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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, April 23, 2015

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, April 23, 2015

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

•(1005)
[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, today, in both official languages, the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, in relation to Bill S-6, an act to amend the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act and the Nunavut Waters and Nunavut Surface Rights Tribunal Act.

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House without amendments.

* * *

[Translation]

CARRIAGE BY AIR ACT

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-666, An Act to amend the Carriage by Air Act (fundamental rights).

He said: Mr. Speaker, the bill that I have the honour to introduce today is entitled An Act to amend the Carriage by Air Act (fundamental rights). This bill amends the Carriage by Air Act to in order to specify that that Act does not restrict the fundamental rights guaranteed under the Official Languages Act and the Canadian Human Rights Act.

This bill solves a problem that we as legislators need to solve, a problem that undermines the basic rights of Canadians. This bill will correct one of the flaws undermining the rights that protect us all.

[English]

The bill would clearly establish that a Canadian citizen, when taking an international flight under Canada's jurisdiction, could be entitled to damages if her or his rights are not respected with regard to the Official Languages Act or the Canadian Human Rights Act.

I encourage all my colleagues in Parliament to support passage of this bill that would protect the rights of Canadians.

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

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NAVIGATION PROTECTION ACT

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-667, an act to amend the Navigation Protection Act (Sooke River).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am introducing this private member's bill today to restore federal environmental protection for the Sooke River by adding it to part 2 of the schedule of the Navigable Waters Protection Act. This is protection that was removed by the Conservative government, in 2012, in Bill C-45, the first of the omnibus budget bills.

The Sooke River system drains a watershed of some 403 square kilometres near the southern tip of Vancouver Island, in my riding. The rock falls at the Sooke River Potholes divide it into the Upper Sooke River and the Lower Sooke River systems.

Protection of the Sooke River watershed is particularly important for two quite separate reasons. The Upper Sooke watershed is the source of drinking water for the Greater Victoria area. The Lower Sooke River is becoming crucial for the restoration of local salmon runs, including chinook, which are critical to the survival of the southern resident killer whales.

Two volunteer-driven organizations, the Sooke Salmon Enhancement Society with its Jack Brooks hatchery on Rocky Creek and the Juan de Fuca Salmon Restoration Society with its Charters River Salmon Interpretive Centre and demonstration hatchery, are doing key work in salmon habitat restoration and enhancement of wild stocks. Restoring federal environmental protection will play an important role in ensuring the long-term health of the watershed so important to Greater Victoria's drinking water supply and to the continued success of salmon enhancement and habitat restoration work.

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

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NAVIGATION PROTECTION ACT

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-668, an act to amend the Navigation Protection Act (Colquitz River).

Routine Proceedings

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am introducing this private member's bill today to restore federal environmental protection for the Colquitz River system. Again, this is protection that was removed for all rivers, lakes and streams, on Vancouver Island by the Conservative government, in 2012, in Bill C-45.

The Colquitz River system drains a watershed of some 49 square kilometres in Greater Victoria, largely in the new riding of Esquimalt Saanich—Sooke. It begins in Elk and Beaver lakes, but also includes Swan and Blenkinsop lakes on its way to Portage Inlet. As a heavily urbanized watershed, the quality of the watershed is under constant threat. A wide variety of volunteer groups have undertaken efforts to preserve and enhance the Colquitz system and have had success in restoring a run of between 200 and 400 coho salmon and dozens of chum salmon in the river.

Restoring federal environmental protection to the Colquitz would support the important work of the Friends of Cuthbert Holmes Park, the Peninsula Streams Society, Friends of Swan Creek Watershed, the Habitat Acquisition Trust and the Colquitz Watershed stewardship project in restoring the important role of the Colquitz in our local ecosystem.

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

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PETITIONS**WORKERS' RIGHTS**

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow marks the second anniversary of the collapse of Rana Plaza in Dhaka, Bangladesh, a building that housed 5,000 garment workers. I am pleased today to present a petition that acknowledges the deaths of over 1,100 workers and injury to 2,500 more in that, the world's second-largest industrial accident.

The petitioners are reminding this House that it is the fundamental right of all people, wherever they live in the world, to be able to go to work without fear for their safety, health or indeed lives. They are calling upon the Government of Canada to endorse the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh, and they encourage Canadian companies that manufacture in Bangladesh to become signatories to that accord.

● (1010)

KOMAGATA MARU

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Punjab assembly in India unanimously passed a resolution calling on the Canadian Parliament to apologize for the *Komagata Maru* incident.

The 1914 *Komagata Maru* incident was a dark moment in Canada's past, when 352 passengers aboard the steamship were denied entry into Canada based on a discriminatory immigration policy. The ship was forced to return to India and, as a result, 19 passengers were killed not to mention the many other hardships that were endured.

The petitioners ask that the Government of Canada provide a formal apology in Parliament with respect to the *Komagata Maru* incident of 1914. I thank the petitioners and the individuals who took the time to sign the petition.

[Translation]

CBC/RADIO-CANADA

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

The first calls for stable long-term funding for CBC/Radio-Canada.

CBC/Radio-Canada is very important to ridings like mine. Without it, regional news would be virtually non-existent. Stable funding to ensure the longevity of CBC/Radio-Canada is essential, especially for rural areas like mine.

PENSIONS

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls on the Government of Canada not to take money from retired federal public servants by changing their defined benefit pension plan.

Many retired public servants, not just in my riding but all over Quebec, are very worried. They are asking the Government of Canada not to go back on the commitments it made to its former employees.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

I am honoured to present a petition opposing Bill C-51, the Anti-terrorism Act, 2015.

[English]

At least that is the name that the law bears.

The petitioners point out that it would create, through weak and strangely over-broad definitions, not just abuses of the rights and liberties of Canadians, but actually would not make Canadians safer against security threats.

The petitioners are from Peterborough, Guelph, Waterloo and other areas of Ontario. They are calling on this House to reject Bill C-51.

41ST GENERAL ELECTION

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the other petition is from residents of the Vancouver area. They urge this House to take action to fully investigate the occurrences of electoral fraud that occurred in the 2011 election, referred to as “robocalls” but that were also often paid live callers who misdirected voters in an attempt to defraud voters of their right to vote.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today because communities like mine in Scarborough, especially in north Scarborough, only have access to public transit at a surface level such as buses.

Routine Proceedings

People in my community realize the importance of creating a Canada public transit strategy because Canada is the only OECD country that does not have a national public transit strategy. It is estimated that over the next five years there will be an \$18-billion gap in transit infrastructure funding.

The petitioners are calling upon the Government of Canada to enact a Canada public transit strategy that seeks to provide a permanent investment plan to support public transit; to establish federal funding mechanisms for public transit; to work together with all levels of government to provide sustainable, predictable, long-term and adequate funding; and to establish accountability measures to ensure that all governments work together to increase access to public transit.

I know how very important and needed it is in my community in Scarborough—Rouge River and all of the northern and eastern parts of Scarborough, so I am very pleased to present this petition on their behalf.

INSECT POLLINATORS

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

The first is on pollinators, specifically bees. There are 200 species of bees in this country. The petitioners are calling on the government to enact studies so the colonies can be saved from the collapse that we are seeing across this country, in numerous regions. We need to save pollinators as they are an intrinsic piece of the agriculture sector, which we need to make sure is successful. The petitioners would like to see that happen.

•(1015)

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is about the Conservative government's changes to EI. The petitioners are asking that those changes be rescinded and that the government make sure that EI actually does what it was intended to do. It is an insurance premium that folks pay and they expect to be covered when they get laid off.

The petitioners are calling on the government to reinstate the benefits that people used to receive not that long ago, before the government took them away.

[*Translation*]

CANADA POST

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition today in support of Canada Post.

The people from the Lower Laurentians region and Laval who signed the petition are calling on the federal government to reject Canada Post's plan for reduced service and to explore other options for updating the crown corporation's business plan. They deplore the fact that between 6,000 and 8,000 jobs will be eliminated and that this reduction in services could lead to the privatization of Canada Post, which is an essential public service.

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am standing today to present a petition from residents of my riding of Burnaby—Douglas who are calling on the Government of Canada to immediately act to prevent the new Kinder Morgan pipeline from being built in Burnaby.

The petitioners note that they are against the project, saying it brings massive environmental and economic risk, and the existing pipeline has already spilled 40,000 barrels of oil into the community. They also mention that this project will not create more than 50 permanent full-time jobs and the company has stated it will use temporary foreign workers to build most of this pipeline. They are opposed to the process as well, saying that the Conservative government has undermined the National Energy Board review process, resulting in an unfair review of this project and many local residents being prevented from sharing their concerns.

I urge the government to take this petition seriously.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 1110 will be answered today.

[*Text*]

Question No. 1110—**Mr. Scott Andrews:**

With regard to the processing of Employment Insurance claims and Service Canada agents: (a) has the department hired an additional 400 new agents; (b) if the answer to (a) is negative, how many new agents have been hired; (c) when were these new agents hired; (d) to which location have the new agents been assigned; (e) to which areas of the Employment Insurance claims processing unit have they been assigned; (f) how long did it take to train the new agents; (g) when will new agents be hired, (i) if no new agents have been hired, (ii) if some new agents have been hired; and (h) is the department committed to hiring a total of 400 new agents?

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the Department has hired more than 400 additional new agents.

With regard to (b), it is not applicable.

With regard to (c), hiring began in October 2014.

With regard to (d), new agents have been assigned to employment insurance processing in: Moncton, St. John's and Halifax in Atlantic region; Boucherville, Laval, Montreal, Quebec City, Saguenay and Shawinigan in Quebec region; London, Mississauga, Richmond Hill and Sudbury in Ontario region; and Vancouver, Kamloops, Nanaimo, Edmonton and Regina in Western Canada and Territories region.

The Budget

New agents have been assigned to EI call centres: in Bathurst and St. John's in Atlantic region; Montreal and Shawinigan in Quebec region; Sudbury and Toronto in Ontario region; and Edmonton in Western Canada and Territories region.

With regard to (e), the resources hired for the inventory reduction strategy are assigned to the various work units within EI processing to help reduce age and volume of the inventory.

With regard to (f), for EI processing, training generally took between 9 and 13 weeks, including the training and monitoring period. For EI call centres, training generally took nine weeks, including the training and monitoring period.

With regard to (g), it is not applicable.

With regard to (h), Service Canada has hired more than 400 new agents since October 2014 for EI processing and EI call centres.

[English]

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

surplus is \$1.4 billion. However, in 2013, then finance minister Jim Flaherty specified that a Conservative government would never use a surplus in the EI fund to create a surplus in the consolidated revenue fund. He pointed out that that is what the Liberals did, and said the Conservatives would never do that. This, then, contradicts the policy of the Conservatives' former finance minister, and yet they clearly do not feel any shame about taking that approach.

What is more, the EI surplus has been moved over to the consolidated revenue fund. This was done at the expense of its accessibility and to the detriment of seasonal workers, even though some regions, like eastern Quebec and the Maritimes, still rely heavily on such workers. We are reducing access to EI and creating a surplus in the EI fund, just so the Conservative government can use it however it wants.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from April 22 consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, when I started my speech, I started by saying that it was actually very telling that the first Conservative speech after the Minister of Finance was by the Minister of State for Agriculture, who is also the minister responsible for small and medium-sized businesses and the member for Beauce, the same one who advocates economic policies that could actually be called crank economic policies, such as zero inflation and a return to the gold standard. Those are obviously policies that make no sense in modern economics and yet that same member, who advocated those policies, gave the first speech, saying that the budget would be good for the economy.

[Translation]

This is not an economic budget; it is a political budget. I started talking about that yesterday, and I want to have a chance to talk about some other aspects in the few minutes that I have left.

Yesterday I talked about the fact that the budget was balanced in an extremely artificial manner, first by dipping into the contingency fund, and then by selling—at a loss—the government's shares in GM as well as dipping into the EI fund surplus, which is projected to be \$1.8 billion next year. What a coincidence—the projected budget

I also talked about income splitting. The Conservatives talk about ending a discriminatory treatment. There is no discriminatory treatment. A couple in which one person earns \$100,000 while the other, quite often a woman, stays at home, is not living the same reality as a couple where one person earns \$50,000 or even \$30,000 and the other person is forced to go to work so that they can make ends meet. There is no comparison between a couple where one person earns \$100,000 and the other person stays home, and a couple with two, three, or four children where one person earns \$50,000 and the other is forced to work. That couple also has to pay for child care in order to be able to join the workforce and provide for the family.

Not only do the Conservatives' analogies not hold water, but yesterday in the media we learned that the then clerk of the Privy Council advised the Prime Minister at the time not to announce the measure before it was presented to Parliament. The Prime Minister and his cabinet ignored that advice, completely disregarding parliamentary institutions and members of the House. Those are not my words. A former legislative clerk of the House was quoted as saying that in the media.

The Budget

I spoke about many of these things yesterday. I want to finish my speech by talking about other aspects of the budget, in particular the increase in the contribution limit for TFSAs from \$5,500 to \$10,000. Once again, I heard my colleague from Beauce say that there are 10 million people who have TFSAs and that increasing the limit will benefit these 10 million people. That is absurd. Yes, there may be 10 million people who have opened a TFSA. That shows how the TFSA may be a useful tool. However, only 15% of the people who contribute to a TFSA put in the maximum amount of \$5,500. Most Canadian families do not have \$60,000 at the end of six years to put in a TFSA. However, the \$10,000 ceiling will ensure that this tool is no longer used solely as a savings vehicle, but will become a tax shelter for the rich. There are certainly exceptions, like people who save a lot and who may be able to save 15%, 20% or 25% of their income, especially, as my colleague mentioned, after the sale of a house. Those are exceptions. Honestly, the current ceiling of \$5,500 is adequate. Once again, increasing it to \$10,000 is simply going to benefit those people who are fortunate or wealthy.

• (1020)

These measures will cause a lot of problems for the Canadian treasury, while the measures we want to put in place across the country, such as the \$15 child care program, will directly benefit these people, in particular the middle class. For example, two spouses who each earn \$30,000 or \$40,000 will not be able to take advantage of income splitting.

They will be able to take advantage of the universal child care benefit, and we are obviously not opposed to this improvement. However, we must put things in context. This is not a gift from the Conservative government to families. Improvements to the universal child care benefit were largely funded by the elimination of the child tax credit. Canadians filed their tax returns, and parents of young children were probably surprised to learn that this line no longer existed. Billions of dollars were given back to families through this child tax credit, which the government used to make this improvement. I do not want to hear the Conservatives tell us that this is a gift for families. It came, in large part, from the elimination of another tax credit.

I would like to take the last few minutes of my speech to talk about job creation because the budget does in fact contain measures that promote job creation. However, it is interesting that the measures that the government adopted are NDP measures. I know that the members on the other side of the House will not like hearing what I am about to say.

On February 6, 2015, the NDP moved an opposition motion in the House. I am going to read it again because it is very educational. It says:

That the House call on the government to take immediate action to build a balanced economy, support the middle class and encourage manufacturing and small business job creation by: (a) extending the accelerated capital cost allowance by two years; (b) reducing the small business income tax rate from 11% to 10% immediately, and then to 9% when finances permit; and (c) introducing an Innovation Tax Credit to support investment in machinery, equipment and property to further innovation and increase productivity.

The Conservatives voted against the NDP's motion that opposition day, but now these measures are included in the budget. They told us

that we did not understand the economy; yet, now these measures are in the budget.

Once again, this budget is about politics, not economics. It is a pre-election budget that does not in any way take into account the reality of Canadian families, a reality that the NDP recognizes by proposing such measures as raising the minimum wage to \$15 for employees of companies under federal jurisdiction and negotiating a pan-Canadian child care program that would cost families a maximum of \$15 a day and would give Quebec the right to opt out with compensation, since it already has its own system. The Conservatives changed the retirement age to 67, but we want to reinstate the retirement age of 65.

The Conservatives' policies were harmful to the economy and Canadian families. When the New Democrats take office in 2015, we will change that and really work for Canadian families, the middle class and workers.

• (1025)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the leader of the Liberal Party addressed the House about the budget, and I believe that he captured the major flaw in this budget. The budget delivers the most to those Canadians who need it the least. It is not a fair budget. It is not a budget that is going to generate the economic growth Canadians need at this time. It unfairly benefits the rich instead of helping the middle class or those who aspire to be part of Canada's middle class. It contains no plan at all for substantial job growth. Good examples are income splitting and infrastructure dollars.

At a time when Canadians are looking for strong leadership from the government to deliver on economic growth and fair taxation policies, would the member not agree that the government has been found wanting in terms of delivering what is important to Canadians?

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is right about much of what he said. That was the gist of my speech to the House.

The Conservative government's measures, not only in this budget but also in previous ones, do the opposite of what the Conservatives say they will. I remember a budget from two or three years ago that made a huge deal out of cutting tariffs on certain products, but when we looked at the specifics in the budget, tariffs went up overall because the preferential tariff was eliminated.

There is a yawning chasm between what the Conservatives say in this budget and what it will really mean for the middle class, workers and families.

The Budget

I know for a fact that the government should pay attention to what we know about economics and fiscal and economic multipliers. The best investments we can make are in infrastructure, social housing and help for families with low incomes or in difficult situations. Instead, the government is using this budget to give money away, but most of that money will go to the wealthiest families. That is the opposite of what we will do when the leader of the official opposition, the member for Outremont, becomes the Prime Minister of Canada in 2015.

• (1030)

[*English*]

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate my colleague's distinction between this budget being an economic budget versus a political budget.

As the infrastructure critic for our caucus, I looked very closely for new infrastructure money, and there is none but for the curious Canada 150 community infrastructure program. The program is not spelled out in the budget itself. It states that the government will announce further details about the program over the coming months. I would note that over the coming months we are heading into an election. That community infrastructure program looks far more like a political action plan than an economic action plan.

I would ask the member how responsible he feels it is to put something like that in a budget when cities and communities across the country are crying out for federal support to deal with infrastructure deficits that amount to tens of billions of dollars.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, that is a good question. Obviously, in the limited time I had for my speech, I did not get around to addressing the matter of infrastructure very much. I am glad to do so now.

Again, the Conservative government is using infrastructure as a political tool. I have two examples. The first is from 2012, when the Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs announced the new building Canada program—not funding, just the new program—with great fanfare. The government said that the municipalities could use the communities fund, not the gas tax, as they saw fit, particularly for infrastructure projects related to sports and culture and so forth.

In 2013, when the conditions for the building Canada program were presented, the municipalities were denied the chance to use this fund for their own needs, particularly the municipalities that had already addressed their needs in terms of roads or water and wastewater systems. That is the situation the mayor of Rimouski finds himself in today. He was told he could use this fund, which is generally shared one-third, one-third, one-third between the federal, provincial and municipal governments. Today, Ottawa claims to know more than the mayor of Rimouski about what that municipality needs. Ottawa is telling the mayor that he can use the gas tax, but that will not be nearly enough to pay for the projects for a city like Rimouski. That is the first example.

The second example is that the Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs still claims that this is a major investment program. Sure, there is funding for public transit

in big cities such as Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. However, to start with, there is very little funding and it just does not cut it. Honestly, the funding for the first year for the City of Toronto might be enough for half a subway station.

That the government is boasting about investing in infrastructure in this manner is beyond comprehension. The use of the 150th celebrations as a political tool is also reprehensible. The Conservatives will pay for that in 2015.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since my colleague is from a fairly rural area, like mine, does he think that there is anything in the budget for rural areas and that it takes into account their economic reality, or will there only be crumbs left, or nothing at all?

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue. We represent two regions that are very far from one another, but that have much in common.

Yesterday, I was asked the same question when I was interviewed by Radio-Canada on the program *Pas de midi sans info*. When asked who came out on the losing end of this budget, I answered that it was the regions.

Big cities are getting a little bit of money because they need it. However, as I said, it is not enough. There is nothing to help the regions with their needs, though, or to compensate for the major cuts made by this government over the past four years.

The effects of these cuts on the regions have been disproportionate. Funds allocated to the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec were not disbursed—the situation is not very different in other regions of Canada—and the reform of employment insurance has had a major impact on the regions, where there is always a large proportion of seasonal jobs, especially in tourism, agriculture, forestry and the fishery. The government is doing nothing to remedy the situation that it has created in the regions.

There is absolutely nothing in the budget to address regional realities, like my region's realities. We are home to the Technopole maritime du Québec, in the scientific field. That institution needs federal investments, because current investments are clearly insufficient. Regions like the Lower St. Lawrence are being prevented from reaching their full potential and taking their place among the premier research institutions in the marine sector.

It is extremely unfortunate to see that this government is in no way using its capacity for investment, which would yield significant returns and help the regions develop. The government is washing its hands of the regions, and unfortunately, it is regions like the Lower St. Lawrence and Abitibi—Témiscamingue that are suffering.

• (1035)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member a couple of questions.

The Budget

The government says it is going to invest in infrastructure, but those investments will not really begin for a few years. It is possible, however, that the economy could recover in a few years, especially if the government changes, and interest rates could go up.

Would my colleague agree that the government's approach lacks some wisdom, given that, with interest rates so low at the moment, now is the time to invest?

It is possible that in the future, as former finance minister Jim Flaherty said, interest rates could go up, especially if there is inflation, since there is a lot of money in the system. The central banks have put a lot of money into the system, so inflation could resume some day.

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I do not necessarily want to respond to hypothetical questions, but the member for Lac-Saint-Louis makes some interesting points.

Inflation is at a record low right now. Regardless of inflation and interest rates, it is recognized that the best investments are investments in infrastructure, because infrastructure gives the best returns in terms of multipliers.

In my opinion, the government is headed in the wrong direction by limiting the municipalities' ability to choose their own projects and limiting necessary investments in public transit, for example. The investments being made are not enough to meet the needs in this area, which is something that has received a lot of criticism from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

The government is also headed in the wrong direction in its relationships with certain provinces, including Quebec, with which it has not yet even signed the building Canada agreement.

Right now, Quebec municipalities have access only to the excise tax on gasoline. They do not yet have access to federal funding for major projects or the community improvement fund. That is extremely harmful to Quebec and the provinces that have not signed the agreement.

We are asking the government to expedite the process and sign the agreements so that the whole country has access to the building Canada program.

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Edmonton Centre.

I am delighted to rise in the House today to voice my support for economic action plan 2015 to support jobs and growth, to support families and seniors, to ensure that communities prosper and to ensure the security of Canadians.

Despite the slicing and dicing by the opposition and some of the carping, complaining and hairsplitting by some of the more partisan members of the media party, I just want to say again in this House that the government has fulfilled its commitment to balance the budget. Economic action plan 2015, as I said, despite the slicing and dicing and the carping by the opposition, the budget is balanced and it has been done using the fiscal tools at the government's disposal. Economic action plan 2015 will create jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.

[*Translation*]

As we promised, this is a balanced budget that reduces taxes for hard-working individuals and families.

[*English*]

I would add that this is a prudent budget. It is a prudent plan. It is a principled plan that will see Canadians more prosperous, more secure and even more confident in our country's place in the world.

This morning I would like to speak to those elements of the budget that are important in my constituency of Thornhill, which sits just atop the northern city limits of the Canadian metropolis of Toronto.

As this House knows, the government's long-term commitment to keeping taxes low is making life indeed more affordable for all Canadians. By reducing taxes year after year and enhancing direct benefits to Canadians, the government has given families and individuals a greater flexibility to make the choices that are right for them.

Canadian families and individuals will receive \$37 billion in tax relief and increased benefits in 2015 as a result of actions taken since 2006. This includes measures announced by the Prime Minister in October 2014. On their own, the measures announced last October 30 will provide more than \$4.5 billion in annual tax relief and increased benefits to all families and children under the age of 18. I repeat that these benefits will accrue to all families with children under the age of 18.

The proposed measures also include the enhanced universal child care benefit that will provide an increased benefit of \$160 a month for children under the age of six, and a new benefit of \$60 a month for children ages six through seventeen, backdated to be effective January 1, 2015. There is a \$1,000 increase in each of the minimum dollar amounts that can be claimed under the child care expense deduction effective for the 2015 taxation year. The family tax cut, a federal non-refundable tax credit of up to \$2,000 for couples with children under the age of 18, is effective for the 2014 taxation year.

The House will also recall that in his speech, the Minister of Finance referenced the fact that as announced on October 9, 2014, the government doubled the maximum amount of expenses that may be claimed under the children's fitness tax credit to \$1,000 as of 2014, and made the credit refundable effective for the 2015 and subsequent taxation years. Parents are already taking advantage of the new \$1,000 maximum limit as they, even now, complete their tax returns for 2014.

● (1040)

Also, given that the government recognizes that all Canadians are interested in increasing their physical fitness, to this end the government intends to establish an expert panel to study the potential scope of an adult fitness tax credit.

The Budget

Moving from families with young children to our seniors, the government has again renewed its support for seniors in economic action plan 2015. As a result of actions taken to date by the government, seniors and pensioners are receiving about \$3 billion in additional annual targeted tax relief. In particular, since 2006 the government has increased the age credit account by \$2,000: \$1,000 in 2006 and \$1,000 in 2009. Based on these increases and adjustments for inflation, the age credit this year, tax year 2015, is just over \$7,000, providing tax relief of up to \$1,000 for eligible seniors.

We have doubled to \$2,000 the maximum amount of income eligible for the pension income credit. We have introduced pension income splitting, which the opposition parties say they would revoke. I believe pension income splitting, which was the first phase and has been extended this year to families with young children, is providing benefits right across the country, and to folks in lower and middle income classes right across the board. Annually, over 2.2 million Canadians take advantage of pension income splitting.

As members will note, and as many seniors in my riding have communicated their satisfaction with, budget 2015 reduces the minimum withdrawal factors for registered retirement income funds. The old age security guaranteed income supplement programs and the Canada pension plan and Quebec pension plan form the first two pillars of Canada's three pillar retirement income system, but in order to supplement income provided by the first two pillars, many Canadians also rely on their own savings for income in their senior years.

I hope the opposition recognizes these benefits to families and seniors as they consider exactly how they will vote when the budget comes before the House for a vote.

There has been a great deal of talk from my colleagues across the way about funding for transit across the country. As we know, although some in the media, some in different parts of the country and some in the opposition seem not to have read what is quite clearly stated in the budget, economic action plan 2015 proposes to provide \$750 million over two years starting in 2017-18 and \$1 billion annually ongoing thereafter for a public transit fund. This is a guaranteed commitment to fund public transit across the country. Since 2006, the government has provided unprecedented support for public transit, committing close to \$5 billion to date for public transit projects across the country. These are projects that have been identified as priorities by municipalities and their governments.

I see time is short, so I will just conclude by saying that given the fact that we are going to see quite a very different budget presented later today by the largest province in Canada, one which will reflect the gross mismanagement of that province's economy for the last several years, there is no fiscal imbalance in Canada. All governments have the capability, competence and capacity to balance their budgets, but as I said, not all governments have either the intent or the competence.

I hope my colleagues across the way will read very carefully the provisions in economic action plan 2015 and support this very important budget.

• (1045)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a short, very specific question for my colleague on his government's new passion for balanced budgets.

This government has spent seven years running deficits and tabling unbalanced budgets, and now, in 2015, it has discovered a passion for balanced budgets and has even proposed a law to mandate balanced budgets in the future, except in specific circumstances. For the past five years our country has been in a period of economic growth. We were not in a recession. Five of these seven deficits were after the 2008-09 recession. Could the member explain this new passion for balanced budgets, when this government posted seven consecutive deficits over the past seven years?

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Kent: Mr. Speaker, my colleague seems to forget the international economic recession, and the measures that were taken by Canada to alleviate, respond to, and recover from that recession.

Indeed, we generated a historic deficit responding to the international recession, and we made a commitment at that time to pay it back, to eliminate the deficit and balance the budget as soon as was financially and responsibly possible. That is what my colleague sees in economic action plan 2015.

As I said earlier, we believe that all governments in this country have the capacity to balance their budgets, extraordinary events like the international economic recession aside, and those must be addressed. I heard some of the member's colleagues, including the NDP finance critic, talking enthusiastically about the legislation we have before this House regarding balanced budgets. I would hope the NDP supports that as well.

• (1050)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened very closely to the transit announcement.

While we all welcome a federal presence on the file, the presence is the problem. Nothing is present this year; no money until 2017. The budget should not be called the 2015 action plan; it is the 2017 action plan.

The \$1 billion does not arrive for years and years. What arrives in 2017 is \$250 million. The funding formulas, which are constant across this country on transit, mean that for Ontario it is \$80 million, and for the GTA, where we represent ridings, it is probably about \$40 million, which means \$20 million for the York Region and Durham and Pickering and everywhere else, including Mississauga, and it is about \$20 million a year for the City of Toronto.

Twenty million dollars in the City of Toronto does not even buy a fleet of street cars. It does not build a subway station. It does not put track down. It is nothing. Twenty million dollars just does not pull its weight in transit.

The Budget

If this money were allowed to be used for state of good repair, it would be making a contribution. Will the government allow these dollars, the \$20 million, for state of good repair, when the \$20 million will not build a new subway line, will not build a new street car line?

Hon. Peter Kent: Mr. Speaker, I would note that the mayor of Toronto, along with the mayors of our other large metropolitan areas have all endorsed the transit plan in the budget.

The member was a member of the Toronto City Council when our government, in 2007, pledged for one-third of the cost of the Spadina subway extension, through my riding, through Thornhill into York Region.

That project is still not completed. It is years behind schedule for a variety of reasons I will not go into today. That money has not been spent. The money that the federal government pledged for the Sheppard LRT extension, as the Toronto City Council flip-flopped between subway—

An hon. member: I did not.

Hon. Peter Kent: Well, you did not flip-flop, but certainly the city did.

I think we have to realize that—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, order. The member's time is up, and he should know not to address comments to other members of the House but to the chair.

Resuming debate.

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise in support of economic action plan 2015, a budget that fulfills our government's promise to be back in the black in this year.

Pursuant to our long-standing commitment to responsible fiscal management, economic action plan 2015 will see the budget balanced, and Canadians can rest assured that Canada's fiscal house is in order. Under this plan, the deficit has been reduced from \$55.6 billion at the height of the global economic and financial crisis to a projected surplus of \$1.4 billion for 2015-16.

This government has lowered taxes every year since coming into office. In fact, since 2006, our government has introduced more than 180 tax relief measures. The overall tax burden is now at its lowest level in 50 years.

Canadian families and individuals have benefited from significant tax reductions that have given them the flexibility to make decisions that are right for them and not decisions that are made for them by bureaucrats. Canadians at all income levels are benefiting from the tax relief introduced by the government, with low- and middle-income Canadians receiving proportionally greater relief.

Canada's debt to GDP ratio is less than half the average of all G7 countries, making us the economic envy of most of the world. Indeed, real gross domestic product has increased more in Canada than in any other G7 country since the end of the recession. We have done this and much more without resorting to higher taxes and higher debt, as those across the floor would advocate. This budget is good news for Canada and Canadians today and tomorrow.

This will not surprise anyone who knows me, but I would like to focus my remarks on one group of Canadians for whom I have the utmost respect and commitment, our veterans.

The Government of Canada is dedicated to ensuring that veterans and their families receive the support they need, while understanding that there will always be more that we would like to do and more that we should try to do. With the implementation of the new veterans charter in 2006, the government significantly increased the range of benefits and services provided to ensure that disabled veterans not only receive compensation for the pain and suffering related to their disabilities but that they also receive support aimed at restoring their ability to function at home, in the community, and in the workplace.

With any new program, unintended gaps begin to appear, and it is the government's job to address those gaps effectively. No government moves as quickly as people would like. In truth, as a veteran, I wish we could have moved faster. That said, we have made significant progress with action on the recommendations of the unanimous report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs tabled last June, and with more recent activities and announcements by the Minister of Veterans Affairs and his dynamic staff.

Since implementing the charter, the government has made important improvements to the new veterans charter to adapt it to the needs of veterans, allocating close to \$5 billion in additional resources since 2006 to enhance veterans' benefits, programs, and services.

We established a minimum pre-tax income of \$42,426 for veterans receiving the earnings loss benefit, which provides income replacement to disabled veterans to age 65. We introduced a new monthly supplement to help severely injured veterans who are permanently impaired and unable to return to gainful employment. We also increased the overall level of benefits provided to disability pension recipients by having the pension no longer offset other Veterans Affairs Canada and National Defence benefits, and a lot of the credit for that goes to a veteran named Dennis Manuge, who advocated tirelessly for years.

We expanded access to the funeral and burial program for younger veterans and we improved online services. We enhanced employment opportunities in the federal public service for veterans and Canadian Armed Forces personnel with the Veterans Hiring Act. We also expanded Veterans Affairs Canada's network of operational stress injury clinics to better serve veterans suffering from mental health conditions.

The Budget

Building on progress to date, the government recently announced additional plans to invest in significantly expanded benefits and services for veterans and their families, reaffirming the government's ongoing commitment to veterans and their families. Beginning in March 2015, the government has announced a series of complementary improvements to the spectrum of benefits and supports available to veterans and their families.

Moderately to severely disabled veterans, those who need it most, will be provided with continued assistance in the form of a new monthly retirement income security benefit beginning at age 65 and continuing for life, and picking up where the earnings loss benefit leaves off. As of April 1, 2015, the permanent impairment allowance will be available to all Canadian Armed Forces veterans who have a permanent and severe disability, even if they do not require assistance to perform daily activities.

These lifetime financial benefits are designed to compensate for the loss of employment potential and career advancement opportunities caused by disabilities suffered while serving in the Canadian Armed Forces. Between the earnings loss benefit, the retirement income security benefit, and the permanent impairment allowance, moderately to severely injured veterans and their families will be assured of the necessary financial resources to maintain their quality of life in their retirement years.

•(1055)

The government also wishes to recognize the important contribution made by Canadian Armed Forces reserve force members; 25% to 30% of our combat commitment in Afghanistan was filled by reservists.

Therefore, economic action plan 2015 confirms modifications to the earnings loss benefit to ensure that part-time reserve force veterans have access to the same level of income support as regular and full-time reserve force veterans while they rehabilitate and transition to civilian life.

Previously, a severely injured part-time reservist would receive a minimum of \$24,300 from earnings loss benefit per year. That will increase by 75% to a minimum of \$42,426 per year. This is in addition to other benefits this veteran may receive under the improved new veterans charter.

Family members and informal caregivers are very often faced with helping to take care of seriously disabled veterans, and those dedicated people deserve our help. To better recognize this important contribution, economic action plan 2015 confirms funding to create a new family caregiver relief benefit to seriously disabled veterans requiring daily assistance from an informal caregiver. The new benefit will provide a tax-free annual financial support of \$7,238 to eligible veterans so that they can purchase services to allow respite for an informal caregiver.

The disability award or lump sum kicks in after the final assessment of disability is made. Before that point, an injured veteran would probably have undergone a lot of pain and suffering through treatment and rehabilitation, such as recovery from surgery.

To recognize that, economic action plan 2015 confirms funding to create a new critical injury benefit. This new benefit will provide a tax-free lump sum amount of \$70,000 up-front to compensate

eligible Canadian Armed Forces members and veterans for the immediate consequences of very severe traumatic injuries sustained in the line of duty.

As part of our government's commitment to service excellence for our veterans and families, we recognize that veterans suffering from severe and complex disabilities need access to ongoing professional assistance with managing their care.

This critical element is provided by Veterans Affairs Canada case managers, and we are decreasing the ratio of veterans to case managers from 40:1 to 30:1, by hiring more than 100 permanent case managers, who will have more time to provide dedicated one-on-one support.

We also recognize that it sometimes takes too long to get disability benefits started because of backlogs in the approval process.

Economic action plan 2015 confirms funding to hire more than 100 new disability benefits staff to ensure veterans receive faster decisions on their applications. Faster decisions on disability benefit applications will in turn expedite access to other financial benefits, health care, and mental health treatment.

To further support rehabilitation of our veterans, the government has expanded vocational training in order to provide eligible veterans with the flexibility to pursue new career directions that are not directly linked to skills developed during their military service.

The budgetary process for all this is not simple and must comply with public sector accounting standards, which have been in place for many decades.

As such, the budgetary projections reflect the accrued value of future benefit payments to eligible veterans, which must be recognized up-front.

Consistent with that process, the value of the overall commitment that the government is making to veterans through these measures is estimated at \$2.5 billion over six years, starting in 2014-15, and these amounts have been incorporated into the government's budgetary projections.

By recording \$2.5 billion at this stage, the government is setting aside funding to ensure that enhanced benefits will be available to veterans and their families in the years ahead. The annual cash value of benefits provided to veterans will significantly increase over time.

The Budget

For example, as more modern-day veterans reach age 65, they will become eligible for financial support under the retirement income security benefit. People need to understand that all these figures are estimates and that Veterans Affairs benefits are demand-driven. That means that no matter the level of demand, it will be met.

That is our solemn commitment to veterans and their families, backed up by legislation. It is no secret that this has been a difficult file, but it is absolutely not for lack of commitment to veterans and their families by every single member of this place and the other place.

Veterans issues will always be a work in progress, and there will always be more work to do as circumstances change. The key word is progress, and with economic action plan 2015, our government is continuing that progress. I am proud of that, and I would welcome questions from my colleagues.

• (1100)

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my hon. colleague's comments with interest, and the member mentioned veterans in his speech.

I am wondering if he will agree that the government has a moral, social, legal, and fiduciary obligation to provide equitable financial compensation and support services to past and active members of the Canadian Armed Forces who have been injured or disabled or have died as a result of military service, and to their dependants, which the Government of Canada is obligated to fulfill.

Does the member agree that this social covenant with our veterans exists?

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his very transparent question. In fact, we have been doing that since Robert Borden's speech in 1917, we have continued to do that until today, and we will continue to do that tomorrow, regardless of where it is written or not written. That is an obligation the government has. Every government of every stripe has tried to fulfill that. As I said, there is always work to do. It will always be a work in progress.

In fact, the wording in Bill C-58, and I am sure my hon. colleague has read Bill C-58, addresses that and formalizes it, if it makes people more comfortable that it formalizes in language what has in fact been happening for decades and will continue to happen.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank that member for his speech and for his service to this country. I know that he is sincere when he talks about the interests of veterans. He must at times be frustrated that he is swimming against the tide in that caucus. I also appreciate his reference to Dennis Manuge, whom the current government fought tooth and nail in court until the injured veteran won in court and compelled the government to take action.

The member referenced case managers and disability claims adjudicators. I want to focus my question on those positions that are now being added.

I have two questions. First, case managers in the past worked from district offices for veterans. The current government has closed those district offices. Does the member continue to stand by the decision of the government to close district offices?

Second, is the fact that this budget has announced 100 new positions for case managers and 100 new positions for disability claims adjudicators tantamount to an admission that the Conservatives cut too deep?

• (1105)

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Speaker, as far as the tide in this caucus, there is no tide. There is not a single member of this House or of the other place who is not completely dedicated to the interests of veterans and their families. That includes every member on this side, every member on that side, and every member in the red chamber as well. We need to stop that BS. It is just not true.

With respect to adjudicators and case managers, it is not an admission of anything. It is an admission that we are continuing to try to do more and more as we make progress in serving our veterans. In 1938 we had no idea that we would have hundreds of thousands of World War II veterans. Fifteen years ago we had no idea that we would have thousands of Afghanistan veterans. In 20 years we will look back and say that 10 years ago we had no idea that we would have thousands of veterans from whatever the new situation is.

The government adapts, as every government has tried to do, Liberal or Conservative, in the best interests of veterans. It is an ongoing process. It will always be a work in progress. To suggest that there is some lack of commitment on the part of anyone in this House is simply wrong and offensive.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member directed most of his comments to veterans, but I know he has a long career and interest in defence spending. I wonder if he cares to comment.

We hear a great deal from Conservative members that there was something called the "decade of darkness", but the actual figures do not show that light has dawned. This budget, at pages 322 and 323, says that defence spending in the National Defence budget would start increasing, but that increase would start in 2017.

I wonder if the hon. member is concerned that the Department of National Defence is over-stretched, with missions in Iraq, Syria, and now Ukraine, and has fallen below the per capita, and in fact, the percentage of GDP spending on defence compared to any of our industrial country allies.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Speaker, the premise of that is only partially correct. It is not true that we have fallen below all of our industrial allies.

As a military member, sure I would love to have more defence spending, but the fact is that every government has a lot of legitimate calls on the treasury. There is a legitimate balance. We would bring in an increased accelerator, going up to 3%, which would ensure that the military has more funding year over year moving forward.

The Budget

We ask a lot of the military. It does extremely well with resources that will always have limitations. I lived through that for 30 years, and we did an awful lot. We would love to have more, but the military does a great job, and we are going to support it every step of the way as best this government possibly can.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to address the current Conservative government's 11th, and hopefully final, budget.

Mr. Speaker, I will also be splitting my time with the hon. member for St. John's East.

After a decade of Conservative government, middle-class families are working harder than ever yet falling further behind. Canadians spent the winter waiting for a plan focused on their priorities: giving their kids the best possible start in life and creating good jobs to support their families. Yet instead of presenting a real plan to invest in middle-class families feeling squeezed, the Conservatives have presented a perversely distorted Robin Hood budget, taking from the poor and giving to the richest Canadians.

Budget 2015 would stubbornly move ahead with a plan to spend billions on measures like income splitting for the wealthiest few, a doubling of the tax-free savings account contribution limit, and tax loopholes for CEOs, measures that would overwhelmingly help those who need it least.

At the same time, the budget fails to provide a helping hand for parents looking for child care, fails to lower the retirement age back to 65 for Canadian seniors, and fails to reinstate the minimum wage for federal workers.

The Conservatives' unfair income-splitting scheme would take billions from the middle class and give it to the rich; 85% of Canadians would get nothing at all. The Parliamentary Budget Office has highlighted this disparity, noting that only the wealthiest Canadians would benefit from the Conservatives' income-splitting gift. Even Conservatives are critical of the scheme, with Conservative insider Michael Taube publicly equating income splitting to "state-run socialism for the wealthy".

The doubling of the TFSA contribution limits would just create more tax loopholes for the wealthiest, while ordinary Canadians working hard to pay the bills would not even be able to take advantage of it. In fact, most low- to middle-income Canadians cannot afford to double their contributions to the TFSA, with fewer than 16% of working Canadians maximizing contributions under the current limit, according to the recent Broadbent Institute report.

Conservatives know that the expansion of the TFSA would be unsustainable and that their plan would be a huge burden on future generations, with indications that doubling the limit could cost \$15 billion a year within a few decades. The finance minister admitted as much when he stated that we should "leave that to [the Prime Minister's] granddaughter to solve that problem".

New Democrats oppose placing this financial burden on the backs of future generations for the sake of the wealthiest Canadians. It is morally unconscionable that the finance minister expects his granddaughter's children to clean up the financial mess his government is intentionally leaving.

Speaking of leaving a mess to future generations, the budget shockingly makes no mention of the environment or climate change. It offers little support for first nations or coastal communities, and its transit commitments would not start soon enough or go far enough to meet the growing challenges facing Canada's urban centres.

Budget 2015 also demonstrates, once again, that the Conservatives take B.C. for granted. For instance, New Democrats have repeatedly urged the Conservative government to reverse cuts to marine safety by reversing the Conservatives' closure of the Kitsilano Coast Guard base and cuts to Marine Communications and Traffic Services centres, but the budget has failed to do that.

The budget also fails to address B.C.'s need for significant investments in housing and infrastructure, providing no additional funding for new affordable housing or roads or bridges.

Canada's New Democrats have presented a significantly different vision that would ensure a prosperous long-term future for our country by proposing practical steps that would help fix the damage done by the current Prime Minister. They would create good jobs and opportunities for families, new supports for small businesses and manufacturing, a \$15 federal minimum wage, and public, affordable, accessible child care.

There are currently 900,000 children in Canada whose parents lack access to quality, affordable child care spaces. In many parts of the country, parents face monthly child care bills in the thousands of dollars.

● (1110)

Canada's New Democrats have presented a plan to create or maintain one million affordable child care spaces across Canada to ensure that parents do not pay more than \$15 a day for a child care space. Our plan would build on the successful child care model in Quebec, where research from economist Pierre Fortin showed that affordable child care helped 70,000 mothers join the workforce and boosted the economy by \$1.75 for every \$1 invested by the government. That is a plan that makes sense for families and for the economy.

Canada's New Democrats are also committed to making life more affordable for Canadians by raising the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour. Under the Prime Minister, Canadian families are working harder than ever but are falling further behind. The Liberal government before the Conservatives eliminated the minimum wage for federally regulated workers in 1996, and the Conservatives have done nothing to boost wages since then.

The Budget

The introduction of a \$15 an hour federal minimum wage would help fight growing income inequality and would provide leadership to increase standards for workers in all sectors of the economy in all regions in Canada. All Canadians who work hard and play by the rules should be able to make a decent living. Restoring a federal minimum wage would help make life more affordable for many workers and would help build a fairer, healthier, and more sustainable society.

New Democrats also understand the importance of increasing productivity by making smart investments in our roads, bridges, and public transit to help families get around faster and help Canadian businesses get their products to their customers, yet this budget would not do anything for local roads and bridges. It contains no new spending for new affordable housing and nothing for tourism, sports, recreation, or cultural infrastructure.

While the budget contains new money for public transit projects, it is a pittance compared to what is required to meet the growing challenges faced by municipalities in the Lower Mainland, like Coquitlam, New Westminster, and Port Moody. Most worrisome, investment is contingent on municipalities borrowing money from private lenders, requiring them to use “alternative financing and funding mechanisms involving the private sector”. This raises real concerns about whether the stringent rules would once again keep infrastructure investments from getting out the door in communities that remain opposed to public-private partnerships.

On a positive note, after a relentless NDP campaign, the government decided to use the copy and paste function and inserted our proposal to lower the small business rate from 11% to 9% to create good local jobs. The government inserted that into its budget. Whether they are local coffee shops, hair salons, or bakeries, small businesses continue to be the engine of our local economies and the backbone of thriving, prosperous, and sustainable communities. It is these small-business owners who create jobs, employ our neighbours, and support our charities. That is why the NDP has prioritized supporting small businesses as part of its practical plan for jobs and the economy.

Why then would the government make incremental reductions that would not be fully realized until 2019 instead of providing immediate help for Canada's hard-working small-business owners, who create 80% of all new jobs in this country? Instead of offering immediate tax relief to the richest 15% of Canadians through the government's income-splitting scheme, would it not make more sense to provide this immediate tax relief to companies that are already creating good jobs and investing in our communities now?

In conclusion, Canada's economy is only strong when it has a thriving middle class. This budget would do nothing to address Canada's struggling middle class. Instead, it would focus on handouts to the wealthiest 15% of Canadians.

The Leader of the Opposition is a principled leader with the experience and the plan to help grow the middle class, create good jobs, protect our environment, and fix the damage done by the Prime Minister and his Conservative government.

● (1115)

In October, Canadians will have a historic opportunity to support the NDP's practical plan for Canada when they reject the Conservative approach and elect the first-ever federal New Democrat government.

Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed listening to my hon. colleague speak and have two basic questions for him.

The New Democrats are suggesting raising the federal minimum wage to \$15 per hour. If politicians can dictate wages without any regard to the economics, why stop at \$15 an hour? Why not \$25 or \$30 an hour?

The member kept referring that the maximization of the TFSAs would only benefit the rich. My second question is in many ways much more personal.

My grandma is in a nursing home. She is 98 years old, turning 99 this summer. She maximizes her TFSAs every year. Her income, though I am not sure what it is, is under \$20,000 a year. Of the people who maximize TFSAs, 60% have an income under \$60,000 a year. Why does the hon. member want to raise taxes on grandma who is in a nursing home and who makes less than \$20,000 per year?

● (1120)

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, there currently is no minimum wage for federally regulated workers. The previous government to the Conservatives, the Liberal government, eliminated the federal minimum wage in 1996. The Conservatives have not done anything on that front, so we feel a measured response to increasing it to \$15 an hour would lift those federally regulated workers to a minimum of \$15 an hour, which is a basic level and not even the living wage that many organizations across the country call for.

On the issue of investments for seniors, we believe the New Democrats have the best comprehensive plan for seniors in the country. In terms of the TFSA, raising the contribution level would not allow most seniors to contribute. They unfortunately do not have that kind of disposable cash to put into investments because they have to put it toward rent, food, prescription drugs and health care. At the end of paying all of that, they unfortunately are unable to invest in those kinds of wealthy schemes. It would be nice for all of us to take advantage of that if we were in the position to do so.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the statements made about small business. There are different types of small business. There are multi-millionaire lawyers who are self-incorporated and are consultants to other multimillion dollar corporations. They are a small business because there is one employee in their corporation. Cutting their taxes is cutting taxes for affluents, but there are also small businesses that employ 10 people or 15 people, such as a corner store or a small manufacturing base. Cutting their taxes creates jobs and opportunities for other Canadians.

Would the NDP support a plan that tied the small business tax cut to job creation rather than simply allowing affluent consultants pay less tax?

The Budget

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that my hon. colleague's leader has decided that he will not support small business, while the leader of the NDP has categorically stated that he will invest in small business.

We feel that small businesses are the engine of job growth because they create 80% of jobs. Whether it is one or five employees, or a self-employed business, they are still creating jobs and doing a lot for our country. Those investments are wise. That is what an NDP government would do. That is what the official opposition leader has committed to do. We will continue to support our small and medium-sized enterprises right across the country.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to have an opportunity to speak to the Conservative budget. The budget is no pleasure, but to have a chance to talk about what is wrong with it, where it is lacking, the negative direction it is taking the country and some of the things that my party, the NDP, would do instead is something I cherish.

The Conservative budget would spend billions in handouts to the wealthiest at a time when the government should be investing in accessible child care, affordable housing and supporting seniors who are struggling to get by. Places like Newfoundland and Labrador and the people there and the Atlantic who have critical issues that need to be addressed, like regional economic development and supporting communities, issues such as the constitutional obligation of the government to support Marine Atlantic, are absent from this budget.

Absent as well are the \$280 million that the government promised the government of Newfoundland and Labrador in a fishing industry development fund in response to the consequences of CETA and the request to remove its powers to export local processing in fisheries. Where is that? All of these are absent.

Instead, we have a claim for an allegedly balanced budget. After nine years, in which the Conservatives increased the size of the deficit by a total of \$150 billion, they now have an allegedly balanced budget, and this is supposedly a talking point that they think will take them to the election and bring them another majority government. That is not going to happen, because people are starting to realize that the Conservative administration is, in fact, not the prudent fiscal manager that it claims to be.

How did the Conservatives balance the budget? What do we have here? They claim to have a balanced budget. How did they get there? They got there by taking \$2 billion out of the contingency fund. It used to be \$3 billion, and now it is only \$1 billion. They achieved \$2.1 billion by selling off GM shares to add to the budget. If they had waited another couple of weeks, they would have actually made another \$100 million. Now there is prudent fiscal management. There are another \$3.4 billion. Where did they get it? They stole it from the EI fund, the employment insurance fund.

We have \$3.4 billion, we have \$2.1 billion, and we have another \$2 billion shaved from the contingency fund. That is where the Conservatives come up with a phony balanced budget. Are we really talking about prudent fiscal management or are we talking about a shell game that is designed to confuse people and let people believe that they have somehow or other magically balanced the budget through prudent fiscal management? What really has happened is that they taken away important sources of income from the

government, like the corporate taxes that are necessary to pay for the services that Canadians need and deserve, and they have done that in a way that is basically a corporate gift. We now very likely have the lowest corporate tax rate in the whole OECD. All of the wealthiest nations in the have corporate tax rates higher than ours.

We would do something about that. If people want to call it raising taxes, yes, that would be raising taxes. My colleague in the provincial party in Newfoundland, when confronted with the notion that the NDP was supposedly a tax and spend party, said yes, it was a tax and spend party. It would tax fairly and spend wisely. The Conservative government would do the exact opposite of that. It would take away the taxes that other countries all across the world make corporations pay, give away revenue and then take away the services for which that revenue pays.

• (1125)

When we look at the things the Conservatives do have in the budget in making special arrangements for the wealthy, the first one that is obvious and jumps out at everybody is the income-splitting proposal, \$2.4 billion. It is income splitting for families with children under 18, income splitting that does zero for single-parent families that are among the poorest families in the country and families without children under 18 or parents who are in the same tax bracket. With a cost of \$2.4 billion, this gives zero benefit to 86% of families, but helps the wealthiest.

Is that wise spending of the government's money? Is that good for the future of our country? Is that good for solving some of the problems Canada has? No. When we add on top of that the significant increase, almost doubling, of the tax-free savings account, what do we get? We get another program that helps, and is designed to help, the wealthiest of Canadians.

We just heard someone opposite talk about his mother, aged 98, putting money into a tax-free saving account. It is wonderful that she is able to do that. We need a reality check with the government because it is ignoring the vast majority of Canadians.

There was a survey done by the Canadian Payroll Association, and this is not a left-wing think tank. Last September it said that 51% of employees found it difficult to meet their financial obligations if their paycheque was delayed by one week. Therefore, they are living from paycheque to paycheque. They are not putting \$10,000 each or \$20,000 per couple into a tax-free savings account. They are just not capable of doing that because they are doing their very best to try to meet their obligations, paycheque to paycheque.

The Budget

That is just people who are working. That is not people who are unemployed, or people who have been looking for work for a long time, or who are disabled or living on social assistance because of their difficult circumstances. These people are working. Where is the benefit to the people of Canada to have this tax-free savings account almost doubled. It is not there. It does nothing to solve the problem Canadians have now.

What is the government's answer? The answer of the Minister of Finance when someone said that this was putting an unfair burden on taxpayers to take away this source of revenue, and it will grow over the years, was that we would let the Prime Minister's granddaughter solve that problem. That is the answer. The Conservatives will let the Prime Minister's granddaughter solve that problem somewhere down the road.

We have a plan that will make our children and our grandchildren better off, because we want to have a program that serves their interests now. One of the most obvious ones—we have announced it already and it is something that is gaining more and more attraction as time goes on—is the national child care plan for a maximum \$15 a day child care.

What would that do? It would ensure that single parents would have an opportunity to get to work, to finish an education, to ensure that their children would be looked after and have a better income for themselves. It would ensure that couples would be able to work as well as look after their children, instead of having, what in many cases is, the next highest expense next to their mortgage. That is what needs to be fixed to make life better for our children and our grandchildren, and not go the other way, which the government seems to be quite happy and content to do.

We have proposed measures that will do positive and good things for the future of our country and help solve some of the problems of inequality, ensure that families have a better opportunity to look after their families and the future of their families, and the government ignores those needs in a crude attempt to try to buy the votes of people with their own money. It is an old game, and it is one that will not work because Canadians are wiser.

● (1130)

We look forward to an election coming up later on this year because we have plans and proposals that we believe can help solve some of the problems that Canadians have. We have a vision for a more equal Canada and a greater opportunity to work together to build our country instead of tearing it down.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the member's honesty. He was clear in his speech that his party is in favour of increased taxes to pay for a number of the programs the New Democrats have indicated they are interested in. I am actually looking forward to debating those issues at election time also.

However, I am a little confused. On one hand, in his speech he talked about corporations needing to pay their own way, and then the previous speaker from his party was taking credit for the small business tax rate going from 11% to 9%. Ninety per cent of the businesses in the country are small businesses.

Are the New Democrats for increasing taxes on business, or are they against taxes going up for business? It is a very confusing message. I do not think they know what they actually stand for. I would be interested to hear what he has to say about that.

● (1135)

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, we have noticed over here that the hon. member is confused on many occasions. He did not actually need to tell us that.

If he had been listening, he would have known that the leader of the NDP gave a major speech several months ago in which he called for a decrease in small business tax rates down to 9%. That was very clear. He also called for an increase in the capital cost allowance for manufacturers. This is desperately needed in the member's neck of the woods, in Ontario, because of the hollowing out of manufacturing that has happened during the government's administration. We are trying to fix that.

We do understand what needs to be done, but we do not support the notion that major corporations, highly profitable corporations, can have tax cuts and sit on that cash for years and years and not use it to create jobs.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a fellow Atlantic Canadian, the member and I certainly have some issues in common.

He talked about the EI fund. Certainly, because of the dominance of seasonal industries in my province, issues around employment insurance are extremely important and the gutting of the program in previous budgets has had a terrible effect.

The question I want to ask the member is in regard to a direct quote from the budget with respect to EI. I would like to get his take on it. In the budget it says:

Taking steps to ensure that Employment Insurance claimants are aware of their job search responsibilities when moving or considering moving for work. The Government will also ensure that individuals willing to move are not excluded from Employment Insurance training opportunities across the country.

I would take that to mean that those who are not willing to move would be excluded.

I invite my colleague's comments with respect to this particular provision regarding availability of EI under the budget.

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, yes, one of the things that has happened over the past couple of decades is employment insurance, which used to be called unemployment insurance, is now unavailable to the majority of people who are unemployed. That happened, I have to say, starting with his party's government in the 1990s and continues through to the efforts of the Conservative government to in fact make it more and more difficult for people to get employment insurance when they need it.

The Budget

The member talked about seasonal industries. We have a tremendous number of seasonal industries in our country. Seasonal workers are needed for seasonal industries and when seasonal workers are treated as if they are repeat offenders, I think is the phrase they sometimes use, when the government treats them with disdain and makes the program unavailable to them, then the government is destroying some of the important parts of the economy of this country, including tourism, forestry, fishing, and I could go on. The government has done a lot of damage to the economy, particularly rural and seasonal economies that need to have a variety of jobs throughout the year. Seasonal workers need to have unemployment insurance when they cannot get it.

The passage he quoted sounds like code for another attack on workers, so I would agree with him on that.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the great member to the north of me in the riding of Huron—Bruce.

It is always a joy to speak in this House on important issues, particularly at this point in time when this Conservative government has just presented economic action plan 2015.

What are budgets? Budgets, whether they are business, government, or personal ones, need to look back a little bit to assess what has worked, what has not worked, what the business plan is. Then it moves forward with an analysis of what one has, what the requirements are for the business, or in this case, the government, and then what is needed for the present.

Since 2006, we have had the incredible leadership of the Prime Minister, as well as the finance ministers. The new Minister of Finance just presented his first budget. They not only have the intuition of what is coming and what is needed, but more importantly, how we should move forward so that as a country and a government we can continue on the path we have been on.

In 2006, after we were elected to government, we presented a budget. In 2006, 2007 and 2008, this Conservative government focused on how to continue to pay down the debt, which we did by almost \$40 billion over those first three budgets. We did that with the initiative of lowering taxes.

Then in 2008, we saw as a government something coming that did not look good. It was not just happening in Canada. It was an international recession. It struck in 2008 and stayed for 2009. In 2010 this country was coming out of it. I might add that Canada was the only country in the industrialized world that was basically coming out of it.

We made an agreement in 2008, because what was happening was a worldwide recession. I do not want to overestimate or underestimate the significance of that event. I know in the 1990s when the Liberals were in power, there was a blip in the economy. I believe they manufactured this huge issue about how bad it was for Canada. However, this one was not; this recession was actually global. It reached deep into the pockets of everyone, every industry, every family, every business, and every government. It was the worst recession since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Quite honestly, there was a lot of good discussion here in this House. It was agreed

by the parties that we needed to do something to help stimulate the economy, and we did.

We put forward one of the largest stimulus packages in Canadian history. There were guidelines that our government put in place that it would be temporary, for two years. We actually wanted to see what was going to happen at the end of that time. We had implemented a lower tax, giving people and businesses back the money that they needed to help stimulate the economy. We came out of that better than just about any country in the world.

• (1140)

We now have budget 2015, and it is called Canada's economic action plan, as the budget was called in 2014, 2013, 2012, 2011 and 2010. Why? Our government has the true belief that we should build a plan around economic growth. Canada's economic action plan is the reason we now have the lowest tax rate for individuals in this country in 50 years. It is why the tax rate is the lowest that it has been for our industry, businesses and small businesses.

We are here to rebuild our country and we have done it, but we are not done. That is why we look to the future when we are building a budget. This plan looks not just at the present, but it has a vision for the future of how we are going to build and help continue to create jobs, on top of the 1.2 million net new jobs that have been created by businesses in this country. We have created the environment for that. Governments do not create jobs that create much economic growth; it is businesses and individuals that do that.

I come from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex. All members will say their riding is the greatest, which is a proud statement we should all make. My riding is very much comprised of small businesses and agriculture. When we looked at the significance of leaving money in taxpayers' pockets, we did what our people and small businesses wanted, and that was to give them an opportunity to grow and hire people. Let us look at what we have done.

Let me start with families, because they are the foundation of every country. Families are the foundation of my riding, but it would not matter if I lived in a rural riding as I do or in one of the urban ridings. The foundation of this country is families, and those families run small businesses or people work for small businesses.

I am a father of three children. I am a grandfather, and I am proud to say that by July I should have 10 grandchildren. I am a little behind my colleague, who announced yesterday that he has 32 grandchildren.

However, with a focus on the significance of what families do for this country, we should leave money in their pockets and as a government only take from people what we need to provide the services. We should run this country like a business. Although governments are not businesses, we should run them like a business with the same principles. When we do that, we look to families and think of what we can do to help keep them remain solid and leave money in their pockets.

The Budget

We have done a number of things, particularly with our tax cuts over the years, which have lowered taxes for families by \$3,400 since we were elected in 2006. On top of that, we have just added universal child care benefits and programs for children six and under, up to \$160 a month, with benefits for children six to 17. We also thought about what we can do on income splitting for parents. Also, one of the greatest assets for many families is the tax-free savings account, and I am sure I will get some questions about that.

In conclusion, we made a promise to balance the budget, which we did. We made a promise to maintain a strong and stable economy. We promised to create jobs. We promised to cut taxes. I am proud to stand here today, because not only did we say it, but we also did it. Budget 2015 is a budget for hard-working, responsible Canadians, and we will make sure they receive what they deserve.

• (1145)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Éleine Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

However, I think it is a problem that there are no concrete measures to provide affordable child care services for Canadian families in the budget tabled by the Conservative government. They are nowhere to be found.

The NDP proposed a plan that the government does not seem to want to consider. The Conservatives spend their time bragging about improving the universal child care benefit, but they refuse to tell Canadians that these benefits will be considered taxable income. Canadians will therefore be taxed directly. The government gives with one hand but has no problem taking away with the other the first chance it gets.

Why does the Conservative government insist on taxing hard-working Canadian families who need help, when the NDP's plan to create \$15-a-day child care spots puts money directly and immediately back in the hands of Canadian families, who will not have to spend obscene amounts of money to ensure that their children have good child care services? I would like to understand the government's perspective.

Why is it okay for the Conservatives to tax Canadian families and promise them fake benefits?

• (1150)

[*English*]

Mr. Bev Shipley: Mr. Speaker, we now have the lowest tax regime for individuals, and that is families, in 50 years. It goes back to former Prime Minister Diefenbaker's time, another great Conservative.

We talk about what we are doing. We believe that they should have the option. We over on this side believe moms and dads are still the ones who should make the choice. That may not be the belief of everyone, and that is fine. We now provide money for families. Every family in Canada with children now benefits from the universal child care program that we have. That \$15 a day is a bit of a challenge for those people who work night shifts, who have vacations, who work on weekends. However, not ours. Moms and dads make those decisions. They can hire someone to come in. They can use family. They are the ones given the choice.

It is a different ideology. We believe parents make the decisions. I do not think the government should be making all the decisions for families.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member about seniors living in poverty. He talked about the economic action plans. It was in either economic action plan 2011 or economic action plan 2012 that the Conservatives made the decision to increase the age of eligibility for the old age security and the guaranteed income supplement from 65 to 67. The result is that poor seniors would receive a two-year delay in receiving about \$13,000 a year. It was tantamount to reaching into their pockets and taking out \$28,000. That is for our poorest, most vulnerable seniors.

My question for the member is this. Which of the measures in this budget is addressed to those vulnerable seniors who are being forced to pay more than their fair share to bring the budget into balance? What is going to help them? Will it be income splitting? Will it be the universal child care benefit? Will it be the increased limits on TFSA's, or will it be the ability to have less tax on their registered retirement income funds? These are seniors living in poverty. Which one of those programs will benefit them the greatest?

Mr. Bev Shipley: Mr. Speaker, what the member forgot to mention is that we have also increased the GIS for seniors. The GIS, as members know, is part of the old age security for those in the most need.

As every government has had, we will have programs for our seniors. We now have the lowest ratio of people in poverty in Canada, at less than 5%.

We have work to do. However, to say that Canada is not in a good position in terms of how we have dealt with seniors is misleading.

• (1155)

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House today and speak about the budget and most importantly, speak about a balanced budget. When I was first elected in 2008, we certainly were in some very serious and challenging economic times and that is putting it lightly. We were in the midst of the worst economic downturn in a generation.

We have been able to carry through that time over the last number of years, almost seven years now. We were able to provide stimulus to the Canadian economy to keep Canadians working to lessen the blow to our economy. As time passed by, we were able to eliminate some of the stimulus and get back to balance. That is what we have done and now the economy is responding like it should and in the budget there are many years of balanced budgets moving forward.

The Budget

Another key indicator is our debt-to-GDP ratio. We have committed by 2021 to have that at 25%. We are by far heads and tails above other developed G7 countries. We are way ahead, so that is encouraging. There have been 1.2 million jobs added to the Canadian economy since 2009. The marginal effect of the tax rate when we first took government in 2006 was at 33%. Today it is at 17%. That allows businesses to keep more of what they earn so they can reinvest.

Another kind of checkpoint as to where we are is on the fiscal balance with our provinces, municipalities and cities. Currently, we are at about 50%, so 50% of the taxes collected in this country are from the provinces, municipalities and cities. We have our fiscal balance. Again, when we look at other countries, other developed countries, this is one of the best rates going. Of course in the budget document it is the best going.

In Huron—Bruce, we are Ontario's west coast. It is a very rural riding with a mixture of agriculture, tourism, energy production is significant as well, and light manufacturing. The budget really does address a lot of the needs and initiatives that we need to keep the economy growing in Huron—Bruce and the greater region of southwestern Ontario.

As for the small business tax rate, in 2008 we took that number from 12% to 11%. In this budget document, we are dropping that level from 11% to 9% over the next number of years. In addition to that, we have increased the threshold. A number of years ago it was \$300,000. It was increased to \$400,000 and now it is at \$500,000 of earnings. This allows employers to keep what they earn, reduce the tax on that and again, be able to reinvest.

There is a fairly large automotive manufacturer in my riding. I worked for it years and years ago. There is an auto supplier innovation fund of \$100 million over the next five years. We know that in Ontario there is a tremendous number of automotive parts manufacturers. Linamar and Magna are two of the larger ones that come to mind. This fund in the next five years will help automotive parts suppliers do some innovative things. One is to improve fuel efficiency and reduce emissions. These are important investments. For my former employer Wescast, in the exhaust manifold business, anything it can do to improve fuel efficiency with large manufacturers is of great benefit to it.

Another one important to remember as well is the auto innovation fund. There has been over \$1 billion invested in the auto innovation fund. Large manufacturers like Ford, Toyota, Honda and again, Linamar and Magna have all benefited from the auto innovation fund to keep our local economies moving.

Another important investment in the budget is the extension of the accelerated capital cost allowance, allowing manufacturers that purchase machinery and equipment in their facilities to accelerate at 50% per year. This would be extended for 10 years. This is something that the government has remained committed to for a long period of time. This would help to increase investment and spur manufacturers to continue to innovate and modernize their facilities.

•(1200)

Coupled with this is making Canada a tariff-free zone for machinery and equipment purchased in a manufacturing facility.

There are 1,800 tariffs that we would eliminate. That would be a savings to manufacturers of about \$450 million a year. When we couple that with the accelerated capital cost allowance, we would really start to put some dollars into job creators to create future jobs, become more efficient and be able to sell around the world. That is great.

We have committed our investments in IRAP. Those who are involved in it will know what the acronym is. That is to help with research and innovation.

I would also like to mention the member for London West, who is the Minister of State for Science and Technology. The percentage to GDP of research and innovation in this area is the highest in the world among the G7 economies.

We are doing things for today, but with the investment in research and technology, we would also make those investments for tomorrow.

I did mention that agriculture is a massive economic component to the Huron—Bruce economy. The lifetime capital gains exemption is very important to farmers who are looking to transition their farms to the future generations. We know that farm families put everything that they have into their farms. The ability to increase the lifetime capital gains exemption in the Conservative government's time frame has doubled from \$500,000 to \$1 million. That is important recognition of the importance of farm families in our communities.

All the while, I should mention that the annual budget of agriculture has seen the commitment from this government. There are billions of dollars per year in non-business risk management and business risk management. We are certainly thankful in our areas for that. There are a couple of additions to that budget. One is increasing the trade commission. We know the importance of the trade commission's role in the countries that we serve and where we have embassies, as well. There is also the market access secretariat. This has proven to be a vital investment to growing trade and maintaining what we have, making sure that if the market does get closed down for a brief period or there is an interruption with its work, we have the great relations to get it open again so that we can get our beef, pork, or whatever it is, back into those markets. There is the agrimarketing fund, and we have made enhancements there.

Many of the members on this side of the House are going to talk about the family tax plan and the benefits therein. This is important to families in Huron—Bruce as well.

I see that there is one minute left. I have probably got 45 minutes' worth of material here, but I want to highlight the fact that families would now be able to split their incomes. We have increased the universal child care benefit from \$100 to \$160 per month. For children over six, that is \$60 new per month. In addition, children's activities are fully refundable, whatever they may be. Parents will see that. There has been \$6,600 in tax relief to the average Canadian family since the Conservative government took office. That is important.

The Budget

Today, we are going to see the provincial budget. The province takes and takes from Canadian families. The Conservative government has provided tax relief time and time again to Canadian families, as well as to seniors. I know that I will probably get a question on seniors as well. Doubling the tax-free savings account would be great for families and seniors. In addition to that, reducing the minimums for RRIFs at 71 would also be beneficial.

• (1205)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question for my colleague is about health care in Canada.

We have a new normal: an aging population. All of the experts agree that the health care system as it is now is not ready to handle that. Why then are the Conservatives planning to cut transfers to the provinces, which are already struggling and looking to the federal government for leadership? How can the member come here and defend a budget that will balance the books at the expense of our seniors and people who want adequate, accessible health care?

At this point, the budget includes \$36 billion less for health care. How can the member balance the books at the expense of people who need health care?

[*English*]

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Speaker, the member is welcome to sit in the House all day and ask as many farcical questions as she wants. That is her right as a member of Parliament.

The fact is that health transfers have gone from \$32 billion to \$40 billion. The budget for CIHR, through Health Canada, is \$1 billion a year for health research. Social transfers are going to be at \$14.6 billion in a couple of years, increasing each and every year. As well, to help seniors age better in the future and deal with issues facing seniors, the Canadian centre for aging and brain health is a five-year commitment that we have made in Toronto to start to figure out some of the serious issues, like Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia. That is delivering for seniors and health care in this country.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the most significant issues facing smaller municipalities, particularly municipalities in the part of the country the member opposite represents, is water quality. Federal changes to water quality standards have side-loaded millions and millions of dollars onto smaller municipalities to upgrade water facilities. There is not a penny in new infrastructure money in this budget that recognizes these new obligations. In particular, in small towns in the Bruce Peninsula, where water quality has been a significant issue over the last 20 years, cuts to water quality support have played a significant role in putting people's health at risk.

Why has the government refused to step up on water quality, refused to invest infrastructure dollars in those projects, and why, for two years now, have cities and municipalities across this country received zero dollars in funding specified for water infrastructure?

Mr. Ben Lobb: Again, Mr. Speaker, the member is also welcome to sit in the House all day and ask farcical questions.

He got up about 10 minutes ago and complained about the federal government transferring \$20 million a year to his city. The riding of Huron—Bruce received \$6.6 million a year in gas tax funds. It has

received over \$100 million in infrastructure since 2008. Umpteen investments have been made in Huron—Bruce, to the point now where they have no water problems. They have invested in sewers, in water and water treatment, in roads, in bridges, and in community centres, all because of this government.

The member's provincial cousins, the Liberal government in Ontario, drag their feet every chance they get, because there is money ready to go for more investments in infrastructure in this province.

Why do you not call your premier in Toronto and ask her why she is slowing things down?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Before we resume debate, I would remind all members to direct all of their comments directly to the Chair rather than to their colleagues.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Beaches—East York.

• (1210)

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the MP for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise, today, to speak to the Conservative government's latest, and last, budget. It is not a budget without some provisions worthy of support, but it is a budget for the few, not for the many, and the few for whom the budget would make a difference are, by and large, the wealthier few.

The income-splitting provision, for example, would cost \$3 billion in lost revenues to the federal government. Singles would be excluded; single-parent families, accounting for one in five Canadian families, would obviously also be excluded from the program; families with partners in the same tax bracket, accounting for another 30% of Canadian families, also would be excluded. In fact, nine of ten Canadian households would receive nothing at all from this program.

The increased limit under the tax-free savings account would also heavily favour higher-income earners. While the immediate cost impact of revenues would be significantly less than the income-splitting provision, the longer-term impact would be significantly greater. At maturity, the cost to the federal government is estimated to be upwards of \$15 billion annually. This is not a sustainable way to budget.

The Budget

These two measures, alone, would continue the long-standing trend in this country of undoing the progressivity of our tax system. Even prior to these measures, our tax system was the fourth least effective among OECD countries in reducing income inequality, with only Israel, the United States, and Chile, having less progressive tax systems. A progressive tax system is but one of the many buttresses against income inequality that successive federal governments have dismantled over almost 30 years. It would leave us with a country not quite as advertized, not as generous as most Canadians would like it to be and think it ought to be, with a level of income inequality by which Canadians are both surprised and disheartened.

The figures are, in fact, quite shocking. The wealthiest 20% of Canadians own 70% of the country's total wealth. The poorest 20% own less than 1%. In fact, the bottom 50% own just 6% of the country's total wealth. The gap is growing, thanks to budgets like this one. In fact, income inequality has become the hallmark of Canadian cities. In some Canadian cities, this is owed, in part, to stubborn, persistent levels of unemployment, but the problem also exists in booming urban economies with low unemployment rates. It is really about the changing labour markets in Canada's global and globalizing cities.

A study released just this month by the Metcalf Foundation, focusing on the working poor in the Toronto region, also looked at nine of Canada's ten larger cities, including Calgary and Edmonton, cities booming with the extraction economy, until recently at least. In only one city, Quebec City, did the percentage of working poor actually decline, and then just marginally. Toronto and Vancouver, Canada's two richest and most globalized cities, are becoming, in the words of the report:

...giant modern-day Downton Abbeys where a well-to-do knowledge class relies on a large cadre of working poor who pour their coffee, serve their food, clean their offices, and relay their messages from one office to another.

With tongue in cheek, I will share the report's good news. The good news is that the population of working poor in Toronto grew by only 11% between 2006 and 2012, which is a far cry from the 39% growth in Toronto's population of working poor for the first five years of this new millennium under a Liberal federal government.

However, while the growth rate has moderated, it is particularly worrying that the number of working poor is growing at all, in the context of a shrinking number of those actually working; that is, in the context of a falling employment rate in Toronto.

It is getting increasingly difficult to make ends meet in Canada's richest city. While workers fall behind, costs continue to rise. While the percentage of working poor has increased by 11% in Toronto, child care costs have gone up by about 30%, rent by about 15%, and the cost of public transit by about a third.

A recent study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives sets the living wage in Toronto for a two-parent family of four at \$18.50 per hour, with full-time work weeks for both parents—no money left over for TFSAs there, no return on the tax form for a split income. That is just paying the basics and getting by.

●(1215)

In Toronto we are seeing the suburbanization of working poverty in cities that are having the highest growth rates of working poverty, such as Markham, with a 27% increase, and Ajax, with a 25% increase. People are moving out of Toronto to escape high housing costs but are moving to places farther from employment centres and public transit. This is Canada's richest city, and there is nothing in the budget that acknowledges this as a reality. After 10 years, the current government still does not understand cities. It does not understand that, with 80% of Canadians living in cities, a federal budget must address the realities of urban life in Canada.

This year there will be \$3 billion given back to the wealthier few in the form of income splitting and nothing to address the pressing need for public transit. In fact, there will be more than \$6 billion given back in income-splitting tax returns before a single new federal penny gets invested in public transit. Even then, in the third year out, the Conservative government proposes that we start up the gentlest of inclines to meaningful dollars, dollars caught up in the red tape and bureaucracy of their mandatory P3 scheme.

However, on the issue of housing, there is not even a recognition of need. Long-term operating agreements that provide housing subsidies to more than 600,000 households in Canada will continue to expire. In Toronto, where 45% of renters cannot afford the homes they live in, there has been virtually no growth in new purpose-built rental housing since 2006. In Toronto, while 90,000 households, which is about 200,000 or so people, sit on a waiting list for affordable housing, only 260 new units opened up in 2013. There is nothing in this budget to remedy or ameliorate this situation.

The Budget

If this budget were worthy of being called an economic action plan, it would surely address the set of economic circumstances at the heart of my riding in Beaches—East York, where a Target store has shut down leaving nearly 200 workers without jobs. The history of that site tells a story about the neglect of urban economies by not just the current government but by successive federal governments over a long period of time. The Target store started its life out as a Ford auto plant. Its workers were the highest paid factory workers in the British empire. A prosperous east end of Toronto was built on jobs like that. However, over time we have seen those kinds of jobs slip away. The auto plant gave way to high-end, unionized retail, an Eaton's store, then to a Zellers store, but still with a unionized staff, and finally to a Target store, a foreign-owned, non-union discount retailer that has now picked up stakes, leaving an enormous hole in the centre of this community, a community where over a third live below the poverty line, with an unemployment rate that is double Toronto's, and with an expansive shadow economy as people desperately seek survival jobs in Canada's richest city.

The finance minister promised every assistance to those who lost their jobs in the Target chain. However, he could not write a budget that would make a meaningful difference to circumstances like these. He could not write a budget that even hinted at some hope for change. This is a government for the very few, for the wealthier few. It writes budgets, as it always has, for its own electoral constituency and leaves the rest of Canada out. What is most troubling is that it is a government that is blind to urban Canada, to the communities in which 80% of Canadians live. It fails to see and address the challenges of Canadian cities, and it fails to see and harness the great potential of Canadian cities and the people who live in them. It fails as a government, and this document fails as an economic action plan for Canada.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member's story and heard many of the stories that define the riding I represent not too far away.

The question I have for the member is this. We heard earlier today from the Conservative side that there is transit money in Toronto, specifically with respect to the Sheppard subway. I am curious as to whether or not the NDP would sustain that investment and would continue to spend the \$625 million of federal money earmarked for that project on the Sheppard subway.

• (1220)

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Speaker, the NDP understands the need of all cities right across the country, big and small, for federal transit funding.

The NDP recognizes the critical place that cities hold in the economy of our country. It recognizes that public transit is critical infrastructure from an environmental, economic and social perspective to the 80% of Canadians who live in urban communities.

It is our intention to ensure that the federal government does its share to ensure that cities across the country get the funding required to build public transit to serve the people of those cities and to serve the economies of those cities.

Most certainly, we will be increasing transit funding over what the current government proposes to do when we form government.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on his speech.

He painted a very clear picture of what is in this budget, which will help just a small percentage of Canadians—the wealthiest 15%, who do not need help—even as the middle class is having a harder and harder time making ends meet.

I know that public transit is a very important issue to my colleague, the member for Beaches—East York. I represent a riding that is pretty much a suburb, but we have a growing need for public transit too.

The budget addresses the urgent need for investment in public transit, which the NDP brought forward. However, it involves public-private partnerships. I see problems with that funding formula.

I would like him to comment on that and explain what it means for him and the city he represents.

[*English*]

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Speaker, the issue of the funding formula for public transit in this budget is a very curious one in light of the government's proclamations that it respects the jurisdictions of other levels of government.

The government is imposing, through the public transit funding, when that funding finally comes through in three years, a funding mechanism that will require that cities engage in private-public partnerships to build their public transit.

It ought to be left to cities, and the citizens of those cities, to determine the best way to build the transit they require. The government ought not to be imposing on cities a funding mechanism. Councillors and mayors of many cities who I talk to are struggling under the mandatory PPP screen that already exists for infrastructure. It imposes enormous administrative burdens on cities for which the federal government does not pay. It delays money getting out so the infrastructure can actually be built.

It is similar to the same disrespect the government has for other funding obligations it imposes on cities across the country. It has decided in its wisdom to amend the regulations to waste water treatment. The implications of that are \$18 billion of required capital expenditures that will have to be borne by municipalities across the country.

These are not insignificant amounts. They are enormous amounts of money that the government has imposed on municipalities with absolutely no support. Metro Vancouver will have to pay \$1.5 billion in order to implement these new regulations. For Halifax, it is almost \$1 billion; Cape Breton, \$423 million; Montreal, Quebec, over \$1 billion; and so on and so forth.

The Budget

For smaller communities, these become incredibly onerous per capita charges. For the town of Burgeo, Newfoundland, whose member is sitting directly in front of me, the per capita cost is somewhere between \$24,000 and \$27,000 to implement these waste water treatment regulations, with absolutely no support from the federal government for those municipalities.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the budget before us shows the real lack of vision of the Conservative government and the Liberal governments before it. They put all their eggs in one basket and missed the boat on economic diversification.

The budget before us will mostly help the wealthy. Just look at the increase in the TFSA limit, which is going from \$5,500 to \$10,000 a year. The vast majority of Canadians do use the TFSA, but the vast majority of people do not even reach the current ceiling of \$5,500 a year. This increase will benefit only the wealthiest Canadians. Just look at income splitting. Not only does this measure benefit only the wealthiest 15%, but it is also a regressive measure that might encourage women to stay home instead of going to work because it is more advantageous to have a large difference in income. The other provinces do not have subsidized day care, so with the cost of child care for two or three kids and other related expenses, a person might come to the conclusion that it does not make sense financially to go to work unless they are able to earn a very good income. In addition to helping the wealthiest Canadians, this measure might have a regressive impact on women. I find that particularly unfortunate.

The budget also contains primarily recycled announcements, that is, funds that have already been announced. The Conservatives are leveraging them, telling people that this is new money, that it has just been released, when in fact, most of these funds have already been allocated and announced.

In cases where there is any new money, quite often those funds will not be available until 2017. Of course, everyone knows that there is a federal election in October 2015 and, in the end, there is a very good chance those funds will never be allocated.

It is a balanced budget, but at what cost? It is balanced at the expense of the contingency fund. The government is dipping into our contingency fund. We no longer have any wiggle room to deal with any emergencies that arise. Given that the government is not putting any money into fighting climate change, and that the emergencies that have come up in recent years were often related to climate change, we will probably need that money. Just think of all the flooding that has occurred at various times and how much it has cost Canadians and the Canadian economy.

The government also balanced the budget by selling its shares in General Motors and by not using the funds that had been allocated to help our regions and Canadians and returning them to the public treasury. Employment insurance surpluses now go to the treasury. At what point the budget is truly balanced and surpluses accumulated is debatable. We see that it takes financial gymnastics to arrive at this outcome. The worst part is that the budget contains absolutely nothing for rural regions like mine. They are left to their own devices once again.

We need only think of the infrastructure funds. At present, there are not even enough funds to meet the needs of even one major Canadian city. What will be left for the small municipalities like those in my riding, where there are sometimes 150 to 250 taxpayers in the entire municipality who have to try to cover the cost of renovating infrastructures that are in serious need of attention? We have community infrastructure that needs to be renovated. There are roads in our villages that need to be repaired.

• (1225)

Some municipalities have two or three bridges to repair. The municipality of Angliers, in my riding, has not had clean water since 2008. The water in this municipality is quite yellow. It is difficult to wash white and coloured fabrics.

Municipalities also need to maintain their sewage and water systems. Once the major cities have dipped into the community improvement fund, there will only be crumbs left for the towns and villages like mine in rural areas.

In recent years, various arms of the public service have been cut in order to reduce costs. However, this has been at the expense of rural regions like mine. Jobs at Service Canada have been eliminated and the budget for service counters at the Canada Revenue Agency and the Canadian Forces recruiting centre have been slashed.

As a result, not only are people not receiving proper services, but the hands of the public servants who work in those offices are tied. They have to tell people that they cannot give them more information and that they will have to call or visit the website. What is more, they also no longer have the right to manage the money allocated to their region themselves.

For example, with regard to the Canada summer jobs program, public servants in Laval, which is 600 kilometres away, now decide who will receive funding in Abitibi-Témiscamingue. Those decision-makers, who have likely never set foot in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, are deciding how to help our region instead of us. It is the same for many other programs. We can no longer even take care of our own regions ourselves. Programs are being managed from elsewhere. This government regularly accuses the NDP of being a centralizer, when it is certainly the most centralizing government I have ever seen.

People are having more and more trouble making ends meet. Rate increases are never compensated by an increase in benefits, however small it may be. People are paying more and more for basic necessities. They are getting ripped off with banking fees and ATM fees, and there is no one to stop that from happening. Canadians have to pay \$2 to receive a paper copy of their bills and they are being told to just get them online because companies do not understand that they do not have the money to pay for an Internet connection or to buy a computer. Let us also not forget that some of these people do not even know how to use a computer. Nevertheless, they are still being told to go online to save money and get services.

The Budget

What is more, over the years, the government has made cuts to community Internet access centres, which is sometimes the only way people have of accessing the Internet. Meanwhile, it is putting more and more of its services online. People in the regions are increasingly getting short shrift from this government. The Conservatives have no understanding at all of the reality of people who live in the regions.

Furthermore, we have had a housing shortage for years. This hurts our economy, since people who find work in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, for example, cannot move there because there is no housing. Not only is the government not helping the regions, but it is also sometimes hindering their economic development, which is unacceptable. This shows a lack of vision on the part of this government with respect to the economy, in particular the economy in the regions.

• (1230)

[English]

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to my colleague across the way and I was quite disappointed when I heard her talk about income splitting, saying it was detrimental for women. That is very interesting because I do not think anywhere in the budget it talks about income splitting being only for women. It talks about the higher income spouse. My recollection is that this could be either partner.

I would like to point out for clarification that it should be up to mom and dad to decide about income splitting and whether they want to stay home with their child.

One more point is that my son and daughter-in-law decided one of them would stay at home, and it was a stay-at-home dad. He looked after the kids. Therefore, I do not see how this is against women

• (1235)

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, for every dollar earned by a man, a woman earns just 70¢. Indeed, income splitting is not specific to women. However, in the real world, it is clear that in the vast majority of cases, women earn a lower income than their husbands. There are situations in which the opposite is true and the choice is different. However, in the vast majority of cases, women will stay at home because they end up working for nearly nothing if they choose to work.

Once they factor in the tax measures they are not entitled to, rising child care costs, transportation costs and all the expenses, these women may end up earning one or two dollars an hour. At that wage, unless your math skills are really rusty, it is obvious that it makes more sense to stay at home. This is a regressive measure that will cause more women to stay at home.

The member opposite needs to realize that it is still mainly women who suffer from inequalities in our society. Unfortunately, his government has not done much to help women.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's comments, particularly those relating to regional economic development. I am from Prince Edward Island, and in my province, the government closed the Citizenship and Immigration Canada office, the Veterans Affairs Canada regional offices and, as my colleague said, the Canada Revenue Agency office.

My question is about this government's priorities. My colleague commented on the government's decision to wait before spending money on infrastructure. The government also decided to postpone spending on financial aid for students and our military personnel. However, some measures will be in effect immediately.

Given these differences and under the circumstances, what message is the government sending to Canadians?

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, yes, some measures apply immediately—those that benefit the wealthiest. Income splitting applies immediately, and the higher TFSA limit will be in effect very soon. Basically, the measures the government is implementing now are for the wealthiest. The measures that could help communities, particularly those that have been suffering since this government came to power, will not come into effect for some time.

We all know that this government will be replaced after the next election and that Canadians will vote in an NDP government that will really look after people's priorities.

[English]

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Canada's economic action plan for 2015.

I am excited about this budget. In fact, I only have 10 minutes, because I will be sharing my time with the member for Medicine Hat, but there is so much in the budget about which I want to talk.

Before I do that, I would like to congratulate the member for Medicine Hat. I understand this will probably be the last budget to which he will be presenting. I also acknowledge the great work he did on the agriculture committee and in the background in Ottawa to represent his constituents of Medicine Hat. He does such a wonderful job and we will definitely miss him.

I want to talk about what the budget means to the people in Saskatchewan, particularly in my riding of Prince Albert.

When I went through my riding doing pre-budget consultations, my constituents told me that we needed to be focused on jobs and the economy. They told me that we really needed to be focused on doing things that were right so their kids would have jobs in Saskatchewan now and into the future, which is what the budget presents.

We have a balanced budget, about which my constituents are excited and happy. Saskatchewan is the only province that has a provincially balanced budget and now we have a federally balanced budget, and the people of Saskatchewan respect and understand the importance of that. Not only do we have a balanced budget, but we will have a surplus of \$1.4 billion, which is huge.

The Budget

I look back at what we faced in 2008 with the economic downturn and recession and how we handled that. We had to go into deficit to provide the jobs and growth that were required to keep people working right across our great country, and we did that in a strategic way. We put in water treatment plants, sewage and roads. We put in the infrastructure that was required for our economy to grow into the future. Therefore, we are excited to see that we have basically the best debt to GDP ratio in the G7, with 1.2 million net new jobs created, which are high-paying jobs. Again, when my constituents talk to me about being focused on the economy, this budget definitely is focused on the economy.

The other thing my constituents asked for was support for families to ensure they would become strong and thrive. We have done that since we came into power. In fact, when we look at the support we have given to families, an average family have \$6,600 in their pockets to spend because of this government. We have done things in such a way that we have balanced the books and have allowed taxpayers and families to keep money in their pockets. That is \$6,600 they can spend as they see fit.

There are other things we have done for families. When we look back to previous budgets, we have increased the amount Canadians can earn tax free. We have removed over one million Canadians from the tax rolls. We have introduced the children's arts tax credit, children's fitness tax credit, the family caregiver tax credit and the first-time donor's super credit. There are a lot of examples of what this government has done that is progressive and beneficial for all Canadians, which is exciting. I know when I go back to my riding in Prince Albert this week, my constituents will thank us for doing these types of things.

We have also expanded the universal child care benefit. For a child under six, parents will now get \$160 a month. For children aged 6 to 17, parents will get \$60 a month that they never received before. This is exciting, and they will thank us for that because they asked for it.

We will introduce the family tax cut and let families decide how they want to raise their family and how they want to have their income split, which is a great thing. When we think about it, people can split their income with their spouse or partner to bring down their overall family tax to such a rate that they could benefit their entire family. What is wrong with that? It is such a positive and progressive tax idea. It is just wonderful, and I think Canadian families will be appreciative of the fact they can share their income and make decisions based on what is best for their families.

I want to talk about what we have done for small businesses.

The business tax rate has been reduced from 12% to 11%, and now it will go down to 9%, which is fabulous. This is a bit of relief that the small business can take advantage of and hire another employee or student. That is a big deal. This acknowledges that we understand small businesses and that we will help them as they grow their businesses.

Hopefully, as these small and medium enterprises grow, they can take on trade and look outside the great country of Canada, and we will be there to support them. With the benefit of EDC and BDC, businesses can take advantage of the big markets we are opening up

for Canadian enterprises, which is one thing this government has done very well compared to previous governments. It is this government's aggressiveness that has opened up world markets, signing free trade agreements with countries like Chile, Peru, Colombia, Honduras, to name just a few in the western hemisphere.

● (1240)

CETA will be tremendous for Canada. The TPP and the agreement with Canada-Japan will cement our ability to grow and foster our economy. We will be able to take advantage of markets and have preferential access compared to our competitors, or at least be on a level playing field with them. Again, the benefits come back right into every small town in Saskatchewan, so we are excited about seeing that.

We also have support for seniors in the budget. Seniors came to us and said that they wanted us to change what they had to withdraw from their RRIFs, that it was not fair, so we did that. We made that change in the RRIF so seniors can withdraw as they see fit because the minimum is different now. This benefit will help seniors enjoy their retirement years.

Another small thing a lot of Canadians have been taking advantage of is the tax-free savings account. We have doubled the amount from \$5,000 to \$10,000. A lot of people may not put \$10,000 in it. Some may put \$6,000, some may put \$5,000 and some may put \$2,000 or \$3,000, but it is there. If they should come across some extra cash and they want to go to \$10,000 one year, they have the ability to do that.

I look at that as part of a suite of packages we have when we plan for retirement. When we have RRSPs, the tax-free savings account and our pensions, we have a suite of things we can work with as we plan for our retirement, and that will pay dividends greatly into the future years as more Canadians retire.

When we look at the farming community, the average age of farmers is getting older. We have to see what we can do to bring in more young farmers. The best thing we can do to bring in more young farmers is to give them a market in which to sell their product. By removing the Canadian Wheat Board and giving farmers freedom, we are starting to see more young farmers coming into the agricultural community. This is exciting.

When I go to a town hall or to the post office and look around, I do not recognize a lot of the young people in our community. They have come back to take advantage of raising a family on the farm. In order to do that, they realize they have to buy the land. A large number of farmers are at the age when they want to retire. The \$1 million capital gains exception for the selling of farmland is huge to them.

The Budget

These guys have worked hard. The families have worked hard. They have gone through a lot of things over the past 30 or 40 years. They have seen droughts, floods, they have had their hands tied by the Canadian Wheat Board and they have seen rail issues. Every year there is something new and they have had to deal with it, yet they still claw their way through, survive and thrive. Now, as they approach retirement years and they sell their assets, this will allow them to have a proper nest egg as they go into retirement. That is appropriate. They asked for this and we provided for it in the budget.

The farming community is very excited about that. However, the other thing we did for them was the export market development programs. Again, \$20 million over two years, helping them expand their exports. We grow more than we could ever consume in Canada, so we need to be able to export that product around the world to get the maximization of prices in Canada. Every once in a while we need to have some help from market development to sell those products that we normally do not consume in Canada, so this \$20 million will definitely go a long way.

Whether we are talking about farmers or small business, and small and medium enterprises, the one thing they told us in the trade committee was that they wanted to see us enhance the Trade Commissioner Service. We have done that. In 2015, we have put \$14.3 million over two years and \$9.3 million per year thereafter to expand the footprint of the resources of the of the Canadian Trade Commissioner Service.

These guys are great. They are located throughout the world. If individuals own a small or medium-sized enterprise and they want to go into a new market, for example, Brazil, they would phone the Trade Commissioner Service and tell it the product they want to sell, that they want to go into Brazil. Trade professionals will go into the marketplace and tell individuals some good potential partners, potential customers and the nuances the individuals need to know about a marketplace. They do that over and over again to help small and medium enterprises take that leap into becoming exporters.

Ten minutes is definitely not enough to talk about the budget. One thing I will say about it is that when I go back to my riding tomorrow and talk to my constituents throughout the weekend, they will be happy with this budget. In fact, I call it a blue jean budget. Anybody who has ever worn blue jeans will receive a benefit from the budget.

I am excited about that. I am proud to say I am part of it. I am also proud to say that this Conservative government has kept its word and balanced the budget. Going forward, we will have balanced budgets that will leave our economy strong going into the future for our kids and grandchildren.

• (1245)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I heard him boasting, like many of his colleagues did, about the enhanced universal child care benefit.

However, I did not hear him mention that the benefit will be considered taxable income. Canadians must be aware of that. They will not be able to fully benefit from the measure, because they will have to set aside enough money to pay their taxes the next year and

not have any nasty surprises. It is important that people know about this and take it into consideration in order to properly assess this measure.

I do not understand why the government is not offering Canadian families a real choice, such as benefiting from tax measures like that kind of tax credit and at the same time from child care spaces at a maximum of \$15 a day. This would help meet the needs of more Canadian families. Hence, people who cannot afford private child care or who opt out of that choice will at least have access to affordable child care.

I am wondering why this option was not made available in the Canadian budget, as the NDP is proposing.

• (1250)

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, I hope I get as much time to answer the question as the member took to ask it.

New Democrats talk about their plan for \$15-a-day day care. What a joke. In Kinistino, Saskatchewan, how is a family going to take advantage of \$15-a-day day care when people work 12 to 18 hours a day? The unionized workers who work from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. that want to provide this service are not available in Kinistino. That family will not be working from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. People work from six in the morning until midnight during harvest and spring seeding. People work shifts. Their program would do absolutely nothing for the average Canadian.

What does work is giving that money to the families to let them decide how they want to raise their kids. If it is grandma or one of the spouses or partners who wants to stay home, that is their choice. Let us leave the money with the people who actually earned it and know how best to spend it, unlike the NDP members, who want to take every dollar out of people's pockets and dictate to them, as if they were two years old, "You get \$10, and you get \$5, and you voted NDP, so you get \$25". No, let us leave the money in taxpayers' pockets and they can do as they see fit.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member about poor seniors, the seniors living in poverty.

Almost immediately upon obtaining their majority government, the Conservatives decided to increase the age of eligibility for old age security and the guaranteed income supplement from 65 to 67 years of age. The result of that is to take \$28,000 from the pockets of the poorest seniors.

Within this budget, for those seniors who have had their pockets picked to the tune of \$28,000, which of the measures is going to help them most: the TFSAs, the RRIFs, or the income splitting?

The Budget

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, maybe I had better explain that it is 2023 when this will actually take place, when the age will go from 65 to 67, not today. There has been no pickpocketing of any senior today at all. In fact, if we look at it now, with the changes to RRIFs, they are going to have more flexibility with the money that they have saved in how they are going to spend it. People should not be confused by Liberal smears and confusing campaigns. Let us look at the truth. Seniors are better off.

This government took one million people off the tax rolls. One million people no longer pay taxes. It is this government that did that, not a Liberal government. When the Liberal government was in power, yes, it balanced the books, but it was at the expense of seniors' health, my health, and everybody else's health when the Liberals made cuts to the provinces. That was shameful.

We balanced the budget without reducing transfers to the provinces. The Liberals did not. In fact, if we look at the transfers for health care, they are increasing year after year, and yet we still have a balanced budget and a surplus of \$1.4 billion. What can the Liberals complain about? They can complain about nothing, so they make up things, and that is what the member has done.

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Prince Albert for sharing his time with me today on the budget speech. I also want to congratulate him for all of his hard work on the agriculture committee. He was a very good support for me, as well as a great inspiration. I would also like to thank him for his work on the international trade file. He has done an outstanding job.

It is a privilege for me, as a member of Parliament, to get up and speak to Canada's economic action plan, 2015, entitled "Strong Leadership: A Balanced-Budget, Low-Tax Plan for Jobs, Growth and Security". I want to thank our hard-working Minister of Finance, the hon. member for Eglinton—Lawrence, for the long hours and late nights spent working on this outstanding budget. I also want to recognize the hard work of past years by the late beloved hon. Jim Flaherty. God rest his soul. We got here, in part, thanks to Jim's vision and talent.

As promised, and as the Minister of Finance so proudly pointed out with reason, this economic action plan, 2015, is a balanced budget written in black ink. Indeed, I believe we will soon be faced with similar choices when we go to the next federal general election campaign later this year. I urge all Canadians to choose wisely between the risky economic plans and plans to increase spending and taxes by the NDP and the Liberals, and our Conservative government's proven track record of delivering on economic promises and our low-tax plan.

Our economic action plan contains a number of initiatives that will be particularly beneficial to the people of the Medicine Hat constituency, whom I have had the tremendous honour and privilege of representing here in the House of Commons since 2008. I will talk a little bit about all of them.

A very important part of this plan encourages investment in Canada's manufacturing sector. It will do this by maintaining a low tax burden on business to encourage investment in Canada by providing manufacturers with a 10-year tax incentive to boost productivity-enhancing investment, among other things. This will

come in an extension of the accelerated capital cost allowance for investment in machinery and equipment used in manufacturing or processing for 10 years until 2025. I know that this will be an important initiative in my constituency, as I have met with stakeholders who have continually pointed out the necessity of such incentives to grow their businesses here in Canada, thus creating more jobs right here in Canada for Canadians.

The 2015 budget also proposes to lower the small business tax rate to 9% by 2019. This is good news for small business owners.

Another major section of the economic action plan is the plan to lower the EI premium by 2017. This is expected to result in a substantial reduction in EI premiums from \$1.88 in 2016 to an estimated \$1.49 in 2017, a reduction of 21%.

One of the big beneficiaries, of course, will be our farmers. My colleague talked about farmers. I have many farmers in the constituency of Medicine Hat, and they will be very pleased to hear that we will increase the lifetime capital gains exemption to \$1 million for those who own farm property and meet the criteria. This will be very helpful to our farmers, who are the backbone of our rural communities and are certainly critical in making sure that our cities are fed. It is estimated that the measure would reduce capital gains taxes for owners of farm and fishing businesses by about \$50 million over the 2015-16 to 2019-20 period. Also, to support agriculture and grow our exports, our budget will boost agriculture marketing by \$12 million.

The economic action plan will help to train the workforce of tomorrow by supporting provinces and territories to facilitate the harmonization of apprenticeship training and certification requirements in targeted Red Seal trades. It will help by providing \$1 million over five years to promote the adoption of the blue seal certification program across Canada, and by making a one-time investment of \$65 million to businesses and industry associations to allow them to work with the willing post-secondary institutions to better align curricula with the needs of employers.

Our action plan also will support Canadian workers. I know that this is important to many of my constituents. It will do this by investing \$53.8 million over two years to extend the employment insurance working while on claim pilot project to August 2016.

We will continue to pursue negotiations with provinces and territories on the \$1.95 billion per year labour market development agreements to reorient training toward labour market demand. Economic action plan 2015 will provide \$35 million over five years to make permanent the foreign credential recognition loans pilot project.

The Budget

•(1255)

The government recognizes that the skilled trades are essential to Canada's economic prosperity. To reduce barriers to accreditation in the skilled trades and to improve labour mobility, our action plan proposes to extend further support to the provinces and territories for implementing recommendations made by the Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship to harmonize apprenticeship training and certification requirements in targeted Red Seal trades. For example, the jurisdictions will work toward adopting common sequencing for technical training curriculum content and similar total hours for training both in class and on the job.

Our economic action plan proposes to reallocate \$35 million over five years starting in 2015 to make the foreign credential recognition loans pilot project permanent to support internationally trained workers in their pursuit of foreign credential recognition. I know this will be beneficial to many of my constituents in Medicine Hat.

To build on the achievements to date, our plan also promises \$18.1 million over two years starting in 2016-17 to expand the activities of the market access secretariat to introduce new agricultural trade commissioners abroad and play a more active role in setting international science-based standards and build on the opportunities created by our trade agreements.

I would also like to point out that the transition of the Canadian Wheat Board to a private competitor on the world stage is complete. With this deal it certainly opens up more opportunities for our grain farmers in western Canada. I thank the Minister of Agriculture, the hon. member for Battlefords—Lloydminster, for his hard work in delivering marketing freedom for the many grain farmers in my constituency.

Our action plan will help families make ends meet and will help our seniors.

In October 2014, the Prime Minister announced further tax relief and benefit increases for all families with children. These proposed measures include enhancing the universal child care benefit, increasing the maximum dollar amounts claimable under the child care expense deduction, and introducing the family tax cut. The government has also doubled the children's fitness tax credit amount and has made it refundable.

Our economic action plan builds on this record of support for Canadian families by proposing to increase the tax-free savings account annual contribution limit to \$10,000.

Our action plan also proposes to extend employment insurance compassionate care benefits from six weeks to six months.

This budget will also implement a new home accessibility tax credit for seniors and persons with disabilities. The proposed 15% non-refundable income tax credit would apply on up to \$10,000 of eligible home renovation expenditures per year, providing up to \$1,500 in tax relief. Eligible expenditures will be for improvements that allow for seniors or a person who is eligible for the disability tax credit to be more mobile, safe and functional within their home.

Our action plan also confirms funding to create a new retirement income security benefit for moderately to severely disabled veterans who receive income replacement under the earnings loss benefit or

the service income security insurance plan. This new benefit will provide additional financial security by guaranteeing that the income of eligible recipients after age 65 does not fall below 70% of pre-65 income provided through National Defence's service income security insurance plan and through Veterans Affairs Canada's earnings loss benefit, permanent impairment allowance and permanent impairment allowance supplement. This will ensure that moderately to severely disabled veterans have the necessary financial resources to maintain their quality of life in their retirement years.

Starting in 2017, our plan will increase the amount of money for the Department of National Defence by \$11.8 billion over 10 years. This is good news for our Canadian Armed Forces and our ability to keep our country safe. It also enhances national security by investing \$292.6 million over five years in intelligence and law enforcement agencies for investigative resources to counter terrorism; by providing \$12.5 million over five years, starting in 2015-16, and \$2.5 million ongoing thereafter, in additional funding to the Security Intelligence Review Committee to enhance its review of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service; by providing \$58 million over five years, starting in 2015-16, to further protect the Government of Canada's essential cyber systems and critical infrastructure against cyberattacks; by investing \$36.4 million over five years to support the operators of Canada's vital cybersystems in addressing cybersecurity threats.

This is by no means an exhaustive list. I encourage all Canadians to visit budget.gc.ca online to see the details.

•(1300)

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am from Newton—North Delta, and Newton is part of Surrey. Recently, in my community, we have had a huge number of shootings, 23. Last Sunday, tragically, there was a fatality, and a 22-year-old young man was killed by gunfire. It was devastating for the family and for the community.

I have been pushing in this House for additional resources for communities like Surrey to take on gang violence and drug-related activities of the kind we have had. As I have gone through this budget, I have not been able to locate where there is funding for real issues like crime and safety in my community. The government talks about being tough on crime. Could the member please point out where in this budget there is money allocated to help cities like Surrey fight crime so that my neighbours and my constituents can feel safe?

The Budget

●(1305)

Mr. LaVar Payne: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to hear about the individual who passed away, and our condolences to the family.

It is a difficult situation, and I understand that the police need to ensure that they continue to work. The resources will have to come from the provinces and communities they are in and from the taxes paid by the citizens of Surrey and by Canadians across the country. I certainly hope they will be able to resolve those issues in terms of crime.

I do not know whether the gun violence the member is talking about is because of weapons coming in from other countries. Under Bill C-42, I know that CBSA will be able to work with the RCMP to ensure that if illegal guns are coming into this country, they can follow them, track them down, and stop that.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was mildly bemused to hear the member for Medicine Hat extolling the virtues of the changes made to the EI program in his remarks on the budget. In particular, he talked about the working-while-on-claim pilot that has been extended. There are many things the government has done that have been bad with respect to EI benefits for those in seasonal industries, but few as unpopular as that particular program.

My question for the member also relates to EI. It comes from page 163 of the budget, where it says that the government will be:

Taking steps to ensure that Employment Insurance claimants are aware of their job search responsibilities when moving or considering moving for work. The Government will also ensure that individuals willing to move are not excluded from Employment Insurance training opportunities across the country.

Is this a veiled attack on those who are not willing to move?

Mr. LaVar Payne: Mr. Speaker, I am amazed by the question. From my experience, and I am only one individual, I took every opportunity to find work and move across the country. Certainly that was something I saw I needed to do for myself and my family.

The member talks about EI. As I understand it, the Liberal Party took somewhere between \$50 billion and \$60 billion out of the EI program and used it for its own pet projects. I do not know how that member can actually stand up and have any credibility.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am following up on the question from my friend from Charlottetown. Perhaps the hon. member for Medicine Hat is unfamiliar with the way the employment insurance system works.

Recipients are actually told that if they are searching for work but leave their own community to search for work they are cut off EI for those days on which they search for work somewhere else. It is fine to say that in his experience he was able to search wherever it was he could get work. However, there are constantly changing rules for employment insurance, a shrinkage of benefits, and the fact that so many people who are unemployed are unable to access the system. I hear from constituents who have waited on a phone line to a 1-800 number to nowhere for hours to find out when their claims will begin. These are people in a system that was intended to cover them in the event of unemployment. They have paid into the system.

The words in this budget seem to suggest that if they are not willing to move, they may not have access to training benefits. We certainly know the way the system works. If people go looking for

work, they are often cut off the employment insurance benefits at that moment. Perhaps the member can address the question.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Mr. Speaker, the short answer is that I understand that people are unemployed and that they need to find work. My understanding is that if in fact they can prove that they were out of the community looking for work elsewhere, they should be able to continue their claims.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be speaking on the federal budget today. I will be splitting my time with the member for Etobicoke North.

[*Translation*]

This budget has no real plan for jobs or growth. It gives the most to people who need it the least, and it keeps Canada in a deficit situation.

●(1310)

[*English*]

The Prime Minister's claim of a balanced budget is about as credible as George W. Bush's claim, in 2003, when he declared "mission accomplished" on the Iraq war. History proved the president wrong; the U.S. remained in Iraq for another seven years.

I think history will prove that this Prime Minister is wrong to declare victory on deficits. It is a cautionary tale about premature declarations of victory. This lesson is lost on the Conservative government. Instead of learning from history, the Conservatives are using this budget to declare mission accomplished in a fiscal year that will not even end until March 31, 2016.

The budget shows that after seven consecutive deficits, the federal Conservatives have yet to balance the budget. Canada has not been in a recession since May 2009. In fact, the Conservatives have been breaking the principle of their proposed balanced budget legislation since then.

Now the Conservatives have fabricated an illusory surplus on the eve of an election. How did they do that? First, they cut the contingency reserve. That is right. In the past, they kept intact the contingency reserve put in place by finance minister Paul Martin. If the Conservatives had actually done that this year, the budget would have shown that the Conservatives would be in deficit until at least 2017.

Slashing the rainy day reserve is just plain reckless. Last year, then-finance minister Jim Flaherty agreed. He said it would be "imprudent" to cut the contingency reserve. Earlier this year, the then-employment minister, now the defence minister, promised that the government would not touch the contingency fund. He said, "We won't be using a contingency fund", to balance the budget. "A contingency fund is there for unforeseen circumstances, like natural disasters".

The Budget

This finance minister and the Prime Minister did not listen to either. Instead, he has recklessly cut the contingency reserve, leaving the government with no room for any unforeseen events.

The finance minister's reckless streak does not end there. His budget also depends on a 50% increase in oil prices. The Bank of Canada knows better than to build its forecasts around the hope that oil prices are going to go up in the mid-term. The Conservatives should be similarly cautious. It is reckless to build a budget around rosy assumptions.

The cut to the contingency reserve, in fact, is not the only item in this budget that is larger than the illusory surplus. There is also the one-time asset sale of GM shares, a \$2.2 billion sale of GM shares that is actually bigger than this illusory surplus.

That confirms the reason the finance minister sat on his hands and delayed the budget until April, after the fiscal year had already begun.

Since 2010, job growth in Canada has been stagnant, and with the fall of oil prices, Canadians have been losing their jobs. The Bank of Canada has called the economy in 2015 "atrocious". The Governor of the Bank of Canada actually took action in January. He stepped in with a historic interest rate cut to strengthen the economy. Meanwhile, the finance minister was nowhere to be found. He went into hiding, avoiding questions in Parliament for months. Now we know the real reason he did this. The finance minister was putting politics ahead of the economy and the Conservatives' political fortunes ahead of the Canadian priority of having a real plan, in a timely manner, to create jobs and growth for Canadians who need them.

He delayed the budget so that the sale of GM shares would count toward this fiscal year instead of last. That is not a plan. That is a gimmick. It is not just unsustainable, it is pathetic. It is playing politics with the livelihoods of Canadians.

The Canadian economy desperately needs a plan for jobs and growth. Instead, the Conservatives remain committed to their fiscally irresponsible plan for income splitting and the doubling of the TFSA contribution limit. They spent the surplus even before it arrived, and they are spending it on those who need the help the least.

Neither income splitting nor the increase to the TFSA limit would do anything for job creation. Neither of these measures would create the jobs and growth Canadians need or help young Canadians find work. Both of these measures would skew benefits toward the rich, doing little for the middle class and those Canadians working hard to join the middle class.

Doubling the TFSA limit would be particularly reckless, because the cost of the measure would ramp up dramatically over time and would gut the capacity of future governments by tens of billions of dollars every year. According to the PBO, a third of that cost would be borne by provincial governments, and because TFSAs would not count toward income-tested benefits, it would also result, perversely, in billions of dollars each year in additional old age security payments for wealthier seniors.

At some level, the Minister of Finance seems to understand that doubling the TFSA would create a problem for the next generation.

When asked about that problem, he acknowledged that there would be a problem and said "why don't we leave that to [the Prime Minister's] granddaughter to solve".

Canadian parents believe in building a better country for our kids and our grandkids. We do not believe in burdening the next generation with today's tax breaks for the rich. We do not believe in gutting our social safety net to pay for those tax breaks.

The Conservatives do not get this. They have grown out of touch with the challenges faced by middle-class Canadian families. Instead of building for the future, the Conservatives have engineered, effectively, a reverse mortgage on Canada's fiscal house to help them pay for giveaways to the rich. Doubling the TFSA limit would dramatically reduce the government's capacity in the future to invest in what matters.

All of this is bad enough, but it was only three years ago, just shortly after the last election, that these same Conservatives falsely claimed that they had to raise the age of OAS from 65 to 67 because of financial pressures. They falsely claimed that the OAS program was not financially sustainable. They passed these measures in Bill C-38, the spring 2012 omnibus budget bill, which resulted in cutting OAS and GIS to Canada's most vulnerable seniors for two years.

When fully implemented, Bill C-38's cuts to OAS and GIS will take \$32,000 away from each of Canada's poorest and most vulnerable seniors. The Conservatives will be taking that money from low-income seniors at precisely the time when doubling the TFSA limit will start to get really expensive for the government and when the extra OAS payments for wealthier Canadians kick in.

The Conservatives are playing anti-Robin Hood. There is an adage that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Under this Conservative budget, it is now official government policy.

Raising the age of OAS and doubling the TFSA limit would take money away from the poorest, most vulnerable seniors and would give it to the rich. It would give that money to the select few who have an extra \$10,000 burning a hole in their pockets every year. We need to keep in mind that some families are wealthy enough that there would in fact be two adults who could each contribute, so that is \$20,000. I do not know a lot of families like that in Kings—Hants. People are working hard. They are struggling. Middle-class families are barely getting by.

The Budget

The Conservative decision to take from the poor and give to the rich is unfair and un-Canadian. It is another example of how out of touch with the priorities of Canadians and the challenges of middle-class families the Conservatives have become.

The budget has no plan for jobs and growth. It would do next to nothing to help Canada's struggling middle class. It would do the most for the people who need it the least, the rich, and it would keep Canada in deficit.

A Liberal government will have a real plan for jobs and growth and support for Canada's middle class, and we will balance the books.

• (1315)

[Translation]

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my Liberal colleague's speech. He concluded by saying that his party had a plan for creating jobs and long-term prosperity. That is nice to hear, but we have yet to see anything. We keep waiting, and still nothing.

The NDP has a solid plan. What is more, the Conservatives thought our plan was so good that they included it in their budget. They are going to lower the small business tax rate from 11% to 9% and create an innovation tax credit. These are concrete NDP proposals.

Nonetheless, where is the Liberals' plan? How long do they think Canadians will wait for a solid plan?

• (1320)

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, just wait, because we are going to present a solid plan for the economy, job creation and economic growth. It is a solid and positive plan for the middle class, for making investments in infrastructure and for helping young people find jobs.

The hon. member will have to wait a little while longer, but I am sure that she will very much like our plan for Canada's economy. I hope she will support our Liberal plan for Canadians because we worked very hard on developing it. I hope she will agree with our ideas for stimulating economic growth in order to benefit Canadians.

[English]

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always wonderful to listen to the Liberal members opposite talk about their plans and then say, "We have great plan, we're going to do all this, but you're just going to have to wait and see." On this side of the House, we are not actually all that worried or waiting with bated breath to see any plan that the Liberals produce because it really does not matter. However, I am curious just for interest's sake because our plan of course includes record levels of transfer payments.

Let us talk a bit about that plan, which would include \$923 million to my home territory in the Yukon, which is record level and would be 73% higher than previous Liberal governments. However, the Liberals back then balanced the budgets by cutting and slashing those transfer payments to the provinces and territories, affecting health care, affecting education, affecting social outcomes, affecting economic outcomes, affecting the territories' and provinces' local abilities to set local priorities and local initiatives.

I wonder if the hon. member's plan, which nobody has ever seen and probably nobody ever will see, would include slashing those transfer payments to the provinces and territories again? Does it include slashing the important family tax cut that we have put in place in this? Does it include increasing taxes? How on Earth will the Liberals ever reconcile their history with what they anticipate their future to be?

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, it is quite amazing that a member of the Conservative caucus would actually accuse someone else of not having a plan when they cannot even present a budget on time. Of course, they say the reason is falling oil prices. If that were the real reason, then how did Alberta or Saskatchewan, both of which are more dependent upon oil prices for their fiscal framework, actually come up with a budget?

The reality is the only reason they delayed the budget is they needed to book the sale of GM shares, a one-time asset sale, this year so that they could create this illusory surplus on the eve of an election, so they could cobble it up and tell Canadians the books are balanced. Canadians will not be fooled by that.

I was proud to be part of a government, Paul Martin's government, that negotiated with the provinces and territories and actually sat down and met with premiers, that invested and put in place a 10-year health care plan, that increased investments in health care from the federal government by 6% per year. That was before the current government unilaterally imposed a cut to those transfers by half, in fact. Now, it has only grown by 3% per year. We will take no lessons on fiscal responsibility working with the provinces from the current government.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by thanking the good people of Etobicoke North, the beautiful community where I was raised, for the privilege of serving them. I hope our community members know that our constituency office is their home and that we are always here to celebrate the good times and to provide support during the challenging times.

I will not be supporting the budget as it gives the most help to Canadians who need it the least. The Conservative Party's proposals will benefit the rich on the backs of the middle class. That is simply not fair. For example, the priority of the Conservatives is a \$2-billion tax break for the rich. What is more, they are doubling the TFSA limit by taking away tens of thousands of dollars in old age security for seniors. In the long term, doubling the TFSA will help the rich and do nothing for the middle class.

The Budget

Our Etobicoke North community needs jobs. I have worked hard to get a \$500,000 job program and to help my constituents find jobs they need to support their families. I personally review resumé's, often doing two and three drafts. I get people into job programs. We follow up with them to see if the program is meeting their needs, and we provide other necessary support such as clothing and food programs. Finding jobs in this economic climate is not easy. Unemployment last year, including youth unemployment, was still higher than before the recession. According to the CIBC, job quality in Canada is at its lowest in a quarter century. For the past 16 months, job growth has been under 1%. This is the first time in four decades this has occurred outside of a recession.

Over the past year, close to 80% of the people I have seen need a job. Many are youth with bachelor's, master's, nursing and law degrees. Some have been out of school with no work for two years despite spending each day sending out resumé's. Many are internationally trained professionals, and some are people who have been downsized after working 20 years for one company. They are good people with good skills and would be an asset to any organization. However, they are struggling. In some cases, they cannot feed their children. In some cases, they cannot buy medication for diabetes, heart disease and multiple sclerosis. In some cases, they cannot pay for their children's dental care. We do the best we can to help.

I have already heard from our youth who are looking for jobs. They want the Conservative government to know that \$7 million to "support the relocation of youth and immigrants to areas where job opportunities exist" is, in their words, inexcusable. Perhaps the government is unaware that the youth employment rate in Ontario stands at 20%, and that one in five young Torontonians cannot find a job. They also want the government to know that they would like to have the opportunity to stay in their community, to get a job, to work and be near family if they choose. They should not be forced to look elsewhere. They also ask whether the government understands the gridlock and lack of transit in Toronto, and that it can take two hours to commute from our community to the downtown core for a job. They see through why there will be no new investment in community infrastructure for two more years, even when cities are calling for help today.

Our Etobicoke North community and Canada deserve a better plan for investing in jobs and growth for the middle class and those working hard to join it.

I will now turn my attention to two of my critics roles, namely international development and status of women, and what was not in the budget. I will begin with international development.

According to a new study by Engineers Without Borders Canada, 94% of Canadians say it is important to improve the health, education and economic opportunity for the world's poorest people. After reviewing the budget, one humanitarian responded with, "was there development in the budget?"

• (1325)

The Conservative government is once again balancing its budget on the backs of the world's poorest. Liberals believe that development assistance must help reduce systemic poverty by

stimulating the creation of democratic institutions, economic opportunity and job growth.

The government has announced a development financing initiative, or DFI. DFIs work with the private sector to promote development and investment in developing countries. While DFIs can be effective in job creation, which is a massive need for developing countries seeking economic progress and stability, these institutions must be managed properly in order to ensure that development outcomes are prioritized.

I have several questions about this new organization. First, where is the money coming from? According to the OECD, Canada's aid spending dropped to .24% of GDP in 2014, down from .27% the previous year, one of the country's lowest rates in more than a decade. It is very important that the DFI be funded with new money and not from the current official development assistance, or ODA, budget. Will the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie look elsewhere for funds and when will funding start?

A decrease in ODA spending is not the only worrying trend I see with this budget on the topic of international development. The Conservative government has shifted its aid priorities to reflect its commercial and political interests to the detriment of the poorest and most fragile countries, where local capital is limited and short-term risks are too high for banks or other investors.

The last issue I will address is what is in the budget for women. The budget focuses on women entrepreneurs and women on boards. These are important issues. I have many questions related to the government's proposals, which I will table as a written question to the government, but the major question is: Why is there no money attached to the action plan for women in business?

Last night, I attended a fundraiser for our local women's shelter, Ernestine's, which daily undertakes lifesaving work and is a refuge and touchstone in the Etobicoke North community. Men and women attending the fundraiser wanted to know what was in the budget for ending violence against women and girls. They were clear that we need a national action plan to end violence and that we need an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women. They do not accept the government's round table on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls as sufficient or acceptable and they asked me to bring this up today.

The Budget

They also asked that I discuss the Canadian Network of Women's Shelters & Transition Houses' latest report that shows that in just one day, 231 shelters welcomed 122 new women and 81 children, but they had to turn away 302 women and 221 children due to a lack of resources. Moreover, only 20% of shelters said they felt well equipped to help women with mental health concerns and only 31% said they could help women with substance abuse concerns.

I am thankful for the opportunity to raise concerns I have heard from the Etobicoke North community concerning jobs, economic growth, lack of infrastructure and lack of real help in the budget and to raise concerns of stakeholders regarding international development and women and men who support Ernestine's and want the violence to end. I cannot support this budget because it fails our communities and it fails Canadians.

• (1330)

[Translation]

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech. We share many of the same concerns. The NDP is calling for a national inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women. That is something that all parliamentarians in the House should support, and we will continue to fight for this inquiry.

I know that my colleague was a well-known scientist before becoming an MP. Consequently, the lack of funding for science in the 2015 budget may be of concern to her as well. This has been the case since the Conservative government came to power. Increasingly and systematically, the government has focused scientific research on industry and applied research. It is fine to support research that can benefit our economy, but it is also important to support basic research and research that can benefit the public.

Could my colleague comment on this?

• (1335)

[English]

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for the question. I have enjoyed serving with her on a number of committees.

I want to start with missing and murdered indigenous women. We absolutely need an inquiry on this issue in this country. We have heard from the families, we have heard from the provinces and territories, we have heard from indigenous organizations, and we have even heard from international organizations that we need an inquiry. Quite frankly, the government is on the wrong side of history. This is a national tragedy and we need that inquiry.

When it comes to science in this country, there has been a war on science over the last many years. For example, there were cuts to the granting council several years ago. Scholarships are being tied to business, and the Conservatives are muzzling scientists.

People should be able to publish their research. Canadian taxpayers pay for that research and we cannot be muzzling our scientists. We have certainly heard from international journals like *Nature* that Canadian scientists are being muzzled.

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her intervention today. I do applaud her for her passion

and commitment to violence prevention programs against women. Of course, I think that is important to all members in this House. It is certainly important to me as a member of Parliament for the Yukon, with some of the long-term investments and personal contributions I have made to that very topic long before I got into politics.

I wonder if the member would help me understand. We have moved through a whole suite of legislative programs that are designed to prevent violence against women. They are also designed to afford people in our communities a greater opportunity in life, be that through work, shelters, a homeless partnering strategy, or the \$252 million for the action plan against violence. All of these things formulate a suite of programs and services that help reduce risky lifestyles and outcomes for Canadians. However, time and time again, the Liberal members vote against that. I understand their position on missing and murdered aboriginal women, but that is not the only source of action. They speak about that as though it is the solution and the only solution.

I am curious why the member would vote against all of those other measures that are indeed improving the lives of Canadians day to day, in which we are investing, and stand up solely for a national inquiry, and not help on all the other fronts. I find it a little disingenuous, but I would like to give her the opportunity to respond to those very pieces against which she has voted.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my friend across the way. As the member said, I have spent close to two decades fighting to end violence against women and girls. When I taught women's health at the university, there was not one class in which I did not have a young woman stand at the end of the class and say that she was suffering abuse, whether by a boyfriend or family member, and I got help for that young woman that day.

What we hear from stakeholders across this country is that we need a national action plan to end violence against women. We do not have that national action plan. We need the inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women. We simply do not need re-announcements of funding announcements already made.

Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Mississauga South.

I am pleased to rise in this House today to speak to budget 2015, introduced this week by our government.

The Budget

In response to the greatest global downturn since the Great Depression, our government introduced the necessary and strategic investments to keep Canadians working and maintain confidence in the economy. These investments paid off as Canada rebounded out of the recession faster than any G8 country, with the best results. Indeed, since 2009, Canada has generated the greatest real GDP growth; created more than 1.2 million net new jobs, 80% of which are full time and in the private sector; maintained the greatest performance of private sector investment; and maintained the lowest debt to GDP ratio.

This last point is particularly important. Whereas many nations tried to fight the recession by flexing fiscal and monetary policy almost without limit, our government, under the leadership of our Prime Minister, prudently balanced strong public investments to support the economy with necessary reductions in federal discretionary spending. The result is that our Minister of Finance stood in this House this Tuesday and announced a \$1.4 billion surplus along with a \$1 billion contingency. The result is that, without the implementation of this government's disciplined and prudent cost-saving measures, the current deficit would have been \$17.2 billion.

The result is that our economy is healthy, strong, and growing. Circumstances of other nations have proven that neither reckless spending nor severe austerity is the answer. Success comes from long-term, disciplined leadership.

I am particularly proud of the fact that this government did not balance the budget on the backs of honest, hard-working Canadians. Nor have there been any cuts to critical services such as health care or key programs such as infrastructure, which remain at a historical high. No, we balanced the budget while simultaneously reducing the tax burden on Canadian families to record lows.

The GST was lowered from 7% to 5%. Small-business taxes have been cut. Various tax credits have been introduced for caregivers, volunteers, and those with disabilities. We introduced the tax-free savings account, raised the minimum income Canadians can make before federal rates are levied, reduced the lowest income tax rate, lessened EI contributions, and introduced assistance for first-time homeowners. I could go on, but the bottom line is this. As a direct result of our government's policies, for the typical Canadian family of two parents with two children, there are savings of an average of \$6,640 every year.

Balancing the budget has never been just about sound and responsible fiscal management. It has been about principle. Our government promised Canadians that it would balance the budget, and Canadians sent the government back to Ottawa in 2011 with a clear majority and a mandate to do just that. This budget also would cement another promise made to Canadians, that of introducing income splitting for families. The principle of this government has been and remains that we keep the promises we make.

With my remaining time, I would like to highlight specific initiatives from the budget that would particularly benefit my constituents in Nipissing—Timiskaming.

For seniors, we would reduce minimum withdrawal rates for registered retirement income funds, or RRIFs. We would introduce a new home accessibility tax credit. Seniors and persons with

disabilities would be able to claim up to \$1,500 in tax credits for specific home renovations.

For families, we would increase the TFSA contribution limit to \$10,000 so Canadians could improve their investments and have easier access to cash flows when they need them. I would just point out for the opposition members that it is the majority of middle-income Canadians who will benefit from TFSAs, not the wealthy. The facts are that 11 million Canadians have TFSAs and 60% of them make \$55,000 or less.

● (1340)

We would expand the eligibility for student loans to make post-secondary education more affordable. There would be \$184 million for students applying to short-term programs, and \$119 million to reduce expected parental contributions to loan programs.

We would expand EI benefits for Canadians who need to leave work for compassionate care purposes. Benefits would be increased from six weeks to six months.

Budget 2015 confirms the family tax cuts and benefits introduced last fall. They are income splitting and increasing the universal child care benefit and the children's fitness tax credit.

For small business, we would improve access to financing. Available financing would be increased to \$1 million from \$500,000, and eligibility would be broadened from \$5 million in revenue to \$10 million in revenue. We would further cut taxes on small business, reducing the tax on small business by 2% from 11% to 9% over 4 years.

We would further reduce the EI premiums. The surplus gained by the EI fund would be reimbursed to employers and employees to lower EI rates.

For the space sector, we would invest in Canada's satellite industry with \$30 million to support satellite research and development projects through the Canadian Space Agency. As my hon. colleagues may recall, I have recognized Nipissing—Timiskaming's entry into the space sector on several occasions, and I am very pleased that the government continues to mark its growing importance to our economy. These investments would ultimately serve to expand the space industry in Nipissing—Timiskaming and create high-paying, high-skill jobs.

Royal Assent

We are further recognizing the increasing importance of space to Canada's economy and security. For aerospace and manufacturing, we would accelerate aerospace supply chain competitiveness and performance. We would continue to provide accelerated capital cost allowance measures to help manufacturers grow and create jobs.

For agriculture and agrifood, we would promote Canadian farm exports and improve competitiveness, with over \$18 million to expand the Canadian Market Access Secretariat and provide more support to farmers trying to access foreign markets. Some \$12 million of additional funding would go toward expanding the agrimarketing program to increase the demand for Canadian agricultural goods. We would also increase the lifetime capital allowance for farmers from \$750,000 to \$1 million.

Finally, for infrastructure, we would continue the improvement of the \$53 billion new building Canada plan announced in March 2014. An additional \$750 million would go to improve public-private partnerships in addition to continuing to provide \$5.3 billion per year for provincial and municipal projects. The new building Canada plan expands on the \$33 million building Canada plan introduced in 2007, which included increasing contributions from the gas tax fund, which supports municipal projects, as well as making it permanent.

We remain on the right track. Canada's fiscal position is the envy of the world. Taxes continue to fall for families and small businesses, and key investments in infrastructure, research, and development continue to be realized. The budget is balanced, and further measures have been introduced to ensure that it stays that way, with immediate penalties to senior government leaders who fail to keep it so. Furthermore, Canada is now uniquely positioned to attack its sovereign debt and will do so by applying unused contingencies to it to maintain at least a 25% debt to GDP ratio.

All of this is to say that, in budget 2015, promises made are promises kept.

• (1345)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Éleine Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the question that I would like to ask my colleague opposite is the one that I have asked several of his colleagues. However, I have still not been given a clear answer. I hope that he will be able to shed some light on this perplexing aspect of the budget.

The government boasts about implementing measures such as the universal child care benefit to help Canadian families. However, these benefits will be taxable. For income tax purposes, they will be treated as additional income and will have to be taxed. I am trying to understand how this measure in the Conservatives' supposedly fiscally responsible agenda, pardon the irony, will directly help Canadian families. They are going to have to keep part of the benefit paid by the government to pay taxes later on.

I do not understand how such a measure will directly benefit Canadian families. That does not make sense. It will have the opposite effect.

• (1350)

[*English*]

Mr. Jay Aspin: Mr. Speaker, clearly TFSAs are broadly based. Eleven million Canadians have TFSAs, 60% of whom earn incomes

of \$55,000 or less. This is a measure that is directed at the average Canadian. Most Canadian families will benefit by it. Canadians as a whole will support this as a firm measure in our current budget to help families.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is an unfair budget that dedicates a lot of tax dollars, tax expenditures to the wealthiest families and virtually ignores the middle class. The middle class are the job creators. When they are doing well, our economy is doing well as opposed to flatlined like it is under the Conservative government.

The budget is not only unfair, but it is also disappointing and deceiving when it comes to the Canadian Armed Forces. It is much trumpeted by the minister, but the reality is there is not a penny for two years and there is nothing to fill the gaps when it comes to medical professionals which has forced injured soldiers to wait months for help with potential PTSD and other conditions.

I am wondering whether the Conservative member opposite is aware that while an escalator has been announced, there has been a de-escalator in place since 2010. It will take more than a decade to build back just the cuts under the government. In fact, this budget will lead to the lowest percentage, some .8% of GDP in defence spending, actually a 20% decrease as a share of the gross domestic product compared with today.

Mr. Jay Aspin: Mr. Speaker, I do not get that this budget has nothing for the middle class. There is a myriad of opportunities to help the middle class, to help low-income Canadians all through the budget.

Perhaps my hon. colleague could tell us what her party would do. The Liberals have no plan. As a matter of fact, their leader has said that we do not have to go through this exercise as budgets balance themselves.

To be fair, I think my hon. friend and her party should take the time to read through all the goodies that are in the budget for honest, hard-working, average Canadians.

* * *

ROYAL ASSENT

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received which is as follows:

Government House

Ottawa

April 23, 2015

Mr. Speaker:

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada, will proceed to the Senate Chamber today, the 23rd day of April, 2015 at 4 p.m., for the purpose of giving royal assent to certain bills of law.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Wallace,

Secretary to the Governor General

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honour today to speak to budget 2015, our economic action plan for Canadians.

Traditionally at this time of year while I am speaking to the budget I like to pick a few initiatives that are my favourites and tell the House about them by page number. I will start with the home accessibility tax credit on page 245 and the reason it is important to me and important to my constituents in Mississauga South.

Seniors and Canadians with disabilities may face special challenges related to gaining access to their homes, or being mobile or functional within it, and making improvements to improve safety, access and functionality of a dwelling can be costly. The home accessibility tax credit will help seniors and elderly Canadians stay in their own homes. Some people may install a railing, grab bars, wheelchair ramps, walk-in bathtubs, chair rails, or perhaps non-slip flooring. Canadians will be able to claim \$10,000 in eligible expenses under the new home accessibility tax credit, which will result in federal tax relief of \$1,500 for the 2016 taxation year.

These improvements will enable seniors and disabled Canadians to be more mobile, safe and functional in their own homes, ensuring that they can live healthy, independent lives in the comfort of their homes or in the homes of their families.

I would like to turn to page 190 and talk about the Canada 150 community infrastructure proposal. This is a new measure. In addition to the unprecedented spending on infrastructure by this government, members probably know about the 10-year new building Canada plan. This dedicated fund is for renovation, expansion and improvement of existing community infrastructure in all regions of the country.

Community-based facilities, like the Small Arms Inspection Building in Lakeview in Mississauga South, contribute to the quality of life and heritage of small communities and large urban areas alike across Canada. The Small Arms Inspection Building is an example of community infrastructure with a rich history and one with enormous potential. It was at this location that over 6,000 employees worked during World War II making Lee-Enfield rifles for the entire allied effort. Most of these employees were women doing their part to support the war effort from home.

There are big plans for the improvement and renovation of this iconic place, and infrastructure funds like this one, which will be cost-shared with municipalities, community organizations and not-for-profit entities, will support projects that celebrate our shared heritage as well as create jobs and improve quality of life.

I would also like to talk to members about an important initiative on page 240 of the budget to extend compassionate care benefits.

Statements by Members

Family and friends have been described as the invisible backbone of the Canadian health care system. Giving care can often place people in grave financial hardship, especially when they are forced to quit their jobs or work fewer hours as a result of the responsibility of caring for a loved one. It is for this reason that budget 2015 and this Conservative government will extend EI compassionate care benefits from six weeks to six months.

We do not believe that Canadians should have to choose between keeping their job and caring for a gravely ill family member. I have heard from my constituents in Mississauga South about this issue and the hardships that they face. There is more in the report of the Parliamentary Committee on Palliative and Compassionate Care about the financial realities associated with caring for a dying family member. With this enhancement, the government is ensuring that the employment insurance program will continue to help Canadians when they need it most.

I would also like to tell members about a lesser known measure in the budget on page 303. That is the renewal and enhancement of Canada's honour system. This will bring the system of citations and honours for Canadians closer to all Canadians, with a commitment of \$13.4 million over five years, plus \$2.8 million in ongoing support to modernize the system. This matters to the constituents of Mississauga South because it is important to commemorate great Canadians. It will increase the number of nominations in particular to the Order of Canada.

• (1355)

I am hopeful that a great Canadian resident of Mississauga South, an icon and true patriot, hockey commentator Don Cherry will be recognized soon. Just imagine the jacket he would wear for the occasion.

• (1400)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The chair regrets having to interrupt the member for Mississauga South. She will have five minutes remaining when this matter returns to the House.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

ARMENIA

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, April 1915 marked the beginning of the first major genocide of the 20th century, the genocide of the Armenian population of Anatolia and Western Armenia. Two-thirds of Armenians who were living in this area died as a result of deportation, famine and mass killings. These acts were committed by the party that was leading the Ottoman Empire during the First World War.

More recently, the primarily Armenian-inhabited village of Kessab in Syria was once again the victim of hate. We therefore have a duty to remember this year, which marks the 100th anniversary of the genocide.

Statements by Members

That is why, on behalf of the people of Ahuntsic-Cartierville, I recently attended the unveiling of a khachkar—an Armenian cross—at the First Armenian Evangelical Church. This cross serves as a reminder to this Christian community of the suffering of their people, but also as a physical sign that the Armenian diaspora is alive and well throughout the world, including Canada.

* * *

[English]

2015 INTERNATIONAL PLOWING MATCH AND RURAL EXPO

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today, once again proud of the many hard-working volunteers who are showcasing what a great community and country we live in.

For the past three years, hundreds of local volunteers, businesses, service clubs and farm families have been working tirelessly in preparation of hosting a major event in the united counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry. The 2015 International Plowing Match and Rural Expo will be held in Finch, Ontario, only 45 minutes south of Parliament Hill, from September 22 to 26.

The event is something to see. The village of Finch, with a population of a few hundred, will host an expected 80,000 to 100,000 visitors from all over Ontario, Canada, the United States and beyond.

I want to thank the many families and volunteers who are working so hard to bring it all together. As we all say, “We are proud to be from S-D-G”.

* * *

NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON MASS ATROCITIES

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, five years ago today, all parties in the House agreed to establish April 23 as the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Mass Atrocities. It was my great honour to work with local activist Norm King and others to call for the creation of this national day.

This morning I attended an event marking this day at Carleton University, organized by students from Sir Wilfrid Laurier Secondary School in Orleans. I was impressed and inspired to see these young people passionate and making a difference. They believe that a better world is possible.

This month marks the anniversary of mass atrocities in Rwanda, Cambodia, Kosovo, Bangladesh, Armenia and throughout Europe during the Holocaust. Today is a day to remember past crimes against humanity and to resolve to act to ensure that such crimes are not allowed to happen again. The world deserves better, Canadians deserve better and our children deserve better.

As parliamentarians, we must all do our part to help prevent mass atrocities.

THE BUDGET

Mr. Chungsen Leung (Willowdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week our government delivered a balanced budget to Canadians, made possible through prudent leadership and a commitment to provide what matters most to Canadians.

Canadians know that budgets do not balance themselves and they know that sponsorship scandals and satellite offices around the country do not allow for balanced budgets.

Canadians do know that sensible and careful decisions provide room for tax cuts and a plan for the future that will benefit families, seniors, veterans and all Canadians.

The constituents of Willowdale know that lowering the amount of money that seniors over the age of 71 have to take out of their registered retirement income fund annually is important. They know that putting more money back into the pockets of families with children under the age of 18 allows them to provide what is best. They also know that reducing gridlock in Willowdale with the public transit fund will benefit the entire community.

Our economic action plan is working.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last night, when I was working late, I was interrupted by cheers and honks. I thought it had to do with the Ottawa Senators beating the Montreal Canadiens 1-0 to push themselves into game 5 of that series. Actually, it was just thousands of Canadians still celebrating the balanced budget that we tabled this week.

That balanced budget includes \$923 million for the Yukon territory, increased transfer payments, record levels, constant dollar increases year after year under the leadership of this Conservative government. Contrast that with previous Liberal governments that balanced the budgets on the backs of provinces and territories by slashing transfer payments to my home territory.

These important transfers allow local governments to determine local priorities for their health care, their education, their social responsibilities, their environmental concerns and their economic opportunity

I am proud to say that I am part of a government that is ensuring local determination by local governments. We will continue on that track. We will resist any opportunity that the Liberals want to do to raise taxes.

Statements by Members

●(1405)

PARKINSON'S AWARENESS MONTH

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, April is Parkinson's Awareness Month. About 100,000 Canadians live with Parkinson's disease and this will double by 2036. Parkinson's is not a normal part of aging, but 85% of people with this neurological disease are over the age of 65.

[Translation]

People with this disease and their families face many challenges, including a shortage of neurologists, genetic discrimination by insurance companies, financial troubles and stress on family caregivers.

[English]

Parkinson's Society Canada calls on the federal government to take a leadership role to implement a pan-Canadian seniors strategy and to ensure Canadians with Parkinson's have access to the compassionate care benefit, which they currently do not have.

[Translation]

We need a law that prohibits insurers from practising genetic discrimination against people with Parkinson's disease. The government recently quashed the Senate's efforts to pass such a bill—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Manicouagan.

* * *

EDUCATION

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain (Manicouagan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I want to acknowledge the courage and commitment of the people and the mayor of Franquelin, who have been fighting for the survival of their elementary school for a few years now. To preserve this essential infrastructure, the municipal council will start offering attendance incentives this year, including a credit to new property owners with children as well as rebates for fees and school supplies. These kinds of measures are unheard of in my riding of Manicouagan.

All Canadians should take an interest in the efforts of small communities on the north shore to combat the rural exodus and save their schools, since education and equal opportunities are among the fundamental values of this country.

Without the opportunity to go to school in my community and pursue post-secondary education, I would not have been able to achieve the position I have here, and I know that the same is true for many of my colleagues in this place.

That is why I want to assure my constituents in Franquelin and elsewhere in Manicouagan that I stand with them in their fight to maintain schools close to home, and I hope that everyone here in the House supports them as well.

[English]

MELFORT MUSTANGS

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I proudly rise today to congratulate this year's Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League champs, the Melfort Mustangs.

The Mustangs ended their 19-year drought and won the Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League championship. It goes on now to Fort McMurray to play in the Western Canada Cup to determine which two teams go to the Royal Bank Cup, which will be held in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba.

On this year's team, Richard Palmer and Adam Fauchoux were co-named MVPs for the playoffs and Melfort resident Trevor Blevins has won two SJHL championships, one as a player and one as a coach.

On behalf of the constituents in the riding of Prince Albert, I want to congratulate this team. It has done us proud and we wish it all the best as it goes on to the next level of play.

* * *

[Translation]

DONALD POTVIN

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a distinguished veteran from my riding who passed away recently. Donald Potvin served Canada with honour throughout the Second World War.

[English]

Don, as he preferred to be called, fought with the 4th Canadian (Armoured) Division. He received the Chevalier Medal of Honour for his participation in the liberation of France. He served in England, France, Belgium and the Netherlands, and was a survivor of Normandy's Juno Beach.

I had the honour of welcoming Don to Ottawa last year for his very first visit to Parliament Hill. He shared many accounts of his service with me, including the fact that he had three tanks shot out from under him while actively engaged with the enemy. He was also a veteran who took the time to share his experiences with local students for Remembrance Day. He was gifted at putting the war into perspective for our younger generation.

●(1410)

[Translation]

Don's death represents a profound loss, and I would like to extend my sincere condolences to his family.

* * *

[English]

ROB BAXTER

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart to acknowledge the life and contributions of Rob Baxter.

Statements by Members

Mr. Baxter was a popular teacher at Walkerville High School, who died at the age of 37 of a brain aneurysm this past March. Rob made such a positive impact on our community due to his overall optimism, positivity and uniqueness.

At Walkerville, he took the time to know his students. Whether as teacher rep to student council, working in drama productions, or just simply sitting down to lunch, Rob touched everyone he met.

Kara Kristof, prime minister of Walkerville's student council, captured the magnitude of Mr. Baxter's passing best when she said:

The loss of our mentor, our friend, our amazing librarian, the most spirited teacher and most importantly, the man who brought sunshine and smiles to everyone in the school, will have an impact on everyone.

On behalf of my community, I would like to offer the Baxter family our deepest condolences. Rob will be sorely missed, but his legacy will continue to inspire.

* * *

HARMONIZED SALES TAX

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are reports that federal and New Brunswick Liberals have made a backroom deal to raise the HST in my home province. According to one *Globe & Mail* columnist, the man who ran Premier Brian Gallant's election campaign, the Liberal MP for Beausejour, did not want an HST increase lest it corrode the Liberal brand before the next election.

MLA Blaine Higgs, the respected former finance minister, has said the Gallant Liberals backed off raising taxes on working families to avoid hurting the federal Liberals.

What are New Brunswick Liberals saying? Minister Rick Doucet has said that additional tax increases have not been ruled out. Last month, Minister Victor Boudreau, with a straight face no less, released a report that said voters actually wanted an HST increase.

Our Conservative government cut the HST by two points to help working families. I call on the premier to come clean and spell out his plans for the HST. Are Liberals going to raise taxes, yes or no? Voters deserve a clear answer before October 19.

* * *

[*Translation*]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I rise in the House of Commons today to mark the 75th anniversary of women's right to vote in Quebec.

The NDP would like to pay tribute to all of those women who, through their courage, tenacity and conviction, managed to beat down the misogyny and conservatism that prevailed at the time. We also want to pay tribute to the courageous men with vision who supported them in their efforts.

Currently, only one political party has managed to achieve the level of equality that was so desired. In the last election, 40% of those elected to the NDP were women. Many of them are young women, who have forever changed the image of this Parliament,

proving that balancing work and family is possible, even at the most senior levels.

Although the Prime Minister has abolished the Thérèse Casgrain Volunteer Award, only to replace it with his own award, the NDP promises to restore this amazing woman's sterling reputation.

Happy anniversary to the women of Quebec.

* * *

[*English*]

TAXATION

Mr. Bob Dechert (Mississauga—Erindale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week the Minister of Finance tabled a great budget for middle-class Canadians. It is a balanced budget, just as we promised, and it is cutting taxes for Canadians.

For example, the new family tax cut and enhanced universal child care benefit will benefit 100% of families with kids, the vast majority of benefits going to low and middle-income families.

The Liberals and the NDP would take this away. They want high taxes on middle-class families, high taxes on middle-class businesses, high taxes on middle-class seniors, and high taxes on middle-class consumers. That is their plan for the middle class. Our government's plan is reducing taxes on the middle class.

* * *

YOM HA'ATZMAUT

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to celebrate Yom Ha'atzmaut, the anniversary of the founding of the state of Israel. Sixty-seven years ago, barely a few years after enduring the horror of the Holocaust, Jews came together from many countries to build a sovereign state called Israel.

[*Translation*]

Canada was quick to recognize the new state. The creation of Israel was a remarkable achievement. It represented the determination of a people to build themselves a country.

Over the past 67 years, the Israeli people have worked very hard to develop a modern and prosperous economy, an innovative and ingenious nation and a flourishing culture founded on free democracy, even though they are right in the middle of an unstable region.

●(1415)

[*English*]

Therefore, on this auspicious occasion I would like to extend our sincerest congratulations to Israel for everything it has accomplished as a country in the past 67 years. It can be assured that Canada will remain its friend and ally in the years to come.

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, despite the opposition's desire to increase the tax burden, our government tabled a balanced budget that will continue to make life more affordable for Canadians.

The tax cuts proposed by our Conservative government will enable a typical family of four in Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière to save close to \$6,600.

The Liberals and the NDP, on the other hand, would make middle-class families pay more tax. They would get rid of the tax-free savings account, which the vast majority of Canadians use to save for their children's education or their retirement. They would make the middle class pay a carbon tax.

That is what they plan to do. That is not our plan. Our plan, which we will continue to implement, is to keep taxes low. It is working for Canadians across Canada and in my riding, Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, not only are Canadians burdened with a budget that only helps the wealthiest few, they have a government that cannot even get the facts straight on its own budget.

The member for Mississauga South does not know that the contingency fund is being used to balance the books, and the Minister of the Environment bizarrely claims that no budget has done more for climate change, even though climate change is not mentioned once.

An extra two and a half months should have been plenty of time for the Conservatives to prepare more than a muddy document even they do not believe. On top of this, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance are balancing the books on the backs of the next generation. With such a poor and confused sales job, it is almost understandable that the Liberals keep flip-flopping.

New Democrats are the only party that stands consistently behind our principled policies, and principled policies are what Canadians can expect in our 2016 budget.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my constituents in Richmond Hill were pleased to see our Conservative government continue to lower taxes for Canadians with our balanced budget. Indeed, families across York Region are looking forward to receiving the benefits from the family tax cut and the enhanced universal child care benefit. These benefits will leave 100% of families with kids with more money in their pockets.

The Liberals and the NDP will take this away. They want high taxes on middle-class families, high taxes on middle-class

Oral Questions

businesses, high taxes on middle-class seniors and high taxes on middle-class consumers. That is their plan for the middle class.

Our government's plan is reducing taxes for the middle class. The Liberal and the NDP plans would take these benefits away from hard-working Canadian families. We will not let that happen. Our Conservative government will continue to support the people who know best how to raise their children: mom and dad.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

THE BUDGET

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on February 5, the New Democrats proposed to cut small business taxes from 11% to 9%. Together with the Liberals, every single Conservative in this House voted against it, the Prime Minister, the finance minister, every single one. Then, lo and behold, the budget proposed that exact same cut, but just not until sometime after the next election. Who are business owners supposed to believe, the Conservatives who voted against that very cut two months ago or the Conservatives who are now promising it in order to get re-elected?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is rather amusing that the NDP is trying to take credit for a Conservative tax cut. The NDP leader is kind of like the rooster who crowed when the sun came up and therefore thinks that he made the sun come up.

The reality is our Conservative tax cut will help small businesses. It is the biggest tax reduction in 25 years. It will allow small businesses to hire more employees, grow and expand, and it is only possible because we have restrained spending and balanced the budget. That is our low-tax plan for jobs and growth, and it is working.

• (1420)

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one person who is not crowing about his budget is the finance minister.

[Translation]

Two days after tabling his budget, the Minister of Finance prefers to hide rather than answer questions here in the House. According to him, it is perfectly okay for our grandchildren to pay for the Prime Minister's mess. Let him hide.

Can the Minister of Finance explain to middle-class families why their grandchildren should have to pay for the gifts the Conservatives intend to give to the wealthiest Canadians?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I find it funny that the NDP leader thinks that people who earn \$60,000 are too rich for a tax cut.

Oral Questions

In fact, 60% of people who contribute the maximum amount to a tax-free savings account earn \$60,000 or less. They are the ones who will benefit from our decision to double the amount they can contribute and they will save money as a result.

We are going to lower their taxes. The NPD would increase them.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, here is an irrefutable fact: 85% of the population will not benefit from the tax cuts the Conservatives are proposing. That is a fact.

[English]

Leading up to the budget, a senior government minister told Canadians that there was no way the Conservatives would touch the contingency fund. Then the finance minister took \$2 billion out of, wait for it, the contingency fund. Then yesterday, we had a rather confused Conservative MP ambling along, claiming that the Conservatives were not touching the contingency fund at all. In this total Conservative confusion, where is the finance minister?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member talks about irrefutable facts, so let me share one with him from the finance department, on page 235 of the budget. There he will find that it states:

...about 60 per cent of the individuals contributing the maximum amount to their [tax-free savings accounts] had incomes of less than \$60,000 in 2013....

These are the very people who would benefit from increasing the tax-free savings accounts to \$10,000. They are, overwhelmingly, seniors who are taking money from their RRSPs and putting it into their tax-free savings account so that they can have a nest egg for a secure retirement.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister claimed that Mike Duffy was appointed to the Senate on the basis of a signed declaration swearing that he was a resident of Prince Edward Island. However, if we look at the declaration of qualification it does not mention anything about residency requirements. Questions were raised at the time that Mike Duffy did not meet the eligibility requirements. We know the Prime Minister's Office received advice from the Privy Council regarding Duffy's appointment.

Senate appointments are the Prime Minister's responsibility. On what basis did he push Mike Duffy's appointment ahead, despite the clear warning signals that as a resident of Kanata he was not eligible to represent Prince Edward Island?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, as I have answered on a number of occasions, the constitutional practice on this has been clear for almost 150 years.

It is disappointing now, of course, to see that the NDP members are trying to make a victim out of Mr. Duffy who faces very serious charges, charges that stem from an independent audit and an RCMP investigation.

At the same time, 68 members of the NDP face very similar types of indiscretions. Almost \$3 million worth of taxpayers' money was redirected to illegal offices. I suggest they do the right thing and repay that money to the taxpayer.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, victim. They really are out of touch. The real victims here are the Canadian taxpayers, not the Prime Minister's patronage appointments—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Charlie Angus: Speaking of which, the Duffy diaries raise all manner of questions about his involvement with Enbridge and the Prime Minister's Office.

The *Vancouver Observer* found Duffy had numerous meetings with Enbridge executives and yet none of that is in the lobbying register. We have the diary stating the Prime Minister was asking Duffy for briefings on his meetings with Enbridge, and yet all these entries have been blacked out of the diary.

Will the Prime Minister confirm that he did meet with Duffy on Enbridge? Was Duffy the Enbridge pipeline to the Prime Minister?

• (1425)

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Duffy faces very serious charges. It is Mr. Duffy's actions that are in front of the court right now.

At the same time, there are 68 members of the NDP caucus, including the Leader of the Opposition himself, who stand accused of redirecting, inappropriately, \$2.7 million worth of taxpayers' funds.

The Leader of the Opposition actually owes taxpayers \$400,000. I would hope he would do the right thing and start to pay back that money.

The Speaker: Order. I will ask members to come to order while other members are answering the questions.

* * *

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that the current Minister of Finance will not be around to fix this.

However, we do not need to wait for the Prime Minister's granddaughter to find out what happens when you double the TFSA contribution limit. The costs of this measure will soon grow exponentially. The wealthiest Canadians are the ones who will likely benefit from this policy and from the income splitting policy.

Why does the government favour the richest Canadians instead of taking measures that will benefit all Canadians equitably?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals and the New Democrats talk about the costs of tax cuts. Only those who believe in big bureaucratic programs see tax cuts as costs.

Oral Questions

We see tax cuts as savings—savings for taxpayers—and this money is theirs. We are putting money directly into the pockets of Canadians with an income of \$60,000, who will benefit from this tax cut and this opportunity to save. The Liberals, on the other hand, would like to take this away from them.

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with a contribution limit of \$5,500, tax-free savings accounts are generally available to most Canadians.

However, only one third actually participate and less than one quarter of that one third can contribute the maximum. Doubling contributions mostly helps wealthier Canadians at a cost of tens of billions of dollars.

Meanwhile, support for low-income seniors is cut. The lowest income, most vulnerable seniors will lose \$28,000 from their OAS and GIS. Why the double standard?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for Liberal and NDP members who believe in spending billions of dollars on new bureaucracies, they believe that cutting taxes is a cost.

We believe that cutting taxes is a saving. The difference is they believe the money belongs to the government and the bureaucracy; we believe it belongs to the people who earned it.

Nobody deserves it more than seniors whose average income is \$60,000 a year and who are proven to be the biggest beneficiaries.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here are the government's priorities: cut support for low-income seniors, take \$28,000 from the most vulnerable elderly women living alone, and use that so-called saving to pay for more expensive TFSAs for the wealthy, or just do not worry about, let the grandchildren pay for it.

On top of \$4,400 in new federal debt already larded onto every newborn child by the government, our grandchildren will be stuck with another \$15 billion or \$20 billion in TFSA costs, only for the wealthy. How is that fair?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is from a party whose leader thinks budgets balance themselves. The same leader said that he defines rich people as those who live off their assets. Seniors live off their assets.

Now, the Liberal Party is standing up in the House to say that anybody who earns \$60,000 or less is too rich and should pay higher taxes. Sixty per cent of those people who already max out their tax-free savings accounts, and would benefit from the Prime Minister's decision to double those account limits, are earning \$60,000 or less. This is a tax cut for the middle class. The Liberals would take it away.

* * *

ETHICS

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Mike Duffy's diary shows that in 2012 he repeatedly spoke with top Enbridge executives, followed by conversations with the

Prime Minister. However, there are no communication reports from Enbridge in the lobbying registry about these chats with Duffy.

Can the Prime Minister tell the House whether it is true that he discussed and requested notes from Mike Duffy about Enbridge or the northern gateway pipeline?

• (1430)

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, Mr. Duffy is facing some very serious charges that stem from an independent audit and an RCMP investigation. These are in front of the courts, and it would be inappropriate to comment further.

At the same time, it is very inappropriate for the NDP to try to make a victim out of Mr. Duffy. He is not a victim; Canadians understand this. They also understand that it is inappropriate that the New Democrats utilized \$2.7 million worth of taxpayer resources and funnelled it to an illegal office in Montreal. Canadians expect the New Democrats will pay back the \$2.7 million they owe.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Mike Duffy's diary shows us the real nature of his work as a senator. He was not working on bills, rather he was lobbying for oil companies. The relationship between Enbridge and the Prime Minister's entourage was quite healthy thanks to Mike Duffy. Nevertheless, the registry of lobbyists does not make any mention of these discreet little meetings between friends.

Did the Prime Minister talk to Senator Mike Duffy about Enbridge's pipeline projects?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Duffy is not a victim.

It is against the rules to use the resources of the House, Parliament and taxpayers for partisan reasons. This member is accused of using over \$20,000 for partisan purposes. That is against the rules of the House.

I encourage the member to do the right thing and pay taxpayers back. It is very important.

[*English*]

I would encourage them to repay taxpayers what they owe.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we understand why it was so important to the Prime Minister to have Mike Duffy on the Hill. He was one of the best and hardest-working Conservative senators. Nevertheless, today he is before the courts. He should never have been appointed as a senator for Prince Edward Island. Mr. Duffy was not even living there and did not even have a PEI driver's licence or health card.

Oral Questions

Why was the Prime Minister so hell-bent on appointing Mike Duffy as a senator for a province where he did not even live, in violation of such clear rules?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said a number of times, the constitutional practice on this has been clear for nearly 150 years.

What is also clear is that it is against the rules of the House to use taxpayers' money for partisan purposes. Nevertheless, 68 New Democrats are accused of doing just that.

[English]

The Leader of the Opposition owes some \$400,000. The member for Scarborough Southwest transferred money meant for his riding through Ottawa to an illegal office in Montreal—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Halifax.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of the Environment had the nerve to state, all evidence to the contrary, that her government has done more than any other to protect the environment. However, greenhouse gas emissions keep going up, and she does not have a plan.

Is the minister really that out of touch with reality, or is she just toeing the Conservative line? Does she think we should make our grandchildren pay?

[English]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our budget outlines the action we are taking to address climate change and protect our environment. We have invested significantly to support initiatives that reduce emissions and improve air quality for Canadians, and we will be investing \$1 billion in transit annually.

Our government has reduced emissions, lowered taxes for middle-class Canadians, and balanced the budget. What do the NDP and the Liberals want to do? They want to raise taxes for middle-class families, throw Canada back into a deficit, and pursue job-killing carbon taxes and pricing schemes. Their position is totally irresponsible.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if the minister really thinks that this is the most environmentally friendly budget ever, then she obviously has not read it.

Let me help her out. There is no money for climate change and clean air. There is no money for energy efficiency. There is no money for renewables, and the money that is in there does not get rolled out until after the election.

The environmental problems that Canada is facing are real, like climate change. Does the minister really think that the government's environmental failure is a problem for our grandchildren to solve?

• (1435)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government's record is

clear, and we have a plan that is working. We have reduced emissions while growing the economy and creating well-paid jobs for Canadians. We will continue to implement a responsible sector-by-sector regulatory approach that is aligned with the U.S. to ensure that Canada's economic competitiveness is protected.

Our government is also the first one in Canadian history to reduce greenhouse gas emissions on a net basis. Compare this to the NDP and the Liberals who, on the other hand, want higher taxes on middle-class families, higher taxes on middle-class seniors, and high taxes on middle-class consumers. That is irresponsible. We are not going there.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative budget would put economic and environmental burdens on future generations, including a burden of runaway income inequality. The Conservative budget is full of measures now to give more money to the wealthy at the expense of the middle class. With income splitting, doubling TFSA's, and stock option loopholes, they went all out when it comes to rewarding their wealthy insider pals. However, Toronto families looking for affordable child care get nothing.

Why does the minister believe that working families should pay more to reward the wealthy?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our low-tax plan for families gives money to 100% of households that have children. It does this through the family tax cut, which will save up to \$2,000 for couples, and through the increased universal child care benefit, which will give \$2,000 per child under 6 and \$720 for each child age 6 through 17.

The NDP and Liberals would take that money away to spend on endless bureaucracies and wasteful programs that Canadians do not want and do not need.

[Translation]

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is not the case.

In its budget, the Conservative government clearly indicated that its priority is helping the wealthy and handing out tax giveaways to CEOs. The NDP has different priorities. Instead of helping those who do not need help, we want to help middle-class families that are working harder than ever and having a hard time making ends meet.

Why is the minister so determined to help the wealthy?

Oral Questions

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP and the Liberals think that anyone with a job, a pension or savings is wealthy. Since doubling the TFSA limit will help people who earn \$60,000 per year, the NDP thinks that means those people are too rich.

The NDP and the Liberals want to raise taxes for those people, but we will cut their taxes.

[*English*]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative budget told millions of Canadians that they simply do not matter. If they are first nations people seeking basic equality, to Conservatives, they do not matter. If they are students struggling to pay for school, to Conservatives, they just do not matter. If they are families desperately seeking child care, they simply must not be in the Conservative target group; but for the well off and the well connected, Conservatives are dropping billions of dollars into their laps.

How can the finance minister justify burdening our children and our grandchildren with his unfair and expensive election promises?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is the NDP and the Liberals who are telling Canadian taxpayers they do not matter. If people are one of the 11 million Canadians who contribute to the tax-free savings account, the NDP says they do not matter. If they are one of the millions of Canadians with incomes below \$60,000 and have maxed out their tax-free savings account, according to the NDP, they do not matter. If they are one of the four million families who benefit from the Prime Minister's increase in the universal child care benefit, the NDP says they do not matter.

The NDP members want to take that money away from all of those people because they think they matter more than taxpayers.

• (1440)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is hard to get the finance minister to actually answer a question. If we had a nickel for every time we actually tried to get the finance minister to answer a question and show up to work, the Conservatives could have actually balanced the budget—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I trust the hon. member was not alluding to the presence here or absence of a minister. I encourage him to keep that in mind.

The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley has about 20 seconds left to put his question.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: It is entirely hypothetical, Mr. Speaker. On that side, they believe in a \$2.5 billion income-splitting scheme for the wealthy, tax loopholes for CEOs, and a massive corporate tax giveaway to the largest and wealthiest corporations. However, on this side, New Democrats believe in affordable child care, a livable minimum wage for Canadians, and real action to fight climate change.

How can Conservatives justify making future generations pay for their bad mistakes?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, New Democrats talk about a livable wage and then in the same sentence talk about their plan for a job-killing carbon tax. The reality is that, with their \$21 billion carbon tax and with the tax increases proposed by their friends in the Liberal Party, they would not only cut the take-home wages of Canadians, but they would kill the jobs of those very same Canadians.

On this side, we have lowered taxes by the most in 25 years for small businesses, which are the engine of job creation. When they hire those hard-working Canadians, their employees will be able to take more home because taxes are at their lowest level in half a century.

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadian seniors are speaking out against this Conservative budget. Minnie Piercey, president of the North Sydney Senior Citizens and Pensioners Club in Cape Breton, had this to say:

To tell you the truth, there's nothing in it for me, and there's nothing in it for poor seniors.... It helps the rich seniors, not the poor, and around here I don't think there's many rich seniors.

What do the Conservatives have to say to Minnie and the thousands of other Canadian seniors who get nothing out of this budget?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what I have to say is this. The budget will bring in a home renovation tax credit so that our seniors can make the adjustments so that they can stay in their very own homes. That includes wheelchair ramps and elevators that might help someone who is wheelchair-bound stay in the home. It will allow seniors to keep their RRIFs tax free for a longer period of time. When they do pull that money out of their RRIF, they can put it into a larger tax-free savings account. That is a nest egg that will allow them to keep more of their savings. That is money directly in the pockets of middle-class seniors, money the Liberals would take away with their planned tax increases.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to a journalist's question, the Minister of Finance let the cat out of the bag: he said he would let our grandchildren worry about these problems.

It is obvious what the Conservatives' strategy will be for the upcoming election: to favour the rich and dump any problems onto future generations. We in the Liberal Party care about the economy, health, the environment and aboriginal women.

Do the Conservatives believe that we should dump all of those problems onto our grandchildren?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, who is going to benefit from the higher contribution limit for tax-free savings accounts? People who are already maximizing their contributions. The data show that it is people with incomes of \$60,000 or less who maximize their contributions. It is these people, people who earn \$60,000 or less, who will benefit from this tax cut.

Oral Questions

The Liberals want to raise taxes on those people and the middle class. We will not let them do that.

[*Translation*]

* * *

[*English*]

EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when oil prices fell and middle-class workers lost their jobs, the Minister of Finance froze and went into hiding. Now we have seen his budget, and there is still no plan for jobs. Today we learned that EI claims in Alberta went up by 30% in February, and that is the second month in a row that EI claims in Alberta have grown by more than 20%.

People across Canada are losing their jobs. Why will the Conservatives not take action? Why are they failing to give Canadians a real plan for jobs and growth?

• (1445)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have a real plan, and it is the low-tax plan for jobs and growth.

While the NDP and the Liberals would raise taxes on job creators, our plan is tax cuts, training, and trade. For example, we announced in this budget that we will be bringing in the biggest tax cut in Canadian history for small businesses that create jobs. That means that promising young people will have more opportunities to work for growing small businesses right across the country.

The Liberal leader admitted that he would reverse this tax reduction on small businesses. He is wrong.

* * *

[*Translation*]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, pictures of the railway tracks owned by Central Maine & Quebec Railway in the Lac-Mégantic area were released yesterday. Their state is cause for concern.

Elected officials in Lac-Mégantic are worried. The mayor, Colette Roy Laroche, even asked the government to inspect every last inch of the railway to make sure that it is safe and, if necessary, to ensure that repairs are done.

Will the minister accept this request and finally remedy this worrisome situation?

[*English*]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we value greatly any advice we receive from the mayor of Lac-Mégantic.

We do confirm that CMQ owns the track. We have been in touch with the people who own the track. I have instructed my officials to look into this matter. I can inform the House that the last time this track was inspected was in November 2014.

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is nothing new for the Conservatives to say one thing and then to do another, as they have done in the case of Quebec producers.

The Minister of State for Agriculture gave his word to Quebec producers: the mandate of Canadian negotiators in discussions on the trans-Pacific partnership is “to preserve and promote supply management”.

Can the Minister of International Trade confirm that the Conservatives will keep their promise and protect supply management?

[*English*]

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have made it very clear for many years that we will continue to support farmers, including those in the supply managed sector. At the same time, supply management has never prevented our government from concluding trade agreements.

This government understands that trade and investment are the twin engines of economic growth for our country. We are going to continue to seek out opportunities to expand Canada's trade opportunities all around the world to give Canadian businesses, exporters, and investors new opportunities.

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister may say that, but what the Prime Minister actually said was that negotiations on the trans-Pacific partnership will involve difficult decisions. Then, in the budget, what do they do? They start implementing the changes the other countries actually want. They do not even wait for negotiations to be concluded. They simply start making the changes, giving stuff away.

Are these the kinds of difficult decisions the Prime Minister talked about? Are we going to actually see supply management offered up by this Conservative government, or is it finally going to stand up for farmers in this country and make sure that it protects supply management?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would caution that member about prejudging the outcome of these negotiations. I just explained that this government has, since its election in 2006, always promoted and defended the interests of our supply management sector. In fact, there is no government that has ever done as much for farmers as this Conservative government.

As we continue to negotiate at the trans-Pacific partnership table, we will be promoting Canada's interests. We have always made it clear that the standard we will set and achieve is that we will only sign a trade agreement that is in Canada's best interests.

Oral Questions

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Weland, NDP): How ironic, Mr. Speaker. The minister says the Conservatives protect farmers across this country, but when it came time to sell the Wheat Board, did they sell it to farmers? Not at all. They did not sell it to farmers. I guess they like the Saudis, because that is who they sold it to. They sold the Wheat Board to the Saudis, even though Canadian farmers wanted to buy it. Canadian farmers said that they would give them more money for it. The Conservatives said, “No thanks, we will just give it to the Saudis”, and so they did.

At the end of the day, if you really stand up for farmers, then you should have let farmers buy the Wheat Board.

The Speaker: I am sure the hon. member for Weland was directing his question at a member of the government not at the Speaker, but I will recognize the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary.

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, to the Minister of National Revenue and for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the hon. member's benefit, a fully commercialized Canadian Wheat Board increases competition in the sector by giving farmers another buyer competing for their grain.

I know the hon. member does not want to hear the answer, but I really would like to deliver the answer. The investors are injecting \$250 million into the company and have plans to develop a coast to coast grain handling and shipping network.

Growing infrastructure and new delivery points means lower delivery costs for who else? Farmers. The new Canadian Wheat Board includes a farmers trust, which offers farmers an opportunity to build equity simply through their deliveries of—

• (1450)

The Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week the Minister of Finance tabled our government's balanced budget and a low-tax plan for jobs and growth, and contrary to what the Liberal leader thinks, it did not balance itself.

On this side of the House, we believe in helping families and in giving them back more of their hard-earned money. I wonder if the Minister of Employment could please tell the House what budget 2015 does for Canadian families.

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry for that excellent question.

Small businesses make up over 90% of Canadian businesses and employ two-thirds of all Canadians. Since we formed government, we have reduced the small business tax load by almost 50%. We are also providing unprecedented tax relief, such as reducing the small business tax rate from 11% to 9%.

We will not increase taxes on almost 700,000 small businesses and kill Canadian jobs like the Liberal leader, who confirmed that he would reverse tax credits for small businesses. That is their plan. Our government will reduce taxes—

The Speaker: The member for Churchill.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today the family of Loretta Saunders joined their voices to the thousands of families, leaders, premiers, and Canadians who are calling for justice. They are calling for a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women.

To quote the powerful words of Loretta's mother: “Why are our children, our people, being murdered and killed more”.

What more is there to say than that? The question is, why is the government not calling a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women?

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Minister of Labour and Minister of Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times in the House, these are terrible crimes against innocent people, just like Loretta Saunders.

The RCMP has said in its own study that they focus and make sure these cases are addressed and the majority of them solved. But let us be clear. What these people do not need now is another study. What they need is action, just as Mrs. Saunders has spoken about, making sure that action is taken on behalf of her daughter.

We are focused on that—protecting, supporting, and preventing—unlike the NDP, which has no interest in supporting that initiative.

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INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada's aid budget is at a historic low point, and this week's budget will not fix anything.

Recently the government got a report on its aid program in Afghanistan, which showed a rather mixed result. Now we learn that there is also a report on its program in Haiti, but the government is not releasing it. What is it hiding? Why has the minister not made the report public, as required by law?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of International Development and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian humanitarian assistance increased 62% last year over the previous year, and since 2003 we have nearly doubled the amount of aid to low-income countries over the previous Liberal government.

We are at the forefront of crises like Ebola, Syria, and Iraq. We are at the forefront, and Canadians can be proud of our actions.

Oral Questions

While the NDP wants to increase taxes on the middle class, we are lowering taxes while providing accountable and effective aid to people in need.

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CANADA POST

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week on Hamilton Mountain, Canada Post is installing new super mailboxes in flagrant violation of municipal law. It is digging up municipal property and installing concrete pads without any permits or permission from the city.

Hamilton's duly elected city council has been clear: Canada Post cannot use municipal land without a permit. Will the government show respect for the people of Hamilton and the council they elected, or will it allow Canada Post to simply bulldoze ahead?

• (1455)

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know why Canada Post is moving forward on its five-point plan. It is because it is not in a position to continuously self-sustain its finances. As a result, it has moved from having door-to-door service to having community mailboxes. In siting these community mailboxes, Canada Post must work with the communities, and it must follow all rules and regulations. The particular incident is before the courts. As such, it is inappropriate to comment further.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it sounds as though the minister has already commented on it.

The fact of the matter is that Canada Post is claiming that it has the right, under federal law, to march into Hamilton and run roughshod over zoning decisions and land-use decisions and to ignore its permit restrictions and regime.

Is the current government prepared to put Canada Post in its place and respect the right of municipalities to decide land use and to bring in permit regimes that will be respected by the federal government?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the appropriate place for this to be debated, as to who has what jurisdiction in this matter, is before the courts. That is exactly where it is. A decision will be forthcoming, and then we will all know exactly who had the right to do what.

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ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is unconscionable that the Conservative government is playing politics with the future of first nation children.

Last year, the government admitted there was a funding gap for first nation K-12 students and promised \$1.25 billion to help close that gap. This election budget claws back that promised money and then tries to portray woefully inadequate dollars as an increase.

How can the current government justify denying first nation students the equality of opportunity they deserve? Where is the promised money for aboriginal education?

Mr. Mark Strahl (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr.

Speaker, our government believes that first nation students deserve access to the same quality education as all other Canadian students. We have invested over \$10 billion to support elementary and secondary education for approximately 120,000 first nation students living on reserve and about \$1.7 billion for 429 education infrastructure projects, including the construction of 36 new schools.

Additionally, economic action plan 2015 provides \$200 million to improve first nation education, and that builds on our investment of \$500 million over six years for first nation school infrastructure.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary needs to admit that these deplorable funding gaps for first nation students are part of a much larger pattern. The minister's own department confirmed billions of dollars of funding shortfalls for education, housing, water, and other basic needs on reserve, such as fire protection.

The current government's budget offers no new money to address these ongoing issues. At the same time, it is giving big tax breaks to rich people.

Why is the current government's priority to help those who need it least and to ignore those who need it most?

Mr. Mark Strahl (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is a disturbing pattern. Every time we invest in aboriginal communities, the Liberal Party votes against it.

In this budget we have additional funds for key initiatives aimed at first nations' well-being.

Let us hear from a stakeholder. Roberta Jamieson, president and CEO of Indspire, says, "Thank you to the Government of Canada" for its new commitment through economic action plan 2015 to advancing education for indigenous use, the country's fastest-growing demographic. This funding will enable Indspire to help lift the financial burden faced by thousands of indigenous students across the country as they strive to complete their education.

We are getting the job done.

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[Translation]

SHIPPING

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the west pier at the port of Rimouski is in such a state of disrepair that Transport Canada has told the organization managing the Institute for Ocean Sciences research vessel, *Coriolis II*, that it will not be able to dock there.

For Rimouski and the marine science park, closure of the pier would be catastrophic. It would threaten the development of scientific research and deprive the Institut maritime du Québec of its training area for professional diving.

Why has Transport Canada neglected its own pier for so long? Will the government undertake to repair the pier as quickly as possible in order to remedy this negligence?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with respect to this particular incident, I am going to ask the member if he will provide me with some more information. I will go back and discuss it with officials, and I can provide an answer to his question more fulsomely.

* * *

● (1500)

*[Translation]***THE ENVIRONMENT**

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we know that the government is reviewing a request for funding to expand the Port of Québec, but the public still does not know what the facilities will be used for. A number of people are concerned about the potential consequences of this project, and any project could have a considerable impact on the environment.

Will the Conservatives reassure the people of Quebec City and require the port authority to be transparent? Can they commit to conducting a full environmental assessment for any expansion of the Port of Québec?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I cannot comment on projects that are under consideration, but what I can say is that the Canada Marine Act is very clear that the third party port, which is arm's length from the government, does have obligations to ensure that there are environmental studies undertaken before it takes up any act or physical changes on its property and land. I expect the Port of Quebec to work with the community in these matters if that is something that is going to be happening there.

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THE BUDGET

Mr. John Barlow (Macleod, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the response I got from small business owners across Macleod to economic action plan 2015 has been outstanding, but I was really disappointed to see the leader of the Liberal Party turn his back on small business, just as he has done on the manufacturing sector. Why is the leader of the Liberal Party against helping small businesses which are the backbone of our economy? They create the vast majority of private sector jobs. They grow our economy.

Would he rather create more jobs for big government rather than help small business and manufacturers—

The Speaker: It sounds to me like the member was asking the minister to answer on behalf of the Liberal Party, and of course, that is not the administrative role of government. It is up to the Liberal Party to answer.

We will move on to the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier.

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NATIONAL ANTHEM

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, next week we will vote on an act to amend the English version of our anthem to make it more inclusive.

The government said it would oppose the bill based on the results of a question in a 2013 poll. That question was, “It has been suggested that the wording of O Canada be changed from ‘in all her sons command’ to ‘in all of us command.’” The current words are “True patriot love in all thy sons command”, not “her sons”.

How does the government justify basing its position on the result of a question which misrepresented the current lyrics of O Canada?

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Canadian national anthem is a source of national pride. On July 1, 1980, O Canada became an official national symbol by royal proclamation in an act of Parliament. Our government has no intention to change the anthem. Our focus is on the economy and jobs. By the way, when the Liberals talk about jobs and the economy, they strike all the wrong chords.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there have been 23 shootings in Surrey and Delta in the past six weeks. Residents are worried about their safety and the safety of their community, but budget 2015 does not even mention youth gang prevention, or gangs for that matter, in Surrey. Conservatives are more focused on balancing the budgets on the backs of the vulnerable than they are in making our communities safe.

Would someone over there please tell me why the Conservatives are ignoring gang violence in our communities?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. I would invite the member to look carefully at the budget, where there are additional resources. In fact, our government has steadily increased the budget of our police forces throughout the years. Unfortunately, the members in the NDP have not supported our initiatives, but I invite the member to look at the budget. There is additional funding for the police, including the Ottawa police. We will do whatever we can to keep Canadian citizens safe.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Rob Clarke (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, prescription drug abuse remains a growing public health and safety concern, especially in aboriginal communities. While legal with proven benefits, prescription drugs have a high potential for harm, including addiction, withdrawal, injury, and even death. In 2013, over 146,000 Canadians abused prescription drugs, fostering harmful addictions and pressures on our health care system.

Could the Minister of Health please give the House an update on our Conservative government's latest efforts to treat those suffering from these addictions in aboriginal communities?

Business of the House

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this Conservative government supports a network of now 44 community-based addiction treatment centres in aboriginal communities.

Just last week I was at the Leading Thunderbird Lodge in Saskatchewan with Chief Kimberly Jonathan to announce further support for addiction treatment on reserve. This includes a \$13 million national investment to combat prescription drug abuse that will enhance prevention and treatment, support drug intervention, and create prescription drug abuse crisis intervention teams on first nations. We will continue to support treatment and recovery programs to get addicts off of drugs and help them recover a drug-free life.

* * *

● (1505)

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, when we were debating in this place the extension of the military mission in Iraq and Syria, we were repeatedly told that substantial humanitarian efforts were part of what Canada would be doing. However, search as I can through this budget, I find no reference to money for humanitarian assistance in Iraq or Syria, but \$360 million for military purposes.

It gets worse, because I find nothing in here at all about the overseas development budget, nothing. We know it was cut by over \$670 million in the last two years. Is it frozen? Is it going up? Is it going down? Where are we on humanitarian assistance?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of International Development and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, we have been at the forefront in the Middle East in terms of humanitarian assistance. Only last year humanitarian assistance increased 62% compared to the year before. Canadians expect us to deliver aid in an accountable way that is effective for people in need, and this is exactly what we are doing.

On top of that, the budget creates the development finance initiative that will help to put more investment money into developing countries helping them to create and sustain economic growth.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mrs. Sana Hassainia (Verchères—Les Patriotes, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, it being autism awareness month, I will repeat a question that remains unanswered.

Although there is a disability tax credit in place, there are no real tax deductions for people with autism. The government must not understand autism specifically since only 2 of the 17 products and services listed by CRA that are eligible for a tax deduction apply to people with autism. As far as medical fees are concerned, only 4 out of 117 fees could be used.

Although Tuesday's budget announced the establishment of a Canadian autism partnership, does the government still intend to change the lists of eligible fees in order to help people with autism? [English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to underscore the commitment that this government has made, particularly under the leadership of former finance minister Jim Flaherty, to support families that are struggling with this very difficult condition. Budget 2015, just a few days ago, put funding together to support a Canadian autism partnership. I will be consulting with stakeholders across the country to support families and research. Since our government came to office, we have invested almost \$35 million directly into autism research.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when you were addressing the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, it was the leader of the official opposition, the NDP leader, who used inappropriate language directed at you. The common swear word, the F-word, was inappropriate to use. It is a disrespect shown in this House. It is not only disrespect to this House, but it is disrespect to you.

I ask the leader of the NDP to unequivocally remove and apologize for those awful comments.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have heard some tall tales from the other side, but this is really unbelievable.

I sit beside the leader of the official opposition, who always treats members of Parliament with respect. What the member for Langley says is absolutely false, and he should stand up and apologize for having made these accusations.

The Speaker: Not having heard what the member for Langley indicates he heard, I am in no position to make a ruling on this one.

No one would have something bad to say about the Speaker. I think it is best to leave it at that and move on.

The good news is that it is Thursday, so we do get to listen to the Thursday question. The hon. opposition House leader.

* * *

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government finally tabled the budget two months later than expected, just a few weeks after the start of a new fiscal year, but it does not bring good news. I have bad news for Canadians. This budget is going to place an enormous tax burden on grandchildren. The Minister of Finance himself clearly indicated that it will be up to the Prime Minister's granddaughter to solve the problems created by his budget. That is what this government does best. It has caused fiscal, environmental and social harm. All of that is going to affect future generations.

The Budget

My question is very brief and very simple: what are the Conservatives going to put on the agenda next week to repair the harm they have done?

• (1510)

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. opposition House leader for his question.

This afternoon we will continue debating economic action plan 2015, our Conservative government's balanced budget, low-tax plan for jobs, growth and security.

He was referring to it and its impact on future generations, and that is where this budget is perhaps at its best, because it delivers long-term prosperity.

With the tax-free savings account, it will provide benefit for generations to come. It helps families save for their children's university education. We have put an additional element in the budget to allow greater flexibility with student loans with calculation of income.

In fact, it is future generations who stand to benefit the most. The most important element from which they benefit, something they would never see under an NDP government, is a balanced budget. That means they will not be paying the freight for generations that came before them for high-spending debt plans that we see from the opposition parties. That is the most important long-term benefit for future generations, so we are very proud of the budget in this regard. Of course, we have been hearing from my colleagues this week that it is a prudent and principled plan that will see Canadians more prosperous, more secure, and everyone confident in Canada's place in the world for some time to come.

While we are focused on creating jobs and putting money back in the pockets of hard-working Canadians, the opposition parties have both confirmed that they want to see higher spending and higher taxes on middle-class families, high taxes on middle-class seniors, high taxes on middle-class consumers. In fact, any tax they can raise, they will probably take a shot at it when they get the chance.

The budget debate will continue on Tuesday and Wednesday of next week.

[*Translation*]

While I am talking about the budget, I cannot help but note that, when pressed Tuesday night for some detailed insight into the Liberals' economic vision for Canada—something we have been waiting for since the hon. member for Papineau became the Liberal leader two years ago—that member told reporters that he would keep it secret from Canadians for yet more weeks—or months—to come.

I am going to give him an opportunity next week to be courageous and share an actual proposal with Canadians—something beyond the view that budgets balance themselves. Therefore, Monday shall be the second allotted day.

Meanwhile, we will start the report stage debate on Bill C-51, the Anti-terrorism Act, 2015, tomorrow. Through this legislation, the government is taking additional action, in line with measures taken

by our allies, to ensure our law enforcement and national security agencies can counter those who advocate terrorism, prevent terrorist travel and the efforts of those who seek to use Canada as a recruiting ground, and disrupt planned attacks on Canadian soil.

[*English*]

Next Thursday, after we have concluded the budget debate, we will consider report stage and second reading of Bill S-4, the digital privacy act. This legislation aims to protect better and empower consumers, clarify and streamline rules for business, and enable effective investigations by law enforcement and security agencies.

In anticipation that Bill C-46, the pipeline safety act, will be reported back from committee soon, we will start report stage, and hopefully third reading, after question period that day.

We will round out next week with the debate on Bill C-50, the citizen voting act, at second reading, on Friday.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1515)

[*Translation*]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that the House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government, and of the amendment to the amendment.

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before I start my speech I want to say that I will share my time with the member for Beauport—Limoilou. I look forward to hearing his speech.

I am pleased to rise today to speak to what will be the last budget from this Conservative government.

After a decade under this government, families are working harder than ever, but they can barely keep their heads above water. Unfortunately, this budget is no different and does nothing to help them. Middle-class families continue to feel overburdened.

Instead of proposing a real plan to help those who need it the most, the government insists on imposing measures, like income splitting, that primarily help the people who need it the least, and it insists on giving tax breaks to the big CEOs.

The average household debt has reached record highs, but the Conservatives have no plan to help families make ends meet. There is nothing to make life more affordable, such as measures to protect Canadians from unreasonable ATM fees and exceptionally high credit card interest rates.

The Budget

Balancing the budget has mainly been achieved at the expense of all Canadians, with cuts to social services and public sector jobs. Household debt is on the increase and provincial government debt has reached a new record. The Conservatives have succeeded in balancing their budget, after the deficit they created themselves, but Canada is in much worse shape.

The Conservatives have made access to services very difficult, and since 2011 this new reality has had an impact on people in my riding of Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel. Six out of ten Canadians are ineligible for employment insurance and that is not acceptable. This budget does nothing to improve their access. In my constituency offices we have helped hundreds of constituents trying to get access to employment insurance, immigration documents, small-business consulting—with the Business Development Bank—and other services to which they are entitled. They have already paid for their pensions and employment insurance. This government always prefers to give its gifts to the wealthiest among us.

These austerity measures do not stimulate growth and are a burden on many people in Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel. I will do everything in my power to ensure that this is the final Conservative budget, because my constituents truly deserve much better.

The budget restates the government's commitment to reducing employment insurance contribution rates, which means that the government will continue to harvest a surplus from contributions while refusing to make employment insurance more accessible to the workers who contribute but who cannot receive benefits when they need them.

[English]

While Canadians are facing more and more inequality, instead of tackling the problem, Conservatives are encouraging it with appalling measures like income splitting, which will cost us more than \$2 billion per year while 49% of all qualifying families will receive nothing.

We must also remember that single-parent households, low-income and equal-income parents are not eligible. They will not get a single penny from this measure. In fact, 89% of Canadian households will receive absolutely no benefit from income splitting at all.

For those who can receive benefits, though, according to Dr. Kathleen Lahey at the CCPA, 30% of families will receive 78% of the benefits, which leaves less than a total of a half a million dollars for 70% of the eligible Canadian families to share.

These changes give nothing to the families who need the government support and leadership the most, those who bear the brunt of the slashed spending and cuts to services that the current government has implemented since it has been in power. However, in every single jurisdiction in the world where income splitting has been implemented, women's participation in the workforce has declined. Why this proposal would seem like a good policy measure for a government to have is completely inconceivable to me.

[Translation]

The government's inexplicable income splitting plan will have a direct, negative effect on the equality of men and women in this

country. This is not surprising, since there is nothing in this budget that would serve to advance equality of the sexes, nothing for pay equity, nothing for child care and nothing to end violence against women.

Gender inequality means that women do not have economic security, and that fits right into the government's agenda. Women make up 59% of minimum-wage workers. Even working full time, women in these jobs do not have enough money to meet all their family's needs. Women who work full time earn an average of 23% less than men; 20 years ago they earned 28% less. At this rate, we will reach wage parity in 95 years.

• (1520)

[English]

Women are often the lower income earner in a dual-income family. Who has to give up work because they cannot afford child care? Women. Who works part-time, in unstable jobs as well? That is women.

In a country failing to create good jobs and insisting on tax giveaways to corporations and the highest earners, what demographic receives the least support when they need it the most? It is single moms, senior women, women living in poverty, women living with disabilities, racialized women and indigenous women.

This budget and, simply put, the government has left women behind. Rather than providing choices for the most affluent, the federal government could reduce discrimination and inequality, and it should.

Few workers saw their wages increased by more than 2% to 3% last year, but 32% of working women actually saw the gap between their wages and those of their male peers widen. Closing the wage gap could boost GDP growth by as much as 10%.

[Translation]

That is why we must have a women's labour strategy, along with mechanisms to ensure that government investments in programs are targeted at both men and women.

[English]

However, the Conservatives idea of including women in the budget is to make a few superficial announcements, like supporting women in business through the action plan for women entrepreneurs and changes to the Canada Business Corporations Act to promote gender diversity among public companies.

While I do look forward to looking at the details of these proposals, no new funding was announced for these initiatives.

[Translation]

Meanwhile, we are far from achieving pay equity in Canada. Canada's wage gap puts us in eighth place among all the OECD countries. More women than ever before in Canada are educated and have careers, but they still do not receive equal pay for work of equal value performed by men.

The Budget

For every dollar earned by a man with a post-secondary education, a woman with the same education earns only 82¢ in the public sector and only 77¢ in the private sector. This gap is even greater for women in a visible minority group and for aboriginal women.

Any progress made by the generations of women who fought for pay equity cannot be attributed to the generosity of employers. In fact, often employers do not even know that there is a problem. Progress on this issue is recognized by experts as resulting from pay equity legislation and other legislative measures. Since 2004, we have seen not just a lack of action on pay equity, but real setbacks.

As I mentioned earlier, income splitting will do nothing to help 85% of families and will do nothing to help the shortage of affordable child care in this country. In fact, the 2015 budget completely fails to provide child care spaces for Canadian families. We know that creating spaces in high-quality and affordable child care centres is central to reaching gender equality.

Even 44 years after the Royal Commission on the Status of Women recommended a national child care program, only 22.5% of children under five have a space in a regulated child care centre. There is a shortage of spaces right across Canada. This is why the NDP has a plan to ensure access to child care for no more than \$15 per day. Experts agree that this plan is a key element for women's equality.

[*English*]

Canadian families are struggling like never before, and yet the government is doing nothing to help them.

[*Translation*]

Even worse, the budget does not tackle the issue of violence against women. This is really disappointing. It is also a shame that they have refused to launch a national public inquiry, which has the unanimous support of people across Canada.

There are a few good proposals in this budget, primarily the ones that were stolen from the NDP, such as lowering the tax rate for SMEs, which will drop from 11% to 9%, as well as extending employment insurance benefits from six weeks to six months.

However, the fact is that most of the measures in this budget fail Canadians, and especially Quebeckers. The budget fails to create good jobs and fails to invest in those who need it the most. I will not be supporting this budget.

● (1525)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate a number of the comments that the member has put forward. I just want to take this opportunity to highlight what the leader of the Liberal party said in his speech yesterday in addressing the budget.

He pointed out that there is this basic unfairness about the budget and. It would enrich the rich of Canada in an unfair fashion and at a substantial cost to the middle class and those who aspire to get into the middle class. That is one of the reasons that we moved forward on that particular amendment. The other issue is that the budget itself contains no real plan for job growth. As a result, this would not be good for Canada's short-term and long-term economy.

My question for the member is related more to the last point. When we think of economic growth, one of the things that is so critically important is Canada's infrastructure. This is an area in which the government has been grossly negligent over the last couple of years. We have seen substantial decreases of more than 80% in actual budget dollars being spent at a time when we should be investing in infrastructure. This budget is once again reinforcing that the government does not believe in investing in Canada's infrastructure.

Would the member not agree that by denying that, we would actually be killing jobs in the future?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to pick up where I left off.

This budget has nothing to offer the regions and Quebeckers. It does not create jobs, nor does it invest where money is needed to create greater equality and wealth across Canada. There is no investment in the regions, and there are more unilateral changes to health transfers, which will put tremendous pressure on my home province, Quebec. Everything will be downloaded onto the municipalities, and Quebeckers will have to pay for it all themselves.

The Conservatives are also making further cuts to Canada Post services, necessary services that many people, including seniors and people with reduced mobility, really rely on. People in most Quebec municipalities, including municipalities in my riding, Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, are really opposed to that.

My colleague also talked about infrastructure. Investments in public transit will not materialize until the end of the budget cycle. This means that no money will be coming for public transit during the first two years. This will really affect municipalities in my riding. Since cuts to health care affect the province, Quebeckers are the ones who will really foot the bill for the Conservatives' balanced budget.

[*English*]

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Minister of Labour and Minister of Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do find it passing strange that the member opposite has commented on how she believes that this budget would do nothing for women. Explicitly outlined in the budget is an action plan for women entrepreneurs. That is the engine that drives the Canadian economy. It creates jobs.

In fact, women who lead firms create more jobs for women, and that is what we are focused on, let alone this bill is on the plan that the government has already enacted. It announced just a few weeks ago \$700 million investment in women-led firms, something that I guess the member opposite just did not hear about. That \$700 million is not “no investment”, it is a huge investment.

The Budget

What I would say to the member opposite is that we are doing a huge number of things to create jobs across the country. We are lowering taxes so that moms, single women and women who are seniors have opportunities to have a job or make sure that they have great savings for the future.

My question for the member opposite is very simple. Does she support the budget and, therefore, the tax cuts, savings and job creation for Canadian women? Yes or no?

• (1530)

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Mr. Speaker, that is an easy answer. No, I do not support the budget. As I just detailed, there is nothing in this budget for women. There are superficial measures that I am looking forward to seeing the details of which do not have any funding attached to them.

Time and again again we hear that for the creation of jobs for women, we need to up the minimum wage. Women disproportionately work in minimum wage jobs. We need child care spaces. By child care spaces, we do not mean a \$500 cheque that will not even pay for a month of child care. Child care can cost anywhere from \$1,000 to \$2,000 per month per child. We have heard that often women have to make the choice, or the choice is taken away from them to work because they cannot afford child care, or they cannot access child care or child care costs more than they earn.

It is quite hilarious that the minister said that there were tax breaks for single moms and women because there are none. The income-splitting tax break that is proposed in this budget does not help the majority of families, and it certainly does not help women. Rather, it helps those who make the most money, those who have two salaries where one is much higher than the other. Often those who make less are women. That is still the reality, as I detailed.

We need to address pay equity. Income splitting does the opposite of addressing it; rather, it exacerbates it. That is why this budget is completely contrary to what women need. That is why I absolutely cannot support it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel for sharing her valuable speaking time. I have no doubt that she could have easily used ten more minutes to discuss other aspects of the budget that affect citizens in her beautiful riding.

I will not conceal from you that since this fine document became my bedside reading, that is for the last 48 hours, I have found some aspects rather amusing, and many others have greatly distressed me.

I will focus my remarks on two specific aspects. Before anything else, however, I will give my Conservative colleagues 10 minutes of thinking time so that they can help me with my research. Since our budget document amounts to almost 600 pages in the French version, I will help them by asking them to refer to chapter 4.1. That could facilitate my research. I looked for the words “fractionnement du revenu”, or income splitting, and unfortunately I could not find them anywhere. I am trying to understand what mystery could surround this mysterious disappearance of what some of our backbench colleagues were defending tooth and nail to their fellow citizens.

They were saying in fact that they had made this commitment during the last election campaign, they were sticking to it and they wanted it to be done. I would thank them for being so kind as to help me by indicating, within nine minutes, on which page the words “fractionnement du revenu”, or income splitting, are to be found.

That said, I will begin with the most amusing aspect. I have to confess that I was bowled over when I saw the commitment the Minister of Finance was boasting about, and I imagine it was probably one of the Prime Minister’s ideas, with regard to the balanced budget legislation. I have to confess that in terms of comedy, it is difficult to think of anything worse—or better, depending on whether you relish the absurdity of it.

I will not presume to mock a government measure, whatever the colour of the government, as long as the basis is sound and the intent favours the largest number, or the common interest. Yet that is absolutely not the case with this bill, or at least the bill proposed and described in the budget document.

Let us look at what such legislation could potentially contain. I trust that in the time allowed for my remarks, the Conservatives will be taking a lot of notes, because this bill may well contain things that are totally absurd and unacceptable, unless of course it is included in the budget implementation bill and thus that becomes an omnibus bill. I know that all bets are open as to whether it will have fewer than 400 pages or more than 400 pages, but that is another question. In a few weeks, we will know what we have to deal with.

The Conservatives are defending a number of things in the balanced budget legislation, because they say it does the following:

preserves Canada’s low-tax plan and allows for further tax reductions, fostering growth and the creation of jobs for the benefit of all Canadians;

For the past nine years, the Conservatives have been implementing their low-tax agenda, especially for their wealthiest friends, but also when it comes to creating jobs and activities for Canada’s labour force, namely people between 25 and 55. The Bank of Canada, however, has been very harsh, saying that the employment and activity level of that category of worker has remained the same since we came out of the last recession, in 2009. In other words, Canada is stagnating. There is no way an NDP government would comply with that requirement of the future legislation.

The other really amusing aspect—and I have asked many questions about this very subject throughout the four years that I have been here representing the people of Beauport—Limoilou—has to do with the part stating that this legislation:

helps to instill confidence in consumers and investors, whose dollars spur economic growth and job creation;

Canadian—and even foreign—investors are rather cautious. According to another very harsh observation by the Bank of Canada, businesses are unfortunately sitting on huge amounts of money and not investing in improving their productivity.

The Budget

● (1535)

Moreover, the excess capacity in Canada's businesses was substantial, despite the government's claims that the economy was vibrant and our strengths were being put to good use. After the drop in oil prices and in the Canadian dollar with respect to the American dollar, despite the improved margins that provided, the recovery they were hoping for has clearly not materialized, because businesses are not prepared for it.

Businesses are not prepared to hire people to take advantage of opportunities in the current situation. The oil-dependence trap makes us much more sensitive to the slowdowns and problems that resulted from the drop in international oil prices. That will affect the entire Canadian economy.

Furthermore, they avoid talking about any future tax increases or service reductions. I could completely agree about service reductions, were it not for the fact that, when we call the Canada Revenue Agency during tax season we reach a voice mailbox, and the chances of an official calling us back with answers to our questions are practically nil. My colleague is telling me they are actually nil. He must have learned that from his constituents in the riding of Saint-Jean.

If the Conservatives had brought in this balanced budget law nine years ago, it would have been interesting, because we would have been able to force them to take responsibility for their actions, particularly the draconian cuts in services. That was not the case, however. They are bringing in this bill now, when they know they are going to be tossed out of office and be replaced by a New Democratic government.

One funny thing in this budget document is the list of all the criteria for an acceptable deficit in a recession or under extraordinary circumstances such as a war or natural disaster, and the requirement that the finance minister must appear before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance within 30 days following presentation of a budget deficit.

I am very happy about that, because the finance committee's invitations to the Minister of Finance often go unanswered. Obviously, he is too busy criss-crossing the country to make announcements about his amazing measures, such as income splitting. No, of course not: he does not use those words. He no longer makes announcements across the country about income splitting. It is a non-existent concept cloaked in the very vague definition of a "family tax cut" in this budget.

Let us take a look at an issue that is even more discouraging. In chapter 3.4, Investing in Infrastructure, there is a new public transit fund. From an objective point of view, it is quite good news that there should be recurring, long-term funding for public transit. Unfortunately, it will come too late. I do not know how to explain the delay. Is it because the Conservatives really do not know what public transit represents? Maybe we have to help them and show them what a city bus or a commuter train looks like.

When we try to understand what the Conservatives are trying to do with their notorious fund for public transit projects, it is really discouraging to note that they want to force municipalities to work in a public-private partnership. It is the same thing with the building

Canada plan. However, that is the opposite of what the infrastructure minister claims, namely that the federal government does not want to get involved in provincial or municipal projects. This is interference.

How can the Conservatives justify imposing their will on the management of infrastructure projects, such as road projects, which fall under provincial or municipal jurisdiction?

● (1540)

If a municipality decides to go ahead with a public transit project, for instance, a streetcar or rapid transit system, and it decides to develop the project by keeping total control over it without involving the private sector, why should the federal government reject its application for funding? Clearly, it seems that this condition will enable the Conservatives to refuse any project that fails to comply with its PPP obligation.

Frankly, the Conservatives are going to have to answer serious questions about their interference in other levels of government right across the country.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are many aspects of the budget that one can talk about, and I have attempted as much as possible to emphasize the importance of just how unfair the budget is.

To give an example, we all know the position of the late Jim Flaherty, the former finance minister, in regard to the income split. He argued while he was a Conservative minister of finance that the income split was not a good idea. The reason it was not a good idea was that only a select few, Canada's wealthiest, would actually benefit by literally hundreds of millions of dollars in tax breaks going to that 15% or less.

Mr. Flaherty indicated this was something he would not accept. Yet, after he left government, ultimately the Conservative government, which is becoming more of a Reform government, is now bringing in these unfair tax policies that are going to hurt Canada's middle class.

I wonder if the member would agree that the people who would be paying for this tax break going to the rich would be the hard-working middle class and those who are aspiring to be a part of Canada's middle class. That type of attitude, by its very nature, is what makes this budget so unfair. Even Mr. Flaherty acknowledged that.

[Translation]

Mr. Raymond Côté: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member for Winnipeg North. In fact, there is a lot of unfairness toward a large part of Canada's population, particularly the middle class. It is the middle class that has to bear most of the tax burden at the federal level. This is really deplorable.

The Budget

One of the factors that explains this is the huge cut in corporate taxes over the last 20 years. Big businesses have seen their taxes drop; in fact, their taxes have been reduced by half. That has led to an outrageous tax inequity between big and small businesses, such as my barber or the owner of the corner store. Fortunately, after repeating our message over and over for the past nine years that small business deserves a chance, the Conservative government has finally taken some action in this budget and decreased the small business tax rate from 11% to 9%, even though the rate of the reduction is very slow. This reduction is consistent with the goal the NDP has been trying to achieve for years.

• (1545)

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to be able to put a question on the budget to my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou.

He did not address the comments made by the Minister of Finance concerning the expansion of the TFSA, the tax-free savings account. I would like to hear what he has to say on that subject. The Minister said that it was not a serious matter if costs were going to increase exponentially in the years ahead, and that in the end it would be for the generations following us, the Prime Minister's grandchildren, to see about resolving a situation that will become unmanageable because of high costs.

Can my colleague comment on these remarks from the Minister of Finance?

Mr. Raymond Côté: Mr. Speaker, I imagine that my colleague, the member for Sherbrooke, must be talking about the new balance approach adopted by the Minister of Finance. He in fact showed up with New Balance shoes on his feet. This means that in the final analysis we are achieving the balance at the expense of future generations.

It must be said that the Minister of Finance was very clear in his approach. He blatantly revealed his agenda: kick the can down the road, and for now, take the money, enjoy it and use it to party hard.

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for La Francophonie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech of my colleague opposite.

He was talking about his confusion regarding infrastructure and transit spending. I would urge him to look at a very nice chart on page 193 of the French version—and page 175 of the English version—of the document, which shows unprecedented federal spending on infrastructure. There is a spending level of about \$100 million or \$200 million for several years, and a major increase in 2006. Note that that was the year the Conservative government came to power. We see an investment rate of about \$5 billion a year, maintained for a decade. It began with the seven-year building Canada plan, followed by the ten-year new building Canada plan.

I would like him to comment on that, because the plan for investment in transit goes beyond the building Canada plan. Therefore, big cities like Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, and every municipality in the country, already have access to huge, unprecedented funding to invest in transit.

I would urge all Canadians to look at this fine chart, which clearly shows the federal investments in public transit.

Mr. Raymond Côté: Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank my colleague for taking us to that page, but I would like to take him to page 210 of the document in the French version, or page 190 in the English version, because he will be able to see that the celebrated public transit fund is far off in the future. In fact it starts gently, then it sharply increases. Of course by that time the Conservatives will have had a few years to reflect on their past sins while they were in power and were imposing their will on the provinces, the territories and the municipalities.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to address the chamber on strong leadership; a balanced budget; and a low-tax plan for jobs, growth, and security. I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, a great champion of taxpayers and her constituents.

My job is called “Minister of Employment and Social Development”. I am very blessed with the opportunity to serve in this capacity. Sometimes our terminology in government, though, is too technical when really things can be said much more simply. My role is to focus on jobs, families, and communities. Those will be the three cornerstones of my address today.

I will start with jobs. How can we create them? The plan of this government is the three *ts*: trade, tax cuts, and training. Trade, tax cuts, and training have helped us create 1.2 million net new jobs. That is 1.2 million people who got a phone call and someone on the other line said, “Congratulations; you got the job”. We want more people to get phone calls like that. One way to do it is to promote trade.

When our government came to office, there were six free trade agreements in place for Canada. Now there are about 44. We have added almost 40 new free trade agreements. In fact, about 97% of Canada's free trade access was secured by a Conservative government. The 3% remaining was done by Liberals.

Let us make this practical, because trade might seem a bit abstract to some people. We signed a free trade agreement with Europe, for example, which is the largest combined economy in the world in terms of GDP, even bigger than the United States or China. This free trade agreement, according to economists, will create 80,000 net new jobs. Some of them are right here in Ontario, and we are already learning about them. Just three weeks ago, the Prime Minister visited a Honda Canada plant where that company announced that for the first time in its history it will export Canadian-built Honda vehicles directly to Europe. That is 400 net new jobs.

The Budget

We have also signed a free trade agreement with South Korea, a fast-growing, free-enterprise, democratic economy. Just recently the Prime Minister announced a deal that will allow Canada to export its uranium to India, the second-largest country in the world in terms of population, a country with one of the fastest growing middle-class populations on earth. That uranium will help India power its economy, literally, and it will create jobs for hard-working employees of companies like Cameco and others in Saskatchewan, which has one of the richest reserves of uranium on planet earth. Trade creates jobs.

Tax cuts do too, the second *t* of our job plan. In our recent budget, our Minister of Finance announced that we would be bringing in the biggest tax cut in 25 years for small business. Ninety per cent of businesses in this country are small, and two-thirds of Canadians who are employed work for them. In other words, small business is the engine of job creation. Whether it is Sonny's gas station on Main Street in Manotick or any other neighbourhood business that all members know, meet with, and can trust, these are the people who lift up our communities and who would benefit from this massive tax reduction. It would mean that they would have more money in their pockets to hire promising employees. When those employees are hired, they would pay lower taxes.

This budget also announced that in 2017 we would be lowering EI payroll taxes by 21%. That means it would be less expensive to hire and that the employees who are working would pay less of their salary into the EI fund and keep more of it in their own pockets. That too creates jobs.

• (1550)

This follows on the EI hiring credit, which we announced in the fall, that saves small businesses money. It is specifically targeted to small businesses for additional hiring by reducing the EI tax burden that small businesses bear when they employ additional people. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business confirmed that this tax cut would create jobs.

Tax relief and lower taxes allow businesses to have more money to hire, families to have more money to save and consumers to have more money to spend, all of which generate more jobs. Therefore, tax cuts create jobs, as does training, the third *T* in our job creation plan.

We have made a mistake in our country. For 40 years we told our kids that there was only one way to get a job when they got older, and that was to go to university and get a white collar job wearing dress shoes. Now we are suffering the consequences. Over the next seven years we will need a million skilled workers, most of them in the skilled trades. We will need 300,000 people in construction alone.

• (1555)

Mr. Pat Martin: Go back to school.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague from the NDP is a carpenter. I think he plans to go back into carpentry where he would do some great work, literally building our economy. The truth is he does great work here as well, but he would be even more useful out on a work site as a journeyman with a whole group of apprentices. I just hope he does not teach them anything about politics.

I have a great deal of respect for the career that he had before he came here, as I do for all tradespeople. We ought to send the message. I think my colleague across the way in the NDP would agree with this message, that colleges and polytechnics deserve the same respect as universities, blue collars deserve the same respect as white collars and trades deserve the same respect as professions.

That has been the nature of the Prime Minister's shift in training resources. It used to be that if people wanted to go into a short duration training program and they were low-income students, they could not get a grant because that money was just set aside for university-style education. What about the people who wanted to do short duration technical training? They did not qualify. That left a whole group of low-income students from disadvantaged backgrounds unable to have access to training money. Therefore, the Prime Minister announced three weeks ago that we would reduce the minimum duration required in order to access the Canada student grant to 34 weeks, down from 60 weeks, so 42,000 young people would have a chance to go and get trained, skilled and into the workforce.

However, some of the best training is on-the-job training. That is what we are promoting with the Canada apprenticeship grants and loans, and the Canada job grant.

Let me start with apprentices. As members know, apprentices spend most of their time in on-the-job training, but about 20% of their time in the classroom to study theory, and to learn more from the books and the instructors. During those times, they often find it hard to pay the bills, especially if they come from a family of limited means. The Canada apprenticeship grant has given half a million grants to over a quarter million promising young people so they can get over that financial hurdle and use their training to have high-skilled, high-paying jobs in the high-demand sector.

Our plan for jobs is tax cuts, trade and training. It has helped us create 1.2 million net new jobs for Canadians. We will keep cutting taxes, keep signing trade deals and keep training the next generation that will build our country and take us into the future.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proudly representing my community in Toronto and as many Canadians know, public transit is a big concern in many of our communities across Canada. In Toronto, the Board of Trade has attributed a loss of about \$6 billion annually to our GDP due to our lack of investments in transit infrastructure.

We have some key infrastructure plans that the city and the province are desperate to introduce, yet the government has no new immediate spending on transit. Its first transit spending will be delayed for two long years and then will roll out very slowly for a very long period after that, much of it will be bundled up in red tape and delay.

The Budget

Why has the minister ignored Canada's cities, these economic powerhouses of our country, by not providing any immediate upfront funding but waiting until, fortunately, long after the Conservatives will no longer be the Government of Canada?

• (1600)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, in fact, the building Canada fund is available right now, as are the gas tax transfers that our government has increased and that go directly to projects like transit.

However, there was something else in the budget, and that is that we are increasing the universal child care benefit to \$2,000 for kids under age six and \$720 for kids age 6 through 17. This is where I need some help from the hon. member. There are about 200,000 families who have yet to register for the universal child care benefit. We need them to register so they can get those funds. Over 30,000 of them are in her hometown of Toronto. Will she join with me in helping us find these families and register them so they can get their funding? They have only one week to reach the deadline to get their July payment.

I would be willing to work with that member and all members to find those 200,000 people who are deserving of the money. These are moms and dads, the real child care experts. Let us work together to get them the money they deserve.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last year we proposed an EI holiday for employers that would hire young people in particular. If my hon. colleague is so concerned about creating jobs, which we all are, why is the government keeping the EI premium level artificially high until 2017? That is a job killer.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, in fact, we are cutting the EI, we already brought in an EI hiring credit, which cuts premiums for small businesses. In two years the budget will reduce EI payroll taxes by 21%. However, on budget day, the Liberal leader said that he opposed our reductions in income taxes from small businesses. Prime Minister Harper is bringing in the largest reduction in small business taxes in 25 years—

The Deputy Speaker: The member has been here long enough to know that he is not allowed to use the name of one of the members of Parliament, whether he is the Prime Minister, or a minister or a member.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is bringing in the largest reduction in small business taxes in 25 years, reducing it from 11% to 9%. The Liberal leader ran outside and said that he would reverse that tax cut for small businesses. He has now said that he will just adjust it.

Small businesses cannot trust the Liberal leader who thinks budgets balance themselves. Small businesses know that hard work and low taxes help them balance their budgets, and we will continue to deliver them the tax relief that will permit them to succeed.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is a great colleague in the House and I appreciate the leadership he has shown.

I know he spoke passionately about some of the benefits for students. One of the things I suffered when I went to university was that I worked part-time and I came from a relatively poor family.

Even though the gross income that we had on the farm was high, the net income was low and it created threshold barriers for qualifications for student loans. It also created the situation where I needed to work and when I did work, unfortunately, I had a cap on how much I could earn every month, otherwise it was clawed back by the federal government from the federal student loan program.

Could my hon. colleague enlighten Canadians about some of the fantastic things in budget 2015 that have ended that practice.

ROYAL ASSENT

• (1615)

[*Translation*]

A message was delivered by the Usher of the Black Rod as follows:

Mr. Speaker, His Excellency the Governor General desires the immediate attendance of this honourable House in the chamber of the honourable the Senate.

Accordingly the Speaker with the House went up to the Senate chamber.

And being returned:

The Deputy Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that when this House did attend His Excellency the Governor General in the Senate chamber, His Excellency was pleased to give royal assent, in Her Majesty's name, to the following bills:

C-44, An Act to amend the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act and other Acts — Chapter 9.

C-40, An Act respecting the Rouge National Urban Park — Chapter 10.

C-479, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (fairness for victims) — Chapter 11.

C-21, An Act to control the administrative burden that regulations impose on businesses — Chapter 12.

C-32, An Act to enact the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights and to amend certain Acts — Chapter 13.

S-219, An Act respecting a national day of commemoration of the exodus of Vietnamese refugees and their acceptance in Canada after the fall of Saigon and the end of the Vietnam War — Chapter 14.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: We were in the midst of the minister responding to a question from the member for Wetaskiwin.

The Budget

The hon. minister.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Wetaskiwin for his excellent question and good work. I am so nimble that I was able to find the page in the budget to answer his question

The member asked about people like himself who, as a young student, tried to do some in-study paid work. He had a part-time job and as a result his Canada student loan was clawed back. This discouraged work among our young people. I think we all agree we want to encourage our young people who are going to school to get on-the-job training and earn more money to limit their debt levels.

I am very pleased to announce to the House that our budget, “Strong Leadership: A balanced-budget, low-tax plan...” proposes to remove the penalties for in-study work for students who are seeking a loan under the Canada student loan program. Young people who get a job and go to work as they are studying would not see their Canada student loan clawed back. They would be able to keep that money and focus on working and learning.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure, on behalf of the people of the great riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, to rise in my place to speak to the many benefits contained in the 2015 federal budget and the importance of having our Conservative government directing the Canadian economy.

First, I congratulate the Minister of Finance, the best member of Parliament the voters of Eglinton—Lawrence could ever have, on the tremendous job he is doing on behalf of all Canadians. Canada's Minister of Finance comes to the job with real financial expertise. He is an example of how deep the Conservative bench is when it comes to talent and experience. He has been the observation of the more thoughtful political commentators; the opposite is the case on the opposition benches.

As noted, the former part-time drama teacher, the last great hope of the third party in this place—Ritchie Rich to his closest trust-fund skiing buddies—would not understand the importance of balancing the finances of Canada. The balanced budget that is being brought forward by my Conservative colleague is a signature achievement.

On behalf of the almost 3,000 employees working at Chalk River Laboratories, I personally thank our government for the continued ongoing support that we give to Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, Canada's premier centre for science, research, and development.

Economic action plan 2015 proposes to provide up to \$72.3 million in 2015-16, on a cash basis, to Atomic Energy of Canada Limited to maintain safe and reliable operations at the Chalk River Laboratories.

Canada is the world's leader in the peaceful use of nuclear technology. Nuclear power is recognized as environmentally sound, producing no greenhouse gas emissions in the generation of electricity, at an affordable price.

I invite the opposition parties to get their heads out of the sand when it comes to nuclear and join the 21st century.

There is some exciting research, science, and development occurring in the nuclear field in Canada. I was proud to participate in the opening of a new \$16-million laboratory, a hydrogen laboratory, at Chalk River.

Our government recognizes that we must do the science, and nowhere is it more promising for the environment in the future than in the hydrogen economy.

This budget is all about balance, avoiding the type of extreme, ideological opposition parties' policies—the same as the ones that are bankrupting Ontario.

Canadians are looking for balance, balance in their personal lives when they balance the family chequebooks and balance in how our nation is governed.

What we have today in Canada is a fiscal position that is the envy of the world. Ours is a balanced approach to complement our balanced budget. An important example that differentiates our balanced approach to jobs and economy from the extreme approach of the opposition is our Conservative government's support for manufacturers.

Federal budget 2015 contains a number of important measures to support manufacturing jobs. Among specific examples is a beneficial change for manufacturers, which would be a 10-year extension of the accelerated capital cost allowance, ACCA provisions that were set to expire this year. The ACCA allows manufacturing companies to depreciate, for tax purposes, the value of newly purchased equipment and machinery at the accelerated rate of 50% per year, reducing their taxable income in the first few years of owning the asset. This, in turn, allows the business to keep more of its income to pay down the debt that was incurred upon purchasing the new asset. New assets are necessary to enhance productivity, which allows a business to remain competitive and, in the long run, hire more employees.

● (1620)

Manufacturers in my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke tell me they appreciate the 10-year extension that replaces the previous two-year time period. By providing predictability for an extended period, businesses have a more suitable time horizon with which to plan. The tax savings and the regulatory certainty that come with the 10-year time period prompt business to make new investment plans. Growth means new employment, and Canadians know that jobs and the economy are our priority because taxpayers have told us it is their priority.

Smaller companies will benefit from reductions in the small business tax rate that begins in 2016. Our Conservative government understands and supports small business, unlike the opposition that is calling for additional payroll taxes on small businesses and employees. Payroll taxes, as any business person will say, are job killers.

The Budget

Our support for the Canadian manufacturing sector is very different from what we hear from the opposition, which believes Canada should be, quoting the leader of the third party, “transitioning away from manufacturing-based employment as a driver in the economy”. For the opposition in Ottawa, clearly it was a moment of weakness in that interview with the *London Free Press* to reveal to Canadians how the Liberal Party really feels about the many hard-working families who rely on manufacturing to put food on their tables. The decision by that party not to support manufacturing jobs is based on its extremist version of the so-called green ideology, the kind practised in Toronto that is bankrupting the province of Ontario.

The person who helped write the greed energy act in Toronto is now the principal advisor to the green leader of the third party in Ottawa. His filthy green fingerprints are all over this and many other of the extreme left-wing policies that will throw our economy out of balance. It is all about balance. Canadians should not be forced to lose good, well-paying manufacturing jobs on the altar of environmental extremists. With the right balance and the balanced approach of our Conservative federal government, we will have an efficient economy and a healthy environment.

While the trust-fund child would like to talk a mean game about the middle class, which is defined by the member for Wascana as earning almost \$140,000 per year, the truth of the matter is that manufacturing jobs are the middle class, the middle-income jobs that sustain Ontario. Instead of defending those jobs, as we have done in our balanced federal budget, he would rather campaign with the Ontario Liberal premier, for whom he makes excuses, ignoring the loss of 350,000 manufacturing jobs in Ontario thanks to high electricity prices and a hostile provincial employment environment.

The junior opposition even directed its provincial wing in Toronto to bring in a carbon tax, and that job killer is aimed at manufacturing jobs in Canada, particularly in the automotive sector. The so-called green jobs are a myth that only exist with huge taxpayer subsidies. The industrial wind turbines that blight the landscape in Ontario are a prime example of that. Take away the government handout and nothing is left behind.

The high electricity rate policy of the Toronto Liberal Party has led to the exodus of tens of thousands of manufacturing jobs to American border states like Michigan and Ohio. Those American states are paid to take subsidized electricity from Ontario—yes, I know it is hard to believe for anyone listening to this debate who does not live in Ontario.

•(1625)

Ontario used to have the most vibrant automotive manufacturing sector in North America, but not any more thanks to the ideologically driven policies of the Liberal Party and the Green Energy Act. If we want to see what would happen if the opposition members were in power, all we have to do is look to Ontario, and what we see there is what we would get out of them.

[Translation]

Mr. Tarik Brahma (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague opposite to comment on a table that struck me when I read through the budget. I am talking about Table 4.3.1 under “Supporting the Deployment of the Canadian Armed Forces to Combat ISIL”.

My colleague opposite has been a member of the Standing Committee on National Defence for many years, and the Petawawa military base is in her riding. I would like her to comment on this line in the budget that says that in 2015-16, \$360 million will be dedicated to countering the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, but in 2016-17 and up to 2020, there is no money allocated.

I would like the member to explain how it is that the Minister of Finance has determined that at the end of the 2015-16 fiscal year the government will not have to spend a single dollar and will have resolved the problem with Daesh in Iraq and Syria.

[English]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from across the way for raising the issue of the Canadian Armed Forces. We are very proud of the women and men in the military who are fighting not only in Iraq and on exercise in eastern Europe, but also wherever they are deployed.

The member made reference to the funding for the deployment against ISIL. We are only covering the budget for 2015-16, and we have only debated and approved the mission for so long. Should there be a decision by Parliament to extend it, we can look at that particular aspect of funding that mission at that time.

Next to the \$72.3 million going to AECL, certainly the injection into the military was the second-best news for our community. Not only does it mean better equipment for the forces who do the tasks we ask them to do, but it also means improvements to infrastructure when they are in garrison at home. That means construction jobs locally in the civilian force as well. When there is more construction and more jobs for people, it is better for the entire community.

•(1630)

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I was glad to be here because I have seldom heard such an amusing speech. It was totally unconstrained by the facts and was hyperbolic in every sense of the word.

Let me start with the first comment where my colleague spoke eloquently about the finance minister. She started off talking about him in glowing terms, yet when I heard the finance minister on CBC's *The National* being asked about what this budget contained in terms of climate change measures, he said that there were some measures with respect to public transit and that more than 60% of greenhouse gases in this country are produced by transportation.

I have to say that more than 60% is not the right figure. I am wondering whether my hon. colleague might set the record straight and tell the House how much in fact transportation is responsible for greenhouse gases in this country. I think it is important for Canadians to know. It is the basis for some of the measures taken in this budget.

We should speak from the facts. Perhaps my colleague could tell us what percentage of greenhouse gases are created due to transportation.

The Budget

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, when the member's party was in government, emissions just went up. Our government was the first government to actually lower emissions, not only greenhouse gases, but also pollution. In addition to clean water and clean air, we are also cleaning up the soil in different sites.

With respect to transportation, if the hon. member was listening, I was talking about the hydrogen economy. What we are gearing up for there is using hydrogen as a fuel. For those who do not know, the emission from a hydrogen fuel battery is water.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to say that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park.

I am very pleased to take part in the debate on the 2015 budget introduced by the Conservative government. In the short time I have available, I want to raise some issues that I, and the people I represent in Laval, think are the most important in this budget.

First, I must mention the impact that the reduction in Canada Post services is having on the people of Laval, along with the Conservatives' reluctance to invest and tell Canada Post that it should do its work properly and respect the will of Canadians across the country.

From east to west on our island of Laval, we are beginning to see community mailboxes appear; we are also seeing the lack of consultation by Canada Post with respect to the changes it is making.

I have met with a number of constituents and received many phone calls lately. People are writing to me about this issue, as they probably are to many of my colleagues, as they deal with these changes. They are worried and they are angry.

I would have liked this budget to say something about Canada Post, to see the government in some way admit that there are problems and repercussions for our constituents, particularly seniors and people with limited mobility.

I should also mention the lack of consultation about the future being planned for Canada Post. At the moment, the existing plan is unnecessary and badly designed, especially since Canada Post had a recent profit of \$194 million. I just wanted to say this as I began my speech.

Another element I have been studying concerns the whole issue of seniors' pensions and well-being. First, the government has finally listened to the NDP. It looked into the question of obligatory minimum withdrawals from registered retirement income funds. This is something the NDP has been asking for for years, in order to ensure that seniors do not outlive their savings. That is important, as I am sure we all agree. No matter which party we belong to, we all think seniors deserve to live with dignity.

Dealing with the issue of minimum withdrawal requirements from RRIFs is a good thing, and I am pleased that the Conservative government has learned from the NDP's example.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the incredible work being done for the well-being of seniors in Laval. I am thinking of the Association pour aînés résidant à Laval, DIRA Laval and the Table

régionale de concertation des aînés de Laval, who do wonderful work every day to make sure that our seniors receive adequate services, no matter where they live on the island of Laval, and to ensure they have a happy and dignified retirement.

However, in terms of pensions, the Conservatives have not respected the commitments they made to our seniors, and this budget does not bode well for the future.

As we all know, the Conservatives want to increase the retirement eligibility age from 65 to 67. Moreover, they are blocking any attempt to increase CPP and QPP benefits, which is frankly unacceptable when we see the number of seniors across the country living below the poverty line. It is deplorable that the federal government is not looking into an issue that is as fundamental as the well-being and the dignity of our seniors, who built the society in which we are living today.

However, they responded to the NDP's request that the amount that seniors must withdraw from their RRIF be reduced, beginning with a reduction of 29% of the amount withdrawn at age 71 and smaller reductions in later years. We can see that there is some openness here, but very little. I had hoped for more for our seniors from our federal government.

This brings me to another issue. This is an issue that is often raised by the seniors I represent in my riding of Alfred-Pellan. They tell me they really hope that we can leave future generations with a healthy environment, with development that is sustainable and with a greener economy. This comes up all the time in the comments that I have received ever since I began my term.

●(1635)

The environment and climate change have always been issues that are important to seniors, because they worry about the generations to come, about their children and grandchildren. Basically, I am here today to voice their concerns and I have to say, unfortunately, that in the Conservatives' 2015 budget, there is absolutely nothing that tackles the issue of climate change. It is very disappointing because the federal government should play a leadership role on climate change.

On reading the budget, I also noted that they are preventing Canadians from taking part in the review of natural resources projects. This is ridiculous. I do not want to go into too many details. However, at home in Laval, the residents have always taken action to protect their land. We live on an island near Montreal that has a lot of green space and a number of little islands as well, including those in the Des Prairies and Mille-Îles rivers. A number of organizations are watching over these areas. I am thinking, among others, of Sauvons nos trois grandes îles, and the wonderful work they are doing. All the small organizations that are working to protect the parks, such as the Bois de l'Équerre and the Boisé Papineau park, are making sure that we can visit these places and take advantage of the large urban parks that Laval residents hold dear. It is discouraging to note that the Conservatives do not support the people of Laval in their efforts and their initiatives to protect the environment. This is a huge disappointment to me.

The Budget

One good thing the Conservatives have done is to reduce the tax rate on small business, as the NDP had suggested. They are reducing it from 11% to 9%. We suggested doing that over two years, but the Conservatives are proposing to do it over four. Any lowering of the tax rate is a good thing.

I have spent a large part of my term visiting small and medium-sized businesses in my riding. I am thinking, for example, of the Dolce Pane bakery in Saint-François, the small butcher shops in Duvernay and Saint-François and a small restaurant called Démon-Ciel, which opened not long ago and is doing an incredible job in Saint-Vincent-de-Paul. A number of SMEs were waiting to hear about federal government initiatives to help them make ends meet. We all agree that these are the prime job creators across Canada, and we have to support our entrepreneurs who have good ideas and sound ventures. I want to say once again that this rate reduction is a good thing. It is not being done as quickly as the NDP was suggesting, but it is nevertheless a very good initiative.

This time I will quickly move on to another subject, specifically stable funding for organizations that are so important in our communities, because I have to mention what disappoints me about this budget. This affects all organizations. We can talk about it among colleagues. It really is a problem for community organizations. Recurrent funding is not there. They often ask us to help them obtain such funding. Once again, it would have been good evidence of leadership on the part of the federal government to help organizations obtain stable recurrent funding.

A number of organizations do such good work, and I just want to name a few of them: the Centre communautaire Petit Espoir in Saint-François, SBEVA, APARL, the Société d'histoire et de généalogie de l'Île Jésus—with which I developed a good partnership for my 2014 calendar—Development and Peace, which does very good work in all our constituencies, Patrimoine en tête in Saint-Vincent-de-Paul, Sports Laval, the Maison des grands-parents, Jeunes au travail, Mieux-Naître in Laval, the Association des Cartier d'Amérique, youth centres, volunteer centres, Entraide Pont-Viau, and so many more.

Concerning stable funding—and unfortunately I will have to end with this—I would like to talk about infrastructure and transportation, which are priorities for the Laval region. I should mention that the mayor of Laval responded to the federal budget. He expressed disappointment that the necessary investments will be a long time coming. He said:

We recognize that there are good intentions, but the 2015 federal budget falls short when it comes to major and necessary investments, particularly for public transit....Waiting another year before getting access to funding creates a pointless delay that will push back the introduction of efficient public transit and the improvement of systems already in place. For Canada's big cities, the wait time will exacerbate the urgency of the need for action.

I completely agree with him.

I see that my time is up, but there is so much more I would like to say. If my colleagues would like some ideas for questions they could ask me, may I suggest household debt, the middle class, anything to do with wastewater infrastructure, and the HPS. Go ahead; that is what I am here for.

● (1640)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on the member's comments about Canada's seniors.

Obviously what we have witnessed in the government's budget is a continuation of applying tax policy to the detriment of our seniors. A good example of that is that on the one hand we are telling people who are 55-plus years of age that they are going to have to work longer, an additional two years. The government is increasing the age of retirement from 65 to 67 years of age, when we know, in fact, that there is no real crisis situation. There is no justification. We have had independent sources tell us that.

On the other hand, as a direct result, in the future we will have thousands of additional seniors who will be living in poverty because of that policy decision. It is a decision that we in the Liberal Party have committed to reverse.

Other policies we have seen in recent months are the TFSA announcement and income splitting. Once again we are seeing an enrichment of those who are wealthy in Canada at a substantial cost to Canada's middle class. It will affect our seniors more than any other sector.

I wonder if the member might expand on how the government has not done its job protecting the best interests of our seniors.

● (1645)

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Winnipeg North for pointing out the federal government's lack of commitment to our seniors. He mentioned the problem of raising the retirement age from 65 to 67. That is one part of the problem that the federal government has created and that he sees as a challenge for seniors.

In his question, he also mentioned the issue of income splitting. I think he is quite right. It is something the NDP has been working on a great deal. We are fiercely opposed to income splitting as proposed by the Conservative government. It is completely unfair. It will favour the richest families, unfortunately. It will cost Canadian taxpayers billions of dollars. It is really sad to see Canada going in that direction when we should be helping our seniors who live in poverty. There are thousands of them all across Canada. Sadly, in every riding, in all regions, there are still seniors living in poverty.

It is most unfortunate that they have not made a clear commitment to our seniors and have not helped them. Instead, they have decided to raise the contribution limit for tax-free savings accounts, which will, once again, help the richest among us. They have decided to put all their eggs—including income splitting—in one basket and give that big basket of goodies to the rich.

I am truly sad to see the government going off in this direction.

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the question our colleague asked. Once again, here is a budget that unfortunately is an election budget. None of the measures in this budget will apply until the 2015-16 fiscal year. What are they doing in the 2014-15 budget?

The Budget

Can my colleague explain why all these measures take effect after the budget, yet income splitting takes effect this year?

If this is not an election budget, and a hastily devised one, what kind of budget is it?

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Mr. Speaker, there is one thing that is even sadder: it appears that there are big gifts in the Conservatives' 2015 federal budget, but most of these measures and funding plans will only take effect in 2017.

The measures proposed for all sectors of public safety in budget 2015 do pose a problem. To give just one example out of many, in budget 2015 they propose an envelope of around \$290 million—I do not have the exact figures here—but in the upcoming fiscal year less than \$20 million will be set aside for the RCMP, Canada Border Services and CSIS to fight terrorism. That is not much money. We get the impression that there is a lot of money to fight terrorism but the funding is very far away in the Conservative's budget forecast.

That is only one example among many because the same thing occurs in many departments. This affects cities, infrastructure, public transit and homelessness, all across the country. It is a fine smokescreen, but in the end, there is very little substance for our cities and communities.

[*English*]

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to speak in this House representing my constituency of Parkdale—High Park. I am very happy to talk about the priorities of my community, because budgets are about priorities. They are about making decisions and choices.

Canadians were hoping that this budget would reflect their priorities. They wanted to see measures that would help their kids get further ahead. They wanted to see measures that would create good-quality, family-supporting jobs.

Sadly, what we see in this budget, after a decade in power, is how woefully out of touch the government is with the priorities of Canadians. Middle-class families are working longer and harder and are falling further behind, and the current government does not reach out to help them and their families do better.

After so many years of Conservative government, we have seen seven years of deficit budgets and all of the cuts the Conservatives have made to veterans' services, to Coast Guard facilities, to meat and railway inspectors, to the EI process, and to many other services, which puts Canadians' quality of life and safety at risk.

The Conservatives reduced health transfers to the provinces. They did it unilaterally, without consultation, and that will begin in 2017 and will cut health care funding by \$36 billion over a decade. It is shameful. Health care is our most important social program, and the Conservatives are turning their backs on it. They will also force Canadians to work two years longer, to age 67, before they can collect OAS in retirement.

While this budget has plenty of giveaways for Canadians at the top end of the income scale, who are already doing very well, sadly, average Canadians will find very little relief.

While some of the tax cuts and tax benefits for the wealthy are so immediate they would actually be retroactive, when it comes to infrastructure to relieve the gridlock in our major cities and the lack of public transportation investment, sadly, we would have to wait another two years for a very small amount of money, and then it would be tied up in so much red tape it would be difficult to access it. Frankly, it would be too little too late. It is a very sad commentary on the current government.

The financial and ecological costs of the Conservatives' failures in this budget will be paid for years and decades to come. That is a very sad commentary on a government that is supposed to be looking out for the best interests of Canadians. Canadians work very hard every day. They expect their government to have a bit broader vision, to look to the future to ensure that their interests are protected.

Canadians today are working harder than ever and are having trouble making ends meet. Far too many are working two or three part-time jobs trying to cobble together a decent income. Far too many Canadians are in jobs that are part-time, temporary, and lower-paid, and they are not getting the kinds of benefits and the retirement income security of generations earlier.

There are over 200,000 young Canadians who are graduating with record levels of debt and are desperate to find work. In my community, I have talked to families with young children who are paying \$2,000 and \$3,000 each month for child care. It is a disgrace. That is if they are lucky enough to find child care spaces. There are seniors whose retirement income does not keep up with the cost of living.

In the short time allowed to me, I want to address the priorities of Canadians in our community, in Parkdale—High Park, those who have been left out of the current government's agenda, left out, once again, of a budget that is supposed to benefit the country as a whole.

• (1650)

Let me talk about rail safety. Few issues have generated as much concern in my community as the government's slow pace of modernizing our country's rail safety regime. Two years after the tragedy of Lac-Mégantic, and dozens of announcements by the minister, the very same volatile crude oil is rolling through downtown Toronto in the very same type of tank cars that exploded at Lac-Mégantic in Quebec.

The budget contains nothing to ensure a safer rail system, and the cuts to rail safety programs at Transport Canada remain in place. The government has not even reversed those cuts. It is absolutely outrageous after that horrific accident at Lac-Mégantic.

The Budget

The other rail in my community is the new Union-Pearson Express link, which will be operating beginning next month powered by outdated diesel engines, with no confirmed date for electrification. The budget could have made a big difference for transit and the environment by investing in this significant infrastructure project and by helping with electrification, but the money is not there. There is nothing in the budget for rail safety. That is shocking, and it frankly is a disgrace.

Speaking of public transit, the most obvious half-measure in the budget is the proposed public transit fund. First, the funding is delayed two years, and the \$250 million, as I said, is too little too late. To access it, municipalities have to navigate the red tape of risky P3s through PPP Canada.

As we recall, the Auditor General of Ontario revealed in December of last year that the Liberal provincial government had wasted nearly \$8 billion on the extra costs associated with public-private partnerships. That does not have to be the case, I suppose, with every P3, but that has certainly been our experience in Ontario.

With this overwhelming evidence, the Conservatives insist on taking a page from the Ontario Liberal notebook that will put our urgently needed transit funding at risk. Municipalities like Toronto, where gridlock costs the city of Toronto \$6 billion a year, need stable, long-term, direct funding for transit and infrastructure projects. They need predictable funding to allow municipalities to plan ahead for population growth and density changes and to move to greener transit vehicles and improved services for their residents.

On that point, I want to talk about climate change, because somehow the government forgot about climate change in the budget. Unbelievably, the words “climate change” do not appear in this budget. A budget is supposed to be a blueprint for the future about the direction of our country, and sadly, there is nothing to address climate change.

The budget has nothing for roads or bridges, and nothing for upgrading infrastructure to adapt to climate change. In fact, the words “climate change”, as I said, do not appear in the budget. For a Prime Minister who called climate change “the biggest threat to confront the future of humanity today”, and that is a direct quote, this omission in the government's fiscal blueprint is truly stunning and horribly disappointing.

I also want to talk about jobs. The proportion of Canadians with jobs in Canada today is at the lowest point in a decade. There are some measures the NDP proposed that make a lot of sense, things like reducing the small business tax, and we are glad to see that the government has agreed with us and has put this measure in the budget. Although it does not happen as quickly as we would have liked, we are glad to see that the Conservatives are supporting our approach to creating jobs. However, they really missed the boat when it comes to capping credit card fees, and they missed the boat in showing leadership in making Canada an advanced manufacturing power.

The Conservatives have stood by while we have lost over 400,000 jobs over their term in office. Between 2011 and 2014, Canada received 0.2% of all global dollars for the auto industry, so the

government has been missing in action, and we can see the results in the hollowing out of the middle class in Canada.

There is nothing for long-term stable funding for the CBC, NFB, Telefilm Canada, and the Canada media fund to demonstrate the government's commitment to strengthening Canada's place in the world as a creative and innovative country.

• (1655)

There is nothing in the budget for housing to take the pressure off Canadians. We have seen federal funding agreements for housing expire.

I could go on about the priorities in my community. Rather than spending money on a major tax credit that nine out of ten families will not get through income splitting the government could have invested in the priorities of Canadians.

The NDP has a practical plan to make life better for the middle class. That is why I will vote for the NDP amendment to the budget and for a positive and hopeful alternative that will help build a fairer, stronger Canada.

• (1700)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member made reference to the Ontario Liberal government. She brought up one valid point, and that was that there was a responsibility for the federal government to take the necessary actions to address issues, even within provinces. For example, the NDP government in the province of Manitoba today has kids in jails who should not be in jail because of poor NDP government management. There is a role for the federal government to properly finance, for example, education. The government has refused to do that. As a result, it is putting pressure on issues such as child and family services.

There is no doubt that we could be talking about many different issues with regard to the budget. However, the underlying theme of what I and the Liberal Party believes is that there is a high sense of unfairness. We see that in the taxation policy being put on Canadians where we are enriching some of Canada's wealthiest and at the same time taxing Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be in the middle class.

Would the member not agree that the government needs to refocus its taxation policy so Canada's middle class is treated more fairly and given the opportunity to create the jobs that are so critically important to Canada today?

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, it is true that with the abandonment of a national housing strategy under the former Liberal governments and then the continued squeeze on the middle class under the Conservatives, Canada's housing crisis is definitely getting worse. I absolutely agree with that.

The Budget

In my riding of Parkdale—High Park people are facing unaffordable rent increases and decade long wait lists for affordable housing. The affordable housing options that we do have are at risk of being lost entirely as federal funding agreements expire, and an estimated \$1.7 billion will be lost in the next two decades.

I agree these facts seem to be lost on the federal government. The budget contains no new money for affordable housing. It is a crisis already in the city of Toronto and the government is turning its back on the need for affordable housing for people across Canada.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Parkdale—High Park, who defends workers and the middle class, day after day.

In this budget, there is not much support for agriculture. Moreover, the budget provides for a 25% cut to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. We know that one out of every eight jobs is found in the agri-food sector. For instance, in Beauharnois—Salaberry, there are a number of agri-food businesses. Of the 31 municipalities, 29 are rural and live off of agriculture. My riding is also home to the fertile area known as the pantry of Quebec.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks about this. Everyone needs to eat. The Conservatives also voted against my bill, which had almost unanimous support and which was about eating locally and encouraging local farmers. What does the member think about the fact that the Conservatives say they are there to create jobs, while the people who work with raw materials such as food are receiving no support and are even seeing cuts to the budget for their sector?

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, even in big cities like Toronto, we are well aware that agricultural lands have to be protected. It is very important to have safe food everywhere in Canada.

We really want to help our farmers and the agricultural sector. It does not make any sense to cut funding for this sector. I can only say that perhaps the Conservative Party thinks that some of these rural ridings are a sure thing, but the constituents need to take a close look at what the government is doing because it is not in their interest. The government has made decisions that will help the rich, not the people who work in agriculture.

● (1705)

[*English*]

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today in support of economic action plan 2015, which continues our strong focus on jobs, economic growth and prosperity.

Before I go any further, Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time.

I congratulate the Minister of Finance for tabling this balanced budget, a great accomplishment and another promise kept by this government. As the Minister of Finance said on Tuesday, “This budget is written in black ink”, a standard accounting practice of using black ink as opposed to red ink to denote positive values, especially a net income.

Contrary to what the leader of the Liberal Party believes, that “a budget will balance itself”, it takes work. It takes thoughtful, careful

consideration and it takes a great deal of discipline to balance a budget. Ask families in Newmarket—Aurora about budgeting and they will tell us what discipline it takes to ensure that the mortgage is paid, that there is money for gas in the car and that there is money for food on the table.

It is important to note that the budget was balanced not on the backs of others, as has been done by past governments, but through a consistent low-tax, well thought out plan plan that puts Canadians first.

Not only is the budget balanced, but it cuts taxes and increases transfers to the provinces and territories to record levels. I am happy to note that Ontario will receive a record \$20.4 billion this fiscal year, including \$2.4 billion in equalization transfers. This level is 88% higher than under the former government.

I would like to highlight just a few of the items in economic action plan 2015 that are particularly helpful for my riding of Newmarket—Aurora. The first is our help for hard-working families.

Our government, under the leadership of the Prime Minister, believes that those who work hard to earn their dollars deserve to keep them. That is why we have cut taxes over and over again. Canadians at all income levels are benefiting from our 180 tax relief measures, including our cut to the GST of nearly 30%. As a result of these tax cuts, individuals will receive \$37 billion in tax relief and increased benefits this year alone. Low and middle-income Canadians will receive proportionately greater relief. By putting more money in the pockets of people, we are helping them make ends meet, thereby enabling them to spend more on their priorities.

For example, the typical two-earner family of four is saving over \$6,000 on their tax bills this year compared to when we came into office. This is incredible, and I know that thousands of families in my riding of Newmarket—Aurora appreciate this. They appreciate, for example, the tremendous increase in the universal child care benefit.

Under our announced improvements, parents will receive \$1,920 per year per child under the age of 6, and we are delivering a new benefit of \$720 per year for each child aged 6 through 17. These are funds that parents can choose to decide for themselves the best way to spend on their family.

We have also introduced the family tax cut, allowing up to \$50,000 of taxable income to be transferred to a spouse in a lower income bracket. This is important because it makes the tax system more fair. We recognize that two families with the same income can pay vastly different amounts of tax, and this new federal tax credit will help fix this imbalance.

For families who pay for child care services, we have increased the child care expense deduction dollar limit by \$1,000.

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●(1710)

Finally, we are enhancing the child's fitness tax credit. We have doubled the amount parents can claim for enrolling their children in sports activities to \$1,000, and as of the 2015 tax year, the credit is refundable, increasing the benefits to low-income families.

Let me draw attention to our strong support for seniors. Since coming into office, the financial security and well-being of Canada's seniors has been a priority for our government. In all, we are providing almost \$2.8 billion in annual tax relief to seniors and pensioners through landmark tax saving initiatives like pension income splitting. We are building on this support through our economic action plan in a number of ways.

First, we are doubling the annual contribution of the tax-free savings account to \$10,000. We heard yesterday from CARP on how pleased its members were with this initiative.

Second, we are reducing the minimum withdrawal requirements for registered retirement income funds. By permitting more capital preservation, we are helping to reduce the risk of one outliving their savings.

Third, we are supporting seniors and persons with disabilities by introducing the home accessibility tax credit. This is a new 15% non-refundable income tax credit that would apply on up to \$10,000 of eligible home renovation expenditures per year. This will provide up to \$1,500 in tax relief for individuals to renovate their home to allow seniors or someone who is eligible for the disability tax credit to maintain their mobility and their independence.

On a personal note, having had to renovate my home to accommodate a wheelchair-bound parent, I know that the costs associated with this are huge and this will be an enormous help to people who want to stay in their own homes.

We are also supporting families caring for gravely ill seniors or other family members by extending employment insurance compassionate care benefits.

Finally, we are providing \$42 million to help establish the Canadian centre for aging and brain health innovation. Research on aging and dementia can lead to better diagnostic tools and treatments, thereby increasing the quality of life for aging adults.

Again, as a person who lived through 19 years of caring for a parent who had a catastrophic brain injury from a motor vehicle accident, I know the kind of impact that has on family and caregivers. I know the work being done through organizations like the Baycrest Centre for Geriatric Care in Toronto, an organization that is doing an enormous amount of research into brain aging and the effects of acquired brain injury. This is an organization that will help to diagnose the kinds of things we need to do to assist people with dementia as they go into their elder years.

All of these initiatives that I have just spoken about are ones that will be welcomed by seniors who live in my riding of Newmarket—Aurora.

Let me turn just for a moment to another important aspect of the budget, and that is regarding small businesses. We know that small businesses are the backbone of the economy, both in Newmarket—

Aurora and across our country. Our government believes that entrepreneurs should focus on growing their businesses and creating jobs, not dealing with the unnecessary red tape of choking on high taxes.

Economic action plan 2015 continues our strong support for these job creators by reducing the small business tax rate to 9% by 2019, improving access to financing through the Canada small business financing program and expanding the services offered through the Business Development Bank of Canada and Export Development Canada.

My time is about to finish, but I believe this budget will help Canadians from coast to coast. It will help seniors, families and people across the country in the middle class. Most important, it will help our businesses grow jobs and opportunity for our young people. I look forward to the questions from my colleagues and I am grateful for the opportunity to speak.

●(1715)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Order. It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith all questions necessary to dispose of the amendment to the amendment now before the House.

[*English*]

The question is on the subamendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the subamendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion, the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Monday, April 20, 2015, the division stands deferred until Monday, April 27, 2015, at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment.

Mr. David Sweet: Mr. Speaker, I believe that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 5:30 p.m.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

CANADIAN AIR TRANSPORT SECURITY AUTHORITY

The House resumed from March 9 consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to support this motion, which, in my opinion, fits in well with our government's commitment and priority to promote economic development and job creation across Canada in a fiscally responsible manner.

The motion also fits in with our government's risk-based approach to air security, whereby funding is targeted to areas of highest risk.

[*English*]

I greatly appreciate having the opportunity to speak about the work that the government is already doing on this issue and what we intend to do in the future to help support the initiatives of these airports.

• (1720)

[*Translation*]

Let me say at the outset that job creation and ensuring strong economic growth are this government's top priority. We firmly believe that the air industry still represents the fundamental pillar of our economic success.

Indeed, that industry provides goods, services and opportunities for Canadians all across the country, from the largest urban centres to the smallest communities. It contributes to our quality of life, our economy and our relationships with others and with the rest of the world.

Canada's vast geographic size has given rise to one of the largest civilian air transport networks in the world, with over 200 airports operating commercial flights.

[*English*]

Aviation helps distribute Canadian goods and helps us to develop new markets for our industries. It also allows people from outside to discover the beauty of this great land of ours. One hundred million passengers benefit from commercial services in this country on an annual basis. Aviation is truly an economic enabler for Canada. It is very understandable, therefore, that smaller airports are exploring ways of maximizing the economic benefits they get from being part of our aviation network.

Our national civil aviation security program is also one of the strongest in the world and we are committed to maintaining a high level of safety and security for the travelling public.

[*Translation*]

Of the 200 commercial airports in Canada, 89 are regulated and therefore required to offer mandatory passenger and baggage screening services. These 89 airports deal with approximately 99% of all air passengers in Canada.

The list of regulated airports required to offer mandatory screening services was developed in 2002 in the wake of the September 11 attacks and shows the airports where screening was already carried out before the establishment of the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority. From the point of view of risk-based security, it is not necessary that CATSA, the authority responsible for monitoring transportation security in Canada, ensure a mandatory

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presence in Canada's 200 airports; otherwise, the cost of ensuring its presence would be prohibitive.

[*English*]

As we know, CATSA is the only body authorized to carry out security screening at Canadian airports. While CATSA contracts with service providers to carry out this function, it is CATSA that ensures a consistent screening process from coast to coast through the training, certification and oversight of all screening personnel. This is why we ask that the proposed motion be amended, so it is clear that only CATSA is authorized to provide screening services.

Many smaller airports believe that the sole obstacle to establishing new commercial services out their airports is the absence of passenger screening. If these routes are economically viable for the air carriers, then they may in fact be right as Canada's major airports require that passengers be screened before they can transfer to other flights within their airports. Passengers departing from the smaller airports must, therefore, be screened at the larger airports before they can continue their trips.

We strongly believe that security is and should remain the key consideration when allocating government-funded resources to prevent or mitigate threats to the transportation system. Nevertheless, we also believe our aviation security system must support, rather than hinder, economic opportunities.

[*Translation*]

We are constantly striving to achieve our security objectives, while supporting competitiveness in the aviation sector and minimizing the impact of this support on Canadian taxpayers and on the allocation of scarce security resources. This is why the changes made to the list of airports designated to receive government-funded security screening services are founded on risk-based principles.

[*English*]

Our understanding is that none of the airports interested in receiving screening services currently meet the risk threshold that would warrant mandatory screening. Nonetheless, we believe it is important that the smaller airports have the opportunity to explore all avenues for economic growth, including those that may come with the establishment of new commercial routes.

As we have heard, last June the Minister of Transport sent a letter to the airports that had expressed an interest in obtaining screening services to inform them that departmental officials would be exploring and assessing various mechanisms that would allow them to obtain these services on a cost-recovery basis. Since then, Transport Canada officials have been in contact with the interested airports to confirm their willingness to proceed down this path and to gather additional information on their anticipated commercial operations. Several airports have confirmed their desire to move forward.

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Transport Canada has also begun to receive projections and plans that will help determine the level of service and equipment these airports would require. The department is continuing to work with both the interested airports and CATSA to assess the cost of having security screening at these airports. Much of this will depend on the number of flights they expect to attract, as well as other factors, such as passenger load and the frequency and destinations of flights.

● (1725)

[Translation]

Transport Canada will work closely with each individual airport so that screening costs and requirements are clearly understood and to ensure that the potential advantages of establishing screening services exceed the cost of those services.

Despite the progress that has been made, there are a variety of legal and financial challenges relating to this initiative that need to be addressed.

[English]

We are currently reviewing the legislative and regulatory changes that would best support this initiative. All parties recognize that these changes would take a certain amount of time. Beyond this, we also want to ensure that any solution takes a long-term view of how CATSA operates so that it is able to respond to this and other industry needs as they arise in the future.

Transport Canada will be working closely with our industry partners to make available all the necessary tools to provide a safe, secure and efficient transportation system to all Canadians.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise to speak to what I believe is an important motion. When we take a look at all regions of our country, there is a desire from communities, both large and small, as to how they can best develop their communities.

From the previous speaker, we heard a lot about the economics. I, too, would like to contribute to the economic side of things with respect to airports but, also, at the very beginning, to make some brief comments with respect to the importance of passengers, the social component to an airport and the difference that it makes.

There are many communities that have a desire to, ultimately, provide passenger travel through the air. Many of these communities are relatively small but still feel that they have the opportunity to grow into the future. By enabling an expansion of some of these smaller airports, the hope is that their airport will grow and, ultimately, be able to provide a better service to the constituents of that catchment area, if I can put it that way. Whether it is smaller communities scattered throughout the country or larger municipalities, airports really do matter; they matter a great deal to our communities. I like to think that governments, at all different levels, whether federal, municipal, or provincial, recognize the true value of an airport facility, and it does go beyond the economics.

Having said that, I do want to spend some time talking about the security issue and then go on to the economics.

We all, especially inside this chamber, travel a great deal. We have had the good fortune of being able to travel, for the most part, by air, which means that we will go through the CATSA and the screening

that passengers are obligated to. It does not matter who one is, one is obligated to go through a screening process. That is just the reality of today's world. I suspect, as we move forward, there will be new technologies brought on. This is where Transport Canada and organizations like CATSA play a very important role because the security factor is ever so important when we talk about airport development. It does not take much to cause a disruption, and a disruption can have a very long, permanent impact upon a community, let alone upon the aviation industry as a whole.

It is important that we can keep up on the technology that is being used out there. People will try to bring things they should not be bringing across the security lines. I am sure many of us have seen ample examples of things that have been pulled out of luggage; for example, a sharp object, a questionable product or even some product of an illegal nature. It is an absolute necessity that we have this process in place in order to protect the long-term and short-term integrity of our airports.

As many members will know, I have had the good fortune of being a parliamentarian for a number of years. I will focus some attention on my own province of Manitoba and the time of Premier Gary Filmon. I can recall during the 1990s they came up with the Winport plan, which was to try to take Winnipeg's geographical location, being the centre of North America, and use it as a port where we could use our airport as a way to facilitate economic growth.

● (1730)

I must say that the hype was considerable back then. The idea was wonderful. Imagine. We are talking about back in the 1990s of being able to bring fresh pork in from our rural communities and load it onto a 747 and then fly it over to Asia as a potential market for fresh, unfrozen pork. It was an idea being talked about because of an experience that was taking place in Atlantic Canada with live lobster.

These are the types of things that generate a great deal of enthusiasm in our communities, when we start talking about potential. Winport did not quite get off the ground, but a number of years later, the concept behind CentrePort was developed. That has gotten off the ground. It is located at the Winnipeg international airport. There is a sense that our airport is going to be a driving force in the future growth not only of the city of Winnipeg but also of the province.

I say that with a great sense of pride. We have developed a new airport. The old terminal that was built a number of decades ago has been replaced with a modern terminal, with departures on the upper level and arrivals on the lower level. The expectation is that we are going to have a growing market as a direct result of the modernization of our airport facility and also on the premises in terms of new hotels that have been developed. Even in the immediate area, we have seen growth in the industrial area. We have seen Canada Way being brought through CentrePort. The potential is truly amazing.

I am very proud of what is taking place in the city of Winnipeg today, and it is being driven by the community. What government can do is enable and support, and the way it can add that support is through infrastructure spending. I will reserve my criticism of the government on that file for now, but there are things the government can do. It is most important that the driving force come from within the community, and we have seen that.

When we take a look at the benefits to the city of Winnipeg, one can understand why communities like Brandon, Portage la Prairie and others, even some communities that are thinking about it that might not have thought about it in the past, are thinking about how they could bring in, in some cases, an airport or expand what they currently have.

There are 200-plus airports scattered across Canada of all different sizes, from the small community airports to Toronto international airport and everything in between. No matter where we go in Canada, we will find that there is a big push to move an airport forward, no matter its size. Even the Toronto international airport is looking at ways to enhance the community by developing the airport.

Whether it is in that community, whether it is in Thompson or Winnipeg, Manitoba, or whether it is any other airport, no matter what coast they might be in close proximity to, that is the reality. A major part of that reality is dealing with the issue of security and the important roles Transport Canada and organizations like CATSA have to play in that, in keeping up on technology and recognizing that there are many airports hoping to be able to tap into that technology to advance their cause, if I could put it that way.

If they can tap into that, and it is a fairly expensive matter, it does allow that facility the opportunity to go in a direction that would be of great benefit to the community in which the facility is actually located.

• (1735)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with conviction and determination to move forward with the matter of security in non-designated airports that I rise to speak today. This motion is designed to provide a solution for the many airports that currently wish to obtain CATSA security checks. The proposed mechanism would be useful for all airports in Canada that are not designated.

I would like to draw the attention of the House to a few figures. In 2004, only two airports received authorization. Since 2004, about 10 airports have had their application for designation denied by Transport Canada. The refusals were not even explained. The government decides to refuse to add airports, without even saying why. Like all the decisions this government makes, these refusals make no sense and once again reflect the incompetence of its administration.

It is nevertheless possible for everyone to understand the opportunity that designated airports represent for our communities. Airports are important economic vectors for our communities. We have the responsibility to support them.

Private Members' Business

At a time when economic growth is slowing and vulnerability is on the rise, the driving force of an airport leads to direct job creation and stimulates trade and tourism. The economic spinoffs for local businesses and enterprises are sure to be beneficial.

We are well aware that the Conservatives have neglected the development of our communities, and scarcely care about our enterprises. Look at the 2015 budget. Since 2006, the Conservative government has cut taxes on big corporations by over 25%, reducing their tax rate from 22% to 15%. Meanwhile, the government reduced taxes on small business from 11% to 9%, at a rate of 0.5% a year, but only as of 2016. In addition to not caring about small business, the government thumbs its nose at it. The NDP wants practical and effective measures. Promises that will not take effect until 2016 have no place in the 2015 budget.

I do not know what members on the other side do, but I have met with my constituents, spoken to them and listened to them. They have told me that they are no longer getting by. Canadians are tired of the government not listening to them. They want results now.

The Conservatives are out of touch with the daily reality of Canadians. Their only concern is the good health of big corporations and big airports, which obviously contribute more to our economy. Nevertheless, local and regional airports constitute a heritage that is just as important, and they also contribute to the enhancement and development of our regions.

I also learned today that Pascan, a carrier based in Saint-Hubert, will be cutting 240 of its existing 340 jobs. Without government support, regional air transport is no longer cost effective, which leads to layoffs like these. We are witnessing a desertification of our provinces. Travellers will no longer be able to make return journeys between our cities on the same day.

• (1740)

That is an additional problem affecting our communities.

I would like to come back to the issue of the desertification of our regions. My constituents write to me every day to ask for improvements in public transit. There is a real lack of infrastructure, and getting from Saint-Bruno to Saint-Hubert is like an obstacle course for the average citizen. However, what is the Conservative government's answer to these requests? It comes up with measures that have no real scope, and with provisions that are so complicated that they prevent the funding from reaching the municipalities. Investing in infrastructure is vital for our local economy. If the government does not understand that, it should let us take over.

In conclusion, I will say that the NDP is proud of this motion, and it supports the initiatives by these airports that would make it possible to improve security and support the regional economy, and thus the economy of the whole country.

In the globalized world we live in today, increased personal mobility is indispensable. The need for rapid travel is a real one.

Private Members' Business

The government cannot restrict people's freedom of movement and the economic development of airports without offering valid reasons. That is why we will continue to defend the application of this motion so that the Conservative government commits to supporting the regions and we can finally move from words to actions.

[English]

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the bill. I do not know if the previous speaker, my colleague from the NDP, knows that we are supporting the motion with amendment, so I do not understand why she would so vehemently criticize the government when the folks on this side of the House have the intention of supporting the private member's bill. Sometimes members should engage in the process that happens in this House whereby we do try to work together to come up with solutions. I see the nod of the head of my good friend from the NDP, the critic at the heritage committee. Oftentimes, while we may disagree, we do understand when we need to work together. Therefore, I am very much disappointed by the language of the previous speaker in terms of its tone.

I am pleased to rise in the House to support Motion No. 553, which advocates the development of a mechanism that would allow small airports to receive security screening services from the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority, CATSA.

The Government of Canada supports this motion as it highlights an issue of which it is well aware, and upon which it has been and will be working for a number of years, that is, to promote a safe and economically sustainable aviation industry. Indeed, this motion seeks to give small non-designated airports all the necessary tools to draw commercial flights to their airports and connect their passengers to larger airports. Over the past several years a number of small airports have expressed their belief that the establishment of screening services will help them attract more airlines, encourage commercial growth and improve their economic development opportunities in general.

I want to add that the Niagara regional airport from the region of Niagara, part of the area which I represent, is certainly interested and has advanced this thought through the commission in a strong way. It is working with the Ministry of Transportation at this very time to become one of those small airports that could potentially receive the services of CATSA.

From an economic development perspective, having a link to the main air transportation network can have an important impact on a local economy. It brings visitors and potential investors closer and makes the local attractions and resources more accessible. The potential economic spinoffs can be significant in terms of economic investment and growth. Travel by air also provides an important service to local residents by better connecting them to the rest of Canada. Our government certainly supports those objectives.

While security is the key consideration when the time comes to allocate resources for the protection of our transportation system, other factors should also be taken into consideration to ensure that our aviation security system supports, rather than hinders, economic opportunities for smaller communities.

Canada has one of the largest and strongest civil aviation systems in the world, with over 200 commercial airports and millions of passengers travelling through or within the country daily. It would make little sense to require government-mandated security screening at all of these airports, as it would be an inefficient and ineffective use of security dollars both from a security and a financial perspective. Instead, security screening in Canada is limited to 89 airports currently designated for mandatory screening. The security designation of those airports was first established following the tragic events of September 11, 2001. It included Canada's 29 largest airports, as well as 60 smaller airports that were already screening at that time, which was being conducted either by the air carriers or the airport operators themselves. Together, these airports represent almost 99% of all air passengers in Canada.

The screening provided at these airports is currently government-funded and offset through the passenger-paid air travellers security charge. Several small Canadian airports, including my own, the Niagara District Airport, have recently written to Transport Canada asking that the department explore the possibility of providing screening services at its facilities, not for security reasons necessarily but rather to promote commercial growth and economic development.

As I mentioned earlier, the primary rationale for passenger and baggage screening is risk. Accordingly, any changes to the current list of designated airports would have to be assessed against the risk threshold that would warrant mandatory screening. Currently, none of the airports requesting screening services from CATSA meet that threshold. My colleague, the Minister of Transport, advised these airports that if screening was to be provided at non-designated airports where screening is not required for security purposes, an alternative source of funding would need to be identified.

• (1745)

In response, a number of airports, including the Niagara District Airport, indicated that they would consider paying for the screening themselves, depending on the economic viability of assuming these costs. Transport Canada is currently holding discussions with all of these airports to present them with as much information as possible and to better understand their specific needs.

Nevertheless, Canada's high security standards must be upheld. Therefore, the security screening services requested by these smaller airports, which will allow their passengers to connect seamlessly to larger airports, will need to be delivered by the officially designated CATSA. In addition, the annual operating costs for screening at small airports will depend on a number of factors, such as the number and frequency of flights, passenger volumes, size of planes, and a number of other factors. Once a solution is in place, the decision as to whether it is financially viable will ultimately rest with each individual airport.

Efforts to increase air service from small airports must take into account both market realities and airline objectives. Cities and regions want easy access and price competitive options for inbound visitors as well as for outbound residents. Airlines will need to determine for themselves what routes are worth pursuing.

Private Members' Business

It is also important that the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority remains the sole screening authority for delivering screening services at Canadian airports. Having a single, centralized organization responsible for screening services allows for greater consistency in meeting security requirements and in managing security incidents. As such, we have asked that the original version of the motion be amended, as it could incorrectly imply that an entity other than the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority could carry out screening services.

In short, small airports' requests for CATSA screening reflects a desire to further economic and commercial growth. The Government of Canada shares these objectives and will do what it can to accommodate these requests. The government continues to be open to exploring mechanisms that will assist in finding ways to drive economic development at smaller airports and in those communities should they choose to invest in these services. I must be clear. "Should they choose to invest in these services" means that those individual airport commissions or boards are going to take on responsibility for the cost. Nonetheless, developing such a mechanism will take a bit of time, as there are still legal and financial challenges to be addressed.

Our aim going forward will be to ensure that the aviation security system continues to be effective, efficient, and responsive to the rapidly evolving industry. It is about getting it right for both air travellers and taxpayers. As such, the Government of Canada will continue its efforts to meet the needs of the small airports, and it is grateful to the hon. member for Sherbrooke for his support on this issue.

I know that there are a number of members of Parliament on this side of the House who have smaller airports in their regions, their ridings, and their districts. I am one of them. On this side of the House, we have worked closely with the Minister of Transport to try to effectively move forward on the security screening that would allow the type of economic development, travel, and options that present smaller airports with the option to land people in their regions, at their airports, to use the great areas they will travel to. This would also allow those who live in those communities to access larger communities and larger airports, both within Canada and potentially outside of Canada.

While original intent of a piece of legislation was to drive at the issue of safety and security at airports, it left out some of the smaller airports across our country. It could be very viable in terms of delivering charter or larger airlines into their regions. The motion speaks to that issue and actually enhances it and moves us forward.

In closing, I would like to comment that the Minister of Transport has been extremely open to looking at these options. I know that she understands the direction and intent of this bill and certainly supports it.

• (1750)

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to join in the discussion. Given that it is about flying, airports and planes, I am particularly delighted, because I like that stuff. I do not mind sharing that when I was a young boy, my goal was to be a commercial airline pilot. It is hard to feel like I failed, given that I got to have a seat in the House

of Commons, but nonetheless, every time I get on a plane I glance over at the pilot and think that yes, that is the place to be.

First of all, I am in support of the motion. While I have the floor may I just say how impressed I have been with the work that the member for Sherbrooke has done on this and every other file.

I mentioned to him in the past how unusual it must be to be walking around here and he is already a historical figure and he is not yet 20. That is not easy. It is tough to be here. It is tough to be here when one is young and have that designation, yet I think the member for Sherbrooke has done an outstanding job. I have no doubt that he is going to be here for a very long time and will make major contributions to our country, as he is doing today with his private member's motion. He is doing the primary work of a member of Parliament, which is to take care of home base, take care of the riding. That is why his motion is here, and it is a good thing.

I realize the motion is not controversial at all and everybody is supporting it. I guess there will not be the usual heckling, which I enjoy listening to and responding to, so it will be a different kind of speech today. I heard my leader at the procedure and House affairs committee comment, "If you could heckle just a little louder so I could hear, I would gladly engage". It does not have to be bad, but it is more fun that way, I find.

Let me say that the importance of local airports really cannot be overstated. The Hamilton airport when I was a kid was called the Mount Hope airport. Now it is formally the John C. Munro Hamilton International Airport. We are very fortunate that it is an international airport. It has everything one needs, except flights from Hamilton to Ottawa, which would be nice. We had these flights, but the airlines keep claiming that there are not enough passengers. However, and I digress a bit, the strange thing is that every time I phoned to book flights, I was always told they were already booked. I had to call two weeks ahead to get a seat, and yet these airlines would inevitably fold up and say that they just did not have the clientele.

Other than that, it is a great airport. It is beautiful with incredibly reasonable prices all around. Cargo is the area that is sustaining our international airport. It is a very viable entity that continues to grow. The airport is an absolute plus in our community.

One of the things I love about my hometown of Hamilton is that given we have an international airport, we also have a world-class port and a world-class train system throughout, because Hamilton has been around so long that it was part of the original planning. We have great infrastructure. Our highway infrastructure is excellent. We have more farmland than we do anything else. Then we have our beautiful city itself, our beautiful downtown. Quite frankly, if this were Europe, Hamilton could easily be a stand-alone country.

I am always enthusiastic in talking about all that my hometown has to offer, mostly because it surprises people. We know the reputation; we get it, but the fact remains that virtually anybody who comes to Hamilton, even if they come with their eyes rolling saying it was not their first choice, in a very short period of time, they find out it is a community to love, to get engaged in. They end up staying, and they are glad they stayed.

Private Members' Business

We are talking about airports, and I see my colleague from Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale feels the same kind of pride that I do in our airport. I am not sure if the member represents the airport right now, maybe a little bit of it, but there are going to be some changes. I know how much pride he has in it.

• (1755)

I realize we are not into partisan debate as usual, but I do have a couple of questions.

If it is such a great idea and the Conservatives are all for it, praising our member for Sherbrooke, as they should, why did it take an opposition member's motion to force the government to do something that they think is a great idea and would help?

The Conservatives are all about economic activity, going on and on about it. To them, that is more important than anything. Therefore, I would think, given the importance we all see and are speaking of tonight of airports in our area having the proper designation so they can be used to their maximum, this should have been a priority. For the life of me, I do not understand why the hometown of the member for Sherbrooke was denied.

I was glad the member for St. Catharines spoke first to give more background to it. I listened carefully, but I did not hear anything that made common sense as to why, if the Conservatives thought this was a good idea and they would support the motion of the member for Sherbrooke, they said no to the city of Sherbrooke in the first place. Why are we going through all this? Why is the government not out in front? It is not like this is some obscure little piece of our country. It is airports.

Given the size of Canada, it is an important part of the day-to-day lives of Canadians, part of our economy and part of our hometowns. It is all those things, so why on earth did it take a member, whose request from his home community was denied, to bring it back here and turn it into a motion? Why did all that have to happen? That is the part I do not get. If it is such a great idea and the Conservatives are so supportive, one would think one of their backbenchers would have grabbed onto this. One could argue that maybe they were asleep at the switch, but at the ministerial level they would have received the request and they would have evaluated it. Now they are all gung-ho for it.

Not only that, here is the thing about the proposal that came in from the city of Sherbrooke. As I understand it, the city offered to pay, so there was no cost to the federal government. I have been in government and the first thing that usually stops it is looking at the price tag, and the government has to come to grips with that one way or another. That is not an issue here because the city was quite willing to pay all the costs.

What else could it be? Then we realize that the airport infrastructure is owned by the city. Again, the city wants to do something with its airport to help with its local economic activity and all the benefits that come from that. The city owns it all, the whole kit and caboodle. It is prepared to pay the costs and the government says no. Then the hon. member did what he should do. He came back here and brought in a motion, put it on the floor of the House of Commons and the Conservatives said yes in that case. How

did we get here? There is a piece of this missing and it just does not make a lot of sense.

I know the member for St. Catharines and the Niagara District Airport really want this. Even if our desire on our side is not enough to cause the government to do this right away, I would hope and think the Conservatives would want to do it for their own member and for their own re-election.

The last point I would leave is this. Having gone all the way around on this issue only to come right back to where the city of Sherbrooke wanted the government to be in the first place, which is that of supporting the city, the question now becomes this. Will the bill pass before the election and, most important, will the government implement the direction that is contained in the motion? That will be the test.

The first test of whether the Conservatives will support it, we seem to have passed, although it was a bit of a crazy way to get to this point. The test that is left is whether the Conservatives are prepared to ensure this bill not only passes, but that the direction it gives is followed and it is implemented.

It will be interesting, not just for the benefit of my colleague, the member for Sherbrooke. I would hope the member for St. Catharines would put whatever political effort he can into ensuring the bill is passed and implemented to benefit Niagara, Sherbrooke and every other community that needs this.

• (1800)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): As there are no more questions or comments, the hon. member for Sherbrooke has a five-minute right of reply.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank all my colleagues who spoke and expressed their views on this issue in the first hour of debate, which took place on March 9 of this year. I would like to mention the participation of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport and of the hon. members for Ottawa-SudCompton—Stanstead in my area, Etobicoke-Centre and Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine. All of them spoke to motion M-553. I also thank all those who have spoken today, beginning with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, the hon. members for Winnipeg North and for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the hon. member for Hamilton-Centre. I wanted first to thank all those who have taken part in this debate and have expressed their views on this issue and, on the government side, have tried to explain the reasons why we have reached this point today. I am very proud to sponsor this motion, which will be put to a vote next week, as the procedure requires.

I thank the government for its contribution, the amendment it proposed and its co-operation throughout this debate. It proposed some rather technical changes to the motion, which will, I hope, have the support of most members of the House. I have had good indications from all the members who have spoken and who said they would support it. I am very happy. I hope that all those who have not had a chance to speak to this motion will nevertheless support it after hearing the debate and what was said during the two hours we spent discussing it.

Private Members' Business

I want to take up the questions by my colleague from Hamilton-Centre concerning the reason why we have reached this point today. I would actually have preferred not to have to move such a motion to compel the government to act in this matter. These concerns date from even before those affecting the Sherbrooke airport. They date from 2009 and the airport in Trois-Rivières, one of the airports that was requesting designation. This matter has been raised for a long time by the various airports that are unfortunately not designated under the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority Act. I too wonder why we have reached this point, given that the applications were made so long ago and that the government talked about a mechanism that would allow non-designated airports to have security screening. To my knowledge, the government had proposed this on paper in 2012, at least. So why has this matter been dragging on since 2012? Why did the government not act and present this mechanism sooner?

Nonetheless, we are talking about it today. We are talking about adopting Motion No. 553, which calls on the government to implement this mechanism as soon as possible. It is important to note that the motion specifies "as soon as possible". I wanted to be sure to emphasize that in my right of reply. I do not want to predict the result of the vote before it is held, but given the support most members have expressed, I get the impression that my motion has a good chance of being adopted. If that is the case, I hope that the government will truly take action as soon as possible because there is not a lot of time left before we all leave for the summer. There is not much chance that we will come back before the next Parliament either. I hope the government will truly take action as soon as possible and that a solution will be presented to the House as soon as possible once the motion is adopted.

Today, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs indicated that the government was working on the issue and that the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority had also held meetings with the various airports involved. Discussions are being held and steps are being taken. People are talking. I am pleased to hear that and I am glad that the government is finally taking this situation seriously after so many years. This matter should have been resolved a long time ago.

•(1805)

Of course, an NDP government would have settled this matter long ago. However, since that is not the case, we are doing our best, and we hope that this matter will be settled as soon as possible for

the good of my community, Sherbrooke, and for the Eastern Townships, because this is critical to Sherbrooke's development.

I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting Motion No. 553, which will provide a meaningful solution to various airports in need of a mechanism like this, including the Sherbrooke airport.

•(1810)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Amendment agreed to)

[*English*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, April 29, 2015, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

[*English*]

It being 6:15 p.m. this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:15 p.m.)

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