretary for an economic portfolio and her stakeholders would be interested in this.

The point remains that an omnibus bill is not supposed to be for introducing new policy elements into law. Until the current government came into power, the convention in this House was that changes that were substantive and of interest to a broad range of Canadians should be debated in their own bill, not slipped into an omnibus bill. This is a brand new area of policy. It has little to do with the budget. Hiding it in this bill is simply not appropriate and is anti-democratic.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the opportunity to introduce myself to my critic. I am the minister for the portfolio. Perhaps if she paid attention to that, she might ask some questions on western economic diversification in the House or engage with me on this topic. I was pleased to be appointed minister of state to this portfolio and I would welcome her comments on this as the critic, hopefully at some point during question period.

The member also made the false assertion that this does not have anything to do with the budget. The protection of intellectual property is one of the key components of an innovative economy. Having innovative intellectual property laws that are streamlined with other jurisdictions' in the world makes Canada a stronger place to do business and, therefore, a stronger economy.

• (1230)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I agree that innovation is important and that it is extremely important that we address the innovation gap in Canada. This particular section of an omnibus bill is not the right way to do it.

Recently, I have been reading some of the commentary by one of Canada's better known innovators, Jim Balsillie, who has been talking about the fact that where we fall down globally in multi-factor productivity relates to our failure to protect our IPR rights globally. This section of the omnibus budget bill would not get us to where we need to be. I agree with my hon. friend that any time we talk about this issue it is a good thing, but burying it in an omnibus bill is not the right place to do this. What we find with making

trademark one word and having copyright protection around trademark is that it does not go nearly far enough to protect Canadian innovation and our companies going into a global marketplace.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, I am glad that we are talking about the length of this bill. Again, I have to say that if we talk to those in the profession or the field, they will know that these changes are a long time coming. We have consulted on these to death. It is awesome that these changes are in these bills.

However, I have to ask my colleagues why they do not take the time to look through the feedback in those long consultation processes. They stand here and slow vote or spend time on inane things when we could be talking about the good policy that is in here today. It is incumbent upon us as legislators to make the debate in this place relevant. There is a lot of good stuff in this bill that is long overdue, including this section. It is a little rich to say that we cannot accept policy that has been consulted on for over the course of a decade because it is included in a budget bill.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on the budget implementation bill, Bill C-31, having just been part of a debate about major policy changes that were put into the bill.

One of the first points I want to make is that it is an abuse of parliamentary process to take complex areas of public policy and to propose policy change to them by slipping them into a budget bill like this. It is an abuse because the members on this side of the House are not able to find out the details of that section of the bill, and because there are so many new and different policy changes that are not related. This is not an omnibus bill with housekeeping changes, but includes major policy changes, making it impossible in the short amount of time allocated for debate to cover all of the facets of the bill adequately.

It is one more anti-democratic omnibus bill that really undermines Parliament's role to properly discuss and give input, and then have a proper opportunity at committee to look at a substantive and complex public policy issue. This is because there are literally 500 separate clauses, more than 40 different pieces of legislation involved, and 359 pages in the bill. Omnibus bills are a hallmark of the Conservative government's disdain for Parliament and its function and the hallmark of its disdain for the Canadian public and its stakeholders, who deserve better.

There are some implications of the bill overall that I would like to touch on and then some specific measures that I will be discussing.

Government Orders

First, the bill overall misses the mark for Canadians. It is essentially designed to provide some speaking points in the next election that would be advantageous to one party, the Conservative Party. It fails to address the major concerns of Canadians. It fails to address the fact that our economy is just limping along, and the measures that the government has taken have been so driven toward partisan advantage and not to the benefit of Canadians that it has failed really to put our economy back on track.

I am from the riding of Vancouver Quadra, and in Vancouver the business community is surprised and disappointed by the dismal level of capital investment for B.C. projected for the coming year. This budget is not helping British Columbia. I will quote the Business Council of B.C. executive vice-president, Jock Finlayson, in his March blog post:

We were surprised at the weak overall investment outlook for British Columbia. Total capital spending in the province...is set to come in essentially flat this year, compared to 2013....

His remarks were based on a Statistics Canada report in February.

This budget fails to address the high unemployment rate for young people, far higher than it was when the government took office. It fails to address the fact that middle-class Canadians are staggering under record high debt loads compared with their incomes, which creates a great deal of concern about their ability to put their kids through school and just manage their day-to-day finances, and of course it creates concerns about retirement security, which is not being addressed in any substantive way by the government, contrary to what the provinces have been asking it to do.

Last, one aspect of the budget that we Liberals are extremely concerned about is that it is essentially cutting almost 90% of the new infrastructure spending over the next two years. This is very important funding for the communities, for jobs, and for the economy.

• (1235)

Vancouver Quadra has the Broadway Corridor, the second largest economic zone in greater Vancouver. According to a KPMG report, the development of that economy and investment in high tech, health sciences, and all of the businesses and activities along the Broadway Corridor are being impeded by poor connectivity, including poor transportation. We need rapid transit along that corridor. It would benefit our economy, but is the kind of project that would be pushed far into the future by this budget because of its cuts to the government's current infrastructure spending.

The Conservatives' new building Canada fund had \$1.63 billion for this year, which has just passed, but goes down to \$210 million for the year we are now in. That is a massive reduction. However, it will be only \$200 million in the following year, and it will be years before it is back at the level it was at last year. This undermines for years to come the plans and economic prospects that depend on infrastructure. This is an aspect of the bill that is taking partisan advantage over the economic realities and investments required by Canadians today.

Second, I would like to talk about the part of the bill where the Department of National Defence loses \$3.1 billion. This is a claw-back of funding that had been announced before, and it is on top of a

lot of other claw-backs. There will be over \$7 billion clawed back from DND's budget.

The Department of National Defence is a very important to the economy of Canada. Not only does Canada need an effective, prepared, and respected military, but it also needs a military that is ready to serve the sovereignty and defence requirements of our country, as may be outlined by the leadership of the country. The National Defence budget is a huge economic driver of jobs, contracts, exports, equipment, and technological innovation.

The Conservative government raised expectation with its Canada first defence strategy funding promises, which I now call the Conservative's failed defence strategy because of how those promises have been broken. In fact, to date approximately \$30 billion has been clawed back or cut from the level of funding promised by the Conservatives' failed defence strategy, according to defence analyst Dave Perry.

This has led to equipment delays, making equipment far more costly down the line when it does arrive, and it has meant that our men and women in uniform are using obsolete equipment that poses safety risks. It has also meant that there has not been proper funding for the kind of support that wounded soldiers desperately need.

I was shocked to find through an access to information request that the director of mental health for the Canadian Forces, Colonel Scott McLeod, a year ago begged to be able to hire uniformed registered psychologists in the armed forces because they were so desperately needed. He said that "...there is strong indication that the addition of a uniformed clinical psychology capability would greatly enhance the mental health care of CAF members...". He said these positions were crucial to the effectiveness of care for ill and injured soldiers.

However, the minister ignored that request. To date, not a single uniformed clinical psychologist has been hired by the Canadian Armed Forces. We know that the care is not adequate. It has been reported by the ombudsman and soldiers themselves for a number of years, and it is having tragic consequences. So why are there these cuts and the government making these kinds of uncompassionate decisions that are landing on soldiers who have risked their lives for our country? It is completely unacceptable.

In part of 1 of the bill there is a tax credit for search and rescue. We support the tax credit, but we wonder why it is not refundable so that those who are doing search and rescue—which is a very important service to their community—and who are not in a position to pay taxes will get no benefit from this tax credit.

Government Orders

• (1240)

Veterans put their lives on the line. In part 6, division 1, there is nothing in the budget to suggest that the government will withdraw its opposition to the Equitas court case. A number of wounded soldiers are having to go to court to get the support they need, such as increased lump sum payments for injuries, and a proper pension, which veterans have always been provided with in the past in Canada. They deserve better, and they deserve to be cared for. That is part of the sacred compact that the current government is fighting to undermine through its lawyer in the Equitas lawsuit.

I would like to talk about other elements, FATCA. Vancouver Quadra residents are very concerned about the impact of this—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please.

Questions and comments, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development.

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague give her comments on the budget, and I would like her to reflect upon some of the history. She talked about business, so she would know that business rises and falls through a business cycle, and she would know that employment and unemployment happen along with that business cycle.

I wonder if she would tell this House why it was that when it was so desperately needed for keeping the money in the unemployment fund, the Liberals raided that fund and took \$52 billion and never put that money back. Would she tell the House what her employers say about that?

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, it is a little disappointing that members from the Conservative Party continue to go back decades rather than actually defending their actions over the last eight years.

This government has been in power for eight years. It has been raising taxes on small business by increasing EI premiums year after year, at a time when businesses simply could not afford that due to a recession.

I would also remind the member that in eight years this government has brought in seven consecutive deficit budgets. The only reason it was not eight is because the government cruised in on a \$13-billion surplus that was left to it by the previous Liberal government which had ten consecutive surplus budgets.

• (1245)

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my hon. colleague has any comments on the rationale that was used by the minister of state just now.

I think that in a sort of free of context way, it makes sense to say that all of the consultations that went in to the intellectual property section help to validate why they should move forward as legislation, although not necessarily in the middle of a huge omnibus bill.

The question for my colleague is that if we use that standard, how much of the rest of this omnibus bill would be on solid ground? I am thinking of the FATCA provisions. It seems very clear there has been absolutely no consultation with Canadians who are both American and Canadian citizens.

I also wonder whether or not the minister of state might want to talk to her colleague, the Minister of State for Democratic Reform, to suggest that standard of consultation might well have prevented him from getting into trouble, as he is now on Bill C-23.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is quite right. The bill's response to FATCA raises obvious concerns about privacy and sovereignty. There was not the kind of consultations that could have avoided those concerns.

This is an element in Bill C-31 that attempts to shield Canadian banks from U.S. financial penalties. It protects Canadian banking information at the expense of those citizens of Canada who find themselves being targeted by FATCA and who are outraged that they would be required to have their banking information shared with the United States.

I think the overall point that my colleague was making is that this government is very well known for its absence of consultation.

I am very happy to hear that the Minister of State for Western Economic Diversification has consulted widely on a complex issue.

That is exactly why it should be in its own bill and not wrapped up in this anti-democratic omnibus budget bill.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if my colleague would comment with regard to infrastructure dollars. This year there is a substantial decrease. I would ask her to comment on that, and the impact.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, indeed, it has been an absolute knockout punch to the municipalities and provinces that were counting on the federal partnership in their infrastructure investments, a partnership that has existed for decades. It is nothing new for the federal government to invest in infrastructure. In fact, the federal government used to partner with the municipalities and provinces, on the basis of one-third each. The Conservative government has decided to whack off that infrastructure funding by 87%, bringing it down to a total for the next two years of \$210 million a year.

To put it into perspective, on one project alone, the Canada Line in Vancouver, the previous Liberal government offered \$500 million for that one project. That shows the scale of the tiny infrastructure funding that the Conservative government will put forward over the coming years. It will take years to ramp up to where it should be.

Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to be speaking today in support of the Conservative government's budget 2014, also known as economic action plan 2014.

When some people think of budgets, they think of numbers and figures and their eyes glaze over. They think that they might have little impact on people's lives. However, I would like to point out today why this particular budget is extremely important for all Canadians, and that it has special significance for people from my constituency of Calgary Centre.

Government Orders

Budget 2014 responds to the number one ask of the people from Calgary Centre, and that is to balance the budget. Economic action plan 2014 not only provides a firm foundation for us to balance the books next year, but it will enable Canada to show a \$6.4 billion surplus in 2015-16. This will be a promise delivered.

It is a phenomenal accomplishment, when we consider that it has just been eight years since Canada and the rest of the world was in a global recession, the worst recession to hit in 75 years.

People in Calgary Centre and across Canada applaud that leadership, the leadership of our Prime Minister. They know that it did not happen by accident. In fact, the flippant quip by the Liberal leader that the budget will balance itself is a tragic example of his misunderstanding of economics.

Unfortunately, it is in keeping with the naive and laughable statements that he is becoming well known for. However, this is not Canada's funniest home videos, and this is not leadership. The Liberal leader's response to this budget is concrete evidence that the Liberal leader actually is in well over his head.

Canadians need to know that. I am sure that all Conservatives, as well as the NDP, the Greens and the Bloc members, know it, because we see it in this House every single day.

This is not just political opponents saying it. Aaron Wherry, of *Maclean's*, even wrote about the Liberal leader, in a moment of understatement, I think, that "he is not the steadiest performer when in scrums or in the House".

Warren Kinsella, a Liberal outsider, said of the member for Papineau, that he has a number of other problems, including lack of policy positions, a background that is weak, a very poor speaking delivery, and an impression that he is younger and less prepared than he should be.

Why do I bring this up? It is because this document that we are discussing today is where the rubber meets the road. In the budget, this is where Canadians need top-notch performance, and this is where we have received it from our Conservative Prime Minister.

Canadians know that we are not sitting with one of the best economies in the world by accident. They know it was the leadership of this Prime Minister that brought us through the 2008 recession, the worst recession since the 1930s.

Being from the Prairies, all of us know about the dirty thirties. After the dirty thirties, the rest of Canada helped the Prairies to recover, and now we owe it to them to help them achieve the same kind of prosperity that Alberta and Saskatchewan have today.

The west and Newfoundland are doing that now, with sustainable energy plays, with our government's strong oversight, support, and encouragement in helping Canada to recover from this recession.

Last week, at the parliamentary Standing Committee on Natural Resources, we heard Dr. Jayson Myers, president of the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters. He said, "The oil sands probably saved about 100,000 jobs between 2008 and going into 2009, 2010 in the recession".

Our government is committed to the success of Canada as a nation, as well as to the economic growth of individual provinces. Energy is Canada's natural competitive advantage: make no mistake about that.

Every province and territory in Canada is benefiting from energy development. We all want the provinces to be able to share in that even more, by using their natural competitive advantages to ensure Canadian success from coast to coast to coast.

The members from the Liberal Party and the NDP were there when Mel Norton, who is the mayor of Saint John, New Brunswick, testified at the same committee meeting. He said:

We want to be a "have" place. We see what it has done in Saskatchewan, what it has done in Alberta, in Newfoundland, in British Columbia. We see so many provinces that are "have" places.

I am going to repeat that New Brunswick wants to be a "have" place.

● (1250)

As the many new monitoring measures our government has put in place in the budget show, we are striving every day to develop our resources more sustainably, while taking care of our environment. Canadians know that the Prime Minister is an excellent fiscal manager. They are coming to understand that under the Conservatives, energy and the environment can be nurtured and developed together. However, what will not work are the ideas of the no-development party, the NDP, or the Greens, or the mushy, mercurial, half-pregnant Liberals, who say that they might want oil sands development but are against pipelines and west coast tanker traffic. We will need all of these avenues if we want to compete with the U.S. Make no mistake, in the U.S., it is full steam ahead in oil and gas development.

With our economic leadership, hand in hand with the environmental improvements in the budget, we are moving Canada forward. That should be no surprise.

I would like to use my remaining time to talk about the things people may not have heard about, the softer side of the budget, the human side of this enterprise.

While the energy sector is helping Canada pay its bills and fund important programs, such as education, pensions, and health care, last summer, the tables were turned. Alberta was hit with the worst natural disaster in Canadian history when two rivers that meet in downtown Calgary both had 100-year-record flows at the same time. The flooding last June shut down the downtown for 10 days. It caused \$5 billion in damages. It destroyed thousands of homes and lives.

Calgary is still dealing with the aftermath of the flood. To this day, there are people without homes. Many do not have the resources to rebuild their lives. In recent weeks, we advanced \$500 million to the Alberta government for this purpose. We want to help these people in their efforts to restore their lives. We still have neighbourhoods that have a third or half the houses abandoned. People are living in hollowed out basements and do not have the funds to rebuild.

Government Orders

We have not stood by silently. The federal government announced, a record eight days after the flood, that it would cover 90% of Alberta's flood damage. It has already committed \$2.8 billion to help. We urge the Alberta government to see these payments to Albertans expedited so that people can rebuild their basements and their lives.

In the last year, I have heard some people say that the federal government takes their city for granted, that it takes Calgary and Alberta for granted. Nothing could be further from the truth. The facts support this. We have invested \$3.3 billion in Alberta infrastructure, up from only \$675 million under the Liberals. Our average infrastructure investment in Alberta is \$412 million per year. That compares to \$52 million per year under the Liberals. This is an average 700% annual increase for infrastructure funding to Alberta to help deal with its growing population.

We have invested in projects including improving Calgary Transit, finishing the Calgary ring road, and building the Telus World of Science. Since I have been an MP, I have had the opportunity to announce funding for 27 summer festivals, such as Sled Island, GlobalFest, and Latino fest, and \$500,000 in funding for the EPCOR Centre for the Performing Arts. There are funds for a myriad of theatre groups, such as One Yellow Rabbit and the edgy women's Calgary Spoken Word Festival, which I attended last weekend. We provided \$250,000 for the spectacular new Bella Concert Hall at Mount Royal University, \$25 million for the National Music Centre in the East Village, and much more.

We have righted an old historic wrong perpetuated by the Liberals under Prime Minister Chrétien when he signed a deal with Alberta in 2004 giving our province less money per capita for health care than all other provinces in the country. The Conservatives have fixed that in the budget with a one-time, 38% increase in health care, \$1 billion, from Ottawa to Alberta. As the western regional minister stated in a speech to the Calgary Chamber of Commerce last week, this money provides Alberta only with fair and equal treatment, fairness the province is getting from our government, fairness that was sadly lacking from the former Liberal government.

• (1255)

The Alberta government was able to balance the budget this year, in large part thanks to those transfers.

Strengthening and supporting our provinces is happening not only in Alberta. I focused on Alberta because it is my province, but these are stories that are not often told in the media. It is similar across the country. Across the country, people's lives are better and richer because of this budget. Albertans' lives are better, New Brunswickers lives are better, and British Columbians' lives are better, and we will balance the budget in 2015. That is what leadership looks like.

• (1300)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will start by saying that I agree with what my colleague from Calgary Centre said in the introduction to her speech about the importance of stopping and studying the budget numbers, which may sometimes seem boring, because the budget has an impact on everyone's day-to-day life.

First, if we must take the time to undertake a study as important as the study of the budget, can my colleague tell us why the government is imposing a time allocation motion?

Second, why has the government included in this budget bill dozens of amendments to laws that having nothing to do with the budget itself and that will gobble up the time we have to do an in-depth study of this budget?

[*English*]

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Mr. Speaker, I am always amused when I hear questions like this from New Democrats. The New Democratic Party, essentially, is a protest party. Its job is to protest everything. It is the no-development party, the NDP. We know this.

What Canadians want is action. This is economic action plan 2014. We have had ample time to discuss this, but we want to get money into Canadians' hands and get this budget working. For example, there is \$100 million in interest-free loans that would go to apprentices so that they could take advantage of the job opportunities in Canada. That is what action looks like, and the NDP should be on board.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the member's speech, she praised Alberta's transfers and its ability to balance the budget. How come the government has not done that yet?

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Liberal member for that interesting question, because one of the long-standing problems I talked about was the fact that the Liberal government in 2004 showed an extreme example of discrimination against Alberta in the health agreement it signed with Alberta, giving Alberta less money per capita than every other province in Canada. It was 20% less than for any other province in Canada for health care.

I am not in charge of the Alberta government, obviously, but we here in Ottawa are working very hard to make sure that Alberta is treated fairly, and that is what this budget would do.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I was dismayed that the hon. member for Calgary Centre used so much of her speech on Bill C-31 to attack opposition parties politically instead of talking about the substance of an omnibus bill that actually has very little to do with what she also discussed, which was the budget.

She says that budgets make people's eyes glaze over because of all the numbers, figures, and columns. I would like her to answer, if she can, why it is that under this administration the document referred to as a budget actually no longer includes a budget. There is no statement of total assets. There is no statement of revenue. There is no statement of expenses, and there is no bottom line. There is no separate breakout, department by department, as in all previous budgets, under all previous governments, that I have read over the last 30 years.

Government Orders

I wonder why the budget is no longer a budget but rather is a very thick brochure.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Mr. Speaker, as a journalist, I have covered probably 15 budgets, at least. Budgets come in many shapes and sizes. We all know that. This very much is an economic action plan that lays out the budget for the next year. I am going to bring out a few numbers that I think the member opposite might want to focus on when she talks about this budget so that people understand what is being done for the environment, because we seem to always hear what is not being done.

Since 2006, this government has added more than 160,000 square kilometres to our national parks and marine conservation system. That is more than the size of Greece. That has been added since the Conservatives came to office. An amount of \$391 million over five years has been provided on a cash basis to Parks Canada. There is \$15 million over two years to extend the recreational fisheries and conservation partnership programs and \$10 million over two years to improve and expand recreational trails across the country. These are some of the numbers. I invite the member opposite to look through the budget, because she will find them there.

• (1305)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I do not want this to be a debate, but I think if the member checks, there is a 10% cut in Parks Canada's budget.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I guess it would be considered in the category of a dispute over the facts that may have been presented in the House but probably would not meet the pure definition of a point of order.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Nickel Belt.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before I start, I just want to tell the House that this is not a protest speech, even though I am a member of the NDP. If the member for Calgary Centre wants to see a protest, she should go outside on the front lawn. That is a protest.

[*Translation*]

I am happy to rise to speak to the latest federal budget. There are few subjects as important to an MP as a government budget. After all, the budget is the document that best expresses the government's true priorities and ideology.

Like all budgets, this one is about choices. In this budget, the government makes it clear that its one and only priority is getting re-elected next year instead of delivering now on the urgent needs of Canadians.

[*English*]

Tim Harper of the *Toronto Star* put it best. With the Olympics still on, he said that the Conservatives would get a gold medal for illusion in this budget. It is a David Copperfield budget, magically making the government appear to care and appear to act on decisive national issues.

In 2015, the NDP will make the Conservative government disappear for real. We plan to make the Senate disappear as well. A New Democratic government will put an end to the many scandals the Conservative government has been caught up in, including Bev

Oda, Mike Duffy, Nigel Wright, Patrick Brazeau, Pamela Wallin, and the MP for Peterborough. The list goes on and on.

Until that time, we have budget implementation acts like this to talk about. The proof of the gold medal for illusion is in the fine print, when we do the math and realize the fact the Conservative government has punted incredibly important decisions to 2015, the election year. One would think it would be smart for a government to go to the voters next year with a real record of accomplishment rather than with a list of promises of what it intends to do. One would think that a government would go to the voters with real accounting on balanced books and not with this shell game, with figures on when it will actually balance the books.

This is another omnibus budget bill designed to ram through hundreds of changes with little study or oversight. Worst of all, there is nothing in the budget to get the almost 300,000 more unemployed Canadians than before the recession back to work or to help replace the 400,000 manufacturing jobs lost under the Conservative government.

There are some good measures in this bill to recognize. They are the ones the NDP promoted. The bill would reverse the government's move to make Canadians pay taxes on parking at hospitals while visiting their loved ones. Boy, did my office hear from folks on this cash grab.

The bill would adopt our party's call to cap wireless roaming fees.

[*Translation*]

During my time today, I will refer to my own national caucus's responsibilities in the mining sector and to my campaign for a national dementia strategy to demonstrate what an illusion this budget is.

I also want to talk about how this budget fails the people of Nickel Belt. First, though, I would like to say a word about the extreme politics of this budget.

In all my years as an elected official, first on the Rayside-Balfour municipal council and, as of 2008, in Parliament, I have always believed that the work of public elected officials is about one thing and one thing only: serving the public good and constituents. Still, since a budget is about choices, let us look at the choices this government has made.

New Democrats know that there would be money in the federal coffers if we put an end to government's spending scandals, absurd advertising extravaganzas and tax breaks for its rich corporate friends.

Government Orders

• (1310)

[*English*]

I was happy at first to see recognition for the dementia health care crisis looming in Canada. The budget quotes the Minister of Health's comments at the U.K. G8 summit last December. By 2031, in just one more generation, the number of Canadians suffering from Alzheimer's or dementia disease will double to 1.4 million. The bill for Canada then will be at \$300 billion, so we might conclude that the government is recognizing the problem and might also act on a solution.

The Conservatives try to pull the wool over Canadians' eyes by noting they will now flow the research money that had already been announced last year.

[*Translation*]

Then, there appears to be a bit of a shell game on brain research money, which begs the question of whether this is new money or money moved from another envelope. I know that the research is important and that funding for it is a good thing. However, Canada is lagging behind its major economic partners in not having a national dementia strategy.

The bill that I introduced in this Parliament would implement a national plan involving research, early diagnosis, training for caregivers, help for beleaguered caregivers, and leadership from Ottawa in partnership with the provinces, territories and municipalities.

Dozens of petitions calling for a national plan are being tabled in the House. Some 200 municipalities have passed resolutions in support of Bill C-356 and the development of a national strategy. Those cities are on the ground, where the crisis is evident. Sadly, this budget could not even find the modest \$3 million dollars requested by the Alzheimer Society of Canada to launch a national plan.

However, the Conservatives put a nice box in the budget report with a quote from the minister and are playing the reannounce funding game to make it appear as though they are doing something. This government is doing nothing when it comes to the dementia tsunami in Canada.

I am the chair of a 20-MP NDP mining caucus, the only such caucus in any party here. We knew that, in these tough economic times, the junior mining companies would be happy to see the flow-through share credit extended. That is a good move we can applaud from here. Capital and other financing challenges can block important projects in the boom and bust cycle of mining.

However, like many of my colleagues from Ontario and northern Canada, I had great hopes that the government would take action on the mega Ring of Fire project in the James Bay lowlands.

However, once again, this government is all illusion and neglect, blaming Ontario or economic conditions for its failed leadership on this issue, after briefly announcing last spring the appointment of the President of the Treasury Board as the minister responsible for the Ring of Fire. That minister promised to reopen talks on the Ring of Fire. He was the new quarterback in town. Well, the quarterback got sacked and the Ring of Fire went nowhere under his leadership.

A few weeks ago, I led an NDP delegation of six MPs to the Ring of Fire, where we visited both the Matawa Tribal Council in Thunder Bay and Eabametoong First Nation, as well as the mining companies exploring at Koper Lake.

Despite the disappointing news that Cliffs was suspending operations, there appears to be progress in both Noront and KWG mining camps, continuing evidence of the wealth in the ground, and the support of First Nations communities if genuine partnerships are established.

Ring of Fire would be much further ahead if the NDP's sustainable development policy had been adopted. Our policy addresses current and future concerns with regard to the economy, the environment, first nations and social responsibility. The Governments of Ontario and Canada should have been working together and leading the way.

In this budget we needed to hear about infrastructure and roads, and measures to help the local communities deal with enormous challenges in health, social services, water, and education.

This budget makes it perfectly clear that any concern this government has for the north and our communities is just an illusion. The budget makes no mention of the Ring of Fire. This government has continued an alarming trend initiated by the previous Liberal government to cut government offices and services in the north.

• (1315)

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, members of the NDP as well as the Liberal Party who have spoken previously to the bill today have talked about FATCA. FATCA would be unilaterally and automatically imposed on Canadian financial institutions and their clients as of July 1, 2014. Because of the provisions in this bill, Canada has seen significant exemptions and relief, including certain accounts that are exempt from FATCA. Financial institutions in Canada will not report any information directly to the IRS versus the CRA. There are several exemptions. This is done through international negotiations.

My question to my colleague opposite is this. Given that this would be imposed on us by a foreign government as of July 1, what would he do differently that is not in this bill?

Government Orders

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, we would first like to help pensioners with their CPP. We would certainly like to help first nations by supplying them with fresh water, for one thing. I would have liked to see something done for the seniors under health care, especially for dementia. As I said in my speech, it is like a tsunami is coming on the health care side of the Canada health accord. It will cost us \$300 billion over the next few years, so unless we start to do something now, and this budget would have been a good time to do it, it will be too late.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for Nickel Belt for his wonderful speech.

I want to come back a bit to the comments by the member for Calgary Centre. She talked about the billions of dollars that the government has afforded to Alberta for its storm relief, yet Toronto was told there would be no help for its storm of the century.

The government is playing favourites in terms of who it will help. Thousands of residents of my riding had hundreds of millions of dollars in property damage as a result of two significant weather events, both of which we believe are as a result of the climate changes taking place. The government is not paying attention to the climate change issues of this century.

Could the member please comment?

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, the current government has never really helped all of the provinces equally. It picks spots where it will help certain people, especially if the help will bring Conservative votes. For example, the new undemocratic elections act targets seniors, students, and first nations, the people who do not generally vote for the Conservatives. That is the kind of undemocratic government we have.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, could my colleague from Nickel Belt comment on some of the statements made today by the government about the \$3,400 in tax relief to Canadians under the stewardship of the current government? We hear about it in question period all the time, and I am not convinced.

The other fact it neglects to share with Canadians is that every Canadian now shoulders an additional \$20,000 in accrued debt. Since the current government has taken power, every Canadian is responsible for another \$20,000 in accrued debt, an amount that is added to the national debt. If there are tax savings, does my colleague see that they are at the expense of our children and our children's children as a result of putting this additional amount of money onto the accrued national debt? I would like his comments on that point.

• (1320)

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question, and the member is right. It is our kids and our grandchildren who are going to pay later.

However, there are some tax cuts in this budget. He is right again. The big banks and the big profitable corporations that do not need any help get tax cuts from these governments, but ordinary hard-working Canadians have to pay more and more every day that the current government is in power.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured and pleased to take part in this debate on Bill C-31.

Almost three years ago, the people of Mississauga East—Cooksville provided me with the privilege of representing them here in our nation's Parliament. We have heard something very loud and clear. Canadians gave our government a mandate to provide a strong economic environment, keep taxes low, and help make our streets and communities safe. As we are in the second half of our mandate, I am very proud of our Conservative federal government and our commitment to promoting those fundamental values.

Canada has the strongest job creation record among all G7 countries, with more than one million new jobs created since the depth of the global recession. Canada has become an example for other nations and the envy of other nations. This is why our economic action plan 2014 continues to focus on creating more jobs and supporting the local economy in Mississauga and across our great country.

Economic action plan 2014 keeps Canada on track to a balanced budget in 2015. Canadians can be pleased that this budget contains no new taxes on families and businesses while also continuing to ensure that government spending is as efficient and effective as possible. We are continuing to deliver support for small business employers and keeping taxes at a 50-year low for the hard-working families across our great country.

Unlike the previous Liberal government, which balanced budgets on the backs of provinces, our Conservative government has continued to grow provincial transfers to record levels. For Ontario, my home province, the federal budget confirms transfers will total \$19.2 billion in 2014-15, a 76% increase from the previous Liberal government. These funds were instrumental in building large infrastructure projects, upgrading facilities, and ensuring that regions across the country are receiving the necessary investment in their communities.

Locally in Mississauga, we are seeing job growth and infrastructure investment in our community, thanks to our government's focus on reducing red tape while increasing investment in skills and training. For example, economic action plan 2014 would help our skilled trades apprentices registered in eligible trades, who would be eligible for loans that would be interest free until their training ends.

I would like to thank the hard-working people in our community who run small businesses. As we all know, small businesses are the great engine of our economy. Despite the economic challenges, these business owners are committed to providing jobs and spurring our economy.

Government Orders

I am proud of the federal commitment to economic growth through supporting local infrastructure priorities in Mississauga through programs such as the federal gas tax fund. The City of Mississauga has received almost \$126 million of federal funding through the gas tax fund since 2006. I will add that the Region of Peel gas tax fund is nearly \$213 million since 2006. Just over \$3.8 billion, or almost \$4 billion, in federal gas tax funding will flow to Ontario municipalities between the years of 2014 to 2019. This is a long-term, predictable, and environmentally stable source of funding that has helped with major projects, including Mississauga's accessible transit fleet and the transit campus.

• (1325)

The cost of raising a family adds up quickly, and our Conservative government understands these challenges.

It is tax return season, and in the past number of weeks I have hosted income tax clinics in my riding, and there is one coming up next week. This is where people come to have their taxes filed by professionals at no cost to them. Those who participated in our tax clinics know that, thanks to this government, their taxes are lower. The average family of four now saves nearly \$3,400 per year in tax savings.

We are not stopping there when it comes to helping families.

This budget would expand on the list of expenses eligible for the medical expense tax credit to include the cost of the design of individualized therapy plans and costs associated with service animals for people with severe diabetes.

Economic action plan 2014 would expand the GST-HST exemptions for training that are specifically designed to assist individuals with a disorder or disability to include the service of designing such training. It would also expand on the GST-HST exemption for services rendered to individuals by certain health care practitioners to include professional services rendered by acupuncturists and naturopathic doctors.

We would put in place the allowance of the Minister of National Revenue to automatically determine if an individual is eligible to receive a GST-HST tax credit, which would eliminate the need for individuals to apply for it.

We will continue to protect Canadian families by supporting victims of crime and punishing criminals. I am very proud to say that our Prime Minister was in my community of Mississauga just last Thursday when he introduced Canada's first ever victims bill of rights.

We are also putting Canada first by providing further support to help meet the needs of our veterans. This is important for those who bravely serve our nation, to provide support not only while they wear a uniform but also in their transition to civilian life. The consolidated veterans hiring act would build on previous government commitments as well as new ones outlined in the economic action plan 2014 to help veterans find meaningful employment after their time in uniform is complete.

In recognition of their service to Canada, Canadian Armed Forces personnel and honourably released veterans would be given more access to federal public service job opportunities.

In conclusion, our government's economic action plan 2014 is excellent news for people and families in my riding of Mississauga East—Cooksville and throughout our country.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate my colleague, the Minister of Finance, on his new role. I am confident that he will display excellent leadership by ensuring we stay on track and not waiver from balancing our budget and keep Canada on course for long-term economic prosperity.

We will continue to stimulate our local economies by providing support for small businesses and we will assist Canadians to get the training they need to meet the labour market demands.

We are helping and supporting families by providing a series of tax incentives.

We will always put Canada first, celebrating and defending our country and working to keep Canadians safe in their communities.

• (1330)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I would like to know what he thinks about the fact that the bill contains so many elements that have nothing to do with the budget. There is one element that affects my constituents and me, which is rail safety. There will be even less transparency under this bill, and cabinet will be able to make major regulatory decisions without disclosing any information.

In February, the member for Brossard—La Prairie came to my riding and we held a consultation on this subject with more than 100 people. The train goes through residential neighbourhoods in my riding. People were critical of the lack of transparency, but this bill makes it seem as though the government is trying to make the situation worse.

I would like to know how safety issues are relevant in a budget implementation bill. Furthermore, does the member agree that there will be less transparency on such an important issue?

[*English*]

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure exactly what the member is referring to when he mentions a lack of transparency.

Our government has been working hard ensuring rail safety. Yes, in recent years, we have had very unfortunate incidents involving rail cars and trains carrying goods from point *a* to point *b*. Our government has been working hard, ensuring that the regulations are in place and that people who live along railway lines are safe and that their communities are safe, always.

Government Orders

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I have looked through Bill C-31 extensively, and a number of things my friend commented on are not in this bill. They are in other bills, such as the victims bill of rights.

This bill does not have anything about keeping communities safer. However it does, I think, have issues of interest to his constituents and anyone with any tangential connection to the United States.

I know that some members today have referred to people who are dual citizens. I can assure members there are many Canadians who are not dual citizens, but the ambit of the FATCA would require Canadian banks to turn over private information about people who have no idea that they could be considered to have any connection whatsoever to the United States, for tax purposes.

This bill, according to many constitutional law experts, would violate the charter. It is unprecedented, in terms of assuming that a foreign power could have access to information about Canadian citizens.

I would ask my hon. friend if he does not think it would be preferable to pull the FATCA sections out of this omnibus bill and subject them to a court review to ensure they are charter compliant?

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, I am familiar with the issue she is raising. As members know, our government reached an agreement with our neighbour, the United States of America, on that very issue.

Under the terms of the agreement, there would be no breach of privacy. There would be no information exchanged between the governments to which she is referring.

• (1335)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to go back to the same question. I am not confident that my colleague and friend from Saanich—Gulf Islands really got any response to the question she asked.

It seems that what the government has done with its omnibus legislation is like what was done with the movie series *Police Academy*: each movie got worse, and each omnibus budget just gets worse and worse.

The bones of the particular piece of legislation are obviously not in sync with the charter.

I ask my colleague this. Why would the legislation not be viewed through the eye of whether or not it aligns with the charter?

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, I am a bit confused, because in his previous questions, the member also raised the issue of whether the \$3,500 per family in tax savings is the correct figure.

In the case of the privacy issues and whether or not the legislation is aligned with the charter, we are confident that it is.

With the tax savings, the Liberal government in power previously introduced in several budgets the deepest tax cuts in the history of this country, including the deepest cuts on transfer payments to provinces. In 1993, it had something called the red book. In that red book, the Liberals said that the day they came to power, they would eliminate the GST. Guess what happened? It never happened, did it?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my role here is to defend the interests of the people of Longueuil and Boucherville. I am rising to speak to this bill as a resident of Longueuil. Members will understand why I am sensitive to the fact that the Minister of Infrastructure's philosophy, that irrefutable "no toll, no bridge" dogma, was reflected in this massive bill from the Conservatives.

The government's goal is obvious. It wants to shut down debate and pass this bill as quickly as possible, and the bill's 350 pages and 500 clauses hide provisions that include relieving the government of its obligation to consult the public. This is an old tactic that the Conservatives learned from the Liberals. In this case, the student has surpassed the teacher.

I cannot believe that the Conservatives are doing this. If they were in the opposition, if they were in our place, they would be outraged to be faced with this kind of omnibus bill. This is Parliament, not a hot dog eating contest.

However, it is not just Parliament that the Conservatives are showing contempt for, but also Canadians. This is about Canadians who want information and who should be kept informed about the laws that will be imposed on them. It is also about journalists, whose job is to keep an eye on and analyze bills, so that people outside the parliamentary precinct can understand what is at stake in these sometimes complex proposals.

The bill's scope is as broad as it is bad. It contains a wide range of amendments and provisions on issues that are way off topic, that clearly have nothing to do with the budget, when, really, it is supposed to be a budget implementation bill. Furthermore, the issues at stake here are extremely important. It is not a question of simply adding a decimal or removing a semicolon. This is about things like hazardous materials and temporary foreign workers. Basically, the Conservatives are trying to push their agenda through without allowing the public to really scrutinize it.

The people of the south shore can draw some very serious conclusions from the huge bill called Bill C-31. They can see that the Conservatives want to impose tolls, from Ottawa, without any consideration for them, their opinions or those of their elected representatives. They also see, with great consternation, the very troubling changes being made to railway safety regulations. Putting forward this kind of nonsense when the entire population of Boucherville is worried makes absolutely no sense.

My role here is to stand up for the people of Longueuil, the south shore and the greater Montreal area. It is also to be here, with my colleagues, to suggest new solutions for the problems that affect the south shore. A very large gathering of business people, community groups and elected representatives from the south shore got together to do some brainstorming and come up with solutions to challenges related to public transit, particularly regarding how to fund it.

My NDP colleagues from the south shore and I submitted a brief on public transit ahead of the metropolitan land use and development plan, because the federal government has also overlooked the issue of funding for public transit. The government needs to stop neglecting this issue and start doing something substantive about it. It is essential not just for the economic reasons underlying reinvestment in public transit, but also because it is an environmental imperative. Our economy will be of little value if the St. Lawrence basin is engulfed by the rising oceans, something that scientists are projecting will happen.

That is precisely why I got into politics in 2008 with the NDP: for the seriousness of its green agenda. Nonetheless, the environment is not an ideological issue. The state of our planet goes well beyond our jurisdictions and our electoral timetable.

This requires consultation, something the government is completely inept at. Never has that been any clearer than with the outrageous abuse that the government has the nerve to call the “new bridge over the St. Lawrence”, a bridge that will be built on the ruins of the Champlain Bridge that thousands of people continue to use every day to get to work or to transport goods.

Imposing a toll in such an underhanded and hasty manner, in a bill like this, is a unilateral and belligerent move. It is an admission of failure, an admission that the federal government is incapable of or simply disinterested in consulting and listening to the public and working with Quebec and the municipalities. The Government of Quebec represents 8 million people, mayors of cities that, together, constitute the second-largest metropolitan region in Canada.

The federal government is making it perfectly clear that it is completely incapable of engaging in dialogue. It is the government's way or no way. The new Champlain Bridge will have a central place in our lives, but the federal government wants to impose its way of doing things. When it comes to bridges in an urban region, it seems clear to me that the government has to be able to talk with others. Going it alone, creating a piecemeal transit strategy applicable to a single bridge, is unacceptable. Nowhere else in the world is that done.

Deciding in Ottawa on the transit strategy for a bridge between Montreal and the south shore and telling people to like it or lump it does not work. That is obvious to everyone back home.

In Quebec, generally speaking, only brand new infrastructure, such as the highway 30 or highway 25 bridges, is subject to tolls. This is clearly not a new bridge linking these shores.

• (1340)

This bridge is not going to be built because having a second bridge between Brossard and Montreal would make for good feng shui. It is going to be built because the current Champlain Bridge is falling apart from one month to the next and needs to be replaced.

This charade of calling it a new bridge—as though it is a gift from Ottawa or as though it is out of its spirit of generosity that the federal government maintains existing infrastructure and ensures that they are marginally safe—is just as bad as talking about holding a contest to choose a new name while the current bridge is crumbling before our very eyes. That, too, is ridiculous.

Government Orders

I imagine that this sado-monarchist government will not hesitate to give the bridge an epithet that will reinforce that image. How about the Queen Elizabeth II Bridge, with 1,812 beams arranged in the shape of the Union Jack? That would definitely put a smile on the faces of the agitators opposite.

It is just too bad, but that is not how this is going to play out. It will not happen that way because we will stand firm and hold the government accountable. The government routinely implies that asking for functional, safe infrastructure is like asking for a favour, particularly when the infrastructure is very important for the country's economy and is a part of everyday life for thousands of Canadians.

The government's “no toll, no bridge” position does not cut it. *La Presse* city columnist François Cardinal spoke this Saturday about the mess this could create. He said that if Ottawa makes the Champlain Bridge the only toll bridge on the south shore, there will be a domino effect that will bring traffic on the other bridges in the area to a standstill. In order to understand this issue, the federal government needs to work with elected officials, experts and the south shore community rather than making unilateral, irrevocable decisions in a meeting room in Ottawa.

Elected officials in Montreal and on the south shore have shown great solidarity on this issue and have been crystal clear.

The mayors of 82 municipalities in the Montreal metropolitan area are unanimously opposed to the toll the government plans to levy on the Champlain Bridge. The mayor of Longueuil, Caroline St-Hilaire, and the mayor of Montreal, Denis Coderre, are both opposed to this plan.

As for me, I continue to strongly oppose this plan and I would like to point out that the people of Longueuil and Boucherville are generally opposed to this plan and are fed up with Ottawa's contempt for them. All of these elected officials will continue to strongly express their opposition to this plan over the next few weeks, and I will be there to support them.

In much the same way as they are neglecting the environment, which has been their trademark and has tarnished Canada's international reputation, the Conservatives have decided to stubbornly stand alone when a consensus has already been reached.

This government's insolence and narrow-minded attitude is not only counterproductive but is also becoming more and more insulting.

The government's position is reminiscent of that of the former finance minister who said no to all his provincial counterparts when it came to public pension programs. The Conservatives refuse to listen and believe that Ottawa knows best, although they apparently came here to change that way of doing things. However, again today, the Minister of Infrastructure is telling all the mayors of the Montreal metropolitan area that they are wrong. Ottawa is going to decide how to manage our transportation. Ottawa is going to disrupt the municipalities' development plans.

Government Orders

What is all this for? It is important to remember that taxpayers already picked up the tab for the existing Champlain Bridge with their tax money. They will not pay twice. It is unacceptable to make people pay again because of mistakes made as a result of Conservative and Liberal mismanagement over the past 50 years.

It is also a bit disturbing to see just how oddly flexible the Conservatives' ideology is when it comes to families in Quebec, particularly since the Conservatives like to boast that they stand up for taxpayers. The people on the south shore are justifiably outraged. A petition is currently being circulated on the initiative of the south shore's chamber of commerce and industry, which is playing a key role in bringing members of the community together in support of this cause.

I would like to share the wording of this petition, which invites business people and individuals to join the movement:

We will not allow the government to impose a toll without consulting us.

Our tax burden is already heavy enough.

Traffic jams are horrendous, and the federal government's plans will make them even worse.

We cannot remain silent about this decision, which may have a significant negative economic impact on individuals and businesses.

No region or sector in Quebec should tolerate being ignored when its development and future are at stake. That is why we encourage you to sign this petition electronically by filling in this short form.

We support a bridge, but not at just any price! The greater south shore deserves to be consulted about its future!

I signed the petition, as did the mayor of Longueuil, Caroline St-Hilaire, and my south shore colleagues. The people are taking action. On May 3, people will be on the ground to demonstrate against tolls.

What exactly does "No toll, no bridge" mean? Does it mean that if people refuse to be bullied by Ottawa, if municipalities in Quebec refuse to let the Conservative Party interfere with their transportation and development plans, the Champlain Bridge will fall to pieces and stay that way?

The people will not stand for it.

•(1345)

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with the remarks made by my colleague from Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, and I sympathize with his concerns and his exasperation.

Since he was so critical of both the form and the content of this budget bill, I would like to ask him whether we should be just as concerned about the growing tendency to give ministers more and more power.

For example, Bill C-31, which exempts the Champlain Bridge from some of the key consumer protection and safety requirements in the User Fees Act and the Bridges Act, also happens to give the minister in charge the power to exempt this project from all federal laws.

Are we witnessing a strong tendency to give ministers more and more power so they can act in secret behind closed doors?

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his very shrewd question. When we have a look at this document—this one-inch thick, Canadian Tire catalogue—that is

chock full of details, we see just how the government is retaining control, in the secrecy of its offices and with its documents, over a number of issues that are of general interest and responsibility. We cannot let it go. Once again, it is just pathetic.

I sometimes feel like we are parrots because the Conservatives are always introducing these mammoth bills that consistently contain very important issues that we can only object to. There are two or three inconsequential items that we will agree on and they will say that we did not agree. For example, in the case of rail safety, when the residents of Boucherville expressed their concerns about the transport of dangerous goods and increasingly flammable oil, they talked out of both sides of their mouths. On the one hand, they told us that they were going to improve rail safety. On the other, and this is hidden in the catalogue, they said that there are some minor things they can fix all by themselves without having to consult anyone. That is pathetic.

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague for his excellent and very passionate speech. People are passionate about this because it has a direct bearing on how they get to work every day.

I am a member from the north shore. There is a toll bridge on the A-25. A number of people in my riding are unhappy about this situation. However, there is another way to get to the Island of Montreal. My colleague's constituents will have no alternative if a toll is charged on the Champlain Bridge.

I would like my colleague to reiterate his position on that and to explain why it is important to learn from one's mistakes.

•(1350)

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, I thank my dear colleague. She is correct, and we cannot stress that enough: the Champlain Bridge is not a new addition. The existing bridge is dangerous. People drive on it and they are a little worried. I think fish even swim a little quicker when they pass under it.

The reality is that the public officials responsible for the bridge are doing their best to keep it safe. We can trust that it is safe to drive across, even though it is quickly deteriorating, as everyone has pointed out. There has been all kinds of neglect over the past few decades.

The government needs to stop going on and on about a new bridge. This is an existing bridge, an existing crossing. It will not change its name and will not cost more to the people who use it, since it has already been paid for. This reality needs to be considered as part of an overall plan. We are talking about access to an island, so it is impossible to say that this will be a toll bridge. If we were talking about Rodolphe crossing the river on his little motorized raft, we could talk about a toll, but not for an existing bridge.

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher for his excellent speech.

He made a good point that this bridge already exists. This is becoming increasingly complicated, and we need to think of new ways to cross the St. Lawrence. We are building a new bridge, if this can be called a new bridge. What are the NDP's suggestions with respect to public transit for this existing crossing?

Government Orders

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. We have always had an interest in public transit. These are urgent, immediate issues. We need to be talking about public transit to make it easier for people to get around and to consider the environmental and economic aspects. All companies will say that public transit is an asset because it helps ensure that people are not late for work. The same goes for delivering goods by truck.

Is public transit a priority for us? Absolutely. Is it a priority for the government? Not quite. Every time we have spoken about the new Champlain Bridge, we have hoped—and we still hope—that the Government of Quebec will get the infrastructure it needs to build an LRT.

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin my remarks on economic action plan 2014 by acknowledging its author. Our former minister of finance, the member for Whitby—Oshawa, was given an extremely difficult task, but under his stewardship Canada managed to keep on the right track through a global economic recession.

As a result of this government's low-tax plan for jobs and economic growth, Canada has enjoyed the strongest economic record of any G7 nation, with over one million net new jobs created, 13,000 in Niagara alone. We are on track to balance the budget by fiscal year 2015, if not sooner, and that is good news for Canadians. One million net new jobs and a balanced budget are no small feats in the chilling aftermath of a global financial crisis.

I also worked with the former minister of finance in the Ontario provincial government, which also created one million net new jobs and balanced the budget, which were no small feats in the chilling aftermath of an NDP government. I have greatly enjoyed my years working with the member for Whitby—Oshawa at Queen's Park and in the House. I would like to thank the member for his years of service and for delivering the kinds of results that made my job that much easier. In his ninth and final budget, I believe the former minister of finance has built upon an already spectacular record.

It is also my privilege to rise today to speak on economic action plan 2014, and I would encourage members of the House to support this budget. When it comes to paper billing, for example, the budget is introducing greater fairness for consumers. One section of the budget that many people in St. Catharines have mentioned to me is the elimination of fees for paper billing. Canadians should not have to pay a fee to see how much they have to pay on their bill. It is only fair, and the government is taking action to increase fairness for Canadian consumers.

The budget also recognizes the price gap between Canada and the United States, wherein Canadians have to pay more to buy some of the very same products that Americans do. It also promotes Canadian-made products by developing a made-in-Canada campaign to promote those very same products and reduce internal barriers to trade. These are measures that would help consumers, as well as job-creating small businesses in communities close to the American border, like those in the Niagara region.

Another item in the budget is investment in the automotive innovation fund. This budget would support new projects and long-

term investment in Canada's automotive sector. The automotive sector is an important part of the local economy in St. Catharines and throughout southern Ontario. I am glad to see that the federal budget would support these manufacturing jobs.

I would also like to take this opportunity to help some of my colleagues on the other side of the floor, who have been making some outlandish claims about this budget and health care. This budget is increasing the Canada health transfer. Not only is the total amount of the health transfer increasing, but all provinces and territories are also seeing an increase to their funding.

In this budget, health care funding has increased for absolutely everyone. Some members on the other side of the House cannot seem to comprehend that fact and are saying that they intend to vote against record levels of health care investment. With respect to investing in health care, the only budgets that should ever have been voted against were the Liberal budgets in the 1990s. If opposition members cared to read budget 2014, they would see that not only is overall funding going up, but health funding for every province and territory has also increased since last year. In fact, it has gone up by 60% since the current government took office.

This budget is fair for the Ontario health system just as it is fair for every other health system in this country. To quote former premier McGuinty, when the formula was announced by the government, he said:

The federal government has also addressed an outstanding concern related to the Canada Health Transfer. We are now going to be treated the same as Canadians in the rest of the country when it comes to the funding that we receive for the Canada Health Transfer.

Health care funding that is tied to population growth makes sense. If Ontario has a third of the population, then the Province of Ontario will receive a third of the funding. If it has a quarter of the population, it will get a quarter of the funding. If a province needs additional funding for extenuating circumstances preventing equal delivery of services, that is what equalization payments are for.

● (1355)

I would also like to address the comments made by the provincial health minister in December. She thinks that it is outrageous for Ontario to receive more health care funding than ever before. That is odd, because in recent years the federal government has been investing more in Ontario health care than Ontario's own provincial government. The federal government is paying for a larger share of health care costs in Ontario than it was in 2006. With every single budget, the federal government's share of health care costs has gone up, and it now pays for almost 25% of Ontario's health budget.

The provincial government has not released a budget for this fiscal year, so I will have to use data from 2013. That data show that last year the increase in federal health care funding to Ontario was greater than the increase in the provincial share of funding.

I am going to finish after question period and continue to show why health care funding from the federal government to the provinces, especially the Province of Ontario, is more than ever before.

Statements by Members

● (1400)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. parliamentary secretary will have four minutes remaining for his remarks when the House next returns to debate on the question.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

SASKATOON—ROSETOWN—BIGGAR

Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the past number of weeks, I have had the privilege of attending many great community events in my riding and the surrounding area. For example, I attended the closing ceremonies and banquets of the Saskatchewan Association of Fire Chiefs' annual conference, hosted by the Saskatoon Fire Department. I also attended the Hindu Society of Saskatchewan's 29th annual vegetarian banquet, where attendees heard from guest of honour Admiral Nirmal Verma, High Commissioner of India.

I also attended Ducks Unlimited's annual fundraising banquet in Humboldt, as well as the Mark of Excellence Awards, hosted by the Humboldt Chamber of Commerce. Touring the new long-term care facility, Rose Villa, in Rosetown and attending the Biggar Wildlife Federation/Bear Hills Range annual awards night were both highlights as well.

It is an honour to represent this diverse riding and the people who make Saskatchewan the great province it is today.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is World Health Day, and last Saturday was National Caregiver Day. As our population ages, more and more of us will either have to become caregivers or will require home care ourselves.

Home care is about ensuring the dignity of senior citizens and those with disabilities, yet we need to recognize the growing cost to our system as more and more people have to take time off work or use their personal savings to help their loved ones.

The New Democrats believe that a continuing care plan for home care, long-term care, and palliative care is essential for a 21st century vision for health care. This is part of the reason we have been pushing for a national palliative care strategy. By building support for family caregivers, we improve the quality of life of both the individuals and their caregivers.

In my region, I particularly want to thank the excellent work of the personal support workers. On World Health Day, let us take a minute to thank the caregivers, the volunteers, the professionals, the front-line workers, and the family members who look after our loved ones. We thank them for their service.

* * *

BANFF LAKE LOUISE TOURISM

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after more than a decade of achievement, this week Julie Canning will step

down from her post as president and CEO of Banff Lake Louise Tourism.

Under her leadership, this destination marketing organization has consistently raised the bar, redefining the meaning of success in our tourism industry. Steadfastly promoting Banff and Lake Louise as world-class, year-round destinations, Julie has opened new doors to the world. Today more than three million people visit this region each year, learning about Canada's natural heritage and sharing in new adventures. When they depart, they are eager to return.

The good news is that Julie will continue to play a role in our tourism industry. She has taken over Holiday on Horseback, the iconic outfitting and guiding operation founded by Ron Warner more than 50 years ago.

As the chair of the parliamentary tourism caucus, the member of Parliament representing Banff, and one of many proud to call Julie Canning a friend, I thank her for her significant contributions to Canada's tourism sector and I wish her well in her future endeavour.

* * *

HEALTH

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is World Health Day. The theme is vector-borne diseases, spread by mosquitoes, ticks, flies, and others. Malaria, dengue, and yellow fever are preventable, yet half of the world's population is at risk.

Health promotion and disease prevention must be a key element of any population health strategy. We now see many diseases reappearing in outbreaks around the world and here in Canada that we thought were eliminated. Right now, Canada has its worst measles outbreak in years. It is a disease that can kill, yet it is preventable through vaccination. I will move a motion at the health committee tomorrow to urgently study Canada's immunization strategy. Obviously, it is not working.

I also congratulate the Canadian Diabetes Association, which today released its diabetes charter that aims at prevention and better management of the disease. It is a critical step forward in ensuring that the millions of Canadians suffering from or at risk of diabetes have the information they need.

On this World Health Day, it is time to recommit to prevention.

*Statements by Members***LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA**

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are alarmed today to hear the Liberal leader's latest attempt to divide Canadians into two groups, with him defining the middle class as those who are living paycheque to paycheque.

Why is the Liberal leader trying to divide Canadians into two groups at all, those who have savings and investments, like most of our seniors and families, and those who do not? It is because he is looking for a pot of gold to fund his hidden plan to spend tens of billions of dollars on bigger government and open-ended socialist schemes, the same thing a former prime minister did in the 1970s, simultaneously creating debt that cost taxpayers \$1 trillion in interest over the subsequent 20 years.

The majority of Canadians who do not have a trust fund but have managed to save for a rainy day, to start a business, or to retire, with much help from Conservative tax reductions, should be fully aware that they are the target to fund a massive nostalgia tour of the Liberal glory years by a new Liberal leader of the same name.

* * *

• (1405)

[Translation]

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Mr. Jean-François Larose (Repentigny, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week is National Volunteer Week, so I want to pay tribute to the work done by all volunteers. They are the heart and soul of our society. They are excellent examples of what it means to help one another and show empathy and compassion.

We all understand how they contribute to society, but I want to remind the House how they contribute to the economy. More than 13 million volunteers donate 2 billion hours of work every year. Their contributions represent \$50 billion, which is nearly 3% of the GDP.

I remind members that the non-profit sector to which volunteers contribute makes up 7% of the GDP. This figure represents more than the mining, auto manufacturing and oil extraction industries. Therefore, this is a significant contribution.

Let us take some time this week to thank the volunteers who give of themselves for the well-being of others and our communities. Thank you, volunteers.

* * *

[English]

BRANTFORD BISONS

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 2014 marks the 50th anniversary of Brantford Bisons amateur football, and what a remarkable 50 years it has been. From 1964 to 1982, the team was a playoff contender 16 times, winning provincial championships in 1996 and 1968. The Bisons' alumni have raised over \$2.5 million, which was donated to many worthy causes.

Resurrected in 1991, the franchise has since grown from 40 players to a sporting institution, with teams and athletes from

Timbits to the varsity level. Bisons' players have gone on to succeed at every level of the game, from university right up to the NFL.

For over 50 years, thousands of players, volunteers, coaches, and fans have been part of the Bisons family. The Bison name holds a special place among people from every walk of life in our community.

I ask members to join me in wishing the Brantford Bisons a memorable 2014 and many more years of success.

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CONSTITUENCY OF YORKTON—MELVILLE

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with mixed emotions today that I rise in this House to officially announce that I will not be seeking re-election in 2015.

For the past 20 years it has been an honour and a privilege to represent the people of Yorkton—Melville in east central Saskatchewan. I am filled with gratitude for my constituents, who have entrusted me with the responsibility of working on the nation's business through seven Parliaments. Who would have thought that a simple farm boy, educated in a one-room country school, would end up working here?

I want to take this opportunity to thank my wonderful wife Lydia for standing by my side all these years. I could not have done this without her advice and support. Surrounding myself with first-rate, dedicated staff has also been tremendously helpful.

God has indeed blessed me, and I want to thank Him.

I look forward to continuing my work on behalf of the constituents of Yorkton—Melville for the remainder of this 41st Parliament. There is still a lot of work ahead of me on a number of important issues, including Canada's gun laws.

I have been part of three political parties and have made many friends across our great country. I will truly miss working with you all.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

[Translation]

TOURISM AWARDS

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of representing the magnificent riding of Laurentides—Labelle. The Laurentides tourist region is one of the most visited areas of Quebec. With more than \$800 million in spinoffs and 28,000 jobs, the tourism industry drives the region's economy.

In light of that, it was a great pleasure for me to attend the Grands Prix du tourisme Desjardins Laurentides gala, an evening where members of Tourisme Laurentides, their partners and friends meet to acknowledge the industry's spirit of innovation and passion.

Statements by Members

This year, the award for tourism personality of the year went to Dominique Piché, race director for Ironman Mont-Tremblant. Thanks to his work, Mont-Tremblant has become a major Ironman event, more popular than New York and Las Vegas. With more than 2,700 participants from 23 countries and the help of 5,000 volunteers, Ironman 2014 is bound to be a success this summer.

I would like to congratulate all of the other winners and nominees. They are proof that the Laurentides will always be a top tourist destination.

* * *

• (1410)

[English]

NATIONAL WILDLIFE WEEK

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise in the House to mark the first day of National Wildlife Week.

The National Wildlife Week Act was passed in 1947 to commemorate the life of Jack Miner. A trapper and a hunter, he was known as the father of North American conservation and was credited with saving the Canada goose from extinction. Canadians, and especially our hunters, anglers, and trappers, have been conservation champions for over a century.

Our Conservative government is building on Jack Miner's legacy by taking steps to protect Canada's rich natural heritage. Since we have formed government, we have created two national marine conservation areas, three marine protected areas, three national wildlife areas, two national parks, and a \$25 million recreational fisheries conservation partnership program. We have also created a hunting and angling advisory panel.

Soon we will unveil a new national conservation plan, and we are working to create Rouge national urban park in the greater Toronto area.

This week I call on all Canadians to reflect on and appreciate Canada's magnificent natural endowment. I would like to add my personal congratulations to the member for Yorkton—Melville.

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DORVAL AND LACHINE HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since 1984 the Dorval Historical Society has put forward citizen participation and promoted the heritage of the city.

Today I would like to emphasize its continued efforts and 30th anniversary. Through its mission to promote and preserve our heritage, the historical society plays an important role in shaping the identity and culture of Dorval residents.

The past has shaped our identity, and history helps us understand the society in which we live today. I must say I have a lot more faith in historical societies to write history for what it is than I do in the Conservative government.

My heartfelt thanks go to the Dorval Historical Society for its unrelenting hard work over the last 30 years and for its dynamic community involvement.

[Translation]

I would also like to commend the outstanding work that the Lachine historical society has done since 1991 to promote the history of the third-oldest parish on the Island of Montreal. I would like to sincerely thank the organization for that.

* * *

[English]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to announce to the people of my hometown, Whitchurch-Stouffville, that the proposed nine-storey cell tower that was going to be built in our historic downtown will not be proceeding at this time.

I want to take a moment just to congratulate and thank Rogers, which has been a good partner on this issue. Rogers took the time to listen to the residents and took the time to meet with me. On the weekend, over 100 residents came to our local town to talk about both the need for improved infrastructure and the need to preserve our historic downtown.

I am very proud of the work that the entire community did. Again I want to congratulate and thank Rogers for taking the time not to proceed at this time and to work with us, to work with me, and to work with the community to find the appropriate location for this tower going forward.

* * *

[Translation]

RWANDA AND CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today marks 20 years since the beginning of hostilities in Rwanda, where, in less than 100 days, 800,000 people, most of them Tutsis, were massacred.

At the time, we promised that we would never forget that genocide.

[English]

On this sad anniversary, we must consider how the international community could have prevented this atrocity. We remember the important role played by Canadian peacekeepers and the work done by Canada and retired Lieutenant-General Roméo Dallaire, who undertook to create the responsibility to protect doctrine.

About 40 minutes ago, I ran into a group of retired military people visiting the library, people who were in Rwanda back in 1994. I asked them what they would want me to mention. One of them said that if we truly remember the lessons of Rwanda, why are Canadian peacekeepers not in the Central African Republic?

[Translation]

On this, the 20th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, that is a very good question.

• (1415)

[English]

JUSTICE

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government is committed to putting the rights of victims ahead of the rights of criminals.

For far too long our system has embodied the comments made by Trudeau-era Solicitor General J. P. Goyer, who said the Liberals:

...have decided from now on to stress the rehabilitation of individuals rather than protection of society.

Our Conservative government could not disagree more. That is why we introduced the victims bill of rights: to bring victims back to their rightful place at the heart of the justice system.

The correctional system should be about correcting criminal behaviour to ensure that whatever brought individuals behind bars will not be repeated. That is why we will not cave to special interest groups that think that while double-bunking is fine for our military, it is not quite good enough accommodation for our prisoners. We will definitely not cave to the special interests who want to allow prisoners to have pornography in their cells.

On this side of the House, we want prison to actually mean something. I call on the NDP and the Liberals to stop putting the rights of convicted common criminals ahead of the rights of law-abiding Canadians.

* * *

FORMER AUDITOR GENERAL

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there was a time when Conservatives listened to Sheila Fraser and acknowledged her expertise, but that time seems to have passed. Now they are treating her like every other watchdog who questions them, including people like Kevin Page, who dared to tell the truth. Conservatives championed Ms. Fraser when it came to the Liberal sponsorship scandal, but now they do not even want to hear her name.

Last week the Minister of State for Democratic Reform could not even bring himself to say her name in the House. It is a pattern for Conservatives. They go from saying a name to attacking a name, and finally the person simply becomes “that individual”. Tomorrow Ms. Fraser will testify, and she will face more ad hominem attacks from Conservatives.

I want to say to those members across the way to remember when they called her their friend and to reflect on what they have become.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Parm Gill (Brampton—Springdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to share with the House some very moving testimony before a Veterans Affairs committee by Sergeant Bjarne Nielsen. Sergeant Nielsen, a veteran who was seriously wounded in Afghanistan, shared his tragic yet truly amazing and inspiring experience on the road to recovery. Members from both

Oral Questions

sides agreed that never has a committee heard such a powerful testimony.

He said:

...if recovery was to be put into a number or percentage, 49% comes from all the resources that surround us. That's you, the government, our friends, our family, the cleaners, the doctors, the nurses. I have to bring that 51%. I have to bring that little bit more to make all those resources worthwhile.

On behalf of the committee and all the members of this House, I would like to thank Sergeant Nielsen for his service and sacrifice as he continues to answer the call of duty with his tremendous courage.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister once praised Sheila Fraser saying, “Her competence and her courage have shone a bright light on... corruption...this Liberal government has been trying to hide”. Now, the Minister of State for Democratic Reform dismisses her and calls her just a mouthpiece for Elections Canada.

Sheila Fraser is warning Canadians, saying this is “an attack on our democracy”.

Will the minister stop attacking this Canadian hero and start listening to her sensible advice?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member across obviously misquotes me, and he obviously gets many facts wrong in the premise of that question.

We have known for a long time the position of Elections Canada; we just disagree with it. We believe it is reasonable to expect people to bring their ID when they cast their ballot. We believe it is good to have an independent investigator of elections law. We believe there should be a registry to track those who make mass dials during campaigns to prevent rogue callers from engaging in political impersonations.

All of these things are common sense and reasonable, and they are found in the fair elections act.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we think it should be a lot easier for the government to say the words “Sheila Fraser”.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons sent a letter to the committee studying the unfair elections act. He suggested that anyone who has ever worked for Elections Canada was somehow tainted.

Is this his own smear strategy, or was it hatched in the offices of the minister and the Prime Minister?

• (1420)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the member has misquoted the parliamentary secretary.

Oral Questions

The parliamentary secretary has merely suggested that anyone who has any interest with Elections Canada should merely disclose them. It should not prevent anyone from testifying, but it is only fair to expect that those who are offering testimony offer full disclosure of any arrangements they might have with the agency most affected by the legislation under consideration.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the bill would make major changes to the role of the Director of Public Prosecutions in election fraud investigations. Yet, the DPP, just like the elections commissioner, was never once consulted.

Why did the minister take the time to consult the Conservative Party before tabling the bill but fail to consult the DPP or the Chief Electoral Officer or the Commissioner of Canada Elections?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Director of Public Prosecutions has been responsible for prosecuting and laying charges under all offences in the Canada Elections Act. That has been the case now for seven years. I cannot find a single example of where Elections Canada or anyone else has questioned the independent manner in which the DPP has executed that role over the last seven years. It is only now that we are hearing the sudden allegations attacking the independence of this respected office.

It is an independent office, and we believe it can carry out the functions that it is prescribed to carry out in the law.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it turns out that the Director of Public Prosecutions was not even consulted about the Conservatives' electoral reform. Had he been, the minister would have realized that, by placing the Office of the Commissioner of Canada Elections under the authority of the Director of Public Prosecutions, he is violating another fundamental principle of justice: the one investigating must not be in the same office as the one deciding whether to prosecute.

Did the minister consult any credible experts at all before introducing his reform, or did he just talk to people on his party executive and in his caucus?

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member has succeeded in enunciating a precise factual error in her question. She says that there is an ancient principle separating investigative functions from prosecutorial functions within elections law.

In fact, prior to 2005, not only were these two functions found in the same office; they were found in the same person. The Commissioner of Canada Elections, prior to 2006, was responsible for both investigations and prosecutions; so there is no necessity, with respect to elections law, to keep them separate.

That being said, the Director of Public Prosecutions is independent and so, too, will be the commissioner.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of

the Government in the House of Commons tried to attack Sheila Fraser's credibility.

Fraser was an officer of Parliament when she exposed the schemes behind the Liberal sponsorship scandal. She did not try to protect the government. She just tried to uncover the facts. The same is true here. The fact that she is on the Elections Canada board should not prevent her from freely criticizing a lousy bill.

Will the Conservatives be as willing to listen to Sheila Fraser on this issue as they were when she submitted her report on the sponsorship scandal?

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): First, Mr. Speaker, let me say that the parliamentary secretary in question is doing a terrific job of serving Canadians.

Members of the government regularly and obligatorily do a full public disclosure of all of their financial interests. That is not to suggest they are automatically biased by those interests, but there is a belief that the public should be able to judge those interests against the actions and the statements of the members of the government.

That principle is a fair one. It is about transparency, and I think it should work before the committee in question.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, by cutting infrastructure investment by 87%, the government is making communities and families pay the price for previous Conservative waste and mismanagement.

One of the major infrastructure needs in Fort McMurray is the upgrading of roads to deal with growth. However, the building Canada fund specifically excludes these projects.

Why are the Conservatives punishing Fort McMurray for growing its economy? Why are the Conservatives turning their backs on the families of Fort McMurray?

●(1425)

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Once again, Mr. Speaker, the opposition is misleading the House. Canadian municipalities will have access to over 71% of the building Canada plan. That is a lot of components. The opposition wants to use only one of these components.

Never have we had, for so long, so much money involved in infrastructure than with this government.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is on page 178 of budget 2013. The Conservatives have cut infrastructure funding by 87%. Again, in budget 2013, page 178, the Conservatives cut infrastructure funding by 87% from last year.

Oral Questions

Growing communities like Wood Buffalo and Fort McMurray, already feeling the strain of traffic congestion and overcrowded facilities, will have to wait for new infrastructure investment until 2019.

Why are the Conservatives turning their back on the families of Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo? Why are they punishing them for growing their economy?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is wrong and he knows it—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec.

Hon. Denis Lebel: Mr. Speaker, the money is already available. We will renew the gas tax fund with municipalities and provinces all across the country. That is more than \$2 billion a year. That is \$32 billion for 10 years only for municipalities. They will receive 71% of all that plan of \$53 billion.

I would invite them to vote for this plan, because it is the best plan we have ever had.

[*Translation*]

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are now facing Conservative cuts of 87% to infrastructure funds. The City of Ottawa desperately needs about \$65 million in federal funds to upgrade its sewage system. Without this investment, sewage will flow into the Ottawa River every time there is a significant amount of rainfall. Can the minister explain to the 1.4 million residents affected why he is compromising job creation and putting our environment at risk?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague's statements are false. It is not true that the amount allocated for all types of projects undertaken by Canadian municipalities is being reduced. That is false.

Municipalities across Canada are eligible for even more money than before with the renewal of the gas tax and the GST credit. This will total more than \$32 billion, and 71% of the plan funds will go to municipalities. His information is wrong.

* * *

[*English*]

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board recently referred to former auditor general Sheila Fraser as “a self-proclaimed expert” on elections law. He went on to suggest that Ms. Fraser was somehow biased because of her work with Elections Canada.

Does the Minister of State for Democratic Reform agree with the President of the Treasury Board in his attacks on her, and does he think Sheila Fraser is somehow biased?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the third time today, the NDP is misquoting members of the government.

It is very interesting that suddenly Elections Canada is questioning the independence of the Director of Public Prosecutions. Let me quote from the Commissioner of Canada Elections:

Since the creation of the Public Prosecution Service of Canada in 2006, when the Director of Public Prosecutions Act came into force, the DPP acts as an independent prosecution authority....

Those are Elections Canada's own words from its annual report in 2012-2013. For them now to question the independence of that office really does raise new questions about Elections Canada.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the quote from the President of the Treasury Board was “self-proclaimed expert”. It seems that the only thing the minister is really successful at is undermining the faith of the public in our voting system.

Sheila Fraser pointed out that the government has been suggesting that officers of Parliament are biased against the government and cannot be trusted.

Why are the Conservatives attacking officers of this Parliament?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the NDP should understand is that the CEO of Elections Canada, as an officer of Parliament, serves the democratically elected Parliament and not the other way around. That is the way our system works. That is the way it should work in a democracy.

We will consider the advice of officers of Parliament. At the end of the day, they provide advice but Parliament decides because that is the institution from which a democratic mandate emanates.

• (1430)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the former auditor general of Canada said this past weekend, “I find some of the insinuations and comments that have been made about the Chief Electoral Officer have been, quite frankly, inappropriate”.

Will the Minister of State for Democratic Reform continue to undermine the credibility of all those opposed to his reform, or will he recognize that the Conservatives' repeated attacks on Elections Canada are completely inappropriate?

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, Elections Canada has the right to author recommendations. It does not have the right to author the law. Laws are made by democratically elected legislatures like this one.

Obviously, at the end of the day, I have been long aware of the CEO's positions on all of these issues. I just happen to disagree with them.

Oral Questions

I brought forward a fair elections act founded on common sense, which would require people to bring ID when they vote, which would require those who make mass calls to register them so they are compliant with the law, and which would render the investigator of elections law independent.

These are common sense and reasonable changes. We are proud to move forward with them.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Sheila Fraser believes that the electoral reform bill would limit the powers of the Chief Electoral Officer to hire the staff needed to hold elections.

Under Bill C-23, the government will have to give its approval before election staff are hired. This is another impediment to Elections Canada's independence that the Conservatives have slyly imposed.

Does the minister feel that the former auditor general's criticism is valid or will he continue to reject constructive criticism?

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think the member is referring to the issue of the central poll supervisors, which an all-party committee here recommended be appointed on the recommendation of the first place party in each constituency across the country. That is the same way that the deputy returning officers have long been appointed at a local level in every riding in the country.

Elections Canada would continue to have the ability to reject any recommendations that are not acceptable, but at the same time, we think this is a fair and democratic part of our system that the various parties—all parties—have the power to recommend officials who work in the election apparatus on election day.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us continue with our constructive criticism while the Minister of State for Democratic Reform pretends that everything is just fine.

Sheila Fraser fears that the Chief Electoral Officer will no longer be consulted regarding the appointment of the commissioner and that no one who has ever worked at Elections Canada will be able to apply.

Does the minister agree with Ms. Fraser that this is a serious problem?

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would state, without any reluctance, that the CEO should not be consulted on future appointments of the Commissioner of Canada Elections, because that commissioner is responsible for investigating all of the offences in the act, of which 34 apply to the office and the function of the CEO.

How is it possible that we would have Elections Canada recommending the investigator to, potentially, one day, investigate Elections Canada?

What we have made clear is that the future investigator should not be a member of a political party and he or she should not have worked with Elections Canada. That is independence.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, although the Minister of State for Democratic Reform does not appear interested in listening to the criticisms of those who know more than him about elections, I still have a faint hope that he will eventually listen to what our seniors have to say.

Disrespecting experts is one thing, but I doubt the minister would do the same thing to our seniors.

Given that 80% of the seniors surveyed oppose the electoral “deform” and say that it will undermine democracy, will the minister admit that he has to start from scratch?

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think the member is referring to the issue of our proposal that people bring ID when they vote. I think that is very reasonable. These are the ID that will be allowed: the social insurance card number, old age security card, and old age security correspondence from the government. For example seniors residences will be allowed to write letters of attestation as to the identity and the residency of the voter. There are 39 different ways that people can identify themselves currently, and that will not change under the fair elections act.

• (1435)

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives once praised Sheila Fraser. Now they target her for payback. The Conservatives have become everything that they used to hate.

This weekend, Sheila Fraser said: “I think it will be very troubling if we see a lot of people being turned away at the polls. [...] I think it will start to call into question the credibility of that election”.

Why are the Conservatives stubbornly ignoring warnings from so many independent experts?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, of the 39 forms of ID that are permitted and will continue to be permitted under the fair elections act, I will give some examples of the 13 that include the addresses of Canadians. There are utility bills, which could be telephone, TV, public utilities commissions, hydro, gas; bank and credit card statements; vehicle ownership; attestation from an authority of a first nation; a government cheque, like an OAS cheque or employment insurance; a pension plan statement; residential lease or mortgage statement; income and property assessment notice; insurance policy. I see I am running out of time.

Oral Questions

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the next round of criticism is coming from just behind him, as even Conservative MPs are demanding that the minister amend his unfair elections act. It is not only experts who are concerned. Leading seniors advocacy group, CARP, polled its members and found that 80% disapprove of the minister's unfair elections act changes. Four out of five say that the bill diminishes our democracy.

Canadian seniors understand how precious our right to vote is. Why will the minister not listen to them and withdraw the bill?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the one hand the NDP believes that people should vote without bringing any ID at all. On the other, it believes that seniors and stay-at-home moms who volunteer in local campaign offices should have to fill out a bunch of paperwork for a national telecommunications regulator. Its position is completely unreasonable.

On this side of the House of Commons, we believe in bringing in tougher penalties for election fraud, requiring people to bring ID when they cast their ballot, and imposing a registration requirement on those who make mass calls. These are reasoned, fair-minded changes, and we are moving forward with them.

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister has clearly lost sight of what the elections act is supposed to be about. The Supreme Court has made it crystal clear that the overarching purpose of the elections act is to safeguard people's constitutional right to vote. However, according to a person who has a name, Sheila Fraser, "this bill would appear to be making it more difficult" for some people to vote. Will the minister now withdraw the bill and reintroduce one that actually protects people's right to vote, and also, by the way, that goes after real electoral fraud?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fair elections act does protect people's right to vote. It provides 39 different ways to identify oneself, in addition to which it requires that Elections Canada inform people of the ID requirements so that people know what ID to bring with them when they show up to vote. It also gives an extra day on which people can cast their ballots before election day, making it easier for people who might have difficulty getting out on the actual day. Also, it will improve the information that Canadians have about the basics of voting: where, when, and what ID to bring.

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AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, about grain transportation, all parties are trying to deal quickly with Bill C-30. The deadline for filing amendments was last Friday. Because of that timing, some key stakeholders had no chance to submit their views, including the Province of Saskatchewan.

We have all just received a letter from provincial minister Lyle Stewart. Will the government accept his request that emergency legislation not be sunsetted in 2016, but kept in place until the CTA review is done and permanent legislation is enacted? That is sensible. Will the government agree?

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has shown real leadership in putting in front of Parliament, Bill C-30. We had

witnesses come in front of committee; we held extensive meetings all last week, and we have received written inputs as well. Tonight we will be doing clause-by-clause, and the committee will be doing its work. I ask the member to let the committee do its work.

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[*Translation*]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for a few days now, I have been asking all the witnesses at the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration about the language testing for sponsoring spouses. All the witnesses agree that the language tests will do nothing to help protect women from violence.

Can the minister therefore now confirm that he will not impose any criteria based on language, income or education for the sponsorship of spouses?

• (1440)

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no, as I have already said, we have no intention of introducing new requirements in terms of language or any other criteria for spousal sponsorship.

We are in favour of open debate. We want to protect women from violence here in Canada and within the immigration program. Does the third party support protecting women from violence? Their leader, the Leader of the Liberal Party, does not appear too sure about that.

[*English*]

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for once I congratulate the minister for his acceptance of clear non-Orwellian Liberal logic. Well done. However, he is not off the hook on refugees.

From Jack Pickersgill and the Hungarian refugees, in the 1950s, to Paul Martin, all Canadian governments have accepted thousands of refugees when the circumstances have demanded it. The same is true for other countries today with thousands of Syrian refugees.

Why is it that one month ago the minister said that Canada had accepted a grand total of 10 refugees? For once, will he tell us how many of the 1,300 sponsored refugees are here?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada, as usual, has been generous in responding to the Syrian refugee crisis, as we have always been, in Diefenbaker's time and under every Conservative government. Hundreds of Syrians have arrived in Canada. They have been accepted faster than in any other country.

Oral Questions

Earlier this year I mentioned a number that had to do with the referrals we started getting from the UNHCR. In December, we acted quickly on those referrals. We continue to act quickly and to be generous. There are 1,700 applications in process. That is more than any of our peers can boast.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The noise level is starting to creep up a bit. I am going to ask that while members are asking questions or ministers are answering them, they respect those who have the floor.

The hon. member for Newton—North Delta.

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EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Here we go again, Mr. Speaker, another day, another example of temporary foreign workers—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I have just asked members to respect those who have the floor. The hon. member for Newton—North Delta now has the floor, and I will ask members of the government to allow her to put the question.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Here we go again, Mr. Speaker, another day, another example of temporary foreign workers being brought in to replace Canadian workers.

Remember RBC, or how about the mine in B.C. that said workers had to speak Mandarin? Today, it is McDonald's bringing in temporary foreign workers while rejecting Canadians.

How many more scandals do we have to have? When will the minister stop allowing companies to bring in temporary foreign workers to do jobs that Canadians are ready and willing to do?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the law does not permit that. Let us be clear. If any employer breaks the law, there are serious consequences, which is why, when I learned about the allegations with respect to the McDonald's franchise in Victoria on Thursday, I immediately ordered an inquiry. We had investigators on the site within 24 hours. I immediately suspended that employer's labour market opinions and the relevant work permits. We have added it to our black list. If the inquiry finds that employer lied in its labour market opinion agreements, I will refer this matter to the Canada Border Services Agency.

I want to remind employers that there are criminal sanctions for misrepresentation, including jail time, if they lie on their applications about their efforts to hire Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the truth is that there is no use blacklisting companies that abuse the system because there are no consequences.

The Conservatives have caused confusion in the labour market. The Kijiji strategy and the McDonald's strategy have one thing in common: incompetence. The Conservatives are the ones who created the loopholes that employers can use as they wish.

How long are the Conservatives going to watch the youth unemployment rate hold at twice the national average while companies bring in cheap labour from abroad?

• (1445)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. It is illegal for an employer to invite a foreigner to work in Canada instead of hiring a Canadian. That is why, as soon as I caught wind of allegations against an employer in Victoria, I ordered an inquiry. Investigators were on site within 24 hours. I suspended the work permits and the labour market opinions and I added that employer to the blacklist.

I want to remind employers that there are criminal sanctions, including jail time, if they lie on their applications to bring in temporary foreign workers.

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INDUSTRY

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week the government announced a weak digital strategy. In comparison, Australia is much more ambitious. The Australian strategy ensures that people will have access to an Internet connection that is five times faster than the target announced by our Minister of Industry.

Why did the minister wait so long to table a digital strategy and why is he being so unambitious?

[*English*]

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, actually I am quite proud that the minister has launched a very ambitious strategy. It is a path forward that takes full advantage of the opportunities of the digital age, if the NDP would have just listened to the announcement. Frankly, I think it is wonderful that as we move toward Canada's 150th birthday, we are moving Canada to a more digital nation for both businesses and consumers. The NDP should support that.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the government's digital strategy was out of date the moment it was announced. Experts like OpenMedia's Steve Anderson said, it's a "digital strategy for the last five years, not for the five years ahead". The inadequate investment in broadband will not even come close to the CRTC's original targets, let alone the standard set by other countries. Why are the Conservatives content to be followers rather than leaders when it comes to the digital era?

Oral Questions

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Frankly, Mr. Speaker, none of that is true at all. What does the NDP have against connecting Canadians, ensuring that Canadians have access to the latest wireless technology? What does the NDP have against protecting Canadians, ensuring that their online privacy is protected; or economic opportunities, ensuring that Canadians have the skills and the opportunities necessary to succeed, not just in the digital economy here in North America, but with all the free trade agreements that we so much support and the NDP do not? How much have we done on digital governments? We continue to do more. The NDP should support that.

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JUSTICE

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Brampton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my constituents regularly tell me that Canada's justice system needs to better respond to the needs of victims rather than offenders. That is one of the reasons I was so pleased last week that our Conservative government made the historic announcement of the Canadian victims bill of rights. This week is the ninth annual National Victims of Crime Awareness Week. Can the Minister of Justice please update the House on what we are doing to raise the awareness of rights for victims?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased this morning, along with the Minister of Public Safety, to mark the opening of the ninth National Victims of Crime Awareness Week here in Ottawa. It was truly an honour to meet with hockey hero Sheldon Kennedy, Rehtaeh Parsons' dad Glen Canning, and countless others, to help raise awareness for those who have fallen victim to crime. The theme for this year's victims week is "Taking Action".

To that end, our government is supporting more than 180 events across the country. This is an opportunity for all of us to personally thank the compassionate organizers and individuals who work tirelessly, day in and day out, to meet the needs of victims. I invite all Canadians to take action and get involved in National Victims of Crime Awareness Week.

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RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives like to brag that railways are getting safer, but companies are not reporting all of their accidents and derailments. Last year, the CAPC found that CN rail had not reported more than 1,800 incidents between 2000 and 2007. Canada's Transportation Safety Board has just learned that over 100 were unreported last year alone. These trains travel through hundreds of communities. Successive Liberal and Conservative governments have loosened regulations. When will the Conservatives punish these railway companies?

• (1450)

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member pointed out, there has been, since 2006, a 40% decrease in the number of rail accidents and an increase in the number of inspections, but in reality, it is very troubling to hear that the Transportation Safety Board has uncovered more incidents that

should have been reported. We expect that the rail companies will tell us when they are having incidents that need to be reported to the Transportation Safety Board, and we will hold them to that accountability.

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): There is still no concrete action, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation]

Canada's Transportation Safety Board discovered that rail companies hid 100 accidents, in addition to the 1,800 accidents not reported by CN between 2000 and 2007. MMA, which is responsible for the tragedy in Lac-Mégantic, neglected to report 24 accidents and derailments. That includes two incidents in Farnham where unsupervised trains full of oil accidentally moved.

Does the minister think it is acceptable that rail companies do not report all accidents?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we find unacceptable is that rail companies do not adhere to the laws we have in this country. That is why we have places that will investigate. One is an arm's-length organization called the Transportation Safety Board, which has done a retrospective analysis of reports of incidents that should have been reported. The information was provided by the railway companies, but that is not good enough. We expect that the railway companies will report these things in a timely fashion so that we will be able to undertake better public policy and better regulation of the railways.

[Translation]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government is not doing anything. Old DOT-111 rail cars filled with oil continue to travel through towns and are derailing, but the public is not even made aware.

It is very troubling that the reports issued by rail companies are not reliable. It is also troubling to see that companies are never fined for failing to report all incidents.

When will the Conservatives make the safety of Canadians a priority over the profits of rail companies?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the safety of Canadians is our topmost priority in the government. That is exactly why we have been undertaking so many steps in the past number of months with respect to railway safety. They are numerous. They include making sure that the parliamentary committee is looking into the transportation of dangerous goods in this country and is reporting back in a very short timeframe, increasing the amount of inspections that are done, and beefing up our regulations to ensure that people are travelling safely and that the goods are travelling safely. If they do breach these, we have serious penalties and we have serious repercussions that we will hold railways accountable to.

*Oral Questions***INFRASTRUCTURE**

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with crumbling infrastructure and increasing gridlock, cities across the country are demanding new investments in transit, yet the Conservative government offers only platitudes, not solutions.

The NDP has long called for a national public transit strategy that would boost urban economies, reduce gridlock, and help the environment through transit investment.

Why are Conservatives turning their back on cities like Toronto, and why are they refusing to invest in transit?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government respects the jurisdiction of provinces, and transit is under provincial jurisdiction.

Under all components of the new building Canada plan, transit is available for municipalities in the country. Note that they will propose projects, and we will analyze them.

* * *

JUSTICE

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Friday I asked the Minister of Justice if he would be meeting with the families of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls this week. He ignored my question.

After the profound disappointment with the Special Committee on Violence Against Indigenous Women, it is clear that the minister needs to hear directly from the victims' families in order to achieve justice for these ignored victims of crime. Let me try again. Will the Minister of Justice commit to meeting with the families of these victims this week?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during the course of my consultations for the victims bill of rights, I met with hundreds of victims across this country.

More important than further meetings and further talk from the member opposite, we have included specific measures and specific resource commitments to victims of crime across this country. We have introduced legislation. We have put in place more programs to help and support them. We just had a recent parliamentary committee that looked into the issues.

The member opposite can talk. We act. This is a week for action. We will continue to stand up for victims of crime.

• (1455)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, aboriginal people want action. They do not want talk coming from the minister.

Let us look at it from the perspective of 12-year-old and 14-year-old girls, and women who are going missing and are being murdered. In Winnipeg North alone we are talking about over a dozen women and girls who have been murdered or are missing.

This is my question for the minister. Can he tell us why the government will not have a public inquiry into the hundreds of missing and murdered women and girls? Tell us why you will not have the public—

The Speaker: Order, please. I remind the hon. member to address his questions through the Chair, not directly at the ministers.

The hon. Minister of Justice.

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is curious that the member just asked for action, and the questioner from his own party said we should have more talk.

The reality is we are acting. We have put more resources, more legislation, in place to provide those law enforcement officers who are tasked with tracking down and holding accountable. We have put in place a DNA databank to help with unsolved murders and missing individuals. We have put in place more programs to help women on reserve, including giving them access to matrimonial property. The member opposite and his party opposed those measures.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadian Tamil groups have been calling for an independent international investigation into atrocities committed during the tragic civil war. These groups are now being targeted and falsely accused by the Sri Lankan government. Canadians will not stand by while a foreign government smears our civil society and their membership.

Will the government join us and do something and stand up on behalf of Tamil Canadians against the smears by the Sri Lankan government?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all Canadians can be tremendously proud that the Government of Canada has taken perhaps one of the strongest reactions to what we see going on in Colombo than any government in the world.

We have fought hard for independent investigations into the number of people and the war crimes that took place in the dying days of the civil war. We fought hard on the issue of human rights and the growing authoritarian trend in the government in Colombo, and we fought hard for reconciliation so that the Tamil community can play a full part in the future building of Sri Lanka.

We are deeply concerned that Canadians would be identified and singled out for attention, as has the Government of Canada. However, we remain focused on doing all we can to help the Tamil minority to live in peace and security with their neighbours.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on Friday we asked about the troubling rise of anti-Semitism and Hungary's safe-country designation by the government. The Conservatives accused us of misleading Canadians. Yesterday, the far-right Jobbik party won over 20% of the vote. One in five votes went to the extreme right party, whose leaders have called for things like putting Jews on a list because they might pose a national security risk.

Will the Conservatives now acknowledge that there is a serious concern here? What is the government going to do about the rising anti-Semitism in Hungary right now?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are tremendously concerned about reports and evidence of anti-Semitism in Ukraine and other countries in central and eastern Europe. We follow these trends extremely closely, and when it comes to designating safe countries, there are objective criteria in Canada's legislation, and those designations are reviewed on a continuing basis.

In the meantime, we are extremely proud that our reforms have reduced the number of asylum claims from safe countries, including those in the European Union, opening the door to a much larger number of asylum claims from those countries that are truly not safe, where large numbers of Jews and others face persecution on a large scale. For genuine refugees from around the world, Canada will continue to do its part.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government strongly believes that Canada is better off when the talents and skills of women are fully represented in every sector, from construction sites to small businesses to corporate boardrooms.

Can the Minister of Status of Women please inform this House of what our government is doing to support women in non-traditional careers, such as new technologies and the digital economy, and how the event she is attending later today recognizes the contribution of Canadian women in this field?

• (1500)

Hon. Khristinn Kellie Leitch (Minister of Labour and Minister of Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Mississauga South for the question and for her outstanding work on the status of women committee.

Our government is committed to taking concrete action to support new economic opportunities for all Canadians. This includes the Status of Women's women in technology initiative that helps women advance in the IT sectors, where we are encouraging them to participate. The information technology sector is a powerful tool when it comes to empowering women internationally.

I would like to take this opportunity to salute the winners of the 2014 Canadian Women in Communications and Technology awards, who will be recognized later today for advancing women's achievements in Canada's digital economy. Congratulations.

Oral Questions

CANADA POST

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, small businesses rely on regular, consistent mail delivery. Rampmaster, a small business in my community, now receives mail intermittently. They have to wait for incoming payments, something that disrupts cash flow and interrupts planning. This Canada Post service cut, made without any consultation, is hurting companies like Rampmaster and its nine employees.

Will the Conservatives finally start to take action, or are they going to continue to allow Canada Post to damage small businesses, the backbone of our economy? Rampmaster needs an answer.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what Canada Post is doing right now is addressing a very real situation it is facing. It is simple. There are going to be one billion fewer pieces of mail delivered this year than there were in 2006.

The reality is that the revenue numbers are not as high as they used to be, so Canada Post needs to react to it by developing a five-point plan. In this plan, it is putting forth a way to ensure that Canadian taxpayers are not on the hook for a \$1 billion shortfall in the coming years.

* * *

[Translation]

HOUSING

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the last-minute changes to funding for the fight against homelessness are having a considerable impact in communities.

A number of organizations may have to cut services. Despite what the minister told us, organizations such as Réseau SOLIDARITÉ itinérance du Québec have confirmed cuts, as have departmental officials.

Why does the government want to complicate the lives of groups that only want to help the homeless?

[English]

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is there have been no cuts. In fact, we have renewed our homelessness partnering strategy.

What this is about is that the opposition is opposed to housing first, which is a process that helps those who are homeless and which is supported across the country. It is an evidence-based model whereby funding goes toward helping people get into a home and get permanent housing. It is called housing first.

I would encourage the opposition to do its research. We support housing first, because it helps the homeless get a permanent home and get help for their addictions and mental illness.

*Oral Questions***NATIONAL DEFENCE**

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, transnational criminal organizations use the Caribbean base in Central America as trans-shipment areas for illicit traffic in drugs, weapons, money, and people.

Illicit trafficking is a significant source of revenue for organized crime and a growing threat to national, regional, and international security, and therefore to North America and Canada.

As part of a multinational campaign to combat and prevent illicit trafficking, Canada has contributed significantly to Operation CARIBBE. Today *HMCS Whitehorse* and *HMCS Nanaimo* return home from participating in this operation. Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence advise this House about their work in this important operation?

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Nanaimo—Alberni for his support of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Today our government is proud to welcome home *HMCS Whitehorse* and *HMCS Nanaimo* from their successful deployment on Operation CARIBBE. Congratulations to the men and women on both ships for their excellent work in this mission to stop illicit drugs from hitting the streets in North America.

Our men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces demonstrate leadership abroad. Their work is critical to the success of these joint operations. Taking part in joint operations with our allies helps keep illicit drugs from entering Canada and has a significant impact on the safety of our citizens. The Canadian Armed Forces made major contributions to Operation CARIBBE and stopped more than 5,000 kilograms of cocaine.

Bravo Zulu to the men and women in uniform.

* * *

LABOUR

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over 100 workers in Niagara were left without almost \$3 million in severance and termination pay when Vertis Communications closed its doors after declaring bankruptcy in the U.S. instead of here in Canada.

It has been more than a year since the last Minister of Labour agreed to take a serious look at this situation, and yet these hard-working Canadians are still being left out in the cold with no money. Can the current Minister of Labour tell this House how much longer these workers are going to have to wait before they receive just compensation from the government?

• (1505)

Hon. Khristinn Kellie Leitch (Minister of Labour and Minister of Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, I have, on several occasions, spoken to both the employers and employees involved in this situation.

This is no longer with the Government of Canada. This is an issue that is being dealt with by a company that has become insolvent. We have spoken to the employers and employees with respect to the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the actions they can take.

ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I asked the Prime Minister, in question period last week, in relation to the recent report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, whether given the evidence from Environment Canada that there is no chance, given current policies, whether the government will do other than have a 100% fail rate on the target the Prime Minister himself pledged to in 2009.

Is this administration, under the Prime Minister, committed to the pledge he made in Copenhagen?

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our sector-by-sector regulatory approach is working. It is part of our government's commitment to protecting the environment while keeping the Canadian economy strong.

Thanks to our actions, carbon emissions will go down by close to 130 megatonnes from what they would have been under the Liberals. This is equivalent to shutting down 37 coal-fired electricity generation plants, and we are accomplishing this without the Liberal and NDP's \$20 billion job-killing carbon tax, which would raise the price of everything.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am so gratified to have a follow-up question, because this repeated nonsense about bringing down emissions by 130 megatonnes over what they would have been in some imaginary universe is not helpful.

The Prime Minister's pledge in Copenhagen was straightforward. It was 17% below 2005 levels by 2020. Environment Canada's data now says levels will be virtually unchanged from 2005 levels in 2020.

The question is simple. Does this administration have any intention of keeping its promise?

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of what our government's action has accomplished. Since 2006, our government has invested significant funds in more efficient technologies, better infrastructure and adaptation, and clean energy. We have taken action on two of the largest sources of emissions in this country, the transportation and electricity sectors. In fact, in the first 21 years of our coal regulations, we expect a cumulative reduction in greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to removing 2.6 million vehicles per year from the road.

We hope that the opposition gets on side with these.

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, Cons. Ind.): Mr. Speaker, the Peterborough airport, which has seen over \$50 million in infrastructure investment since just 2010, is my region's fastest growing economic driver. That said, as I have indicated many times in the House, its future is in jeopardy should the Sumac Ridge wind turbine project move forward as planned.

Despite federal protection of its airspace, in what could only be described as ideology trumping common sense, the provincial government, through its jurisdiction-related land use planning, has granted approval for the placement of a wind turbine in the approach path of aircraft seeking to land at Peterborough airport.

The City of Peterborough, the County of Peterborough, and the City of Kawartha Lakes have all voiced their strong opposition. Can the Minister of Transport please indicate if she shares my concerns?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the hon. member.

In our government, we believe in jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity. In fact, we actually invest in it as well. That is why it is troubling that the Ontario government has issued a permit for a wind turbine that would limit the operability of the airport going forward in the future.

We are talking with our counterparts on this matter and letting them know the difficulties. We do believe on this side in ensuring long-term growth and I do not understand why the Ontario government does not see the same opportunity in Peterborough.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of a parliamentary delegation from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, led by the Right Hon. Anne McGuire, MP.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: In order to mark the 20th anniversary of the United Nations' Assistance Mission for Rwanda, which was led by then Brigadier-General Roméo Dallaire, I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of a delegation of veterans of that mission: retired Lieutenant-Colonel Michel Bussière, retired Major Jean-Guy Plante, retired Major Jean-Yves St-Denis, retired Major Sarto Leblanc, Commander Robert John Read, retired Major Philip Charles Lancaster, retired Major Donald James MacNeil, retired Lieutenant-Colonel Michael Austdal, and Doctor James Orbinski.

Some. hon. members: Hear, hear!

Routine Proceedings

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1510)

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 33 petitions.

* * *

REFORM ACT, 2014

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): moved for leave to introduce Bill C-586, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and the Parliament of Canada Act (candidacy and caucus reforms).

He said: Mr. Speaker, last September I introduced the reform act, 2013. At that time I indicated I was open to suggestions and amendments that would improve the bill. Since that bill was introduced last September, the reform act has received a great deal of attention and debate.

Over the past few months, I have listened carefully to the suggestions I received from Canadians and colleagues on both sides of the aisle. I want to thank those colleagues and Canadians who provided those suggestions, and based on their feedback and input, I have drafted a second version of the bill entitled reform act, 2014.

[Translation]

The amended bill reflects the same principles as the original. It gives the responsibility for appointments back to the electoral district associations. It stipulates that caucuses must vote to choose their chair and to expel members, and it sets out the rules that must be followed during leadership reviews.

[English]

In closing, this changed bill that I am introducing today would increase the number of caucus members required to trigger a vote from 15% to 20%; would mandate that those requesting a review vote of the party leader be made public; redefine a majority as that of the entire caucus rather than just those members of the caucus present; replace a locally elected nomination officer with one for each province and the territories; maintain the power of the party leaders to deregister an electoral district association; and finally, put the reviewed rules for the leader of a party in the Parliament of Canada Act rather than the Canada Elections Act.

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

* * *

RESPECTING FAMILIES OF MURDERED AND BRUTALIZED PERSONS ACT

Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): moved for leave to introduce Bill C-587, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (increasing parole ineligibility).

Routine Proceedings

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce my private member's bill, an act to amend the Criminal Code (increasing parole ineligibility).

The bill would amend section 745 of the Criminal Code to provide that a person convicted of an abduction, horrendous acts of sexual assault and murder of the same victim in respect of the same event or series of events, be sentenced to imprisonment for life without eligibility for parole until the person has served a sentence of between 25 and 40 years, as determined by the presiding judge, after considering the recommendations, if any, of the jury.

The bill would spare families and loved ones of murder victims from being re-traumatized by repeated parole hearings for convicted murderers.

If passed, the bill would assist families by not having them deal with the re-enactment of what happened to their loved ones over and over again.

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

* * *

● (1515)

20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE RWANDAN GENOCIDE

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties and if you seek it, you would find unanimous consent for the following motion with regard to the 20th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide:

Whereas during a three month period beginning April 7, 1994, 800,000 Rwandans were killed in an organized campaign of genocide;

That the House of Commons solemnly commemorate the Rwandan genocide on the occasion of its 20th anniversary; reflect upon the lessons learned since the genocide, including the importance of reconciliation; and reaffirm its commitment to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek unanimous consent from the House for the following motion, that, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, clauses 299 to 302 related to the temporary foreign worker program be removed from Bill C-31, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 11, 2014 and other measures, and do compose Bill C-33, an act to implement administrative monetary penalties for the temporary foreign worker program; that Bill-33 be deemed read a first time and be printed, deemed read a second time and referred to a committee of the whole, deemed reported back without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage, and deemed read a third time and passed; that Bill C-31 retain the status on the order paper that it had prior to the adoption of the order; that Bill C-31 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 Speaker: Does the hon. member have unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

PETITIONS

CANADA POST

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud, as always, to rise to represent the people of Timmins—James Bay, who have entrusted me with hundreds of their signatures expressing concern about the planned cuts at Canada Post and the effect those would have in our region, in terms of senior citizens and in terms of the competitiveness of business. The petitioners state that we rely upon the Canada Post system and that for many years it has been making a profit.

Does Canada Post need to be reformed? Certainly. We have many issues, in terms of how we could make it more efficient, but the decision to cut home delivery would be a retrograde move and would further undermine confidence in Canada Post.

Therefore, I am pleased to rise in the House to represent the concerns and the voice of the people of Timmins—James Bay on the importance of maintaining a viable Canada Post service in Canada.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to introduce three petitions from the constituents in my riding of Yorkton—Melville.

The first petition deals with the issue of sex-selective abortions.

Ultrasounds are being used in Canada to tell the sex of an unborn child so that expecting parents can choose to terminate the pregnancy if the unborn child is a girl. Ninety-two per cent of Canadians believe sex-selective pregnancy should be illegal. Two hundred million girls are missing, creating a global gender imbalance crisis and causing girls to be trafficked as a commodity.

Therefore, the undersigned are calling upon members of Parliament to condemn discrimination against girls occurring through selective pregnancy termination.

● (1520)

UKRAINE

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition deals with issues in the Ukraine. The petitioners call upon the Parliament of Canada to stand with the Ukrainian people during this difficult time and to continue to forcefully oppose all efforts to repress their rights and freedoms and to monitor developments closely and utilize all options at Canada's—

The Speaker: Order, please.

I am just going to remind the member that the Standing Orders do call for a brief summary of the petitions, not that they be read.

Routine Proceedings

I do see many members rising, so unless the member has another petition, I am going to stop him there. Is that his final petition? No.

Then, I would ask the member to present the final petition in a very brief manner, please.

Mr. Garry Breitzkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the final petition is very similar to the one I just described. The petitioners ask that personal sanctions against those individuals or family members and associates who are responsible for human rights violations, criminal activity, or corrupt business practice in Ukraine be stopped.

CANADA POST

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I rise today to table three petitions.

The first two petitions are regarding the devastating cuts to service and huge price increases at Canada Post.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the third petition, the petitioners call upon the government to take action to assist Hungarians in Romania.

I am pleased to table these petitions on behalf of hundreds of Canadians. I look forward to the government's response.

CANADA POST

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure today to present petitions from many residents of my riding who are protesting the loss of home mail delivery by Canada Post. They call upon the Government of Canada to reject Canada Post's plan to reduce services and to explore other options to update Canada Post's business plan.

VIA RAIL

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in addition, I am presenting petitions on behalf of people in Canada who call upon the government to contribute to the funding necessary for the repair and maintenance of the track between Bathurst and Miramichi, and to obtain a guarantee that Canadian National will keep the line open between Bathurst and Miramichi in order to maintain the VIA Rail service in eastern New Brunswick and Quebec.

ABORTION

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from members of my constituency calling upon the House of Commons to assemble to speedily enact legislation that restricts abortion to the greatest extent possible.

[*Translation*]

VIA RAIL

Ms. Manon Perreault (Montcalm, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present two petitions signed by over 400 people. The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to contribute the funding necessary for the repair and maintenance of the track between Bathurst and Miramichi, and to obtain a guarantee that Canadian National will keep the line between Bathurst and Miramichi open in order to maintain VIA Rail train services in eastern New Brunswick and Quebec.

[*English*]

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions today. The first petition asks the government to consult the public and introduce a form of proportional representation.

CANADA POST

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls upon the Government of Canada to reverse the cuts to services at Canada Post and to look for ways to innovate, mentioning the case of postal banking.

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the third petition concerns Bill C-24. Constituents are asking the government to eliminate the portion of the bill that gets rid of the current practice of giving partial credit to time spent living and working in Canada before somebody achieves permanent resident status, to also consider giving full credit to that time, and to consider recognizing up to four years of time spent before achieving permanent resident status.

[*Translation*]

VIA RAIL

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present.

The first petition I have the honour of presenting has been signed by 200 people. The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to contribute the funding necessary for the repair and maintenance of the track between Bathurst and Miramichi, and to obtain a guarantee that Canadian National will keep the line between Bathurst and Miramichi open in order to maintain VIA Rail train services in eastern New Brunswick and Quebec. The petitioners are from the Bathurst and Acadie-Bathurst region.

[*English*]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have another petition. I am presenting a petition signed by more than 300 people. The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to contribute to the funding necessary for the repair and maintenance of the track between Bathurst and Miramichi, and to obtain a guarantee that Canadian National will keep the line between Bathurst and Miramichi open in order to maintain VIA Rail service in eastern New Brunswick and Quebec. The petitioners are from Rogersville and Miramichi.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I present this petition on behalf of many Newfoundlanders who live in St. John's, Newfoundland. They are protesting the government's decision to do nothing about a permanent solution for the *Manolis L*. We congratulate the Coast Guard on its temporary measures to patch up this boat that is just off of Change Islands. However, a permanent solution is necessary. These residents of St. John's feel that a permanent solution should be worked out in the near term.

Routine Proceedings

● (1525)

[Translation]

SCIENCE

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present two petitions today.

The first petition is from Canadians who are asking the Government of Canada to support Bill C-558, a private member's bill introduced by my NDP colleague Kennedy Stewart in order to create the independent position of parliamentary science officer.

CANADA POST

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I am presenting has to do with the cuts that the Conservative government recently made to Canada Post. The petitioners are asking the Government of Canada to reject Canada Post's service reduction plan and explore other avenues for updating the crown corporation's business plan.

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions. The first is in relation to the Canada-China investment treaty. It is a petition signed by residents of primarily the Smithers area, as well as Hazelton.

This is an issue that has dropped somewhat from our radar but remains poised for ratification only before cabinet, without any vote in this place. It would tie Canada, this current administration, and future governments, for up to 31 years from the date of ratification, to be subject to lawsuits and arbitration claims by the People's Republic of China if we were to strengthen our labour or environmental laws.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition speaks to the issue I raised in question period. That is Canada's responsibility to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These are from residents of Saanich—Gulf Islands, primarily Saltspring Island and Galiano Island, demanding that this House put together a plan to meet the targets in the bill that was put forward by the member of Parliament for Thunder Bay—Superior North, what was Bill C-311, to reduce greenhouse gases rapidly by 80% below 1990 levels by 2050.

GENERIC MEDICINES

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to table a petition about Bill C-398. Approximately 15 million children still die of AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa. This petition is to support the ability to have patented, generic medicines go to these kids.

BLOOD SUPPLY

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with for-profit blood plasma clinics on the verge of opening in Ontario, I present the following petition signed by Canadians from across the country urging the House to put in place legislation that would prohibit new, for-profit blood clinics.

The petition states that blood plasma is not a commodity that should be bought and sold, and it reminds us of Canada's tainted blood scandal, of the 30,000 Canadians infected with HIV and hepatitis C from tainted blood, and of the thousands who died from those infections.

[Translation]

VIA RAIL

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

The first is about the cuts and rail service reductions at VIA Rail. The petitioners feel that rail service is one of the safest, most economical and most environmentally friendly modes of transportation.

[English]

They are asking the government to reinstate the daily round-trip VIA Rail passenger service between Montreal and Halifax.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ALFALFA

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is about GM alfalfa. The petitioners are asking Parliament to impose a moratorium on the release of genetically modified alfalfa, in order to allow a proper review of the impact on farmers in Canada.

The petitioners and I look forward to the minister's response.

[Translation]

VIA RAIL

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present two petitions. The first was signed by 150 people, the second by 116.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to help repair and maintain rail lines between Bathurst and Miramichi by investing the funds required to obtain a guarantee that CN will maintain the segment between Bathurst and Miramichi.

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the two petitions I am presenting today have been signed by a lot of people. The first was signed by 150 people, the second by 100.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to help repair and maintain rail lines between Bathurst and Miramichi by investing the funds required to obtain a guarantee that CN will maintain the segment between Bathurst and Miramichi so that VIA Rail can maintain its service to eastern Quebec and New Brunswick.

* * *

[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, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

•(1530)

[English]

ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN 2014 ACT, NO. 1

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-31, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 11, 2014 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage has four minutes left to conclude his remarks.

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to conclude my comments.

As I was stating, the provincial government, when it comes to the funding for health care and the transfers from the federal government to the provinces, has not released a budget for the fiscal year. Therefore, I will use the data from the 2013 budget.

This data clearly shows that the increase in federal health funding to Ontario was actually greater than the increase in the provincial share of funding. The federal government provided over \$635 million in increased funding to Ontario's health transfer. This represented 59% of the increase in health care funding in Ontario from 2013-14. Nearly 60% of the increase in funding for health care in Ontario, which is close to 50% of the Province of Ontario's budget, was made up from the federal transfers that we delivered to the Province of Ontario for health care for the year 2013-14.

In the first two budgets since the last provincial election, the federal government increased Ontario's health transfers by over 11.8% from 2012 to 2014. Yet, between 2012 and 2014, the Ontario government increased its share of health care funding by only 3%, and that is over two years. The annual increases were 1.8% and just over 1% in the last budget. Therefore, with the federal government providing almost 12% in increases between 2012 and 2014, the Canada health care transfer grew by almost four times the rate of the 3% that Ontario raised in its share.

When we account for equalization, let us not forget that Ontario, under the provincial government, is now a have-not province, but it was about \$1 billion above 2012 levels. One has to wonder if the Province of Ontario has invested a single penny into new health care spending that did not come from the federal government since the last election.

If anything is truly "outrageous", as the provincial minister of health has stated, it is not only that the federal government invested more new money in Ontario's health care system than the Province of Ontario did but that the Province of Ontario's share of new money from increased equalization payments was paid for by the federal government.

I applaud this budget's move to a sustainable model of health care funding. The Canada health transfer would increase by a minimum of 3% each year and would increase above 3% when the economy grows faster than that. This budget would bring in a sustainable funding model for health care that could guarantee a predictable level of funding for provinces and territories, and could do so for

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generations. On our commitment, our promise, we have delivered. Even in times of recession, it would be at least 3%.

I believe those comments summarize economic action plan 2014 as well.

The budget is managing taxpayers' dollars wisely while investing in the services Canadians need and positioning Canada to experience further job creation, economic prosperity, and long-term growth, including a commitment to health care for generations to come.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that the member would choose to take his time to take shots at the Province of Ontario in terms of health care funding.

Two points come to mind right off hand.

One, I was a provincial health care critic in the Province of Manitoba for years, and I can tell the member that the provinces pay a far greater percentage of health care costs than Ottawa—a far higher percentage. So even a 1% increase in provincial expenditure in Ontario could easily exceed the percentage increases in terms of real dollars that the member just finished talking about. One has to be very careful of statistics.

The other point I would make is on what happened in Ontario when it became a have-not province. In good part it is because of the Conservative government's failure to be able to recognize the economic needs of Ontario. The Conservatives have to take responsibility as well, not being able to address the loss of tens of thousands of manufacturing jobs.

My question to the member is this. To what degree does he believe that the current government has to take ownership of the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order. The hon. parliamentary secretary.

•(1535)

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Mr. Speaker, the only part of that question that actually resonated with me was his statement that the Province of Ontario needs to take responsibility for its actions, or lack thereof.

It has not acted on manufacturing, it has not acted on jobs, and it has not acted on building an economic system that would work. We have provided all of the social service needs in terms of investment, whether in health care, education, or social services. He should take a look. The member does not need to look too far if he wants to understand facts and figures.

The commitment that this federal government has made to all of the provinces and territories leaves the Province of Ontario to only turn its head in shame when it comes to its commitment to health care in that province, because certainly the commitments in this budget and the last eight budgets that have come forward from this federal government have all included increases in finances and in delivery of those finances to the provinces. If we were to ask any Ontarian if they are getting better health care than they did after all that investment, they would say no to that provincial government.

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Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, there are areas of waste that continue to plague the spending of the current administration, and many of them have to do with outside contractors. We know from the report of retired Lieutenant-General Andrew Leslie that something around \$2 billion in the Department of National Defence goes to outside contractors every year. Recently it was revealed that this administration has used about \$482 million for legal advice, rather than relying on the existing Department of Justice, which is fully staffed with competent lawyers who are already being paid.

Does the hon. member not agree with me that spending and outsourcing should end when we reach balanced budgets, and that we should rely on people within the civil service who are there to provide professional advice?

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Mr. Speaker, it is an interesting question. This government has always believed that when the government has the ability within its particular ministries to deliver services, it does so without having to reach to outside sources.

However, the member has been around this place a long time, both as an elected member and as a senior adviser to former ministers, and she realizes that there are incidents, examples, and circumstances that require the government to use external sources, especially when it comes to legal services and expertise, to defend the government's interests and the civil servants who represent this government in terms of defending their service and the delivery of that service as well.

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and a pleasure for me to stand in this House to talk about how Bill C-31 would positively impact residents of Palliser in Saskatchewan and in all of Canada.

Our government is focused upon building strong communities with prosperous businesses and creating good high-wage jobs for Canadians. We know that this vision is achievable through creating an environment in which for business can flourish.

Just as we promised in the 2011 election and in budgets since then, we are working toward a balanced budget while not raising taxes or cutting transfers to the provinces. This budget bill would provide support where needed while being mindful of the bottom line.

I would like to add that there is \$3 billion in the contingency fund to adjust for risk in the event of disaster, as we unfortunately witnessed last year in Lac-Mégantic and with the floods in southern Alberta. Canadians can be confident that we will achieve a balanced budget this year, and we will.

In my address, I will focus largely on initiatives to train the workforce of today and tomorrow. Canada needs to do much better to ensure that training reflects the needs of the labour market.

Members might be wondering what issues are facing our labour markets.

We have regional and sectoral job vacancies coupled with unemployment. We have a number of groups that are being used to fill different potentials, including recent immigrations, aboriginal people, persons with disabilities, and older Canadians. I am very

pleased that this budget contains a number of measures to encourage and foster skills training to help these people find meaningful employment while filling job vacancies. Creating highly skilled and well-paying jobs is very much in the national interest.

To emphasize the importance of finding solutions to skills shortages, I will mention that the Canadian Chamber of Commerce lists skills shortage as the number one barrier to Canada's competitiveness. One of the most exciting aspects to foster skills training involves allowing apprentices to qualify for interest-free loans during their four-year training period. The Canadian apprentice loan would build upon substantial support already in place to help apprentices with costs. This loan of up to \$4,000 per period of technical training would assist apprentices as they complete their training and would encourage more Canadians to consider a career in the skilled trades.

It is important for apprentices to complete their training to ensure their qualifications are recognized in other parts of the country. At least 26,000 people are expected to apply for and ultimately benefit from this \$100 million annual investment.

Robert Blakely, of Canada's building trades union, has indicated his support. He said:

...the way apprentices are being treated has changed and they are now, thanks to measures introduced in the 2014 Budget, treated more like their colleagues in college and those involved in university training.

Another exciting feature entails modifications to strengthen the labour market opinion process to ensure Canadians are given the first chance at available jobs. This would be partly accomplished through limiting the use of LMO programs in high-employment regions. This \$11 million investment over two years, and \$3.5 million ongoing, would realign applications to high-demand fields.

We will continue to better meet the demands of the labour market through the newly created expressions of interest system to allow the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to actively target highly skilled immigrants who wish to establish permanent residency in Canada. This program represents an investment of \$14 million over two years and \$4.7 million per year ongoing.

So far my words here today have focused on meeting the needs of our workforce, because this is the primary obstacle to growth facing Saskatchewan. Indeed, Saskatchewan's unemployment rate ranks among the lowest in the country, while Regina ranks the lowest among Canadian cities. In fact, as of yesterday, there were more than 15,500 jobs listed at saskjobs.ca.

● (1540)

As a government, we are primarily concentrating on securing the long-term financial security of Canadians. We work toward this vision through creating jobs and economic growth and keeping taxes low to allow Canadians to keep more of their hard-earned money. Our government is known for saving Canadians money through the 160 tax cuts already in place, which save the average family of four approximately \$3,400 annually. Also, one million people are now entirely off the tax rolls.

Government Orders

New indications of our ever-expanding list of tax cuts include increasing and indexing the adoption tax credit to \$15,000 to make adoptions more affordable. Adoptions can be costly, and this measure would greatly help young growing families.

Helping Canadians save more of their own money extends to ensuring that they get better value for their service in the marketplace. Wholesale domestic roaming rates will be capped to allow the smaller cellphone companies to be better able to compete, which would lead to increased competition and ultimately to lower prices. We can look forward to lower cellphone bills.

These measures build upon existing consumer-friendly items, including reduced tariffs on baby clothing and athletic equipment and clearly displayed fares without hidden fees.

With the keen judgment and steady hand of our former finance minister, Canada is well positioned to continue leading nations of the world down the path of economic recovery. I know that our new finance minister will continue to steer our economy down the right track, given his discipline, work ethic, knowledge, and depth of experience.

Through Bill C-31, we are continuing to support Canadians of today and tomorrow. All in all, it is a good budget that would encourage economic prosperity not only in the short term but also in the long term. We are investing in our economy today while not mortgaging our future.

I have mentioned just a few points that would greatly improve the situation for issues facing Saskatchewan and, indeed, all of Canada. I hope all members will appreciate the forward thinking demonstrated in Bill C-31 and support it.

• (1545)

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote someone who, in 1995, said the following:

Second, in the interest of democracy I ask: How can members represent their constituents on these various areas when they are forced to vote in a block on such legislation and on such concerns?

We can agree with some of the measures but oppose others. How do we express our views and the views of our constituents when the matters are so diverse?

The current Prime Minister said that when he was a member of the opposition.

I would like to ask my colleague what has changed since 1995. Why are all of the Conservative budget bills omnibus bills that include, as the Prime Minister said, matters that are “so diverse”?

They are moving too quickly, presenting bills with proposals lumped together in bulk form, and then they have to make changes.

[English]

Mr. Ray Boughen: Mr. Speaker, let me say this in reply. The bill is what it is. Are 400 pages too many in a bill? Are 300 pages too few? Are 500 pages too many? We have to read the bill and then ask if the bill covers what needs to be covered in a budgetary year. If the answer to that question is yes, then the length of the bill is not really of major concern. It is what is contained within the bill.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, following up on that, it is one thing to have a bill of 50 or 60 pages that are all

primarily aimed at budgetary issues because it is a budget bill, but it is impossible to think that anybody can pick up a so-called budget bill of 400 pages or so, analyze the items in it, ask questions, and seek amendments to improve it. That is why it is introduced in the House.

Has the hon. member read all 400 or so pages in this bill? Can he tell me how many pieces of legislation are being changed as a result of Bill C-31?

Mr. Ray Boughen: Mr. Speaker, this is the bill. Have I read it? Yes, indeed, a couple times actually.

The bill answers a lot of questions that people have that are minor in nature but affect a lot of people in one way or another. The budget addresses that. Budgets are designed to express a government's position as it moves forward in a fiscal manner. That is found in the bill.

Does everyone like the bill equally? No, I am sure they do not. I am sure that if we took the bill apart page by page, it would generate a number of questions that we would perhaps have a hard time answering. At the same time, the bill would cover what it is designed to do, which is to bring forward the position of the government in a fiscal manner.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we know, budget 2014 expands the health-related tax regimes under the GST-HST and income tax systems to better reflect the health care needs of Canadians. This includes the GST-HST exemptions for services rendered to individuals by certain health care practitioners, including acupuncturists and naturopathic doctors. My question to my colleague is, how does he view our government's tax cuts for health care services?

• (1550)

Mr. Ray Boughen: Mr. Speaker, I think the question was, is there some cutting of taxes that we are suggesting and how do we view that?

If we look carefully, the reduction is very minimal. In fact, the 6% that has been allocated for health care and education has been well accepted by the provinces. The bill talks about the fact that those responsibilities will be continued to try to find favour with budgets, not only this budget, but budgets in the future.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have an opportunity to speak to this budget bill.

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For those who are watching, it is well over 400 pages. It is quite a book. It certainly is too much for anybody, without 10 people, to analyze it individually and pick out the things that are problematic. I suspect that there is a variety of items that will go unnoticed, until Canadians feel the impact and then call us, as legislators, to ask if we knew whether it was in the budget.

Try as we might, we cannot cover all the things that are in there. Given the fact that we have time closure, there is a limited amount of time to speak to the bill. I am fortunate to be one of the few people on the Liberal side who has the chance to actually speak to the budget. I would have preferred to have much more opportunity, so that all of us could have spoken to it. However, time allocation renders that next to impossible.

As I said, I am pleased to be here to talk about the budget issue today, particularly because it is my hope that Canada will soon set aside many of the years of Conservative fiscal mismanagement in favour of something better. That could be this fall or it could be next spring, but it certainly should not be any later than next fall. We have to weather another 18 months or so of these kinds of budget bills coming in, which are so huge that people do not know a lot of what is in them.

The day before the budget was released, the Liberal caucus released what we would have hoped the budget would contain. We said that we thought the federal budget must focus on generating the kind of economic growth that would finally help struggling middle-class families, including people in York West, in Toronto.

Many are struggling with the high cost of living in apartments. They are trying to find housing, lack affordable housing, and have all of the pressures that drive many people to join the steady line at food banks every weekend. It is quite appalling for a country as wealthy as we are, and in a city as large and successful as what Toronto has been. I am sad to say that there is nothing in this budget that is going to help the residents of York West and Toronto, or there is very little, if anything.

The reality is that our economic growth rate has not been this poor since the days of R. B. Bennett. The government should have used this budget to invest in infrastructure, education, and other areas that would help to get Canada on track and help to create jobs, and to invest in making our country stronger and more effective.

Instead, this budget provides little more, again, than smoke and mirrors. It provides even less for the average middle-class family in this country.

Budget 2014 speaks directly to the government's priorities, which is why it is good to be clear about the government's priorities versus our priorities as the Liberal Party of Canada. There is nothing in here for seniors who are struggling with limited increases in their pensions while they struggle to pay for more prescription drugs that continue to become more and more expensive.

There is nothing for the many students going to York University, in my riding, and to other universities and colleges across Canada, to deal with the high tuition fees. There is nothing as far as jobs when students graduate. They may get through school with a big debt, but then they will not have jobs at the end of the day. Those are serious

problems that governments need to look at and try to find solutions for.

There is nothing to address the fact that the only thing keeping pace with the GDP growth over the past 10 years has been household debt. We know, from all of our analysts, that the amount of debt that all Canadian families are carrying continues to increase every year.

What about veterans? There is nothing to help veterans make ends meet any easier.

There is nothing to deal with the fact that the Canadian middle class has not had a decent raise in over 30 years.

Indeed, those are the government's priorities, and that is its choice. Our job is to point those things out and to plan for the future and the kind of budget we would introduce ourselves, which I expect will try to meet the needs of middle-class Canadians and all Canadians, whether young or old, with their struggles.

That is enough of generalities, I want to look at the budget in a more specific way now.

● (1555)

The government would have us believe that it has set aside money to help veterans. However, in reality what are we hearing? We are hearing that veterans have been left out in the cold again, with \$6 million for veteran funerals and \$2 million to improve Veterans Affairs.

Now, in order to get access to this tiny bit of money, a veteran would have to be below the poverty line, which means that to get money to help offset a veteran's funeral cost, one has to be bringing in an income of less than \$12,000. We do not want people living on less than \$12,000. However, in order to be able to apply for help to pay for a veteran's funeral, one has to be down to that kind of a pocket, which means that very few people would be able to qualify to apply for it.

What about the veterans who are struggling with PTSD, physical injuries, and resettlement issues? There is a lot of talk, but the rubber hits the road when it is in the budget. The amount of money that should be in the budget to help with PTSD cannot be just talk; it has to be in the budget.

However, it is not just veterans who have been left out of this Conservative brand of so-called economic prosperity; rural Canadians have been ignored as well.

Budget 2014 allocates what amounts to be about \$6.75 per rural man, woman, and child for rural broadband. That is right: after slashing the Liberal program to connect every rural and remote community in Canada to the Internet, the government is hoping that a paltry \$6.75 will be enough to connect rural broadband with the rest of the country. It does not work that way.

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However, we are glad to see that the government has finally put some money into connecting rural and remote Canada to the Internet. It is a lifeline, a railroad, that will help all Canadians have access to the Internet. We were disappointed when the Liberal programs had been slashed, but pleased that the Conservatives finally adopted the previous Liberal plan. They are now going ahead and realizing just how important that is.

Remember, the budget looks very similar to another example of financial planning on the fly. Phony ad campaigns and one-off cash injections did not bring prosperity when the minister was selling Ontario down the river in the 1990s. Clearly, it is not going to work here either.

In 2012, the government made ill-advised changes to environmental regulations and immigration laws. Then, in 2013, it reversed those changes. Am I shocked that the 2014 budget made more reversals? No, it is just how these guys appear to roll: one step forward and two steps back.

Worst of all, let us keep in mind that this is all just in time for an election. It begs the question: are the Conservatives minding the best interests of Canadians or their own best interests?

Of course, seniors are happy that they have been left out of the budget because recent history tells us that when they are included in the Conservative budget it usually means pain, such as moving the age of retirement to 67, the beginning of taxing income trusts, and increasing the income tax rate for low-income Canadians. The good thing is that seniors were ignored this time. They cannot take much more of the Prime Minister's kind of prosperity that they have in the past.

Now, that does not take into account the fact that the government appears to be reversing itself again on previous commitments to seniors, rural Canadians, and middle-class Canadians.

Remember the Conservative's income-splitting promise? Remember their promise to cut the excise tax on diesel in half? What has happened with those things? This is 2014, and that was a commitment from 2011. Three years later, we have not seen that happen at all.

Remember when the Prime Minister said that taxing income trusts was raiding the best nest eggs of our seniors? Well, budget 2014 has verified a full reversal on all of those commitments.

All of this is just as a leaked government report shows that middle-class Canadians, students, seniors, farmers, truckers, and nearly every other person who works for a living, are falling behind. I did not invent these things. These are facts that come from Statistics Canada, or our public policy forums, which certainly confirm this. Household bills are growing, but incomes are stagnant throughout Canada.

People in York West, who I meet with every day, are struggling to find jobs, looking to take anything. I met a fellow last night who was pumping gas. He said he has three jobs and that is the only way he can stay on top of things.

Things are tough out there. The government's role is to make it better. The Liberals are going to do that.

● (1600)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from York West, who brought forward some very salient points when we consider that some of the things in the bill fall short of what has been promised over the past several elections.

I would like the member to comment on the disturbing trend of the omnibus nature of these bills, and how we deal with things when everything is jammed into a bottleneck with stuff that does not pertain to what is considered to be the normal circumstances of budgetary policy.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Mr. Speaker, looking at the so-called bill and the content in this book, it is a pretty intimidating document. There is absolutely no way people will be able to stay on top of all the things in there.

I have to also say that on the issue of jobs and investing in infrastructure, there was an 87% cut in infrastructure. The urban task force recommended the gas tax to Paul Martin. The gas tax is not enough. We need big investments in infrastructure. The government knows that. The cities have been here knocking on its doors on a continuous basis. Cutting 87% of the infrastructure budget is clearly unacceptable.

When we are looking at the \$5.2 million in surplus in EI, why not take that money and invest it in job creation? Even when we invest in infrastructure, it is also social infrastructure that creates jobs and helps people have better lives.

There are a lot of opportunities for investment out there. Clearly, if jobs and moving the economy forward were the priorities of the government, those investments would be done.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member's speech very carefully. I have two points to make. The first is on veterans. The hon. member said in her speech that veterans were left out. If I remember correctly, she has been part of the Liberal caucus for a long time. There were no deeper cuts to veterans benefits than in the 1995 budget. The member was part of that government at the time. This government has restored some or most of the benefits the previous government cut. It is a bit rich for the member to now say that veterans have been left behind.

On promises, I would like to point out that the promise to do income splitting was done on the basis that we balance the budget first and then do income splitting.

The Liberals promised to get rid of the GST. What happened to that promise?

Hon. Judy Sgro: Mr. Speaker, the whole issue of income splitting has been of huge benefit for seniors, but it really benefits those who have very high incomes. When the government talks about having income splitting for everyone as part of its next election platform, that will only benefit those in the very top elements. Those with very high incomes are the ones who will benefit. The rest of Canada will not.

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The \$3,400 the government likes to tout, the \$3,400 people have saved in taxes, again is for a very small pocket of people who are very rich. They are the ones eligible for the various programs that split income and reduce their taxation level. The average Canadian is not entitled to any of those benefits at all.

• (1605)

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am truly proud to rise today to speak to our budget implementation bill.

I have listened to what members of the opposition have said about the bill. They have spent more time complaining about the lack of time they have for debate than anything else. Some finally are starting to focus on some of the issues, and that is a good and healthy thing. That is what the opposition should be doing.

However, we have had day after day of debate on the bill, and we are only at second reading. It will go to committee for hours and hours and days and days of discussion and debate. Then it comes back to the House for third reading debate, which will be several days more. Yet the opposition spends time complaining about the lack of time they have to speak on the bill. It does not jibe with reality.

I would encourage members of the opposition to focus more on dealing with the issues. If they have concerns, they should bring those forward, absolutely. That is the role of the opposition. It is an appropriate role. I encourage them to do that. It would not hurt, from time to time, to say something positive where they see strengths in the budget. In fact, the last member to speak did that, and I give her credit for it. We have heard precious little of that from the opposition in this debate, although we hear more in private conversations.

I will focus on a couple of the key issues that are important parts of the budget and of this implementation bill. First, I will focus on the government and its absolute commitment to balancing the budget by 2015. That is very important to people in my part of the country and to Alberta as a province. It would bring benefits to Canadians right across the country. It is worth talking about a little bit.

Unlike the Liberal leader, who said that the budget would balance itself, we do not believe that, and we put in place a plan back in 2006 that started the process of working toward a balanced budget. That is when we got into government.

The opposition forgets that we paid down \$37 billion in federal debt before the recession hit. When the recession hit, the government took the position that it was important to provide some stimulus for the economy. Most of that was delivered through infrastructure funding, new innovation, and things that would make Canada more competitive and would allow us to compete with our neighbour to the south but also with the world. We have seen really incredible results from that over the past few years. The benefits are becoming obvious.

We have focused on balancing the budget. We will not do it by legalizing marijuana, another position taken by the leader of the Liberal Party, which is to tax it but make it more readily available for our youth and our kids. We will not do that. First, I do not think that would do the job. Second, I think it is more important that we protect our children from marijuana and from other drugs, for that matter. I

do not believe that they are harmless. I believe that they are dangerous drugs that are to be kept from our children. Legalizing marijuana, as the leader of the opposition suggests, no doubt as a plan to increase taxes to balance the budget, is not an acceptable way to go, and I will not be part of that. I simply will not support that, and our government certainly will not propose that in any fashion.

Nor should we try balancing the budget by implementing a carbon tax, which has been proposed by both the New Democratic Party and the Liberals. I do not believe that is the right way to go. Our government does not believe that is the right way to go either. In fact, we believe that would stifle business and harm our economy and therefore kill jobs. That is not what we are about. We are about creating a stronger economy and creating jobs and long-term prosperity for all Canadians.

• (1610)

We have certainly moved our country along in that direction in the past few years. I am proud to be a member of the party that is in government now. We are not willing to go the carbon tax route.

We have members of the opposition saying that we do not care about the environment. That is simply not the case. In fact, if we look at history, it is always Conservative parties that actually do something about protecting the environment. When the former Progressive Conservative government was in place, Prime Minister Mulroney was the prime minister. He was criticized and beaten upon day after day, week after week, year after year, because he was not doing enough on the environment. Who was then awarded recognition by the Sierra Club, which was led by the current leader of the Green Party, as the most green prime minister in Canadian history? It was Mr. Mulroney. What the opposition said at the time, when the Conservatives were in government, and what it said later, once it was actually recognized what they had done, were two different things entirely.

That is really what is happening with our government as well. Certainly the opposition does not recognize what we have done for the environment, nor does the national media, but the reality is that we have done a lot. We have Canada well positioned when it comes to dealing with the environment and ensuring that Canadians are going to live long into the future in a very safe environment. I am proud to be a part of that. We are doing that without a carbon tax at the same time as we are balancing the budget. That is an important focus. It is a commitment we will meet next year, if not sooner.

I think Canadians want to know that. Why should they care? They should care because once we balance the budget, we can pay down the debt. At that time, maybe we could offer some tax relief as well. Maybe there could be targeted new spending as well. Certainly the infrastructure spending we have committed to in the budget will increase as time goes on. All of that is in place. As we start paying down the debt again, as we did when we first got into government, with \$37 billion in those first three years, I think it was, it means lower interest payments for Canadians. That means more money they can keep in their pockets. We are all about that.

Government Orders

How have we balanced the budget? I was here in 1993 when the Liberal government balanced the budget. I give it credit for that. How did the Liberals do it? They did it almost entirely by downloading to the provinces and municipalities. They did not do it by making government itself more efficient. They did not do it by improving operations within the departments. They did nothing when it comes to that. They did it by downloading to the provinces and by slashing health transfers by \$21 billion. That is completely out of line.

We are balancing the budget with increased spending on infrastructure and increased spending on social transfers while at the same time keeping taxes low. We have lowered taxes for an average Canadian family of four by \$3,400. At the same time, we offered these families \$1,200 a year for every preschool child. We left that in place. We are not increasing taxes. We are keeping taxes low. In fact, taxes in Canada are the lowest they have been in 50 years. What a reversal.

The world is noticing. There has been a 35% reduction in business tax. The rewards are great. We have more companies moving to Canada to do business. This is a great place to do business. The example we all love to point to is the head office of Tim Hortons. It moved from the United States back home to Canada, where it belongs. That is just one example of many.

I am proud to be part of a government that has balanced the budget and at the same time has kept taxes low and is increasing transfers to the provinces for infrastructure and social programs. It is the right thing to do. I wonder why the opposition does not talk about that more.

•(1615)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when a government member has to hide behind the bogeyman of a non-existent carbon tax, that says a lot about the quality or lack of quality of a budget and a budget implementation bill. Instead of boasting about their own measures, the member seems to have taken more time to talk about policies he attributes to us that do not exist.

However, he did talk about an award given by the Sierra Club to Prime Minister Mulroney for environmental protection. First, that was 30 years ago. Second, speaking of recognition, we should mention that this government has consistently been criticized by the international community for its poor record on environmental protection.

However, let us talk about protection and safety. My question concerns railway safety and the fact that processes, in cabinet, will no longer be transparent because of certain measures in this omnibus bill.

Does the member really believe that, with respect to railway safety, they are on the right track—no pun intended—by not being transparent about changes that are made?

[*English*]

Mr. Leon Benoit: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his comments on the recognition that the Conservative governments are in fact the governments that actually do stuff about the environment.

We do not tend to talk an awful lot about the environment; we just get it done.

He talked about the award to former Prime Minister Mulroney, who was a PC prime minister and not a Conservative prime minister, but I give him a lot of credit for this. That award was about seven years ago. We are not talking 30 years in the past. He was recognized as the most green prime minister in Canadian history by the leader of the Green Party in the House today. That is the reality.

We are doing the job on the environment, and we are doing it without a business-killing carbon tax. He says there will never be a carbon tax. I hope and pray that is the case. I hope and pray that the New Democrats will never be government and that the Liberals will not be back in government for some time.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if I did not know better, I would suggest that the member has the Prime Minister's Office's speaking notes down pat. He knows what to say. I can give him that much, even though what he says is somewhat factually incorrect.

Let me ask the member a question. He says that the Conservatives are going to balance the budget. Why should we even believe that in the first place? I suggest they have demonstrated that they are incapable of balancing the budget, but he says they are going to balance the budget and increase infrastructure dollars. That is wrong. It is actually an 80%-plus decrease in their budget document. The member needs to not only read the Prime Minister's Office's speaking notes but also read the budget. It is a decrease.

Then he said they are increasing social spending. It was the Paul Martin agreement on the health care accord that mandated the government, by law, to give increases to health care, and that is why there is a record amount of millions of dollars going to health care today to the provinces.

I am wondering if the member might want to revisit those two inaccurate facts, which were a substantial part of his speech saying that the Conservatives intend to balance the budget. Canadians just do not believe it.

Mr. Leon Benoit: Mr. Speaker, I am delighted, of course, to revisit those two issues, because the member is revisiting history. In fact, he is rewriting history, and he is not rewriting it accurately.

I was around in those years that the Liberals were doing what they did to this country, and it was not pretty. The budget was not balanced in the right way at all. They slashed social transfers to the provinces. We have increased them, even to Alberta, finally, the province I am from. We have increased infrastructure transfers from \$52 million under the Liberal government, before we got into office, to an average of \$412 million per year, which is almost a ninefold increase. That is pretty remarkable. Not only that, our new infrastructure program will deliver \$50-some billion over the next 10 years.

An hon. member: We will do \$100 billion.

Mr. Leon Benoit: Mr. Speaker, the member is saying he will do \$100 billion. Yes, and the budget will balance itself, his leader said.

Government Orders

•(1620)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. member for Winnipeg North is rising on a point of order, and I trust that it will be a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is. The member said that I said from \$100 billion from across the floor. I did not say \$100 billion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please.

It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised to night at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Drummond, The Environment; the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, The Environment.

Resuming debate, the hon. Minister of National Revenue.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the leadership of this Prime Minister, Canada has enjoyed a stellar economic record. This is why I stand in this House today in full support of the measures contained in the 2014 budget implementation act.

Year after year, through our economic action plan, this government has created the economic conditions that allow Canadian businesses to prosper and Canadian citizens to benefit from a high standard of living.

There is a sentiment shared by many. Globally recognized authorities, from the OECD to the International Monetary Fund, have ranked Canada as one of the best countries in the world in which to do business. In fact, they expect Canada to be among the strongest-growing economies in the G7 over this year and next.

[*Translation*]

The international business press, including *Forbes Magazine* and *Bloomberg News*, is equally fulsome in its praise for Canada's success in creating a climate conducive to job creation.

Indeed, the facts speak for themselves. There are over one million more Canadians working today than during the worst part of the recession. That is the best job creation record of any G7 country during this period.

[*English*]

Despite significant global uncertainty, the Canadian economy has continued to expand. Real gross domestic product in Canada is significantly above pre-recession levels. All of this is translated into the strongest real per capita income growth in the G7 since 2006, which means Canadians have more money in their pockets today than their counterparts have in other developed countries.

This is a testament to this government's and this Prime Minister's strong economic stewardship.

Of course, there is ongoing uncertainty in the global economic environment. That is why we must continue to encourage job creation and foster economic growth, the twin pillars of the economic action plan since its inception in 2009, while remaining on track for balanced federal budgets.

[*Translation*]

That is exactly what budget 2014 will do.

We must—and we will—continue to improve the conditions for business investment. We will keep taxes low and reduce the tax compliance and regulatory burden on businesses so they can focus on jobs and economic growth. We will also make sure everyone pays their fair share.

[*English*]

There are over 20 tax measures in the budget that would improve the fairness and integrity of the tax system and crack down on tax avoidance and evasion.

One of the most important of these measures would advance the work of the Red Tape Reduction Commission. Economic action plan 2014 announced that we are cutting red tape for more than 50,000 employers by reducing the maximum number of times employers need to send source deduction payments to the CRA. These are deductions companies withhold for their employees' income tax, Canada pension plan contributions, and employment insurance premiums.

At the moment, if employers withhold an average of \$15,000 to \$50,000 in deductions monthly, they are required to remit deductions up to twice per month. Larger organizations withholding monthly deductions of \$50,000 or more have to remit them up to four times a month. This can be an onerous task for Canadians already working tirelessly to run their businesses.

To reduce the tax compliance burden, economic action plan 2014 proposes to reduce the frequency of remittances by increasing the threshold levels. Employers would only need to remit up to two times per month when their withholdings are between \$25,000 and \$100,000. The upper threshold would also be increased. Now only employers with monthly withholdings of \$100,000 or more would be required to remit up to four times a month.

•(1625)

[*Translation*]

We also intend to launch a liaison officer initiative pilot project to improve compliance within Canada's small and medium business community.

Firms will be provided with information and the support they need, when they most need it, so they get their tax obligations "right from the start". This will help them avoid costly and time-consuming interactions with CRA, freeing up businesses to focus on doing business.

[*English*]

Another way we would reduce the paper burden for companies big and small would be by making improvements to CRA service delivery. For instance, authorized company tax representatives, such as accounting firms, can now submit an electronic authorization request to the CRA instead of filing paper forms.

As part of our efforts to reduce red tape, we have engaged Canada's business community and listened to its concerns. We are now acting on its recommendations.

[*Translation*]

As of October 2014, businesses will be able to update their banking and direct deposit information online.

Government Orders

October is also when the first free online option for paying taxes will be available for business owners registered with My Business Account. As well, a detailed payment history for all of their accounts will be available in one secure and convenient place.

[English]

Our government takes the abuse of Canada's tax laws very seriously. Unpaid taxes mean less money for programs that all Canadians depend upon. The CRA is clamping down on international tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance. The majority of the measures announced in economic action plan 2013 to combat international tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance are now in place and are giving CRA investigators more tools to crack down on tax cheats. These measures will build on our efforts in dealing with international non-compliance.

To date the CRA has identified over \$4.5 billion in unpaid tax. This includes 340 cases of high-net-worth groups using sophisticated business structures and offshore arrangements to avoid taxes.

Word of CRA's success is spreading. Disclosures received through the CRA's voluntary disclosures program involving offshore accounts or assets have increased from roughly 1,200 in 2006-07 to close to 4,000 in 2012-13. Total unreported income from this period was \$1.77 billion, with just over \$470 million in federal taxes owing.

To make it easier to identify more cases of international tax non-compliance, we now require Canadian taxpayers with foreign income or properties to report more detailed information, and we have extended the time the CRA has to reassess those who have not properly reported this income. As of 2015, we will have even more tools at our disposal. Banks and other financial intermediaries will be required to report international electronic file transfers of \$10,000 or more to the CRA.

We have also streamlined the legal process that allows the CRA to get information from third parties, such as banks. This makes it easier to access information on unnamed individuals, such as those who hold foreign assets or are involved in foreign financial transactions.

This government is working to ensure the CRA has access to as many sources of information as possible. That is precisely why we introduced the new offshore tax informant program, which allows individuals to provide information related to major international tax non-compliance.

I could go on highlighting a long list of new tax credits in this year's budget. They range from recognizing the contributions of volunteers who fight fires or conduct search and rescue to expanding the list of eligible medical expenses and enhancing the adoption expense tax credit, initiatives that would make a meaningful difference in the lives of Canadian taxpayers.

I urge all parties to join us in passing this legislation so that we can continue on our path of job creation and economic growth.

• (1630)

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I asked a question last week along the same lines but I did not get an

answer from that side of the House, so I am hoping that the minister will answer this question.

The recent issue of *The Economist* shows that GDP growth in Canada is slated to be 2.3%, Australia 2.7%, the U.S. 2.8%, and Britain 2.9%. We are starting to lag behind our biggest trading partners in terms of economic growth.

Would the minister care to comment that perhaps the cuts the Conservatives have made over the last couple of budgets have been too deep and are stifling our future economic growth?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, the truth is that Canada is weathering the global economic turbulence better than most other countries with the help of our low tax plan. We have the lowest federal tax burden now in 55 years. Our plan is working. We have seen the most net new and full-time jobs of any of our G7 partners. We continue to lead the way. Bloomberg has said that we are the second best place in the world to do business. These kinds of accolades from around the world continue to come in. It shows that we are on the right track, albeit in a fragile global environment, and that we are doing what we should do. Lower taxes make Canada's economy stronger. This is what creates good and long-term jobs for Canadians. That is our focus.

Both the NDP and the Liberals have voted against each and every one of our job-creating tax cuts. We are keeping taxes low. The NDP believe in higher taxes. That would hurt our economy.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about what our economy needs. One of the things it needs is good infrastructure. Unfortunately, that is one of the things missing from this bill, that is, a replacement for the big gap in infrastructure spending announced in budget 2013.

In my riding of Kingston and the Islands, we have a major east-west artery that passes over the main CN rail line. We need to have an overpass. Right now it is a level crossing. In another part of my riding, on Wolfe Island, we have a road that connects the winter ferry terminal to the rest of the island. That needs to be rebuilt. These are important pieces of infrastructure that cannot be worked on for many years because the extra money in the building Canada plan has been so low for a number of years. It was cut drastically, by roughly by 87% from last year to this year.

Why is the government cutting infrastructure right now when it is so needed?

Government Orders

Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals continue to misrepresent what we are presenting through our build Canada fund. We are proud of the build Canada fund. It is going to seed infrastructure projects across this country. Every region of the country will benefit from our investment in infrastructure. We have made the gas tax fund permanent. That is something that all municipalities welcome. This past Friday I was in one of the municipalities in my riding. I met with the mayor and city staff to talk about how they can access the build Canada fund to provide for the infrastructure needs of those communities.

The truth is that we have the support of municipalities, provinces, and territories for the way we have put together our build Canada fund. The first part of it people took advantage of, and Canadians will see the advantages of this one too.

Frankly, this misrepresentation by the Liberals is irresponsible.

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of National Revenue this. Why are the freezing of EI premiums; the expansion of the hiring credit for small business, which will benefit over half a million small businesses; the lowering of the small business tax rate from 12% to 11%, and the raising of the threshold to half a million dollars, significant measures in our economic success, leading us to being the economic model for the G7?

• (1635)

Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question because it gives me an opportunity to talk about our pride in our small and medium-size businesses in this country. The fact is that small and medium enterprises in Canada employ 98% of our workforce. They are the engine that drives our economy. We are doing everything we can as a government to promote their growth. We do that in many ways. One of them is by giving tax credits for apprenticeships and tax credits for internships, which I think is an important new initiative. We have also been cutting red tape drastically, as I mentioned earlier, and working with them on that.

With respect to my department, the CRA, we have a number of initiatives, including the new liaison officer initiative, whereby we will support and educate small business and tax preparers to help them do their job, which is to employ Canadians.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and speak on this bill. First, I would like to thank our shadow minister for finance, the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, for all his work in preparing us for this bill and defending Canadians within and outside of the House. I am really proud to have him as a colleague, and he serves British Columbia very well.

I have to say that I am opposed to this bill for much of its substance, as well as for the process by which these laws are being passed. I will elaborate at length about my procedural objections to Bill C-31.

Bill C-31 would fail to take adequate action to create jobs or reverse cuts to infrastructure funding, which is apparent from the speeches we have heard. That is why I would like to focus mostly on the process by which these omnibus bills are passed through Parliament.

Bill C-31 would fail to create jobs, it would cut infrastructure funding, and it would also continue the sorry tradition set by previous omnibus budget bills of forcing hundreds of changes through Parliament without proper oversight. This is an all too common Conservative practice, and it is disturbing as it undermines the work we do here in Parliament. The tabling of such a wide-ranging bill in such a short time frame undermines our ability to properly scrutinize the bill and denies MPs the ability to thoroughly study the bill and its implications.

The bill has over 350 pages, almost 500 clauses, and would amend dozens of bills, including a variety of measures never mentioned in the budget speech. This is the Conservatives' fifth attempt to evade parliamentary scrutiny of their economic agenda.

In the remainder of my time, I would like to use an example from a previous omnibus budget, Bill C-38, to show the damage these omnibus budget bills can cause and why it is important that we break these bills apart and debate them piece by piece.

Among other things, Bill C-38 rammed through changes to the National Energy Board Act regarding the approval of new oil pipelines. In addition to shortening the length of time the NEB has to review new projects to just 15 months, whereas previous reviews had no time limits, the NEB is now only a mere advisory body, with the cabinet now having the final say on any project.

Now, the changes that were rammed through the House in Bill C-38 with little consideration or debate are hitting the road in my riding of Burnaby—Douglas. Again, we had a large package of bills bundled up in Bill C-38 and passed through with little debate, and now the effects of those bills are impacting my riding in a negative way.

I would like to use the example of Kinder Morgan's proposal to build a new pipeline from Edmonton to Burnaby to illustrate why the current omnibus bill should not be rammed through the House.

Last December, the Kinder Morgan company filed an application with the National Energy Board to build a new export-only bitumen based crude oil pipeline from Edmonton to Burnaby. This application includes a request for permission for a 150 metre-wide right of way to dig a trench as large as one that would be required for a subway or SkyTrain. The project would bring 400 new oil tankers to Burrard Inlet. The project will likely be built using temporary foreign workers. It will not use Canadian steel, limiting the economic benefits to B.C. However, the benefit to Kinder Morgan is obvious, with the company standing to make as much as \$5 million per day if the project is approved.

Government Orders

Before the changes brought in by Bill C-38, any company proposing to build a new pipeline of this size would have filed an application with the National Energy Board. The NEB would have reviewed the application to determine that it were complete, and if complete, the NEB would have issued a hearing order and called for public participation. Any Canadians interested in speaking to the project could have either sent a letter of comment, given a short oral presentation, or applied to be a full intervenor. This was the case for the Enbridge northern gateway project, which, incidentally, is about the same size as Kinder Morgan's proposal.

After the changes in Bill C-38, the process has been completely changed and, I submit, undermined. First, due to a new 15-month time limit, the NEB has had to cut the public almost completely out of this approval process. To do so, the NEB has cancelled scheduled public information meetings; issued a call for participation without as much as a press release; reduced the possible participation routes from letters, oral presentations, or full interventions to just letters or a full intervention; and ruled that if the potential participant fails to register, he or she cannot even send a letter to the National Energy Board. The NEB has also issued a hearing order for this project, even though the company has filed an incomplete application. For example, Kinder Morgan has not even determined the final pipeline route.

● (1640)

This is serious, because if this project is approved, the company would have the right to expropriate homes and land along the proposed route through the NEB Act right of entry clauses, and we could find ourselves in the absurd position that those who might lose their homes would not even be allowed to send a letter of objection to the board. These changes were all brought about because Bill C-38 was rammed through the House without proper debate.

Although the NEB wanted this whole process to proceed without public input in order to meet the conditions prescribed in Bill C-38, 2,200 people still registered to participate in the process. However, last week we learned that all but 400 of these applicants had been kicked out of the process, including many homeowners. That means they will not even be able to make an oral submission or appear before the National Energy Board. Whereas companies were almost universally accepted, including one that filed after the deadline had closed for participation, the vast majority of those now excluded from the process are residents and landowners whose lives could be turned upside down by this project.

Not everyone is upset by how this project is being rammed through my community in British Columbia. The Conservatives are certainly pleased and have referred to these pipelines as “a national dream” and label anyone who asks questions about the logic of these pipelines—they do not even have to be opposed—as “radicals”.

However, the support for this pipeline and a process by which it is being approved does not stop there. In the January 22 edition of *Metro News* in Calgary, the leader of the Liberal Party said:

I am...very interested in the Kinder Morgan pipeline, the Trans Mountain pipeline that is making its way through. I certainly hope that we are going to be able to get that pipeline approved.

To reiterate, the leader of the Liberal Party said he certainly hopes we would be able to get this pipeline approved. This quote was again

confirmed in an article published on February 26 in the *Vancouver Observer*:

While others in the House may view the Bill C-38 omnibus bill as a dream, my constituents, especially those who might be negatively impacted by this project, see this process and project as a nightmare.

I too am worried. This pipeline is not only slated to run through the communities I represent, but is also slated to run through 15 first nations reserves and 80 territories, and 130 nations have signed a declaration against this pipeline.

My nightmare scenario is that bulldozers show up in B.C. neighbourhoods or reserves, start digging trenches without consent, and then we have conflict. This is a real possibility. Because of the way Bill C-38 was rammed through the House, because of the way the NEB process was undermined and shortened, now the National Energy Board really has had no choice but to limit public participation. This means excluding residents, people who own homes and land and businesses along the route, but also first nations.

Many first nations did not register to appear before the National Energy Board, thus they will be cut out of the process. They will not even be able to send a letter to say that they do not want the pipeline to go through their community.

This is unacceptable, and I think the changes to the National Energy Board Act and the negative impacts on my community are a direct result of these omnibus bills. They are cobbled together so that the government can force its agenda through and perhaps facilitate these very large projects like energy pipelines.

It is important to realize that now that we are here discussing a new omnibus budget bill, an implementation act, we should take the time to break it apart to make sure that we have an adequate discussion of these different clauses.

Perhaps I have not stressed enough how this project and these changes have affected my community. I have literally had hundreds of constituents call or come into my office to express their concerns, completely oblivious to the fact there will basically be something as large as a subway going through their backyard and that they will not even be able to send a letter to say that they do not want this to happen.

I think it is a disgrace, and I apologize to my constituents. We fought against Bill C-38 as much as we could. We will fight against this current budget implementation act until the government sees fit to make sure that Canadian voices are heard when we are debating this important legislation.

● (1645)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the issues the government talks about a lot is citizenship.

Government Orders

What we have witnessed over the last number of years is an ever increasing waiting period for a person to acquire citizenship. That has been compounded by the government increasing the cost of getting citizenship by hundreds of dollars.

Quite often government requires or provides services, then it increases those fees. The individuals who have to pay those additional hundreds of dollars in fees are in fact paying a great deal more. Many would ultimately argue that it is just another form of tax on individuals, when fees are raised to the degree the government has done.

I wonder if the member would comment on service fees.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Mr. Speaker, adding extra fees onto the backs of new Canadians is always a problem.

My speech really had nothing to do with that. It was more about his leader's comments. He said:

I am, however, very interested in the Kinder Morgan pipeline, the Trans Mountain pipeline that is making its way through.

I certainly hope that we're going to be able to get that pipeline approved.

Again, it would have been helpful if perhaps the member had raised a question about that, because I find that quite disturbing.

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thought the member had a very reasonable speech, but it focused on one topic, which was how to block pipelines.

Oil and gas and natural resources are a big part of the Canadian economy. It is not the whole basket, but it is a very important part. About 13% of our economy is directly related to natural resources, and another 6% or so indirectly.

The member talks about blocking this project. There is some fantasy about maybe refining these products in Canada and selling it to ourselves. The reality is that there is a demand. Any time individuals have a business, they have to think about what their customers want and that is what needs to be sold in our markets overseas.

It is one thing to talk about trying to block this project. We have put in measures to have these projects accelerated in terms of the review, in the sense of not needing to drag this out for years and years. However, what does the hon. member propose as an alternative to this pipeline? Would we just keep this oil at home? Would we just leave it in the ground and not sell it to anybody?

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Mr. Speaker, these are the kinds of debates we should be having.

Our leader has been very clear that west-east pipelines are the way to go. He has stressed that over and over again.

I want to clarify that this is not about blocking a particular project. That is not what my speech was about. It was about the fact that, the way the process is constructed now, there are homeowners who were not informed that this pipeline would go through their property, who under the National Energy Board Act can have their property expropriated, and now under the provisions of this act would not be able to send a letter of objection.

I think that is too much. Whether one is for pipelines or against pipelines, I think the process has to be fair. If not, the whole process of government is delegitimized. We might as well just cancel the National Energy Board hearings altogether and just have it rammed through, as cabinet will probably do anyway with the northern gateway pipeline.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague, the member for Burnaby—Douglas, for focusing on the damage that is done through the repeated use of this mechanism of omnibus bills and bringing a sharp focus on Kinder Morgan and its so-called Trans Mountain pipeline.

I have also been one of those who applied to the National Energy Board. I just found out that I am one of the few interveners, one of the 400 who was selected. I certainly hope to be able to convey the concerns of my constituents, because although the project directly affects people in his riding, as the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas has said, there are also all the communities along the shorelines, the coastal communities. They are very concerned about an increase of more than 400 Aframax tankers a year carrying diluted bitumen.

To our friend across the way who asked what we would propose instead, we propose that we should not ship out diluted bitumen. We should be upgrading and refining product in Canada, so that we are not shipping it and putting it in tankers, essentially exporting to China the jobs that could have been had in Alberta.

• (1650)

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Mr. Speaker, I enjoy the debate we are having here today. It would be nice to have more of these. I thank the hon. member for intervening. Our party, the New Democratic Party, has also registered as an intervener.

It gives me an opportunity to bring up how the National Energy Board selected which of the 2,200 people would be acceptable to this process. Literally, at my office, I had two gentlemen who live along the route. Both made fairly identical applications, and one was kicked out and one was allowed to participate in the process.

It really has been a botched job by the National Energy Board, brought about by the Bill C-38 changes that the government brought in two years ago.

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise today to speak about the budget implementation act.

We have been down this path before in terms of the complexity involved in the challenging economic times we live in today. It requires large comprehensive budget implementation bills. This is the first of two. There will be one in the fall that we will debate.

As always, it is good to get a budget passed in the same year we propose it. We will likely get this budget all wrapped in December of this year. It is through a lot of work among all members of the House of Commons where we debate this bill.

I know they complain about process across the way, but that is the reality. These are not simple economic times. They are challenging economic times, and they do require large and comprehensive responses.

Government Orders

I will focus my comments on a few items that are very important to me and, I know, to the people of my riding of Etobicoke—Lakeshore and in Toronto.

First I will talk about what frames the budget, and we are looking to get to balanced budgets, which is really fundamental.

Before the recession hit, we paid down about \$37 billion in debt between 2006 and 2009. That was very important. It actually put Canada on firm economic ground. It gave us flexibility to do certain things.

Unlike the Liberals, we do not believe that budgets just balance themselves. It does require a lot of effort to balance the budgets. We ran some deficits intentionally during the global economic crisis. There was stimulus that was required. A lot of infrastructure was built through the stimulus program and it was necessary to keep people working, but we want to get back to balanced budgets.

The way we get there is not by stifling consumer confidence, by raising taxes, or by raising all kinds of other taxes that drive people to work in the underground economy. One of the fundamental underpinnings of our approach to balancing the budget is to keep taxes low.

What we have in our plan are some sensible tax policies. My colleague, the Minister of National Revenue, talked about some of those sensible tax policies, such as pursuing aggressive tax avoidance and putting new plans there. It is also keeping those taxes low precisely so that the people work in the above-ground economy and pay those taxes.

We see this inverse relationship. When we are lowering taxes, tax receipts are going up. It is because it does create jobs and stimulate the economy, and more people and more companies are paying taxes.

We also have to have as an underpinning some very sound job creation strategies. I mentioned earlier that natural resources are an important plank in our economy, but there are all kinds of other places where we have seen significant job growth in Canada over the last few years. In fact, we have had the best job creation record in the G7.

A third very important underpinning is that we have to have some control on government spending. It is really important that we manage the tax spending on behalf of taxpayers. We are the custodian of these tax dollars that they send us and we have to spend those dollars responsibly.

I am proud of what we have put together in the last few years, and this budget builds on that theme of controlling expenses necessarily. We have done that. We actually have the lowest net debt to GDP ratio in the G7 as a result of that strong hand on the economic tiller.

I want to salute the previous minister of finance for all the fine work he did over the years. I look forward to working with the new Minister of Finance to make sure we continue with that strong tradition.

What are we doing to control those expenditures?

One, the President of the Treasury Board has been in negotiations with the public sector unions to make sure the wages and benefits we are paying our fine, hard-working public servants are affordable to taxpayers. They have to be reasonable. They have to be in line with what people would get for similar kinds of jobs in the private sector.

As I mentioned earlier, we are also closing tax loopholes to make sure we strengthen tax enforcement and ensure we can keep those taxes low.

We are looking at things that control the size, scope, and cost of government. We have done some things in the last couple of years to freeze departmental spending, which is very important, by using new technologies and consolidating back-office kinds of functions, as any good business would do. The Government of Canada is a very large enterprise and we have been doing certain things that have been saving taxpayers money.

We are also looking at assets that are under the control of the Government of Canada, and where it does not make sense for the Government of Canada to be in that business, we are looking at where the private sector can jump in and play a more important role.

I will talk mostly about what the Liberals did in the 1990s, because I think there is a strong contrast between what we are doing with our plan to return to balanced budgets and what the Liberals did.

In 1993, the Liberals came in with a promise to abolish the GST. Well, of course, they did nothing of the sort. In fact, they kept it in place and even encouraged an expansion of the consumption tax base through the HST without cutting the rates at all.

● (1655)

They also kept EI payroll taxes very high and ran enormous surpluses in the EI account, which they then transferred to pay down the debt, which was a tax on jobs; members know that. They also kept income taxes high, and this happened through bracket creep, by stealth, so more and more people who actually had lower income were paying income taxes. What we have done with our plan is remove those people from the income tax rolls altogether, by adjusting the brackets appropriately.

One of the things the Liberals did in the 1990s to balance the budget, which we are not doing, is they failed to meet the needs of our Armed Forces. The Armed Forces needs equipment. It needs the supplies. It needs all of the materiel to ensure it can do its job protecting Canadians and engaging in places around the world. That is something we are not doing. We are maintaining those important investments in our capacity there.

The biggest dollar item and biggest contrast between what we are doing and what the Liberals did in the 1990s to balance the budget is we are not slashing transfers to the provinces. That is very fundamental. As members know, we have a record high of \$65 billion in transfers to the provinces for things like health care and social services. I should mention that it is an increase of 50% since 2006.

These are important differences between how we are balancing the budgets and what the Liberals did in the 1990s.

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I also want to mention that, before we can do all these things, we have to have this foundation of jobs and growth. There are some important measures that we have taken to create jobs in this country. I mentioned natural resources. However, it is also important that we talk about the employment and skills strategies that we put in place. Last year, in 2013, we talked about the Canada jobs grant. This year, we have some agreements in place with the provinces because we know that, for companies to grow, they need to have the skills. We hear over and over again from employers across the country about the skills gap and what employers need. In fact, some employers are looking to bring people from overseas, which is great for those immigrants to come to Canada and take those high-paying jobs in various roles, but at the same time it is a shame that there are not more Canadians available who can fill some of those important jobs in areas like science, engineering, and technology. That is where the job growth is in our 21st century economy, so we are doing things to ensure Canadians are connected with those available jobs.

There are some significant investments we are making in R and D that need to be pointed out. We are working with universities and working with private companies. Where Canada has been challenged has been in private sector R and D. We have always maintained a very high level of public sector R and D, but we can encourage companies to make those investments and really take their great ideas to the commercialization stage. We have some specific measures in the budget, which I firmly support. In talking to people at innovative companies in my area of the GTA, I hear them talk all the time about the need for these programs, to ensure we are building those jobs for the 21st century.

One of the last things I am going to talk about is also what we are doing to foster small business. Many of my colleagues have mentioned the importance of small business, the way it flexibly adapts to changes in the economy and creates jobs all the time. Since 2006, we have had a very firm record of supporting small business through measures like tax reductions. Some of my colleagues mentioned we have reduced the small business tax rate from 12% to 11%. It does not sound like a lot, but it is actually reducing the taxes small business owners are paying by almost 10%.

We have eliminated that corporate surtax that they were paying, which is a very big item for small business. Very importantly, we are maintaining EI rates for small businesses. These are some significant measures. We raised the lifetime capital gains exemption for small businesses. So when they build capital and build a nest egg for their future, we have raised the rate they are not taxed on to \$800,000 in 2014. Importantly, it is now indexed to inflation.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the important investments in infrastructure. In Toronto specifically, \$4.5 billion has been spent by this government on GTA infrastructure, on things like subways and roads: for example, the Toronto-York Spadina subway extension, the Union Station revitalization, GO Transit enhancements, and finally, with the commitment with the City of Toronto, the extension of the subway into Scarborough.

With that, I am just going to mention that our plan is to keep taxes low, create jobs, and ensure people are paying taxes; and we are not going to spend recklessly like the opposition.

● (1700)

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a specific question about funding agreements for co-operative and non-profit housing. By 2020, 200,000 households in co-operative and non-profit projects will lose their federal rental assistance. This is going to have a huge impact in Burnaby—Douglas, and lots of other ridings across Canada. I am wondering, will the federal government agree to renew these housing agreements and not just shovel it off to municipalities and provincial governments? These are very low-income households and they are a staple housing product for all ridings, including his own, I am sure. Perhaps the member could answer that question.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Mr. Speaker, we have made some significant investments in the budget when it comes to affordable housing. With respect to federal co-ops, I have three of those in my riding of Etobicoke—Lakeshore. One of the funny things is that these are mortgage assistances that we agreed to a generation ago. The mortgages have been paid off, so we are not going to be renewing those mortgages.

In the bigger cities, like Toronto, and I am sure in Vancouver, affordable housing is primarily the responsibility of the province, working with the municipal government. We are there to support that, but we are trying to make sure there is no duplication, that we are not trying to do the same kinds of affordable housing projects that the province and the city are doing. That is why there are certain programs that the CMHC is doing in building small-scale, affordable housing in certain neighbourhoods. These are programs that the province and the city are not doing. That is where we can make a difference. However, overlapping bureaucracies trying to do the same thing are not productive for the taxpayer, and it does not get more affordable housing built.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member is confusing social housing with affordable housing. They are two completely different things. The question was about social housing agreements.

People who rent an apartment with the help of a housing subsidy do not have the means to buy a so-called affordable house. These agreements are expiring, which is causing some problems. For example, people in Sudbury who were paying less than \$400 a month for an apartment are now forced to pay more than \$900 in rent.

We are not just talking about mortgages not being renewed. We are talking about rent subsidies and building repairs. That is what my colleague was talking about. He was not talking about so-called affordable housing.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we respect the jurisdictions of the provinces and municipalities.

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Members on the other side of the House always want governments to compete to do the exact same thing in our municipalities, and that is not the right way to go about it.

Nevertheless, we have made rather significant investments in affordable housing. We invested \$1 billion in renovations and energy retrofits, which was well received. There was no such program before.

We will take action together while respecting the jurisdictions of the provinces and municipalities.

• (1705)

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this omnibus bill contains two components that are very important for my riding. This is yet another omnibus, or “omnibrick” bill, as I said to my colleague from Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher. What is sad is that the two measures I am going to focus on have nothing to do with a budget. I am talking about railway safety and imposing a toll on the Champlain Bridge.

The government knows full well that railway safety is a major concern. It has been said in the House on a number of occasions. It is even more important where I come from because the rail lines travel straight through large urban centres and residential neighbourhoods. The elementary school where my mother teaches, in Otterburn Park, is located near train tracks, and trains pass by carrying the same products that caused the Lac-Mégantic tragedy. We are therefore very concerned about this issue, to the point that when my colleague from Brossard—La Prairie, the NDP transport critic, came to Mont Saint-Hilaire for a public consultation, more than 100 people showed up. It was a beautiful sunny Sunday, which goes to show how worried people are.

We have hammered away at many points over and over again. One interesting point was raised a number of times. It is not being talked about much, but it comes up in the bill. I am talking about the issue of transparency. One of the changes proposed by Bill C-31 would allow cabinet to make amendments to railway safety regulations without the public's knowledge.

That is extremely troubling because if Canadians wants to pressure their government into making changes and ensuring our safety, they can no longer challenge the government's decisions because they will not even know about them. That is clearly very problematic, especially because it runs counter to the current trend.

Indeed, in the United States, the trend is to investigate the various regulatory issues. We know that the U.S. also wanted to make changes because of the Lac-Mégantic tragedy, among others. After all, it was an American company, and thus a somewhat shared jurisdiction. However, the fact that this falls under shared jurisdiction is not an excuse to do nothing. The government has done nothing to date. It is extremely troubling to think that the government wants to make changes without the public knowing about them, particularly since Canadians are already concerned about the government's lack of transparency. These changes are only going to make things worse. What is more, they have nothing to do with the budget.

This shows a lack of respect for Canadians, given that people are concerned. From what we have seen, people are becoming increasingly aware of this issue. The government may say that

accidents rarely occur, but when they do, it prompts people to find out more. During the public consultations, I was extremely impressed to learn that people know a lot about this issue and about the various regulations. That is good for our democracy.

As MPs, this really helps us to properly stand up for what our constituents want. However, it also shows that if people are looking for information, it must be available to them. The government's desire to make decisions behind closed doors is insulting to Canadians who are clearly committed to getting informed in order to improve the regulations. We are very concerned about this.

The second point I would like to make is about the toll on the Champlain Bridge. I could never speak about this issue with as much passion as my colleague from Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher showed this morning. However, I would like to say that all members of ridings in the south shore share his passion. I am not just talking about federal MPs. All elected officials in the region are united on this issue, as are ordinary Canadians and the business community.

Once again, the government is hiding measures in an omnibus bill. That seems to be a consistent trend.

• (1710)

Since the Minister of Infrastructure was once a mayor, he should understand the importance of consulting municipalities and businesses. He should also understand that it is a grave insult to the people when Ottawa fails to consult them and hides measures that eliminate other consultation tools. That is what is going on with Bill C-31. There is no independent consultation about the new Champlain Bridge to make sure that future tolls will be similar to tolls elsewhere in the world and that the government is following best practices.

Unfortunately, the minister's contempt for the people comes as no surprise. We may not be surprised at the lack of consultation or the government's decision to hide measures in omnibus bills, but we are nevertheless disappointed.

That being said, as my colleague pointed out, we will not let this go unnoticed. We have rallied the people. In my riding, there was a luncheon with the new president of the *Chambre de commerce et d'industrie du Bassin de Chambly*. The new president and the new board have three priorities for the chamber of commerce in the coming year. Their top priority is the Champlain Bridge. A huge number of people in the Chambly basin use this bridge. We are right along highway 10, so it is easy to see why this is such an important issue.

The mayor of Chambly, Denis Lavoie, gave a presentation to the chamber of commerce during the annual mayor's luncheon. He talked about his disappointment and said that he would not let the issue drop. My colleagues and I stand firmly behind them.

In that spirit, on Saturday, May 3, we will be knocking on our constituents' doors on the south shore and in the northern and southern suburbs of Montreal, since I am in the second tier of suburbs, not the immediately adjacent suburb. My riding straddles two regions, but we are still in the south shore region. Some of our constituents commute to Montreal for work, so it is important for me to consult them. Just today some of my constituents said they are worried about this, and their concern is growing every day.

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I really liked the expression my colleague from Brossard—La Prairie used. He called it bullying. Some people may find that a little strong, but the word is fair, since the situation in our region is very serious. It would seem as though I am repeating everything my colleague from Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher said, but that is a good sign, because it shows how united we are on this and that our constituents have the same priorities.

The lack of consultation really worries us because it was the mismanagement by consecutive Liberal and Conservative governments that got us here in the first place. They did not want to maintain the bridge properly. Now the government is saying that it is a disaster and that measures must be imposed immediately. They even skipped the tendering process. The government used past mismanagement to justify its current mismanagement of this file. We have a problem with that. This situation is unacceptable, and we will continue to oppose it.

This is a positive message, because an NDP government would consult Canadians, whether regarding the Champlain Bridge or on any other matter. We have the courage of our convictions and we would not hide them in an omnibus bill like the one I am honoured to oppose here today.

• (1715)

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking my colleague from Chambly—Borduas, who did an incredible job of presenting the concerns of the people who live in the suburbs of the south shore, including their concerns about the Champlain Bridge.

Toward the end of his presentation he mentioned the omnibus bill. Once again, Bill C-31 is a mammoth bill, with countless clauses that affect many laws.

Since he did not have enough time to talk about it, I would like to know what the member and the people of Chambly—Borduas think of the fact that we are faced with yet another omnibus bill in this House?

As well, what does he think about the fact that we are being gagged with another time allocation motion, which means that not all the members will have a chance to talk in detail about Bill C-31?

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

Indeed, we are dealing with another omnibus bill. I think my speech clearly demonstrated the problems that this causes. This is a budget implementation bill, and I have to speak to the issues that matter to the people back home, in other words, railway safety and the Champlain Bridge. Those are two of the top priorities in my riding.

This is a fine example of the problems associated with this approach. We could spend 10 or 20 minutes talking about the Champlain Bridge alone. I am sure that some of my other colleagues agree. It is not that I did not want to talk about my own concerns or those of the people I have the honour of representing, but the problem is that we cannot talk about all the other aspects of the bill. There are so many, and that speaks volumes about the shortcomings of this approach.

The people back home are fed up with this approach. They see that we want to talk about their priorities in the House, but when we are forced to do so in a roundabout way and to talk about railway safety and the Champlain Bridge during a debate on a budget implementation bill, it makes no sense.

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague if any of the members opposite have ever visited Longueuil or Brossard. A toll bridge to get there is unthinkable. Half of the people on that side work in Montreal, and nearly as many travel in the opposite direction. It is totally absurd.

The Conservatives claim to know everything there is to know about economics. Over the past few years, people have invested hundreds of millions of dollars in businesses on the south shore. That is how the economy developed. If, all of a sudden, people have to pay a huge toll to cross the bridge, we can kiss those Conservative buzzwords, job creation and long-term prosperity, goodbye.

I would like my colleague to comment further on that.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question. Chambly—Borduas is the third-largest riding in Quebec by population. Two of the five municipalities with the highest birth rates in 2012 are in my riding. One of the three municipalities with the highest population growth rates in 2011 is in my riding. With all due respect to my colleagues from Montreal, that speaks volumes about the growth taking place in the suburbs, in places like my riding.

That is why we are concerned, and so are our chambers of commerce. The statistics I just shared suggest that people want to settle in my riding, raise their families there and participate in the community and the local economy. If the government creates more and more obstacles to make it harder to get into Montreal, that is extremely problematic.

In the lead-up to his question, my colleague asked if any of the members opposite had ever visited my riding. The answer is no, and that is why we are so disappointed in the Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs.

[English]

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is certainly a pleasure for me to highlight some of the key measures in the federal budget, the economic action plan 2014. It is entitled “The Road to Balance: Creating Jobs and Opportunities”. It was recently tabled by the Minister of Finance.

Those are two very important aspects of the plan to ensure that indeed there are continuing jobs and continuing long-term prosperity in Canada.

This is the government's tenth budget since 2006. I have been here for each of the years of the budgets after that. Over that period, our country has been confronted by some unprecedented global and economic challenges from beyond our borders. We have certainly had to take action as a result.

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In good time and bad times, we have never strayed from our commitment to strengthen our economy for all Canadians, with the determination to see our plan through without raising taxes—and that is an important aspect of it—while at the same time addressing of the deficit. Those are important pillars in keeping our economy strong and ensuring that we do well in the long term.

As was mentioned a number of times here today, Canada is leading the global economic recovery. The fact is that over one million net new jobs have been created in Canada, over 85% of them full time and nearly 80% in the private sector. Those areas are very important. That is where we are creating the jobs.

This has all happened since the end of the recession in July 2009. Over this period, this is the strongest job growth in the entire G7 by far.

Canadians have also enjoyed the strongest income growth in the G7. Canada is the only G7 country to have more than fully recovered business investment loss during the recession.

It is important that we keep on track for balancing the budget. Before the global recession hit, our government paid down \$37 billion in debt, bringing Canada's debt to its lowest level in 25 years.

Members will remember that there was a discussion about what we should do with the extra funds that were available, and a decision was made to pay down the debt. That was in advance of the global recession that was to take place. We now find that was a very wise thing to do. That aggressive debt reduction and fiscal responsibility and good planning put Canada in the best position possible to weather the global recession.

When the global recession hit, we made a deliberate decision to run a temporary deficit to protect our economy and jobs. I was there when that discussion was held as well. Would we go into deficit in order to preserve our economy, in order to create jobs? The answer was that we would indeed go into deficit, fairly significantly, but in the short term and with a plan to return to balance. Those monies were not placed or spent by putting them on some big dark black hole. The money was utilized primarily to create infrastructure.

Infrastructure was indeed needed to create jobs. In fact, infrastructure is the backbone for our economy. Businesses that want to invest and expand require infrastructure to move products to the port, especially if they are in central Canada. They require electricity. They require highways. All those kinds of things are necessary. That money was invested in infrastructure and certainly helped to create jobs in the short term, but it also ensured our economic prosperity in the longer term.

While other countries continue to struggle with debt that is spiralling out of control, Canada remains in a most enviable fiscal position among the G7 countries.

Our Conservative government remains on track to return to balanced budgets in 2015-16. Specifically, economic action plan 2014 announced that the deficit is expected to decline to \$2.9 billion in 2014-15 and that a surplus of over \$6 billion is expected in 2015-16, even after taking into account a \$3 billion annual adjustment for risk.

For all intents and purposes, the budget is balanced, and we are going to announce a surplus.

● (1720)

At the same time, federal transfers that provide important income support to individuals, such as old age security and employment insurance, and major transfers to other levels of government, including those for social programs and health care, have continued to grow.

Budget 2014 also builds on these efforts to reduce wasteful and ineffective government spending by announcing an additional \$9.1 billion in ongoing savings. It is not just a question of creating a climate by keeping taxes low to ensure that income is earned and taxes are paid; it is also important to ensure that we do not spend wastefully or operate ineffectively.

We have made public service sector wages and benefits affordable for taxpayers by ensuring that compensation is fair and in line with other public and private sector employers. We have improved the fairness of the tax system by closing tax loopholes and strengthening tax enforcement to ensure low taxes for all taxpayers, not only a select few.

In addition, we have controlled the size and cost of government by freezing departmental budgets to ensure efficiency in government operations and administration. I know it is difficult to do. Once we start doing that, there are a lot of complaints that we are starting to require more efficiency to ensure that we can operate better. It is like a culture that sets in, asking if we can do more with less. Once that starts happening, the amount that is saved ends up being a significant portion. It is not just a saving in the short term; the savings continue to accumulate as the years go forward. It is important for that to happen.

Overall, since 2010, actions that we have taken to make government more effective and efficient are saving taxpayers roughly \$19 billion a year, which over a number of years amounts to a significant saving to Canadian taxpayers. At the same time, since 2006 we have increased transfers by over 50% to an all-time high of about \$65 billion in 2014-15.

As I said, another important pillar in ensuring that the economy continues to do as well as it has is keeping taxes low. Unlike what some others would suggest, our Conservative government believes in low taxes and in leaving more money where it belongs: in the pockets of hard-working Canadians and Canadian families and in job-creating businesses.

Indeed, as has been mentioned here in the House before, we have cut taxes nearly 160 times, reducing the overall tax burden to the lowest level it has been in 50 years. We have cut taxes in every way that government collects them, including personal tax, consumption tax, business tax, excise tax, and more. In fact, our strong record of tax relief has meant savings of nearly \$3,400 for a typical family of four in 2014.

We cut the lowest personal income tax rate to 15%. That was welcomed by all Canadians. We increased the amount that Canadians can earn without paying any tax at all so that low-income earners would not have to pay tax.

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We introduced pension income splitting for seniors. As we all know, we reduced the GST from 7% to 5%, placing more than \$1,000 back into the pockets of the average family.

We introduced and enhanced the working income tax benefit to ensure that low-income earners could earn more and keep more in their pockets. That has been well received, and the enhancement has certainly done well for lower-income earners.

We introduced the tax-free savings account, the most important personal savings vehicle since the RRSP.

We reduced the small business tax rate from 12% to 11%. We steadily lowered the general business tax rate from 21% to 15%. When someone looks to invest in Canada, whether they are a business person, a corporation, or an entrepreneur, having a good tax climate is important in deciding to either expand a business or invest in a new business.

Overall, we have also removed over one million low-income Canadians from the tax rolls altogether.

• (1725)

Of course, the final point I want to talk about is investing in communities and infrastructure. It is an interesting area.

• (1730)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague opposite for his speech.

I would like to mention that Bill C-31 is massive. The Conservatives have once again introduced an omnibus bill. What is more, the Conservatives are once again muzzling the other members and refusing to let them talk. The Conservatives have imposed closure. Unfortunately, not all members will have an opportunity to speak to this bill, which contains so many things that it is impossible to cover them all in a 10-minute speech.

I would like my colleague opposite to tell us whether they will introduce any more of these omnibus bills amending legislation that has nothing to do with the budget. Why are the Conservatives systematically refusing to discuss bills and stifling debate in the House?

[*English*]

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Speaker, I have been in the House for the better part of today, and I have not seen anyone muzzled or kept from speaking.

Members have been able to speak on any aspect of the budget that they want to. In fact, many of the comments have little to do with what is in the budget.

As for saying that it is a gigantic bill, of course, anything that is affected by way of spending money or providing a service is obviously the type of activity that would be implemented in the budget. This one is no different from ones in the past. It is certainly appropriate to deal with matters that affect the economy and that affect the budget and the spending of taxpayers' dollars in a comprehensive tax implementation bill. That is how it gets done.

There is much debate in the budget itself, which sets out the parameters of what would be done. There was debate on that, as well. This is one of two budget implementation bills, and there is freedom to speak on this also.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the member says that this is the way it is done, I think it is important that we recognize that this is not the way it has been done traditionally.

It is only since we have had the Reform-Conservative majority government that we have seen such massive budget implementation bills. That is an important point that I think needs to be recognized.

My question to the member is in regard to the median average household income. There we have seen a hundred dollar annual increase going to the middle class. The middle class are the people we should be truly caring about inside this House, and we have seen a hundred dollar increase. If we take the 20% at the other end of that spectrum, it is actually a decrease of about \$500.

My question to the member is very simple. Why does he believe that this Conservative government has failed so badly in terms of addressing the issues of the middle class in Canada today?

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure how the member is defining the middle class.

I can say that an average family of four is saving at least \$3,200 in income taxes. Not only are they saving dollars in income tax and putting more money in their pocket, but we have provided a whole range of services with respect to skills training for youth, for older people, and for those transitioning to jobs, into the millions of dollars.

We have helped students by ensuring that they have the ability to get a student loan, that they can qualify for student loans with higher incomes. We have said that while students are going to school, they can continue to work.

In fact, when we start adding up all the things we have done, we have actually enhanced the position of taxpayers exponentially compared to when we took over from the previous Liberal government in the last number of years.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to work with my colleague on the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

At the time, he was the committee chair. I imagine that he must remember that we studied the apprenticeship programs and we recommended that the government include apprenticeship programs in federal infrastructure projects. Unfortunately, that is not in the budget.

I would like to ask him whether he is disappointed by this omission in the building Canada plan that is outlined in the budget.

• (1735)

[English]

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Speaker, we have maybe not done the specific thing that the member speaks of, but we have done a number of things for apprentices. We had the apprenticeship incentive grant, the completion incentive grant, the tradesperson tools deduction, and the apprenticeship job creation tax grant. We have taken a number of initiatives in the trades and a number of initiatives for apprentices.

Can more be done? I am sure there is more that can be done, but we have had significant improvements in that area, and I know apprentices have really appreciated that.

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak out against the budget implementation bill, Bill C-31.

I am against this bill and I am going to try to state the reasons why as quickly as possible in the 10 minutes that I have to speak. Various measures in this bill affect the people of Laval and, today, I am speaking on their behalf.

First, I would like to talk about debt. My colleagues would be very surprised to know how many people write to me every month to share their concerns about our debt. Many people are concerned about the way their money is being spent at the municipal, provincial and federal levels. People know how to count. They expect politicians to spend the money that is available to the different levels of government wisely, and I understand that.

The federal debt went from \$582.2 billion in 2011-12 to \$627.4 billion in 2013-14 and, according to projections, it will reach \$634 billion in 2014-15. What is more, there is no reason to believe that the Conservative government will achieve the surpluses it expects given how much the deficit has grown over the past few years.

I therefore believe that the members on the other side of the House should take the debt issue a bit more seriously and deal with it head-on. According to our numbers and forecasts, this is a very serious situation. Our national debt has increased significantly.

Furthermore, I am still extremely disappointed in the Conservatives' lack of commitment to community organizations and particularly the lack of funding given to these organizations across the country. I cannot mention them all because it would take me much longer than 10 minutes. I could spend a whole day listing them.

As an aside, I would like to talk about the chronic lack of funding for amateur sport. As a result of decisions made regarding the building Canada fund, the federal government was going to help fund an arena for amateur sport in Laval, but at the last minute it decided to back out of the project. We never found out exactly why. That is just one example.

In fact, other amateur sports organizations get very little funding. I am thinking, for example, of Josée Lepage, executive director of the Club de gymnastique Laval Excellence, which continues to work miracles with very few resources. The government is not there to help finance the work needed to maintain the organization's

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facilities, which costs \$35,000. That does not even include the operating budget, which is practically non-existent.

There is another element that affects both the people of Laval and Canadians in all of our ridings. I am talking about funding for cadet corps, which help young people immensely. The young people I met in Alfred—Pellan are involved in community organizations and do volunteer work. For example, they help out at spaghetti suppers and are always there to lend a hand.

In addition, they successfully find ways to raise money for other community organizations, by packing groceries and so on. The people who work in cadet corps are very dedicated, and that includes not only the youth who often become civilian instructors, but also all the officers and civilian instructors.

Because of the current lack of funding for cadet corps services, some people basically use their salary to help pay for activities. I am thinking about Major Felix Macia, from the 2567 Dunkerque cadet corps in Laval, who uses his meagre officer's salary to pay for his cadets' activities.

This budget should have done more to address the challenges facing youth organizations. People can work miracles with very little.

• (1740)

The riding of Alfred-Pellan is an urban but highly agricultural riding on the island of Laval; its economy is largely based on many small and medium-sized businesses. They are a key part of the economy of the eastern part of Laval.

I was very disappointed to see the lack of action for small businesses in this budget and to realize that we will have to wait for the next budget, in the coming year, before small-business owners will see their tax rate drop. They asked for this relief years ago. Ottawa has already granted that privilege to big businesses but refused to do the same for small businesses. Under the Conservative government, the tax rate for big business dropped from 22% to 15% in order to kick-start investment. The government seems to be willing to show some flexibility with small businesses, but we need to wait for the next budget, during an election year, for that to happen. They are simply insulting people who own small and medium-sized businesses.

Where I come from, we are proud of our small and medium businesses. One that comes to mind is the Dolce Pane bakery in Saint-François, which makes cakes with dulce de leche. Just thinking about it makes my mouth water. Another is Ongles Royal at the Centre Duvernay, where amazing, incredibly gentle and polite women work every day. Another is Démen-Ciel, a restaurant in Saint-Vincent-de-Paul, where an absolutely charming couple, executive chef Éric Côté and pastry chef-host Sophie Lapointe, devote themselves to serving local products every day. Au Féminin in Vimont is a clothing boutique run by Chantal Côté and her team that sells only clothes made in Quebec. These are extremely dedicated people who have small businesses with five, 10 or 20 employees. If the government wants to help the economy, it has to help our small and medium businesses.

Government Orders

I also wanted to talk about youth unemployment. Even though 1.3 million Canadians are unemployed, this budget contains not a single significant measure to tackle that problem. In January 2014 in Laval, the unemployment rate was 5.7%. In Quebec, it was 7.5%. This problem hits younger Canadians hardest; their unemployment rate is 2.4 times higher. Statistics Canada's comprehensive study of youth unemployment dynamics found that, in 2012, the unemployment rate among youth aged 15 to 24 was 14.3%, while it was just 6% among adults aged 25 to 54 and those over 55.

I am thinking about the young people in Saint-François who are going through a very difficult time and who are even more isolated than the other young people in Laval. They are having a hard time finding work. The young people in Auteuil and Vimont are also struggling to find work even though they are highly educated. Youth employment has never recovered since the 2008 recession. What is more, young people are twice as likely as adults to be laid off. Young workers with low seniority are at greater risk of being laid off by their employer. The sectors that are most affected are construction, manufacturing, retail sales, and hospitality and food services. This budget proposes far too little for young, unemployed Canadians across the country.

I would like to close by talking about arts and culture. In Alfred-Pellan, arts and culture are important to the community. Just look at all the agencies that work in arts and culture in Laval, such as Choeur Chanterelle du Collège Laval, La Chorale le 400, Corporation Rose-Art, Société littéraire de Laval, St-Vincent de Paul Art Gallery, Maison des arts de Laval, Galerie du Ruisseau, le Pépin d'Art, and the list goes on.

As far as culture is concerned, the budget earmarks \$105 million in ongoing funding for a number of cultural funds such as the Canada arts presentation fund, the Canada book fund, and the Canada music fund. It should be noted that in all three cases, the allocated funding is not as high as the actual expenditures for those programs for 2012-13.

For its part, the Canada media fund is to end in 2014-15. There is nothing in the budget for now, which is causing some uncertainty and concern among culture stakeholders.

• (1745)

I just want to mention very quickly that the Mayor of Laval, Marc Demers, laments the federal government's disengagement when it comes to social housing. I totally agree with him because there are no measures for social housing. I hope to be able to address this point during questions and comments.

Again, I must say that I am opposed to this omnibus bill. The NDP will keep fighting for a fairer, greener, and more prosperous Canada.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I too believe that housing is a critically important issue, no matter where one lives in Canada. For example, our current housing stock needs to be renovated. I made reference to the impact of consecutive Conservative budgets on the middle class and people not necessarily being able to afford essential home repairs, for example. The idea of housing co-ops, life leases for people aged 55 plus, infill housing in older communities across Canada, non-profit housing, and making

sure that all Canadians have sound housing, which is one of the basic essentials, are all critically important in Canada. The budget falls short in addressing those many issues.

The member indicated that she would like to comment more on housing. Perhaps she could provide her other thoughts.

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Mr. Speaker, I think that the lack of social housing measures is extremely important in terms of the budget and what the federal government can do. Budget 2014 does not offer anything tangible to help with housing. It does not have any objectives, timetables or specific commitments to develop a long-term social housing plan.

I am relying on what Mayor Demers said, but the Federation of Canadian Municipalities has also sounded the alarm for the Conservative government.

Funding for social housing will drop by about \$1.5 billion over the next five years, as federal investments start to expire. That is in addition to the lack of a long-term plan and lack of leadership on the part of the Conservative government.

[English]

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have heard of shortfalls in social housing and of infrastructure that has been delayed for decades, particularly in Quebec. We have been seeing the news reports of the problems in infrastructure there. We can take it back to the government's obsession with corporate tax cuts. It took \$30 billion out of our country's annual budget in its first couple of years in government. Over the last four to five years, if we had had that revenue and had it going forward, social housing would be something we could address.

The question I have is about the relationship between the municipalities, the provincial governments and the federal government. It seems to me to be toxic. When they try to come together on various issues, it does not seem to be working. What is the member's experience, relative to opinions in her area, with regard to how the federal government does not work properly with other levels of government?

• (1750)

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. He is getting at the crux of the problem when he talks about the toxic relationships—which is an interesting word to use—or the lack of relationship between municipalities in Quebec and the federal government. This is quite evident here; the issue of social housing and the Conservative government's lack of commitment is only one of many examples.

Government Orders

As I mentioned earlier in my speech, the government made promises to Laval about building a large arena to serve a number of community and sports organizations in the city. The people had been waiting for that for years. The federal government promised to invest with the building Canada fund and to pay for its share of the project. Unfortunately, the Conservatives abandoned the idea. That is unbelievable and it is just one example.

As my colleague mentioned, there are infrastructure problems all across the country. Montreal has a glaring infrastructure problem, in both the inner areas and outlying suburbs. A few years ago, the de la Concorde overpass unfortunately collapsed onto highway 19 in Alfred-Pellan, killing about 10 people. Another overpass collapsed in Laval, the Boulevard du Souvenir overpass, which is a little further west in Laval. We have serious problems and investments are needed. We need the Conservative government to sit down and talk with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to come up with solutions to this problem.

[*English*]

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to address the House on Bill C-31, the budget implementation act for budget 2014.

Life is a people business, and nowhere is that a truer maxim than in politics. A number of years ago, I decided to stand for election for reasons that most of us did, and that was to make the country a little bit better for everyone.

The last five years have been challenging for our country, even though we have weathered the recent economic storms relatively well since 2008.

Much has been made of the fact that budget 2014 puts the federal budget on a clear path to balance next year, and we in the government are very pleased and proud of that fact. However, I would like to highlight some other measures that Bill C-31 implements.

This budget implementation legislation makes improvements to the lives and economic well-being of Canadians from coast to coast. That, after all, is why we are here. We might disagree with each other on how to improve the lives of Canadians, but we all want to make things better, regardless of where we sit.

For my part, I know that budget 2014 and the measures in it would make a difference in the lives of Canadians, and particularly in the lives of my constituents. I would like to highlight some of these measures in Bill C-31 that would help our families and communities.

We all know that we face an aging population situation and that with aging comes health-related challenges. Budget 2014 expands health-related tax relief under the HST/GST and the income tax system to reflect the health care needs of Canadians. We are committed to ensuring that the tax system is representative of the changing nature of the health care system and the health care needs of Canadians.

In economic action plan 2014, the list of eligible expenses under the medical expense tax credit would now include costs associated with service animals specially trained to assist individuals with severe diabetes. These are diabetes alert dogs.

Additionally, budget 2014 would provide further tax recognition of costs associated with specially designed medical therapies and training. These costs would be addressed by expanding the current HST/GST exemption for training that is specially designed to aid those Canadians coping with a disorder or a disability. Budget 2014 would now exempt services for designing these particular training plans. The amounts paid for the design of an individualized therapy plan would also be considered an eligible expense for income tax purposes under the medical expense tax credit.

The services of acupuncturists and naturopathic doctors would also be exempted from the GST/HST.

Furthermore, eyewear specially designed to electronically enhance the vision of individuals with vision impairment that was supplied on the order of a physician or other specified health professional would also be added to the list of GST/HST-free medical and assistive devices.

These changes to the medical expense tax credit would apply to expenses incurred after 2013. While these measures are not large or expansive, they are recognition by our government that the expenses of Canadians are changing, and the tax system needs to change with them.

Another measure for budget 2014 I would like to highlight is the increase in the maximum allowed for the adoption expense tax credit to help make adoption more affordable for Canadians.

There are many Canadians out there who would make phenomenal parents, but for whatever reason, they are not able to have children. Equally, there are many children out there who are put up for adoption and need loving families, parents, and safe homes to go to, since for whatever reason, their biological parents are simply not able to take care of them properly.

I believe that no one would argue with me that we want all Canadian children to be in safe, loving homes with parents who care for them and their well-being. For some Canadians, adoption is the only road to parenthood. As such, I believe that we should help Canadians adopt children, and that is what budget 2014 does.

The adoption process however, can be costly for potential parents. Currently the adoption tax expense credit provides a tax credit of up to a maximum of \$11,774 in expenses per child for 2014. To increase tax recognition of adoption-related expenses for things such as adoption agency fees and legal fees, budget 2014 would increase the maximum amount of the credit to \$15,000. This change would apply to adoptions finalized after 2013. Normal indexation would apply to the new maximum amount for taxation years after 2014. By increasing the adoption expense tax credit to \$15,000, we would be providing further tax relief for Canadian parents who want to adopt and would be recognizing the unique costs that arise from adopting a child.

Budget 2014 would also help parents in another critical area. It would enhance access to sickness benefits for claimants who receive parents of critically ill children and compassionate care benefits. Sometimes, when Canadians get sick, they might be unable to care for family members who are seriously ill or injured.

Government Orders

• (1755)

Our government is committed to ensuring fairness in employment insurance programs, to make sure they continue helping Canadians when they need it most. Budget 2014 would build on previous enhancements to the EI sickness benefits for parental benefit claimants, and would commit \$2.4 million over two years and \$1.2 million ongoing per year to enhance access to sickness benefits. This would be for claimants who receive parents of critically ill children and compassionate care benefits. These enhancements would allow claimants who are temporarily away from work to take care of a critically ill or injured child or gravely ill family member at significant risk of death to temporarily suspend their claims in order to access sickness benefits should they themselves fall sick or become injured. This is good, common sense change and speaks to the compassion of Canadians for one another.

Last, I would like to speak to another measure from budget 2014 that demonstrates the care Canadians have for one another. Speaking from personal experience, I know that Canadians have a great volunteer spirit, and that spirit is very evident in the great city of Edmonton, which I have the honour to represent in this House. I have been privileged to live in many areas of Canada, and I have never seen a city with the volunteer spirit that Edmontonians demonstrate every day and that results in Edmonton staging many large international events with spectacular results.

Canadians volunteer for many great causes, and the one that many people volunteer for is search and rescue. These Canadians volunteer in this role on the ground, in the air, and on the water.

In budget 2011, our government introduced the volunteer firefighters tax credit to recognize the important role that volunteer firefighters play in many Canadian communities. Search and rescue volunteers are another group of quiet heroes in Canada. They put themselves at risk to serve their communities by volunteering for ground, air, and marine search and rescue groups. They do this in support of the Canadian Coast Guard, police, and other agencies. These volunteers are a very important part of the emergency response system, and they provide a source of well-organized, well-trained, and well-equipped volunteers in the event of a natural disaster or large-scale emergency.

To honour these quiet heroes, budget 2014 announced a 15% non-refundable search and rescue volunteers tax credit on an amount of \$3,000 for ground, air, and marine search and rescue volunteers. This credit would be available to search and rescue volunteers who perform at least 200 hours of combined eligible search and rescue services and volunteer firefighting services in a given year. They would be able to choose between the volunteer firefighters tax credit and the new tax credit. Those search and rescue volunteers who currently receive honoraria in respect to their duties as emergency service volunteers would also be able to choose between the new tax credit and the existing tax exemption of up to \$1,000 for honoraria. This measure would apply for the 2014 tax year and subsequent years, and it is an excellent way to honour the heroes of our local communities.

All these measures I have mentioned would help Canadians and their families. They would make life a bit easier and a bit less expensive, help Canadians become parents, and honour our local

heroes. These measures reflect the values of Canadians: compassion, caring for others and those in need, and volunteerism, to name a few. These are values that should be reflected in our federal budgets, and budget 2014 does exactly that. It reflects truly Canadian values.

It has been an honour to address the House on such an important piece of legislation as the budget implementation bill. I look forward to answering questions from my colleagues on both sides of the House, and I truly look forward to casting my vote in favour of Bill C-31.

• (1800)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech.

This bill contains dozens and hundreds of pages on various pieces of legislation. Does my colleague not find it incredible that so many laws will be affected by a budget implementation bill, laws that have absolutely nothing to do with implementing the budget? The Conservatives have already done the same thing over the past few years. Once again, they have introduced the same kind of budget implementation bill.

As a parliamentarian, does he not think that muzzling other MPs and limiting the time for debate constitutes an attack on democracy?

[*English*]

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Speaker, what I find unbelievable is that some members, not necessarily this member, have difficulty grasping that budgets and government responsibilities are extremely complex and wide-ranging.

With respect to muzzling, we have been here listening to debate today and other days, and I have not heard or seen anybody being muzzled. In fact, if they would talk about things that are actually in the budget implementation bill, rather than their concerns for political points, then we might all get a bit further and they might actually get more of their points put out, instead of just complaining about it.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is about the search and rescue part of the member's speech. He mentioned that these measures in the budget implementation bill are for Canadians and their families. Clearly when there is a non-refundable search and rescue tax credit, there will be family members who are doing search and rescue, putting in those volunteer hours, and helping to keep their communities safe, but they may not have enough other income to qualify for a tax credit.

I would ask the member this: given the importance of this activity, why would he cut out the Canadians and families who are not able to claim a tax credit because of their low income?

Government Orders

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for thinking that I have the power to cut things out, which of course I do not. It is a team effort.

Simply put, there are a lot of tax credits. We have brought in many tax credits over the last number of years. This is just the latest one. They are all designed to give some financial relief to those who contribute to their communities in a variety of ways and who make taxable income. That income can then be reduced based on the wide variety of tax credits we have brought in.

Every measure does not apply to every member of society. There is a balance across the board. That is why we have done things like taking a million Canadians completely off the tax rolls. It is not that every measure has to apply to every Canadian. That is not the way it works.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague whether he really thinks that in a bill that is 362 pages long and one-inch thick it is really reasonable to include a pile of legislation and subjects that have nothing to do with one another. Can he really look me in the eye and say that he thinks that this is appropriate?

[*English*]

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Speaker, looking my colleague in the eye, through you, I would repeat that the business of government, of finance, of budgets is very complex and interrelated. Although some things may not seem budget-related to him or to other members, virtually everything the government does is budget-related in some fashion. Virtually everything we do or anything any government does is an attempt to find ways to do things better and more efficiently. That may not have a direct dollar figure on it in a budget bill, but there is a connection and an interrelationship between all of those things the government does.

• (1805)

[*Translation*]

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to this bill. Clearly, as you know, the Liberals will vote against it.

I will start with the temporary foreign worker program. Three hours after question period, I moved a motion in the House that, unfortunately, did not receive unanimous consent. However, that motion reflects our point of view on this program.

[*English*]

What I tried to do in this motion, which did not receive unanimous consent, was to propose that the section of the budget implementation bill having to do with fines being imposed on those who break the laws regarding temporary foreign workers be removed from this bill and passed immediately through all stages of the process, thereby becoming effective immediately. This would provide another tool in the kit for the government, which is seeking to punish, so to speak, employers who are breaking the rules on temporary foreign workers.

The government did not like that. I guess it does not like the principle of breaking up its huge omnibus bill, no matter how much sense that might make. However, this would have given the

government the tools right away to deal with this problem. This illustrates the more general point that while we in the Liberal Party agree that the temporary foreign worker program should exist, we also believe that the government has been incredibly irresponsible in allowing the number of temporary foreign workers to more than double, from approximately 150,000 or 160,000 people when the Liberals were in government, to well over 300,000 today.

As we know from examples involving my former employer, the Royal Bank, and also a mine in British Columbia, there have certainly been abuses of this program. Now the government has created its own mess and is trying to fix it. Liberals believe that many thousands of jobs that have been occupied by temporary foreign workers should have gone to Canadians in need of work. That is becoming more evident. It was evident from the public response to the situation involving McDonald's in Victoria.

We think the Conservatives should never have gotten into this in the first place. However, now that they have a mess to clean up, we think they should have accepted our motion so they could have imposed fines right away, rather than waiting weeks and weeks until this massive budget implementation bill finally passes through both Houses and becomes law.

[*Translation*]

According to what I have heard, the NDP wants to abolish the temporary foreign worker program, which would be really stupid if that were true. That shows that the New Democrats' attitude and economic policy are devoid of any common sense.

Experience has shown that in some sectors, including agriculture, this has been a useful and vital program for decades. There is absolutely no question that we want to keep this program. However, under the Conservatives, the numbers have shot up irresponsibly. Therefore, we want to put limits on the program, not abolish it.

[*English*]

The danger of this program is that it risks taking us away from Canada's long-held immigration system, where people come in with their families, become citizens, have children, vote in elections, and have grandchildren. That is how most of us, if not all of us, came to this country. By having massive numbers of temporary foreign workers, who are not in many cases qualified to be here but are taking other Canadians' jobs, we are gravitating toward a Europe-style, a Switzerland-style guest worker system, where people come in for a couple of years and then are shipped out again. That is not and never has been the Canadian way, but I fear that is the way the government is taking us.

• (1810)

I would like to spend the rest of my limited time on two other immigration-related issues.

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The first issue is the immigration investor program. I believe there are approximately 20,000 applicants to the program who would be unceremoniously dumped by this bill. Yes, they would get their fees back, but in many cases they have been waiting many years to come into this country on the basis of this program. All of a sudden they are cut off at the knees and have absolutely no possibility of coming to Canada under the terms of that program. It is perhaps coincidental, but it is a fact that a very high proportion of these people happen to be from China. Naturally, they are not at all happy about this development.

I would be the first to acknowledge that the program, which I believe was brought forward in the Mulroney years, was imperfect. It had deficiencies and things that should have been fixed. Instead of \$800,000, which the people get back, maybe it should be \$8 million. Maybe there should be a requirement for real job creation. Maybe this, maybe that. We do not have the resources of the government to design a precise program.

My point is that rather than cutting these people off at the knees and throwing them out the window, the government should first develop an improved version of the program and give those who were already applicants in the old program the option of transferring to the new program. That would be fair. That would be better for Canada, because those people are likely to make a major contribution to the country, especially if the requirements imposed on them are more onerous and more favourable to this country.

Therefore, rather than proposing a little pilot program, which the Conservatives do not define and for which we have no idea of when, if ever, will happen, the government should have done its homework first and reformed the existing program, giving the applicants to the old program the opportunity to apply to the new program. That would be the way to move our system forward in an efficient and effective manner, primarily for the sake of Canada but also for the sake of those who waited many years and spent many dollars to apply to come to this country.

Finally, I will speak to another provision in the bill. This provision would extend to 20 years, rather than 10 years, the time that has to elapse before a newcomer is eligible for GIS.

[*Translation*]

The poorest seniors will now have to wait 20 years instead of 10 in order to be eligible for this benefit.

[*English*]

This is a subset of a more general issue. The government has decided that instead of sponsors being required to look after their parents for 10 years, they will have to look after them for an extended period of 20 years. In today's volatile economy, it seems to me that this is an unreasonable imposition. One does not know over a period of 20 years whether one will lose one's job or whether other unfortunate things might happen.

The bottom line is that in imposing these changes, the government is rationing the number of parents and grandparents to be allowed into the country according to the income and wealth of those who are applying. I think it is a very restrictive approach and I do not think it reflects the long, positive Canadian traditions in the area of immigration.

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am always amazed by the vast ignorance demonstrated by the member opposite on these matters.

The member just suggested that this government created the temporary foreign worker program. Let me be clear. What we call the temporary foreign worker program is essentially issuing work permits to foreign nationals coming to Canada. This has always existed.

In fact, the particular dimension of the program to which the member objected—namely, permitting general low-skilled workers or foreign nationals with permits to work, for example, in the restaurant business—was introduced in 2004 when he was in the cabinet. He sat around the cabinet table to introduce the general low-skilled stream about which he is now complaining.

We have not broadened the policy framework of the TFW program since coming to office. To the contrary, as any of the industry groups will tell him, we have constrained those parameters. As the president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business says, the worst thing our government has done is to make it so difficult to bring in TFWs.

The flow of TFWs coming to Canada has gone from 0.7% of workforce to 1.1% of workforce since 2005. In other words, 99% of people in the Canadian workforce are either citizens or permanent residents. We have not changed that in any meaningful way.

Finally, on the GIS, is the member suggesting that Canadian taxpayers should be responsible for the social costs of bringing seniors to Canada who have never lived here, paid taxes, or worked in the country? Certainly, we will be—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Markham—Unionville.

• (1815)

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the second question, the answer is not at all, and that is not at all what I said.

The minister can use all the vitriol and negative language he wishes, but he really misses the point. It is not so much that I am the one who is devoid of facts or knowledge; it is him, by virtue of some of the things he just said.

The point is not the point he makes. The point is that under a Liberal government, as I said in my speech, we had approximately 150,000 people. Contrary to the NDP, which wants no temporary foreign workers, we are conscious of the need for them in agriculture and other high-skill areas. We have nothing against the program in principle.

What we do object to is the irresponsible doubling of the number of such people, more than doubling, by the Conservatives, under the leadership of the minister, and bringing in people wildly inappropriately and causing scandals in a number of well-known companies. Now they have cooked their own stew, and he is doing his best to extricate himself. If he had accepted the motion I proposed—

Government Orders

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. We need some time for other members.

The hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what the member for Markham—Unionville just said is not true. It is not true that the NDP is opposed to the temporary foreign worker program. What the NDP is opposed to, and we have often spoken to the minister about it, is the possibility that temporary foreign workers could be hired instead of our workers, who want to work and who are available to work. They should be hired before foreign workers.

However, let us not forget that under the Liberal government, people who worked in Prince Edward Island's agriculture industry for six months and then went home to their country for six months never became permanent residents in Canada. They wanted to stay here in Canada. That was under his government in 2004 and 2005. The same thing is happening here today.

Is the member saying that we need to bring in temporary foreign workers when unemployment is at 16% and there are people who want to work and to receive the training they need to get jobs in Canada? Is that what he is saying?

Is it not true. The NDP is not against temporary foreign workers. However, we are opposed to the idea of having them come here when our workers have no work. I would like him to acknowledge that before the House of Commons.

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, given what the member just said, perhaps the NDP members have changed their minds and now agree with the Liberals' policy. If so, I congratulate them because we have said pretty much the same thing he just said. We are not opposed to the program in general, but we are not okay with letting foreign workers come here to take Canadians' jobs. That is what I just said and what he just said.

At the same time, in the agricultural sector, as I said—though he may not agree—I know there is a need for these foreign workers, and in some cases, we would like these temporary workers to become permanent workers in Canada and eventually Canadian citizens.

[*English*]

Mr. Rob Clarke (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, those of us in the Harper government are immensely proud of economic action plan 2014, and for good reason.

Once again, our government has delivered for Canadians while making plans to return to a balanced budget in the short term. Under our Conservative government's financial stewardship, Canada has seen the strongest job growth rate among G7 countries. Canada is the only G7 country to receive a triple-A credit rating from all major reporting agencies, thanks to our government's sound economic policies. Canada's net debt to GDP ratio is, by far, the strongest among the G7 countries.

In short, our Conservative government has steered Canada through a worldwide economic storm and come out on the other side stronger and better equipped for the future than any other nation.

It should come as no surprise that economic action plan 2014 delivers for Canada's aboriginal community, a segment of the population that, for obvious reasons, is very close to my heart.

A quality education is more important than ever in today's global marketplace. Economic action plan 2014 allocates \$1.9 billion to first nations education. In addition, new funding of \$500 million for building and renovating schools on first nations, set to begin in 2015-16, is confirmed in our new education infrastructure fund.

These investments in learning will manifest themselves not only in new schools and improved staffing, but also in building a stronger future for first nations communities and Canada itself. With quality education, first nations members will participate more fully in the world economy, providing benefits to all segments of our nation's population. Improving first nations education improves Canada.

Canada's national disaster mitigation program has been funded, to the tune of \$200 million. This fund allows our government to mitigate the effects of catastrophic situations affecting Canadian communities through the assessment of risks and the implementation of measures to eliminate those risks.

These disaster elimination protocols are vigorously applied on Canada's first nations, but an additional \$40 million has been set aside for on-reserve emergency management. Those of us living in northern Saskatchewan are too familiar with the disasters that can affect first nations, such as floods, fires, severe weather, and power outages. The on-reserve emergency management framework for Canada provides crisis funding to assist in combatting the effects of these disasters, including search and rescue efforts, and action to reduce the impact of community infrastructure failures such as bridge collapses.

The funding agreements between Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada and Canada's provincial governments ensure that first nations communities have comparable emergency services to non-aboriginal communities in the same province. This system provides assurance to provincial governments that Aboriginal Affairs will provide funds to cover emergency costs, ensuring rapid responses from provincial authorities. First nations deserve the same level of care as all other communities, and measures such as the on-reserve emergency management framework for Canada are helping to make this a reality.

With a young and vibrant populace, Canada's first nations members are entering the workforce in record numbers. Our Conservative government's job creation strategy has been wildly successful, with more than one million jobs created since 2009.

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Education programs targeted at aboriginal Canadians are helping place first nations members in high-paying, high-demand jobs. With so many bright, young first nations members entering the workforce with skills in high-demand fields, we are growing that workforce at a record rate. We are reversing the near criminal neglect of a valuable segment of our workforce by helping aboriginal Canadians get the education and skills necessary to compete in the global economy.

For too long, we have recklessly squandered the talents of our first nations citizens, and our government is now taking concrete steps to address this shameful situation, allowing first nations citizens to fulfill their potential.

A healthy Canada is one in which we recognize and reward the skills of its citizens. Now that first nations members are finally getting a toehold in the workforce, there is no holding us back. By forging strong ties to our aboriginal communities, our Conservative government is now showing that working together makes us all stronger.

● (1820)

Violence against women is a concern for all segments of our Canadian society.

Often living in remote areas, traditionally without much in the way of support or protection, aboriginal women and girls will benefit from the renewal of our government's addressing violence against aboriginal women and girls program. This effort continues our government's mission to address the alarmingly high number of missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls. This initiative has made possible the creation of the National Centre for Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains.

Enhancements to our government's victims fund will ensure that aboriginal victims and their families as well as missing first nation members and their families have access to culturally appropriate services.

Perhaps most important, our government has materially supported the development of community-based awareness initiatives and safety plans to promote the safety of aboriginal women and girls.

With a disproportionate rate of incarceration as well as victimization, a plan is necessary to allow Canada's first nation members to emerge from this crippling situation.

Economic action plan 2014 proposes \$22.2 million for the continuation of the aboriginal justice strategy. The initiative, which is showing very positive results, has allowed aboriginal people to take a larger role in the administration of justice in their communities while giving victims of crime a strong voice. By allowing first nation communities a stake in the judicial system, we are demonstrating a desire for justice rather than punishment.

Community-based justice for non-violent crimes gives aboriginal communities a say in the administration of punishment with regard to crimes affecting their neighbourhoods. It also demonstrates to the accused the impact of their crimes on the region and eliminates any suggestion of bias on the part of those administering the punishment.

Community-based justice is working, and I am proud of the part the government has played in its implementation.

More than \$323 million has been earmarked for the purpose of continuing the first nation water and waste water action plan. Since 2006, our government has invested more than \$3 billion in assisting first nations in the construction, maintenance, and operation of their water and waste water systems. This investment was sorely needed and has resulted in a vast improvement in water quality for first nations.

These communities have also been made safer through the enhancement of waste water management systems. Clean drinking water and the safe handling of waste water are essential to the health of any community. Through our government's investments in water on first nations, we have made them safer places to live. Insurance for these investments is provided through the disaster mitigation protocols I spoke of earlier.

A particular point of pride for me with regard to the economic action plan concerns the support provided to first nation fishing enterprises. Great progress has been made in the integration of first nation fishing enterprises with existing fishing operations since our government instituted the supporting first nation fishing enterprises initiative.

With an investment of more than \$66 million over the next two years, our government is taking concrete action to improve the overall management of fishing on both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. This program will continue to create new jobs and opportunities for first nation fishers.

Many aboriginal communities will also benefit from our government's improving access to broadband in rural and northern communities proposal. Social networks and the worldwide web are helping to bring people together, not only on a personal level but for the purposes of business networking and promotion as well.

Canadians in rural areas are demanding faster access to the Internet, and our government is responding. We are proposing more than \$300 million over five years to improve access to broadband Internet connections for 280,000 households, with a target of five megabits per second. This would represent near-universal access to broadband for Canadians.

By improving Internet access for first nations, we will increase the ability of aboriginal businesses to compete globally.

As members can see, our government understands that the things that make Canada's aboriginal communities better make Canada better. By continuing to improve the already strong relationship between the aboriginal people of Canada and our Conservative government, we build a stronger Canada.

● (1825)

The healthy bond that the government has forged with the aboriginal peoples of Canada is reflected in the budget, and I am proud to stand today in support of our government's economic action plan 2014.

• (1830)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): There will be five minutes available for the member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River for questions and comments when the House next resumes debate on this motion.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to revisit a question I asked a few weeks ago regarding the Conservatives' habit of being satisfied with half-measures when it comes to climate change. To call them half-measures is being generous.

At the time, I referred to a heartfelt plea from a scallop producer from British Columbia. He lost nearly 10 million scallops and had to lay off dozens of employees after what happened.

It is important to point out that, for years now, we have been calling on the common sense of Conservatives—this goes back to the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s—but they do not appear to have much common sense, since they do not seem to understand the urgency.

I will talk about IPCC's latest report, which was released last week. Many articles were written on the basis of that report and several of them were devastating. They were devastating because, unfortunately, people like the Conservatives are not doing anything to fight climate change. I am generally quite optimistic and like many of us who have children, we want to take care of our future generations. That is why I think there is still time to take action and even act urgently, despite the devastating headlines we have before us.

IPCC's recent study mentions that the Conservatives' inability to take action will result in problems with food security. It is also reported that a number of essential food crops such as rice, wheat and corn will be increasingly hard hit in the coming years, and that this threatens food security not only in Canada, but around the world.

The fisheries are mentioned as well. One article says:

Global fisheries are also at risk of significant decline. In the more southern regions, in particular, a number of species will completely disappear. The United Nations environment program projects that it will not be possible to commercially fish the oceans by 2050.

That is not so long from now. Can you imagine?

That is from an article in *Le Devoir* entitled "Climate: catastrophe on the horizon. Changes are already having a major impact on all continents". And then there are all the studies, even the secret reports by government officials, prepared by Environment Canada, which tell the government that if it does not take action it will not even reach its low Copenhagen goals. We know that it is even an insult to human intelligence to consider that the Copenhagen goals are high.

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Despite that, instead of cutting emissions to 17% below 2005 levels, we are headed towards the same results as in 2005, which represents no reductions. Reductions are even lower when compared to 1990 levels. Those are scientific figures.

What I would like from my honourable colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, are some figures other than the government's own figures. I would like him to give me some scientific figures that were not produced by the government. In fact, all scientists are saying that the Conservative government is going to hit a wall. I want some figures other than the ones the Prime Minister gave him.

[English]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech, and he is going to be very happy to hear what I have to say, because our government has made responsible resource development a priority. That is why, together with the Government of Alberta, we have implemented significant monitoring enhancements through the joint Canada-Alberta implementation plan for oil sands monitoring. This is a scientifically rigorous, comprehensive, and transparent undertaking.

Since the joint implementation plan for oil sands monitoring was announced, significant progress has been made. Monitoring has been enhanced with greater geographic coverage, more monitoring sites, more frequent sampling, and testing for a greater variety of contaminants. All environmental components—air, water, land, and wildlife—now will be studied. By the time the three-year plan is fully implemented in 2015, water sites will increase from 21 to more than 40, air sites will increase from 21 to more than 30, and biodiversity monitoring sites will increase from 35 to more than 70, with thousands of additional samples being taken each year to assess impacts on individual species.

The data that has been collected is public and is intended to be used for independent scientific analysis. The fact that the University of Toronto used information from the joint Canada-Alberta implementation plan for its study shows that our objective is being achieved. This shows we are delivering on our promise to produce oil sands monitoring data and ensure this information is publicly available.

We are also delivering on our commitment to ensure that Canadians continue to have some of the cleanest air in the world for generations to come. On this note, I would like to highlight the air quality management system. It represents a major step forward in addressing air pollution in Canada. It is a comprehensive system that includes stringent outdoor air quality standards, emission requirements from major industries, and provincial actions to address local sources of air pollution. Once fully implemented, the system will provide significant health and environmental benefits. It was developed through years of extensive collaboration with the provinces, territories, and stakeholders. The result is a system that lets all levels of government work together to address air pollution in a coordinated and effective way.

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Working with all levels of government is the key to a cleaner environment, and we look forward to continuing to work with the Province of Alberta to achieve the goals of the joint Canada-Alberta implementation plan. Our co-leadership of environmental monitoring contributes to the development of the oil sands in a responsible and environmentally sustainable manner, for the benefit of all Canadians.

• (1835)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, I would like to come back to the fight against climate change. This is a major challenge for all humanity, as clearly shown by the most recent IPCC report.

Unfortunately, I have not heard any scientists say that Canada is making a concerted effort to combat climate change and allow scallop fishers and farmers, for example, to continue with this very worthwhile economic activity.

The member spoke about the oil sands, but that is a discussion for another time because today we are talking about ocean acidification.

In January 2014, an Environment Canada report—thus written by government officials—showed that Canada is moving farther and farther away from the targets set in Copenhagen, which are very small.

According to another study published last year by Concordia University's Department of Geography, Planning and Environment, under the direction of Damon Matthews, Canada is ranked tenth in the list of largest greenhouse gas emitters in the world. That is huge. Canada is the third worst country in the world per capita.

It is time we did something to improve our situation. I would like to see ambitious new measures to combat climate change because the measures that are currently in place are insufficient.

[*English*]

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, my colleague will be happy to hear that we are taking a balanced approach that will continue to support Canadian jobs while protecting our environment. We have worked very well with the Province of Alberta to launch a world-class scientific monitoring system of the oils sands. This undertaking, which is unprecedented in Canada, involves monitoring the impact of oil sands activity over an area covering 140,000 square kilometres.

Environment Canada is pleased that the University of Toronto used the data provided by the joint Canada-Alberta implementation plan for its very important study, and that shows that our plan is working. We are going to continue to work with the Province of Alberta to achieve the goals of this plan.

• (1840)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to stand this evening in adjournment proceedings to pursue a question I asked on March 27. I asked the Minister of the Environment to face the facts and do the math. I prefaced my question on March 27 by saying that I wanted to address the problem of math and red herrings.

The math is this. On the numbers that have come from Environment Canada's own database, published by the current

government, there is not a chance in the world that on current plans Canada would come anywhere near the target selected by the Prime Minister after breaking faith with the world and abandoning the Kyoto protocol and choosing a much weaker target.

When the Prime Minister committed in 2009 to the so-called Copenhagen target, that represented the second time he had weakened Canada's targets. First, they were weakened in the spring of 2006 when the Prime Minister, after cancelling the plan in place that would have brought us quite close to Kyoto, announced that he did not feel that Canada was bound to pursue Kyoto and that Canada's target would be 20% below 2006 levels by 2020. Then in Copenhagen the target accepted by the Prime Minister for Canada was even weaker than the one he moved to in 2006. I know that percentages fly by and one's eyes can glaze over, but in accepting the target of 17% below a different base year this time—that is, 2005—the target was further weakened. It was an anomaly that in 2005 our emissions were higher than they were in 2006. That was the peak year for emissions for Canada.

We have seen a weakened target. Now we see the evidence. It is right in front of our face. The Environment Canada report from October 2013 makes it clear that by 2020 our emissions will have risen steadily from the low point that was achieved, but not through any effort on the government's part, but due to the recession in 2009 when greenhouse gases in Canada had gone down to 692 megatonnes. They are now climbing steadily up to where Environment Canada projects they will be 734 megatonnes by the due date of 2020.

I know that numbers are hard to discuss in the House of Commons, but here is the math. It is simple. We pledged a reduction of 17% below 2005 levels by 2020. We will have perhaps achieved a 1%, not a 17% reduction.

My question was this. Would the government remain committed to the Copenhagen target given this record of failure? Would we adopt additional measures to try to get there?

Instead, we get a repetition of something, such as in question period earlier today, which I once again had to call nonsense. It is the idea repeated ad nauseam, so we know it by heart, that under this administration we have 130 megatonnes less than what we would have had under the Liberals.

Adjournment Proceedings

If we go to page 4 of the report I have already mentioned in referencing Environment Canada's October 2013 numbers, we find this imaginary figure of 130 megatonnes above where we are now. It is hard to express this because it is such nonsense. It is called a "business as usual" number or, as it appears in the Environment Canada report, a "without measures" number. If nothing at all were done by anyone, our emissions would reach a level they have never reached of 862 megatonnes a year. Then this administration tries to take credit for doing nothing and staying at the same level we were supposed to reduce from by 17%, saying, "Look how great this is. We are 130 megatonnes below an imaginary figure that has never happened based on no measures at all".

It is time to be honest with Canadians. There is no chance of reaching the Copenhagen target. Will this administration commit to meeting its weak Copenhagen target with new measures?

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to let my colleague know that our Conservative government is committed to addressing the challenge of climate change and is following through on that commitment with concrete actions, both domestically and internationally.

Domestically, the government is implementing a sector-by-sector regulatory approach that started by addressing emissions in two of the largest emitting sectors of the Canadian economy, which are the transportation and electricity sectors. In collaboration with the United States, the government has developed emission standards for passenger automobiles and light duty trucks, as well as heavy duty vehicles. With these regulations, it is projected that by 2025, light duty vehicles will produce 50% less greenhouse gas emissions than 2008 vehicles. This is great, since I come from Oshawa, where we build cars.

With the government's coal-fired electricity regulations, Canada became the first major coal user to ban the construction of traditional coal-fired electricity generating units. In the first 21 years, the regulations are expected to result in a cumulative reduction of about 214 megatonnes of greenhouse gas emissions. This is great news for Canadians. It is equivalent to removing 2.6 million personal vehicles per year from the road over this period. The government will build on these actions by working with the provinces to reduce emissions from the oil and gas sectors, while ensuring that Canadian companies remain competitive.

The government has also made significant investments to transition Canada to a clean energy economy and advance this country's climate change objectives. Since 2006, the government has invested over \$10 billion in green infrastructure, energy efficiency, the development of clean energy technologies, and the production of cleaner energy and fuels.

We are taking the responsible approach, working closely with all stakeholders, and it is paying off.

It is estimated that, as a result of the combined actions of provincial, territorial, and federal governments, consumers, and businesses, greenhouse gas emissions in 2020 will be 734 megatonnes. This is roughly 130 megatonnes lower than they would have been under the Liberals. I make this distinction because, in contrast to the Liberal climate change policy of international rhetoric

and domestic inaction, our Conservative government's policies are achieving real results.

Internationally, Canada is playing a constructive role in the United Nations' negotiations toward a fair and effective new post-2020 climate change agreement. At the latest UN climate change conference in Warsaw, Canada demonstrated leadership in helping to achieve a breakthrough in an important initiative to help developing countries reduce deforestation and forest degradation, which account for nearly 15% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Canada is also taking a leadership role on a number of collaborative international initiatives outside of the United Nations to combat climate change. For instance, the government is taking meaningful action to address short-lived climate pollutants, such as black carbon and methane, through active engagement on the Climate and Clean Air Coalition, of which Canada is a founding member through its chairmanship of the Arctic Council.

Due to their short lifespan, reducing these types of pollutants can achieve more immediate climate benefits, particularly for the north.

• (1845)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to blame my friend, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment. I have not been able to get a straight answer from the Prime Minister or from the Minister of the Environment, and it is his unhappy task tonight to try to defend an indefensible record.

The math is clear. Just as the parliamentary secretary says that by 2020, emissions will be 734 megatonnes, the promise that was made by the Prime Minister was that they should be 607 megatonnes, a reduction against 2005 levels.

Instead, there has been no plan to deal with the oil sands sector. The government keeps telling us there is a sector-by-sector approach. We had to bring in regulations on transportation because our car market is shared with the United States. They were good regulations. I supported them.

The coal-fired regulations do not take effect until 2015, and they will not actually shut down any existing coal-fired power plants.

However, the oil sands sector, where the Prime Minister and successive ministers of the environment promised regulations, remains unregulated.

This is a record of inaction and missed targets. I still do not know if the administration regards Canada as committed to the Copenhagen target.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, the evidence speaks for itself. I do not know if the member had the opportunity to listen to the speech about all the wonderful things we have been doing and to compare that to the Liberal record.

Adjournment Proceedings

When the Liberals were in government, emissions actually went up 130 megatonnes. They signed all of these international agreements and there was all this rhetoric, but they did absolutely nothing.

We are actually seeing our economy grow as the trend in emissions is slowing. Our Conservative government's actions have resulted in a constant decline in emissions intensity and emissions per capita. Both these trends, which are projected to continue through 2030, clearly demonstrate that our sector-by-sector approach is achieving real results in terms of reducing greenhouse gases, while fostering economic growth.

That is something Canadians should be proud of.

● (1850)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:50 p.m.)

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