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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, May 14, 2015

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, May 14, 2015

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)
[English]

INFORMATION COMMISSIONER OF CANADA

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table, pursuant to subsection 39(1) of the Access to Information Act, a special report of the Information Commissioner entitled “Investigation into an access to information request for the Long-gun Registry”.

[Translation]

This report is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

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SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (A), 2015-2016

A message from His Excellency the Governor General transmitting supplementary estimates (A) for the financial year ending March 31, 2016, was presented by the President of the Treasury Board and read by the Speaker to the House.

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[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Minister of Labour and Minister of Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaty entitled “Convention concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment” done at Geneva on 26 June, 1973. An explanatory memorandum is included with the treaty.

* * *

• (1005)

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker,

pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to five petitions.

* * *

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women in relation to its study on the main estimates, 2015-16.

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 12th report of the Standing Committee on National Defence in relation to the main estimates 2015-2016.

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present, in both official languages, the 21st report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights in relation to the study of the main estimates for 2015-2016. We have met 76 times in this session. It is a very hard working committee.

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, entitled “Main Estimates 2015-16: Vote 1 under Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages”.

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties and I believe if you seek it you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, in the opinion of the House, and in advance of the twentieth anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide of 11 July 2015, Parliament should (a) reaffirm support for former Motion M-416 passed in the House of Commons on 19 October 2010, which recognized July 11 annually as Srebrenica Remembrance Day in Canada, and (b) include the Srebrenica genocide, and Srebrenica Remembrance Day, as part of “Genocide Remembrance, Condemnation and Awareness Month” every April going forth as supported by the House in Motion M-587 passed by Parliament 24 April 2015.

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

Routine Proceedings

Some hon. members: Agreed.

TAXATION

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Garry Breitzkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition today that sadly informs the House that Rayel MacDonald was tragically killed by a drunk driver who chose to drive while impaired. Rayel's family is devastated.

Families for Justice is a group of Canadians who have had a loved one killed by an impaired driver. They believe that Canada's impaired driving laws are much too lenient. They want the crime to be called what it is: vehicular homicide. It is the number one cause of criminal death in Canada, where 1,200 Canadians are killed every year by drunk drivers. Families for Justice are calling for mandatory sentences for vehicular homicide and for this Parliament to support Bill C-652, Cassandra's law.

SENIORS

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of more than 100 constituents calling upon the House to pass Motion No. 529, which calls upon the government to work with the provinces, territories, municipalities, and seniors organizations to develop a national strategy on aging. This would deal with secure public health care, reducing out-of-pocket health expenses, establishing appropriate policies for seniors housing and income security, and basically ensuring that seniors issues are addressed by this government, as well as creating a seniors advocate to monitor these changes. I am pleased to submit this petition on behalf of my constituents.

• (1010)

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I stand to present several petitions with hundreds of signatures from people in and around Guelph who feel that multinational seed companies are replacing the immense diversity of farmer seeds with industrial varieties through an increasing number of patented seeds, and that UPOV 91 will deter or outlaw the saving and exchanging of seeds between farmers, all of which affects both Canadian farmers and peasant farmers in third-world countries. The petitioners ask Canada to adopt policies, internationally and here at home in Canada, that support small farmers, especially women, and ensure the exchange and preservation of seeds.

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Fredericton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of my constituents, which calls upon the government to both adopt international aid policies that support small family farmers and ensure that Canadian policies and programs are developed in consultation with small family farmers.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions. The first is from Canadians who are telling us very clearly that feminine hygiene products are essential to the lives of Canadian women and that paying the GST on these products contributes to a financial burden on Canadian households. Therefore, they request that the Government of Canada withdraw the GST from feminine hygiene products.

CANADA POST

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from constituents who are very concerned about the plans to end door-to-door mail delivery. The petitioners believe, rightly so, that this is an important service, particularly for seniors and persons living with disabilities, that the loss of 8,000 well-paying jobs is absolutely unacceptable, and that the loss of this service, which should absolutely be supported by this House, is a travesty. The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to stop the devastating cuts to our postal service and to end this notion that somehow we should do without our Canadian postal service.

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Hon. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is great to see our hon. colleague from Fredericton back in the House.

I rise to table a petition with respect to the sad case of 19-year-old Kendra Cole, who was tragically killed by a drunk driver who chose to drive while impaired. Kendra's family is devastated. As we heard from the petition of one of the previous members, there is an organization called Families for Justice, which is a group of Canadians who have had a loved one killed by an impaired driver.

A lot of people may not be aware that research shows that more than 1,200 Canadians are killed every year by drunk drivers. Families for Justice is calling for mandatory sentencing for vehicular homicide and for this Parliament to support Bill C-652, Cassandra's law.

PENSIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I am tabling a petition signed by many constituents of Winnipeg North who are very upset with the Prime Minister's decision to increase the age of retirement from 65 to 67.

*Government Orders***QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN 2015 ACT, NO. 1

BILL C-59—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC) moved:

That, in relation to Bill C-59, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 21, 2015 and other measures, not more than two further sitting days shall be allotted to the consideration of the second reading stage of the bill;

That, 15 minutes before the expiry of the time provided for government orders on the second day allotted to the consideration of the second reading stage of the said bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this order, and, in turn, every question necessary for the disposal of the stage of the bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 67(1), there will now be a 30-minute question period. I invite all hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise in their places so that the Chair has some idea of the number of members who wish to participate in this question period.

The hon. leader in the House for the official opposition.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is another sad day. This is the 96th time this government has invoked closure or time allocation in this Parliament. No other government has done that. Canada has never had a government that has abused time allocation and closure as much as this one has. This is a sign of arrogance and incompetence because many of the bills that the government has introduced in the House of Commons have been rejected by the courts. They reject the legislation because the government does not really double-check its bills as much as it needs to.

[*English*]

Sadly, this is the 96th time in this Parliament, which is the worst record of all time. It is three times worse than any other previous government for bringing in closure and time allocation.

The petitioners are asking for the Prime Minister to reconsider and to allow Canadians to continue to have the option to retire at the age of 65 and receive their old age pension. They also believe that people should be able to have that retirement option at 65, and do not want the government to in any way diminish the importance and the value of Canada's three major programs, the OAS, GIS, and CPP.

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by many residents of my great riding of Kitchener—Waterloo.

This petition highlights and underscores the importance of respecting the right of the small-scale family farmers to preserve, exchange, and use seeds.

[*Translation*]

CANADA POST

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present to the House a petition that has been signed by dozens of Ontarians, mainly from Oshawa, who are very concerned about the end of home mail delivery. The message they are sending to this House is that they want to keep home mail delivery. We have no rational fiscal or economic reason to be the only G7 country that can no longer provide home mail delivery.

[*English*]

PHARMACARE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two petitions from residents within Saanich—Gulf Islands.

The first petition is calling on the House to develop and promote a national pharmacare plan that would include, among other things, a bulk purchasing agency at the federal level to ensure that, by bulk purchasing of drugs, the price can be brought down for provincial health care systems.

•(1015)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is also from residents of Saanich—Gulf Islands, Salt Spring Island, Sidney, and Brentwood Bay, calling on the government to put in place a carbon price through the means of fee and dividend, where a fee is charged at the pollution source and the dividend is returned equally to every Canadian.

CANADA POST

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of people in my riding in the Labrador West area who, unfortunately, are seeing cuts to their postal services.

The petitioners ask that Canada Post Corporation not downgrade its service and leave the community with reduced levels of postal service.

They are calling upon the Government of Canada to instruct Canada Post to maintain and improve postal services, and to cease any proposal to reduce hours and diminish service to the residents of Labrador West.

Government Orders

The government is going to say that it is trying to do this for our veterans. We will recall that after years of neglect of our nation's veterans and years of just refusing, cutting back on services and treating our nation's veterans with disdain, the Conservatives finally introduced a bill that would help to improve the situation. That is Bill C-58, which has sat on the order paper all week. For days, the NDP has been standing up and asking for unanimous consent to get Bill C-58 for veterans into committee so that veterans can start getting the relief that is called for. Instead, the government is saying that it is going to make them wait even longer with Bill C-59.

The question is very simple. Why are the Conservatives playing so many games with veterans? Why do they not heed the message from Alberta and, instead of showing such arrogance and incompetence, why do they not work with the opposition parties so that they can get good legislation that is not rejected by the courts?

• (1020)

[Translation]

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-59 is in line with our government's plan for low taxes and a balanced budget to promote employment, growth and security. The budget implementation bill contains measures that were announced in economic action plan 2015. Many of these measures are tax-related, but they all achieve one main goal: Canada's long-term prosperity.

It is common practice, even for Liberal governments, to include various measures in a budget. That is nothing new or out of the ordinary.

[English]

As to the question about veterans, our Conservative government places the highest priority on making sure that veterans and their families have the support and the services that they need when they need them. Our government made significant progress in key areas, such as long-term financial security, increased family support and removing barriers of eligibility for certain financial benefits.

Canadian Armed Forces veterans who are moderately to seriously disabled as a result of their service will soon have additional benefits after age 65 and new money to support family caregivers. In addition, those from the Canadian reserve forces will receive fair financial benefits from VAC.

These new initiatives are evidence of our government's commitment to ensuring that Canadian veterans and their families are treated with care, compassion and respect.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, we have time allocation on the government's financial piece of legislation, which I would argue is unfair. The Minister of Finance needs to recognize the reality. His taxation policies would be to the advantage of Canada's wealthiest, and he is asking Canada's middle class to pay for that tax giveaway.

This is not a budget that would deal with or that has any concept of what it really takes to have economic and job growth. There is a lot of contrast. This is why we need to have a thorough debate on this budget.

Let me give an example. The contrast of the Liberal Party would propose to make the tax system fairer and cut the middle-class tax rate by 7%. That would be a \$3-billion tax cut for those who need it the most. The Liberal plan would also provide one bigger, fair, tax-free monthly cheque to help families with the high cost of raising their kids.

My question for the Minister of Finance is why does he not recognize how unfair his tax proposals are to the middle class and those who are aspiring to become a part of Canada's middle class? Why does he not instead adopt good, solid, fair taxation policies and stimulate Canada's economy?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Speaker, I am very proud that our budget will provide benefits primarily to low-income families. We will do that in a number of ways.

The family benefit program, of course, will overwhelmingly benefit low- and middle-income Canadians, with two-thirds of the benefits going to them, and 25% to families earning less than \$30,000.

The tax-free savings account is a wonderful way for middle-class and lower-income Canadians to save for their kids' education and for their retirement. That is why 11 million Canadians have a TFSA, with the vast majority low- and middle-income earners, and 60% of those who contribute the maximum earn less than \$60,000 a year. Therefore, it is amazing that the NDP and the Liberals would take away the TFSA increases, robbing the middle class and seniors of an extra opportunity to save.

• (1025)

The Deputy Speaker: Before we proceed, I have allowed a little flexibility on the first two questions, but from now on I will be holding all members, in both questions and responses, to one minute.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the Minister of Finance that we are in the House of Commons of the Parliament of Canada. We are not in front of the media or in the middle of an election campaign. We are here to discuss a parliamentary procedure. We are MPs who are accountable to their constituents, but all the minister is doing is giving speeches that have already been given.

We are talking about the government's 96th time allocation motion, which will prevent members of the House from debating some of the complex issues in this bill.

The government does not seem to care about the repercussions of the decisions it is making.

[English]

The Conservatives keep doubling down. However, when they are doubling down constantly, in the end, we end up losing, and this is what is going to happen to the current Conservative government.

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Speaker, this bill would be a benefit to all Canadians. This bill will be debated in this House, and there will be plenty of opportunity to do that.

Government Orders

We are very pleased about our commitment to introduce many tax measures that would benefit Canadians, such as our commitment to introducing balanced budget legislation, to strengthening the Canadian Labour Code, to providing benefits to families and to providing tax relief to small businesses that are the basic generator of employment. Some 50% of employment is created by small businesses.

The previous Liberal government's budget bill contained dozens of different pieces of legislation, and if I may say, it is not the committee's study that the opposition members really care about; they want to stop the necessary and vital economic reforms in the bill.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is good to see the Minister of Finance in the House of Commons answering questions. In the past, this was something that ministers of finance did on a regular basis, because they were accountable to Parliament. They felt that participating in question period and responding to questions was absolutely part of their job. We hope that this participation in the House of Commons and accountability to Parliament becomes more of a regular occurrence for the current minister, who has only participated in seven question periods in 2015.

My question to the minister is on the budget implementation act, which contains Nixonian changes to ATIP legislation to try to cover up the information that Canadians deserve about the long gun registry. It would also change the Copyright Act and actually bring in new parliamentary security. However, with all these things that have nothing to do with the economy, why is the minister not focused on providing Canadians with a plan for jobs and growth at a time when the Canadian economy has flatlined?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the last time I attended question period, the Liberal opposition had no questions for me. The previous time, there were seven questions, which I was pleased to answer, and I will, of course, continue to do that. However, it is also my responsibility to communicate to Canadians around the country about the measures that we are proposing for the budget bill, and I have been doing that from coast to coast.

With respect to the long gun registry, our Conservative government has fulfilled its commitment to end the wasteful and ineffective registry once and for all. It is still possible to access outdated copies of the long gun registry through access to information legislation. However, the will of Parliament has been clear and all copies of the registry were to be destroyed. This technical amendment would address that.

• (1030)

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, this particular bill contains a provision that is very important to the protection of Canadian intellectual property, which is the extension of privilege to patent agents in Canada. The Intellectual Property Institute of Canada has been lobbying for this for close to a decade. My colleague Heather Mueller, who is a patent agent in this field and is part of this particular committee, talked about how her colleagues actually cried tears of joy when they saw this, because it would have such an impact on our country's ability to protect intellectual property.

I am wondering if my colleague could explain why it is so important to pass this bill in a timely manner, especially given this particular clause.

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister of state for her question and for the great work she is doing for Canadians.

Our government is dedicated to cutting red tape and supporting businesses, and that is why we created a statutory privilege to protect confidential communication between intellectual property agents and their clients. These changes would help Canadian businesses avoid costly litigation and remain competitive.

We are also listening to businesses and making sure that our intellectual property system responds to their needs. That is why we have cut red tape and made it easier for businesses to use Canada's intellectual property system and to seek the legal protections they deserve.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise again in dismay to find that an omnibus budget bill is being pushed through with limitation on debate in what was supposed to be our second day here discussing the legislation.

I also note, as other colleagues have noted, that this omnibus bill contains many measures that have nothing to do with the purview of the Minister of Finance, who is here to answer questions about limiting debate. I do not know how we are going to adequately get to the multiple levels of different bills. I am particularly concerned, as other members have mentioned, about these very bizarre retroactive changes to remove a situation in law back to not only before the bill was passed but to the point when it was first introduced.

Referring to the long gun registry, Professor Kazmierski from Carleton has noted that the same government is now using omnibus legislation to introduce retroactive limitations on our already limited access rights and to potentially eliminate access to a material that we currently would have access to, and that this should be alarming to anyone concerned about the effectiveness of our democratic process.

My question to the minister is this. Will this bill be split into many pieces, with multiple committees studying it? Will we have time to ensure that we adequately study, for instance, the security of Parliament Hill? I do not see how we can.

Hon. Joe Oliver: There will be, Mr. Speaker, ample time to debate this measure. I will repeat that in respect of the long gun registry, our Conservative government was pleased to end the wasteful and ineffective registry once and for all. Due to a bureaucratic loophole, it was still possible to access outdated copies of the registry through access to information. This clearly goes against the will of Parliament, and all copies of the registry should be destroyed. A technical amendment reinforces this point.

Government Orders

As to the omnibus bill, it supports our balanced budget, our low-tax plan for jobs, growth and security. All measures in the budget implementation bill were in economic action plan 2015. Many of the measures are tax related and accomplish our key goal of long-term prosperity and security.

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think the Minister of Finance is missing the point. The problem is that if there were a loophole with the long gun registry, it should not be corrected through an omnibus budget implementation bill. There should be a stand-alone bill. Procedurally, this is wrong because the public safety committee will not be able to propose and adopt amendments. It might make recommendations that will go back to finance. It has nothing to do with it.

Is the minister not a bit ashamed to be part of a government that will have imposed time allocation 96 times to force bills down the throats of Canadians? Whatever the government's policies and promises are is fine, but it should do it properly.

• (1035)

[Translation]

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Speaker, it is common practice, including for Liberal governments, to include a number of different measures in a budget. There is nothing new or groundbreaking in this practice.

[English]

The bill, as I said, would support our plan for low taxes, jobs, growth, and security. The bill is balanced fiscally and is balanced socially. This is in contrast to the refusal of the opposition to support any of these job-creating measures. I will reiterate, because the point does not seem to be getting across to the opposition: there is nothing new or groundbreaking in this practice.

[Translation]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am disheartened because, as you know, every time a time allocation motion is moved, that means not every member will have a chance to speak to the bill. In this case, we are talking about the budget, the most important bill of the year.

My region is going through tough economic times. The last time I checked, the unemployment rate in the urban areas was the highest in Canada. Our forestry industry is struggling, and so is the aluminum sector. I have a lot to say about this budget, but unfortunately, the government is preventing me from delivering a full speech on it.

I want to know why the Conservative government has such little respect for duly elected members. There are 308 members in the House of Commons. Things will likely only get worse when there are 338 and more people want to speak to bills.

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Speaker, as I said, we will allow enough time to debate the bill, which offers many benefits to all Canadians, including those living in the opposition member's riding.

The economic action plan proposes to change the funding plan for small businesses in Canada. This is a good example of measures that will allow more small businesses to submit an application for funding and will provide larger loans. These changes were proposed by stakeholders and could amount to an additional \$100 million a year in loans. By improving access to funding, our government is

continuing to encourage and support the growth and success of small businesses in Canada.

[English]

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that debate on the bill is going to be limited, because there are so many Canadians who will not be getting anything from the bill, and they want to have a voice.

Why is there no northern strategy by the government opposite? In the north we hear of people looking in the dumps for food, because it is not affordable. We hear of people sleeping in vans and tents in -40° temperatures, because there is no housing for them. We hear of people going without proper medical care, because they do not have access to it.

I ask the minister, why no northern strategy? Why no strategy for Inuit people across the north? Why is his government not doing anything to help those who need it?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Speaker, I am proud that our government has transferred to the provinces and territories record amounts. In fact, since we took office, the amount has increased by 63% over that of the previous government. There has been funding for health care, funding for social programs, and funding for equalization. There is also money for social housing. We have brought down taxes for all Canadians and have taken one million Canadians off the tax rolls. Our Prime Minister has placed a priority on the north that we have never seen before in Canadian history, and we are all proud of that.

• (1040)

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's seniors, like those in my riding of Oakville, have helped build our country and make it great. That is why I am proud that no government in Canadian history has done more to stand up for seniors than this Conservative government. For example, we enhanced the new horizons for seniors program to combat elder abuse and to engage seniors in their communities. We put money back into the pockets of seniors by legislating pension income splitting and by introducing the largest GIS increase in over 25 years. We cut taxes, removed 380,000 low-income seniors from the tax roles completely, and created the landmark tax-free savings account.

My question for the Minister of Finance is this: what would the budget bill do to support Canadian seniors?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that significant question and for his commitment to seniors in Oakville, and indeed around the country.

Government Orders

I am pleased to assure the member that with budget 2015, we are introducing a new home accessibility tax credit to provide seniors with the ability to stay in their homes longer, if they choose.

We are also giving seniors more choice when it comes to managing their retirement income by reducing the minimum withdrawal requirements for registered retirement income funds.

What is more, we are proudly increasing the tax-free savings account annual contribution limit to \$10,000. About 600,000 seniors across Canada aged 65 and over with incomes below \$60,000 are currently maxing out their TFSA room. This is a measure that will primarily benefit low- and middle-income Canadians.

This is a very important venture, and these initiatives will benefit seniors right across Canada.

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a shame that we are in a situation where we are here debating the use of time allocation for the 96th time. Rather than responding to why that is, why the government feels that there is no need to debate any of its bills, we are getting speeches on cherry-picked items from the budget.

Why are we again, for the 96th time, in time allocation for a budget bill, arguably the most important document we will debate in this House, as it affects all Canadians? Why are we not giving it its just time to have a fulsome debate with as many members of this House as want to participate?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Speaker, we have continually heard, throughout the past half-hour, complaints from the opposition that there is no opportunity to debate. Perhaps if the opposition members asked questions on the measures in this bill we could discuss them in a little more depth. However, all they want to talk about is the fact that they do not have an opportunity to talk, while they are talking.

Our government is focused on what matters to Canadians: helping them make ends meet by lowering taxes and securing Canada's long-term prosperity. We are supporting a balanced budget. We are supporting lower taxes. We are supporting incentives for manufacturers. We are reducing the small business tax rate. We are reducing the minimum withdrawal rate for RRIFs. We are doubling the TFSA. We are introducing the home accessibility tax credit. We are introducing a new retirement income security benefit and a compassionate care benefit, and we are providing the needed resources for our brave men and women in uniform.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is incredible to see a finance minister who is so unfamiliar with the parliamentary rules in place that allow us 30 minutes to debate a time allocation motion. That is the motion being debated.

The only justification he gave for having a budget implementation bill with so many different measures is that the Liberals have done this before. I would like him to tell us if he has some more convincing reasons for having a budget implementation bill that contains so many measures and if he has an explanation other than the fact that the Liberals did even worse. I would like a more convincing explanation.

● (1045)

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Speaker, and so it goes on. The opposition members do not want to discuss the bill, they want to discuss the fact that they cannot discuss the bill. However, we want to discuss the specific measures that will benefit Canadians, the four million Canadian families, seniors and the middle class.

The fact remains that the previous Liberal government amended dozens and dozens of different legislative measures. Let us be clear: the opposition members do not really care about studying the bill in committee; they would rather stop the vital economic reforms that the bill contains.

[*English*]

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, another group that has been overlooked in this budget and by the economic policies of the current government is young people. We now have in this country 169,000 fewer jobs for students than there were before the downturn. We have seen cuts since 2005 to the Canada summer jobs program. I see it particularly in my riding in Charlottetown and right across Prince Edward Island, but this is happening right across the country.

At the same time, when we watch the playoffs on TV, we see expensive ads, at \$100,000 a pop, and that money could be much better spent on creating jobs for young people. Why is it not?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Speaker, we will continue to communicate with Canadians and provide them with the information they need to access the benefits we are offering them. By way of example, there are some 200,000 Canadians who have a right to some of the family benefits being offered, in particular young families, who have a right to have access to the universal childcare benefit but are not registered. We need to provide them with that information.

With respect to the Canada Labour Code, we are providing more benefits to interns. We are providing job matching. We are providing loans to students, and we are reducing the dependency on parents' contributions. We are doing a great deal for youth right across this country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians will remember the Conservatives' omnibus bills. They will also remember the time limits placed on debating bills. The Conservatives will have a place in history, but not for the right reasons. They will go down in history for systematically imposing closure, from the beginning, once they obtained a majority. Their reputation for governing with this kind of contempt for the parliamentary process and the opposition will stick with the Conservatives for generations to come.

Government Orders

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Speaker, I would rather discuss the bill. As I said, our government is focused on what matters to Canadians and on helping the middle class by reducing the tax burden and securing Canada's long-term prosperity. Economic action plan 2015 will provide benefits directly to families, create jobs, stimulate economic growth and improve Canadians' security, all while helping us return to a balanced budget. I am very proud of that.

• (1050)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith the question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

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 yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1130)

[English]

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

(Division No. 404)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anderson
Barlow
Benoit
Bernier
Blaney
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Calandra
Cannan
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Daniel
Dechert
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Eglinski
Fantino
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Galipeau
Glover
Goldring
Gosal
Grewal

Adler
Albas
Alexander
Allison
Ambrose
Ashfield
Bateman
Bergen
Bezan
Block
Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Chisu
Clarke
Crockatt
Davidson
Dreeschen
Dykstra
Falk
Fast
Fletcher
Gill
Goguen
Goodyear
Gourde
Hawn

Hayes
Hillyer
Holder
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
MacKay (Central Nova)
Maguire
McColeman
Menegakis
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Obhrai
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Perkins
Preston
Reid
Richards
Saxton
Seeback
Shiple
Smith
Sorenson
Strahl
Tilson
Trost
Truppe
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Yurdiga

Hiebert
Hoback
James
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Lebel
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKenzie
Mayes
McLeod
Miller
Norlock
Oliver
Opitz
Payne
Poilievre
Rajotte
Rempel
Ritz
Schellenberger
Shea
Shory
Sopuck
Stanton
Sweet
Toet
Trottier
Valcourt
Vellacott
Warawa
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)
Zimmer — 136

NAYS

Members

Angus
Aubin
Bennett
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau
Casey
Charlton
Chisholm
Christopherson
Cullen
Day
Dion
Doré Lefebvre
Dubourg
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Foote
Fry
Genest
Giguère
Goodale
Groguhé
Harris (St. John's East)
Jones
Kellway
Lapointe
Laverdière
Leslie
MacAulay
Marston
Mathysen
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)

Murray
Nash
Papillon
Pilon
Rafferty
Regan
Sandhu
Scott
Sgro
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
St-Denis
Stoffer
Toone
Vaughan— 105

Nantel
Nunez-Melo
Péclet
Quach
Rathgeber
Saganash
Scarpaleggia
Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
Sitsabaiesan
Stewart
Sullivan
Valeriotte

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: I want to inform the House that because of the proceedings on the time allocation motion, government orders will be extended by 30 minutes.

[English]

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques.

[Translation]

SECOND READING

The House resumed from May 13 consideration of the motion that Bill C-59, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 21, 2015 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will begin my speech by simply saying thank goodness. This is this government's last budget bill because there are only 158 days before this government is replaced by a government that is competent when it comes to finance and the economy, and particularly when it comes to respecting Parliament and parliamentary institutions.

I was here during the debate on the time allocation motion, which just wrapped up. It was unbelievable. We could feel the contempt rolling in waves off the members, particularly the Minister of Finance. I had the pleasure of working with his predecessor, Mr. Flaherty. Although I respect the current minister as a person, as finance minister, he cannot hold a candle to Mr. Flaherty, who was at least diligent and passionate about what he was doing, even though we may have disagreed with the direction the government was taking. The current finance minister is simply taking orders from the Prime Minister's Office and saying what they tell him to say, while completely disregarding parliamentary tradition.

Once again, we are talking about an omnibus bill. This bill does indeed deal with measures that were debated in the budget, but it also includes all kinds of other measures that have absolutely nothing to do with the budget we were given. These measures should be given serious study by the appropriate committees because of their ramifications and consequences.

Once again, we are in a situation where most members of the House, who represent the 100,000 or so people in their ridings, will

Government Orders

be unable to even speak to this bill. Speeding up the passage of bills the way the government does, especially for something as important as a budget bill, is not necessarily a good thing for it to do. In addition to trying to pass bills quickly, they try to prevent people from getting the extra research time they need to uncover flaws in these bills and gaps that undermine the credibility and efficiency of government initiatives. We have seen that in the past, and we will see it again this time with this budget bill.

As I mentioned in the past, when I had the opportunity to debate other budget bills, this government seems to have a certain number of criteria that it uses when drafting and introducing its budget bills. It has eight main criteria. One of them is obviously the size of the bills. In this case, we are dealing with a bill that is over 150 pages long. In fact, the French version is 167 pages.

The government believes that a budget bill must amend a minimum of about 10 laws. When I say amend, I mean create, amend or eliminate about 10 laws. In this case, the budget bill contains 20 divisions that amend about 20 different laws. Why does the government not introduce 20 separate bills to pass new laws or amend existing legislation? It is because the government simply wants to include them all in an omnibus bill to expedite the process. That shows the government's contempt for this Parliament.

Another criterion that the government uses is that the budget bill must address many issues that have nothing to do with tax or fiscal policy. This bill contains amendments to the National Energy Board Act, the Veterans Review and Appeal Board Act, the Public Service Labour Relations Act and the Industrial Design Act. Those laws have nothing to do with the budget that was presented.

Another criterion that the government always seems to use is that the budget bill must create new laws. Once again, this bill creates two new laws: the federal balanced budget act and the prevention of terrorist travel act. These two new pieces of legislation will be created and discussed at the same time as the many other measures set out in this budget bill.

Another criterion that the government always seems to use is that its budget bills must always contain provisions that concentrate power in the hands of various ministers. Again this time, we see that this bill gives discretionary powers to the President of the Treasury Board, among others, despite the Public Service Labour Relations Act.

• (1135)

The final three criteria that the government feels it must meet in this budget bill, as with past bills, relate to the presence of at least one legislative amendment to restrict the rights of workers and immigrants, and finally, one measure that deals with law and order. Those elements can be found once again in this budget bill, so the pattern is repeated here, and we have yet another mammoth omnibus bill.

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The government is imposing time allocation. It is imposing conditions on the committee regarding its study of the proposed initiatives and measures. In the House, it is imposing constraints on independent members, who should be given the opportunity to have their say at report stage, especially since they are not members of the committee. With no regard whatsoever for parliamentary traditions or respect for democratic parliamentary practices, this government is quite happy to simply steamroll over everything, as though the House were merely an annoying obstacle to overcome in order to achieve its ends.

I know that the Minister of Finance was uncomfortable talking about time allocation. He kept returning to the subject of the debate, when we were discussing a motion regarding yet another gag order imposed by the Conservative government. He only wanted to talk about the budget. I will now talk about the measures and initiatives in the budget.

Although the government likes to brag about balancing the budget, I would remind the House that it was this very government that put us in a deficit situation in 2007-08, before the recession even began. In fact, if the balanced budget legislation had been passed or even proposed by this Conservative government when it was first elected nearly 10 years ago in 2006, this government would have already been in violation of its own law, even before the recession.

In fact, aside from the time when the government used up the entire existing surplus shortly after coming to power, this is the first time the budget has been balanced since 1912. Obviously, this government is boasting about the fact that, unlike the previous Liberal governments, it did not off-load the deficit to the provinces. The government is not wrong, because that is what the Liberals did to balance the budget in the 1990s. However, what it is not saying is that balancing the budget would have been impossible for this government if it had not dramatically reduced the contingency fund. It would have been impossible if the government had not, yet again, dipped into the EI surplus. It would have been impossible if it had not sold, at a loss, its GM shares. It took these three measures for the government to be able to boast about balancing the budget before the election.

That is not the mark of a competent government. That is not the mark of a government that shows competent economic leadership. That is the mark of an ultra-partisan government that is trying to score points at the expense of good management and sound financial administration.

Let us get back to the balanced budget act, because it is the first division of the part that deals with other measures. If we want to talk about a balanced budget act, I have no trouble doing so, but we should have talked about it separately. The Conservatives are being underhanded and at the end of their mandate are feeling the political heat because they know that their chances of forming the government in October 2015 are very slim. They just want to say that they are being responsible and they are going to limit subsequent governments' room to manoeuvre when it comes to managing the economy and public finances.

The Standing Committee on Finance heard from a number of witnesses who talked about the legislation and how it is applied in the rest of the country and where it has been implemented around the

world. This kind of legislation often has perverse and negative effects that will not necessarily be found in this bill because there are so many loopholes that we can just assume that it is a symbolic gesture by a government that wants to look good.

As for the effectiveness of such legislation, the NDP has not yet had the opportunity to govern at the federal level, but we can look at what the provinces have done.

• (1140)

Since the early 1980s, the NDP has had the best record on balanced budgets among all the parties that have governed, at both the federal and provincial levels. In provinces that have had a New Democrat government, balanced budget legislation was not needed for the government to properly manage the provinces' finances. This tradition started with the first New Democrat government, in Saskatchewan, under Tommy Douglas, who managed to balance 17 consecutive budgets. Seventeen. He still found a way to bring in Canada's first public health care system. There is a way to provide quality services that the public can be proud of and still balance the budget.

That is not what we have seen from this government. Far from it. For 10 years now it has been mismanaging this country. Once again, I am mentioning the fact that it ran a deficit when Canada was not even in a recession. Now, 10 years later, the government is trying to make itself out to be a good manager. On the contrary, over the past 10 years this government has undermined Canada's potential to develop its own economy in a way that would benefit the entire population. The government could have supported the manufacturing sector and could have supported our exports, but it did not. The Conservatives can count themselves lucky that we can stack up against other countries whose job creation and economic records were often poorer than ours, as a result of the circumstances. This was not due to the Conservatives' good work, but rather to the situation being worse off in other countries, not necessarily because of their policies, but often because of their geographical context.

Obviously, I object to the government's desire to include measures that do not belong in a budget bill. One can argue that a balanced budget act is part of that. Obviously we are talking about public finances. However, there are other elements. For example, division 2 of part 3 is about other measures and enacts the prevention of terrorist travel act. We just had a long debate in the House and in committee on Bill C-51, which is about combatting terrorism. Putting a division about terrorist travel in a budget bill gives the impression that the government realized it forgot that. It looks like the government wanted to introduce Bill C-51 so quickly and it was so important to do things really fast that it forgot that aspect and had to sneak it in through the budget bill by saying that that aspect was there and could be debated anyway.

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Again, contrary to what most Conservative Party backbenchers might think, our role in the House is not simply to approve the government's initiatives. It is our duty to thoroughly study proposed legislation. The role of the official opposition, and the opposition in general, is not just to oppose what the government does. There are some things we can even throw our support behind. Beyond this opposition role, it is also our role to make proposals and conduct reviews. Our fundamental role is to point out any flaws in the government's legislation so that the appropriate corrections can be made. This government is denying the fundamental role of the traditional structure and operation of the House of Commons. The government is so partisan and obtuse in its desire to leave its Conservative mark on this country that it does not seem to care one bit about the effectiveness or constitutionality of its bills.

We have here another example with division 2 of part 3 of the budget bill on the prevention of terrorist travel act. Why make changes to the Industrial Design Act, the Patent Act and the Trade-marks Act under the radar yet again? The last budget bill made the same types of changes to these laws. Is this a patch job? The government finds flaws and gaps and then quickly tries to fix them behind closed doors so that once again it does not appear to be too incompetent. That approach certainly gives that impression.

● (1145)

Another important initiative found in this section is the extension of copyright terms for sound recordings. This significant extension should be debated separately, either in the House or in committee.

Due to the new structure that the Conservative government has imposed, we can no longer even have an adequate debate in committee, because when we send a bill like this one to a committee—I imagine it would be the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage in this case—only a two-hour meeting is scheduled. The minister speaks for about half an hour and then answers questions for an hour or an hour and a half.

The minister usually speaks for 15 to 30 minutes and answers questions for 15 to 30 minutes. Then there is time remaining to hear from perhaps four witnesses to talk about a fundamental amendment. Then the bill is usually submitted without amendment.

I had the opportunity to sit on the Standing Committee on Finance for the study of five budget bills. We studied over 2,500 pages and only one amendment was adopted by the government, which had a majority on these committees. Furthermore, it required a Conservative sub-amendment. A careful and rigorous examination of the measures proposed by the government simply does not happen, because this government systematically rejects criticism, even when it is constructive. It refuses to examine opportunities to improve the provisions it puts forward. That concludes my remarks on the proposals of the third division, even though I could have talked about them for a long time. Other members—although sadly not many—will have the opportunity to talk about this some more.

I would like to come back to some of the initiatives that will certainly be of interest to many members here. I am talking about the income splitting initiative proposed by the government. Income splitting will benefit only 15% of the population. By raising the contribution limit for TFSAs, the government is trying to confuse Canadians with all sorts of statistics that have nothing to do with

reality. The reality is that raising the contribution limit for TFSAs from \$5,500 to \$10,000 will help only those who contribute the maximum amount.

Right now, only 17% or 18% of people with a TFSA contribute the maximum amount. They are the ones who will benefit from the increased contribution limit. Basically, raising the contribution limit for TFSAs will merely allow people to move their savings from one place to another, since TFSAs are not currently helping people to save money.

The government claims that the increased contribution limit will help two-thirds of those who contribute the maximum amount and who earn \$60,000 or less. That gives the impression that two-thirds of Canadians contribute the maximum amount and that these people are all earning \$60,000 or less. That is not true. It is two-thirds of the 17% or 18% of people who contribute the maximum amount who will benefit from this measure. That means that only a very small fraction of Canadians will benefit from this measure, which will be used more and more as a tax shelter when it was supposed to help people save money.

The members on this side of the House proposed several initiatives. The government adopted some of them and now it is boasting about them. Meanwhile, when we moved a motion in the House to lower the corporate or small business tax rate from 11% to 9%, the Conservatives and the Liberals voted against it.

We also moved a motion to extend the accelerated capital cost allowance for investment in machinery. The Conservatives and Liberals voted against that motion, but now that measure is included in the budget.

The government might want to start doing some soul searching, because the election is fast approaching; it is 158 days away. The day after the election, when they find themselves on this side of the House, perhaps the Conservatives will understand the completely disastrous consequences of their actions, their behaviour and their attitude over the past several years, especially the past four years, toward democracy, the parliamentary system and the traditions that have made this House a place to work for the common good and all Canadians.

● (1150)

The Conservatives refuse to hear this message. We will put it into practice after October 2015.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments the member made, especially when he focused on the fact that the role and responsibility of the opposition is not just to criticize but to generate ideas, alternatives, and so forth.

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I believe that a good comparison is the manner in which the government made the determination to move forward with income splitting. It means that less than 14% of Canada's population, primarily the wealthiest, would receive \$2 billion annually. That is a significant amount. We in the Liberal Party are opposing that and have provided a tangible alternative. We have said that a Liberal government would make the tax system fair and would cut the middle-class tax rate by 7%. It is a tangible difference and is a much fairer policy.

Can the member provide his thoughts on the 7% tax break the Liberals are proposing for the middle class? What is his party's position on that issue?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I think the official opposition and the third party agree that income splitting is not a good measure. We also oppose the increase in the contribution limit for TFSAs. Our positions are consistent, and we oppose what the government is proposing.

I looked at the measure the member for Winnipeg North mentioned and found a number of glaring weaknesses.

The first weakness has to do with the 7% tax cut. In fact, it is not really a cut, because it leads to the same problem that plagued former premier Jim Prentice. When he talked about the Alberta NDP's proposal to raise corporate taxes by 20%, he gave the impression that the NDP wanted to raise taxes by 20 percentage points, but that was not the case. Ms. Notley, the new premier, emphasized that she was simply raising taxes from 10% to 12%, which is an increase of only 2%.

In this case, it is not really a 7% tax cut, but rather a decrease from 22% to 20.5%, or a real cut of 1.5%.

However, this measure would not benefit two-thirds of taxpayers, since it would apply only to those who earn over \$44,800. Those who earn less than that, which is two-thirds of Canadians, will not benefit at all from that tax cut.

The Liberals should not be making it sound as though this measure would benefit only people earning between \$44,700 and \$89,000. It would benefit everyone who has an income between \$45,000 and \$215,000.

At the end of the day, the measure proposed by the Liberal Party would take a little money, by increasing taxes for the top 1% of earners, and redistribute it among the top 15%—or thereabouts—of earners.

I think that the Liberals' proposal shows a real lack of consideration for the public and the middle class, whose average yearly individual income is under \$44,000.

• (1155)

[*English*]

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member would well know, it is our Conservative government that has restored fiscal balance. We have done this through long-term transfers to the provinces. They are historic transfers. This year it was nearly \$68 billion. There has been a 62% increase since the

Liberals were in government. That is an increase of more than \$3 billion and almost 63% since the Liberals. Federal support for health, education, and social services has increased some 59% since we formed government.

I know that the member is a member of Parliament from a great riding in Quebec. There is a very important contribution to the province of Quebec. The federal government has increased transfers to the province of Quebec.

We believe in collaborative government, where we work with our provinces. I wonder if the member can now stand in his place and speak to the advantages these additional transfers to the province of Quebec have brought to the province and to his riding. Would he indeed reconsider his position and the rhetoric we have been hearing in the House on this budget and actually stand up and support his constituents in his riding by supporting this budget?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, standing up for my constituents is exactly what I am doing in speaking out against this bill.

I find it curious that the parliamentary secretary is talking about a government that works with the provinces.

When he talks about a 59% increase over 10 years, I thank the miracle of compound interest. In fact, if the member crunches the numbers, 59% over a period of 10 years is not all that much.

Why was I smiling about his comment on this government's collaboration with the provinces? Let us take a look at health transfers. There is no collaboration. Ottawa and the provinces had a health agreement, but the government did not renew it. It even refused to sit down with the provinces to renegotiate these transfers. Negotiation involves discussions and collaboration. The government unilaterally imposed a reduction in the growth of health transfers. These are important, especially since health care spending is growing at a higher rate than inflation. Cutting growth from 6% to 3% means that the provinces will see their transfers reduced to half what they were under the agreement that had been signed and negotiated. We are talking about a \$36 billion cut in the coming years. Quebec is losing out, as are all of the provinces.

I would like the parliamentary secretary to reconsider his support for this budget bill and the government's policies.

• (1200)

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his excellent speech and his very hard work as a member of the Standing Committee on Finance. It must be so hard sometimes, knowing how the Conservative government operates. I can talk more about that later during my own speech.

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I would like my colleague to comment further about something. He talked about measures in the budget that the NDP supports, such as the tax cut for small and medium-sized businesses in Canada. We support that measure because it was our idea. The Conservatives took a long time to act on it. All the same, I would like my colleague to explain how the NDP would have implemented that tax rate. I know that the Conservatives are making our small and medium-sized businesses wait for the tax cut. I would like my colleague to talk about how the NDP would start trying to help Canada's entrepreneurs right away.

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier for that question because it is relevant.

Both the Conservatives and the Liberals rejected our proposal to cut taxes for small businesses. The initiative in the current budget implementation bill does not go as far as the NDP's proposal. When we moved our motion, which was debated for a day in the House, we wanted an immediate reduction from 11% to 10%, and then to 9% when finances allowed, such as in a budget surplus situation.

What the government has put on the table is a plan to gradually reduce small business taxes over a period of time that is twice as long as what was proposed in the NDP motion. I feel that the government has shown bad faith. For one thing, it voted against the principle of cutting taxes for small businesses. For another, it is taking much longer to implement the tax cut than an NDP government would have done.

[*English*]

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to share my time with the member for Burlington, if I that is agreeable.

Mr. Speaker, there is one initiative that stands above all others in this budget bill, because it would allow millions of Canadians, from all backgrounds and walks of life, to work hard and plan ahead to become more self-reliant, and even wealthy, over time. This is the bright future Conservatives want for all Canadians, especially our children and grandchildren. Ordinary people would have the independence that is available only to wealthy people now. That initiative is the tax-free savings account limit being increased to \$10,000 a year.

Tax-free savings accounts are the most powerful savings vehicle in Canadian history. They will allow hundreds of thousands of ordinary working people to actually become millionaires.

Here are 10 reasons the Conservative government, in this bill, has the only plan for Canadians to conserve their earnings, build personal wealth, and be financially independent in their senior years: tax-free savings accounts.

Number one, they help our youth understand the importance of saving. What is the most important gift for financial success and security we could give our children and grandchildren? It is teaching them to be self-reliant and to work and save for their future using the power of compound interest. It is teaching them to not spend what they do not have, to not get buried in charge card debt and interest, to pay their bills on time, and to save for life's priorities, like education, a home, and their retirement.

The ratio of debt to net income is 1.6 for the average family in Canada right now. It is the highest ever. However, it gets worse. What happens when the interest rates go up, as they will? Hundreds of thousands of families will be trapped in monthly credit card payments at an 18% interest rate, or higher, that they will struggle to pay down.

By promoting saving as part of our culture, instead of credit card debt, we can help spare millions of young people from this interest rate trap that never ends.

Eleven million Canadians have opened their own tax-free savings accounts so far and agree with us. Every Canadian over 18 should try to save in a tax-free savings account. They should not be misled by the subterfuge of the Liberals, who are telling Canadians that tax-free savings accounts only help the rich. That is absolutely not true. It is never okay to mislead Canadians like this. It is shameful.

Here is the truth about tax-free savings accounts. Sixty per cent of those Canadians who have invested the maximum in tax-free savings accounts to date earn less than \$60,000 a year. By whose standards are these people rich? No one's.

More than half of the Canadians who have opened tax-free savings accounts and have saved in them earn \$40,000 a year or less. That is 5.5 million people. Are they rich? Certainly not.

The Liberals are setting us all up by saying that they will only increase taxes for the rich. What do they mean by that? Who is that? It is everyone who earns over \$40,000, which is the vast majority of Canadians. They want to get their hands on that \$6,600 our government has cut from the average Canadian family's tax bill.

The federal Liberal leader has already announced, on May 4, the Liberal plan to cancel our increase for tax-free savings accounts to \$10,000 a year. That is a tax increase of the most foolish kind.

Number two, tax-free savings accounts are the great equalizer. Canadians who do not earn over \$100,000 a year have only one way to become financially independent: save, invest, and watch their money grow. That is what tax-free savings accounts facilitate.

With tax-free savings accounts, ordinary Canadians who work and save can become wealthy. For example, a skilled tradeswoman electrician who took full advantage of her tax-free savings account limit from age 20, with a modest 4% return on stocks, could receive her first million dollars tax free by age 61. That is 13 years sooner than it would be without a tax-free savings account.

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Tax-free savings accounts also grow our economy. When people open tax-free savings accounts with Canadian securities, their money goes to invest in Canadian enterprises that create jobs here in Canada. Businesses expand. Economic activity is boosted. That growth, over decades, could easily replace any lost government tax revenues from tax-free savings accounts.

Here is the problem. The Liberals and the NDP believe, and they want all Canadians to believe, that money not in government hands is not benefiting Canada. This is a Marxist hangover. It is nonsense.

Here is the truth. Money invested by Canadians is money that is loaned out to industry and job creators to help build Canada. Entrepreneurs are our most important creators.

This is reason number four: they support innovation and job creation. With tax-free savings accounts, entrepreneurs can tap into their accumulated tax-free savings to create new industry and replenish their accounts later as their businesses grow.

● (1205)

The fifth reason is that tax-free savings accounts are fair because the government should not tax all people's money twice. It saddens me to see our seniors, the people who built Canada, trying to live on interest on their savings that gets eaten up by inflation and then taxed. They are just falling further behind. With tax-free savings accounts, the federal government is forgoing the double taxation that prevents Canadians from growing their most important lifetime savings, leaving them one little pile of their own money to grow without interference. Canadians deserve that.

The sixth reason is that tax-free savings accounts shine a light on how ordinary Canadians have been robbed of their right to affluence and self-reliance. Big-spending governments, like both opposition parties would create, are addicted to spending and borrowing. Just look at Ontario right now. The Liberals and New Democrats believe that all money belongs to the government and Canadians just get to use it for awhile and governments can tax it back any time they want, any way they want, whenever they want. The Conservatives believe that money earned after tax belongs to the people who earn it. They should have at least one special account that the government has no right to touch, or even its growth, ever again.

The seventh reason is that tax-free savings accounts help ensure better health care for Canadians. Canadians who want to be able to afford choice in their own health care in their senior years should be saving as much as they need in tax-free savings accounts. The most hysterical socialists at the Broadbent Institute are playing the fear card, claiming that health care is threatened if the doubling of tax-free savings accounts is approved. They have no shame. The exact opposite is the truth.

The fact is that governments only cover 60% of our total health care costs. Canadians pay the rest, if they can afford to, such as dental care, chiropractic care, naturopathic care, homeopathic care, long-term care, blood tests, vitamins. We pay more for drugs than we do for doctors. We pay for long-term care. Let us face it, the nanny state is a failure.

People can save in the TFSA and be self-reliant so they are not left without the money they need to pay for these things. By saving \$7,000 a year from age 25, at a modest 5% rate of growth, a 65 year

old would have \$887,000 to handle any such bills. No government could ever do that for them. If that same person saved \$10,000 a year and got a 5% rate of return, he or she would have over \$1.2 million. This drives the socialists crazy. They cannot stand that ordinary people could be that independent. Who would need the nanny state? That is why the socialists hate TFSAs and would get rid of them if elected.

The eighth reason is that TFSAs reduce the underground economy. TFSAs are registered savings plans. The government knows about them. They will help bring our considerable underground economy above ground by making it more attractive to invest in Canadian companies because the growth is tax free. The government will get more tax income from the companies that grow out of the investments and from their employees.

The ninth reason is that tax-free savings accounts support the flexibility of future governments to act. The Broadbent Institute claims that by 2080 the government will be short \$15 billion that it otherwise would have had. That completely ignores the fact that some of those billions of dollars would have remained in the underground economy. It also ignores the multiplier effect of those dollars invested back in the economy and the fact that our economy, by that time, would be as large as \$15 trillion. Therefore, \$15 billion would be about .001% of such an economy. This is simple math. If governments are ever low on money, they can always raise taxes, reduce spending or borrow if need be. Tax-free savings accounts do not hinder any of that.

The tenth reason is that tax-free savings accounts at \$10,000 a year are the absolute best deal Canadian taxpayers have ever been offered. They will motivate Canadians to work, to be entrepreneurs and employ others, to save and to be self-reliant. We can build a much greater nation with millions of citizens like that, and that is what we would do with this budget bill.

● (1210)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to give my colleague a basic lesson on the difference between a non-taxable amount and a taxable amount.

My colleague talked about the new universal child care benefit, which will benefit all parents. However, that benefit is taxable at the end of the year when families have to do their tax returns.

Government Orders

In other words, a family that receives about \$750 from the government will be taxed—this is taxable income, after all—and will have just a little under \$200 left at the end of the year.

Why do my colleague and the Conservative government want to tax families?

[*English*]

Mr. Terence Young: Mr. Speaker, the member has it all wrong. Our party is about lowering taxes on families. That is what we have been doing since we became the government in 2006. In fact, the amount we have lowered taxes for the average Canadian family since 2006 is \$6,600 every year. With this budget, we now have lowered taxes in 180 different ways. That is what we are all about and I think the taxpayers know that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe the member is the one who has it all wrong. The government's taxation policy does favour Canada's wealthy. Using his example of the tax-free savings account, let me give him a dose of reality.

A good majority of the constituents who I represent will make individually somewhere between \$20,000 to \$40,000 a year. Out of that, maybe 5% will have contributed the maximum last year to their tax-free savings accounts. Compare that to those who make over \$200,000 a year. There it would be close to 35% who maximize it, and the government has chosen to double that benefit. That tells me the people who benefit the most are the wealthiest in Canada.

That is why I say the taxation policy favours Canada's wealthy. It is not fair taxation policy. Could the member explain how that discrepancy is fair?

• (1215)

Mr. Terence Young: Mr. Speaker, I do not think the hon. member was listening to my speech. The point is that the only way that people who never have an income over \$50,000 in their whole working life can ever become independent and have the freedom that wealthy people have is if they are able to save in a tax-free savings account. The growth within that account is never taxed. It is extremely powerful savings plan to help people have that independence later in life. That is the point of tax-free savings accounts.

There will always be people who earn more money than others. However, why are the Liberals trying to create a class war in Canada? Why are the Liberals picking on our doctors, lawyers, union leaders and other business people and even people in the arts? Why are they targeting them and trying to create a class war? I think it is because the Liberals just cannot stand that highly accomplished people earn more than others and they do not make a very large voting base, so too bad for them.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond to some of the questions I just heard and give the member an opportunity to talk about those. Of those who have maxed out their TFSAs, 60% earned less than \$60,000, which is contrary to what the member opposite just said. There are 856,000 Canadians age 65 and over who have maxed out their contributions. Another 1.3 million age 55 and older have done the same. Therefore, it is a tool being used by those who are in the lower and middle incomes. Could the member comment on the actual facts?

Mr. Terence Young: Mr. Speaker, those are the undeniable facts. People understand the power of savings with compounded interest in a tax-free savings account. However, if people ever want to know what a potential Liberal budget would look like federally, all they have to do is look at the province of Ontario right now. Ontario Liberals just announced two major tax grabs, the pension tax, which would take about \$2 billion out of the pockets of people and employers, and the carbon tax, which would be another \$1.5 billion. Then they are going to sell off portions of Ontario Hydro to try to raise another \$4.5 billion. Imagine that on a national scale and imagine—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. We only had a limited amount of time on that last round.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Burlington.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from the riding of Oakville for sharing his time with me today. I am very honoured to stand to speak to Bill C-59.

I have made an attempt to speak to all of the budget bills that have come before us, whether at the time the policy is introduced or during the implementation bills. There are normally two. One is in the spring, after the budget has been presented in the House, to implement what is in the budget, and other measures. There is also, normally, an implementation bill in the fall, which I know will not happen this year because we will be out on the hustings, asking people to support us.

It is my pleasure to be here, particularly this year. Over the last number of years, I have been advocating with our finance minister and finance officials for changes to the RRIFs in terms of the minimum withdrawal. I did not come up with that on my own. I want to thank the over 40 individuals who came to my office over the last year or so to talk about the issue of the level of required withdrawals they had to make from their RRIFs. This is not an organized lobby. They are individuals and their families affected by the existing rules.

I also want to thank the member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, who heard the same thing. We were very active with our colleagues on this side of the House on this issue, encouraging them to speak to the finance minister and financial officials about the possibility of looking at the withdrawal rate on RRIFs.

I was very excited to see that in this budget we have actually moved on it. Under the current system, the minimum withdrawal is 7.38%, and that will go down to 5.28%. Why is that important? Why did those 40 people come to see me, and what does it mean to them?

We have a couple of programs for retirement savings. We have the RRSP and RPP to encourage individuals to save for their retirement. Part of that encouragement is to give them tax relief for the amount of money they put away for their retirement.

Government Orders

A few years ago, the program required people to move that money from an RRSP, or the other savings program, into a registered retirement income fund. I believe the age for that was 68 or 69, but we moved it to 71, knowing that people had some more time and did not need the money that early. The fact is that people are living much longer than when this program was introduced decades ago. People need their retirement money to last longer. They need to be able to stretch it out to meet the needs they will have if they make into their 90s. Many of my constituents are making it into their 90s.

In my riding alone, the senior cohort is not only growing, it is actually the majority. That is over 55; it is not everyone over 71. However, that cohort is growing and moving forward and we need to be there now, making the changes now, so they can take advantage of it.

There is an excellent chart in the budget, which I would like to read into the record. Regarding the changes that we would make to RRIFs, or registered retirement income funds, let us look at the difference that it would make to an individual. Let us make the assumption, as the budget does, that it is \$100,000. A 2% inflation rate is built into that, and the return on investment in their income fund is at 5%. Some will do better, some will do a little worse, but this is our chart.

●(1220)

At age 71, one would have \$100,000. At age 80, under the existing rules, one would have \$64,000 left, but under the new rules of this budget implementation legislation, it would be \$77,000, a difference of 20%. This is a significant difference that those individuals could hold on to for the retirement funds that they need for basic living. Under the current rules, at age 85, it would be \$47,000, which would go to \$62,000. Many of my constituents are living into their nineties these days. At age 90, under the current rules, it would be \$30,000. Under the new rules, it would be \$44,000, and so on and so forth. It caps at \$20,000 at 94 years of age.

This is important because people are getting older in all ridings in the country, not just mine. We expect individuals to save for their retirement. The other option is to look to governments to support everything, but it cannot afford it. The government will not have the tax base to support the growing bubble of retirees who are coming with the baby boom. We have tools for saving, whether that be the tax-free savings account, as previously mentioned, or the registered retirement savings plan, which encourage people to save for their retirement so they will have less reliance on government to support them.

However, what was happening in my riding, because of the minimum, at 7.38%; because of good planning, good strategy and my constituents working hard, understanding their future and saving money; they were being required to take money out, reducing the cash flow that they would need in the years to come.

In the past, we would think that someone 71 years old would have another decade and a half left here. However, people are living longer. Last year I lost a grandmother at 97 years old. I have a grandmother still with me who is 97 years old. I have had two grandfathers aged 89. I have known four great-grandparents. People

are living longer, but I will let members know that it does not mean that I will be in this seat for another 40 years.

Some hon. members: That is not true.

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, I know that members hoped I would get re-elected for another 40 years, but I do not think that is going to happen.

I appreciate the fact that this government, through this budget bill, has recognized the importance of retirement savings and that it is our constituents' money. They have not paid taxes on it, because they use the system we put in place as a government to encourage people to save for their future. However, we now have recognized that they will need that money for a longer period of time.

Let us be honest, the government of the day will get its taxes. The plan for RRSPs is that when earnings are higher, money is put away and one would receive a reduction on taxes at that time, but when one takes that money out, one would pay taxes on it then. We would expect to be earning less when we take the money out and therefore the tax rate should be slightly less. However, what was happening in Burlington, and I believe across the country as we heard from the MP from West Vancouver, because the marketplace was not performing as well in terms of the stock market, people were taking their money out of RRIFs and actually losing money. They were unable to get the return on that money that they could have if they had left it there. They lost money in their income funds, and then we were forcing them to take that money out, which became a double-edged sword. We have recognized that and have made some significant changes to the registered retirement income fund, which is great for savings for seniors across this country.

Therefore, I am very proud to be supporting Bill C-59 and we look forward to having the bill passed and in place for this fiscal year.

●(1225)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to ask my colleague a question after his speech on the Conservatives' new-found passion for balanced budgets in 2015.

In Bill C-59, they have introduced a balanced budget act to require the government to balance the budget under certain circumstances.

Is my colleague prepared to make this measure retroactive, so that it applies to the Conservatives' last seven deficit budgets? Five of them would not have been accepted, according to the circumstances outlined in the budget implementation bill that allow a government to incur a deficit.

Would my colleague be prepared to make this proposal retroactive, so that cabinet ministers would have to pay out of their own pockets for all the Conservatives' deficit budgets that did not comply with the bill they are introducing today?

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, in the implementation bill there is a part implementing the balanced budget act. It states that if a country, or the world in our case, is facing a recession or a depression and the economics of the day require governments around the world, including Canada, to spend more than they are taking in, to have a deficit to stimulate the economy in order to create jobs and make sure that Canadians have the wealth they need to continue, the bill actually provides an exception for that to happen.

The finance minister of the day would come forward to the finance committee and discuss the issues of the day. That is included in the bill.

I stand behind it today. I stood behind it three years ago. Balanced books is the way governments, businesses and households should operate.

• (1230)

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the hon. member's last response on balanced budget legislation. He is quite right. As it is defined in the legislation, balanced budget legislation would only apply during times outside of recession.

Given the fact that we have not been in a recession, statistically, since the spring of 2009, would the government accept an amendment to the legislation to make it apply retroactively? As such, the cabinet and the Prime Minister would, of course, have their pay docked every year since 2009. During that period of time we have been outside of a recessionary period and the government has actually added \$160 billion to the national debt. Would he accept the spirit of the legislation and support an amendment to make it retroactive?

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, if we look back at the deficit reduction plans of all the parties in the House over the last number of years, which I have done relatively recently, the only party that had an actual deficit reduction plan was the Conservative Party. The Liberals want to spend more money. The NDP members always want to spend more money. New Democrats believe it grows on trees and somehow it grow back. It is like “the books balance themselves”, I guess.

An hon. member: That was the Liberal leader.

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, that was what the Liberal leader said.

The fact is, we did have a recession. We did have a deficit and we had a plan to pay it back and we met our obligations. We have balanced the books. We have balanced the budget in this fiscal year. We promised that.

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first, and it really is a first, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier. This is not the first time I have shared my time, but it is the first time I have remembered to mention it. I therefore have the honour of sharing my time with this excellent member.

I quite liked the speech by the hon. member who spoke before me. He is also the chair of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. I felt like telling him that it is not that we always want to spend more money. We want to spend Canadians' money on Canadians, whereas the Conservatives do not mind if that money is spent on a corporation.

It is all a question of nuance, and that is the big problem with Bill C-59, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 21, 2015 and other measures.

In the House, we are facing a time allocation motion—the 96th—which prevents members from across the country from speaking to such an important issue as the budget implementation bill. This bill is over 180 pages long and affects many laws. I especially want to talk in the House about other measures contained in controversial Bill C-59.

Since I do not believe that we will have the time to debate the bill at length, I will talk about three divisions that are of particular interest to me. I am referring to division 10, which concerns the parliamentary protective service, division 18 on the abolition of the long gun registry, and division 20, which deals with sick leave and disability programs. I will start with the last one I mentioned, namely, the division on sick leave and disability programs.

Since this bill was introduced, and even before that—the budget gave us a taste of what was to come—we have had the clear and distinct impression that the Government of Canada was set on what it was going to do, even though, over the years, it had made a commitment to its employees across the country who serve Canadians. I am a labour lawyer. We know how negotiations work. You give and you take. That is what negotiating is. In the end, you come to an agreement. Each party compromises in order to reach an agreement or a collective agreement. That is what happened in negotiations in previous years.

Now, with the stroke of a pen, the Conservatives have decided to take back what they had given to people, who for their part had also given up something in return. Thus, the government won concessions on some things over the years by giving these much talked-about sick benefits and a certain disability plan, that it is now taking back. That is not very democratic.

In my humble opinion, this could definitely be challenged in court and it is certainly not a way to treat those who are working here among the lawmakers in Parliament and delivering services to all Canadians. Make no mistake: this is a blatant lack of respect. When I hear the minister and the President of the Treasury Board saying that over 200 negotiation meetings have already been held, I think to myself that the Conservatives are very good at throwing all sorts of figures around, whenever and however they want, because they lump in pretty much anything and everything. They certainly did not hold intelligent and productive negotiations in good faith on this issue.

What is worse, this is like me saying to someone that I am going to negotiate with him, but then I just go ahead and do whatever I want, even if he does not in any way support my decision. That basically means that there will be no negotiation. That is what this provision of division 20 of Bill C-59 boils down to.

Government Orders

I can say that the NDP is strongly opposed to that way of doing things. If the Conservative government believes that the government negotiators were not able to negotiate the right things over the years, then it needs to do something about that. That is the government's decision. However, it should not take away from people the things that belong to them, and it should not be spreading false information. For example, it should not be saying that all federal government employees abuse the system and their sick leave. I think that is insulting to dedicated employees who work tirelessly to serve the public.

•(1235)

If the government wants to defend an argument, there are many ways of doing so other than spouting such nonsense. The employees who work for us should at least have our respect. This is certainly not a very respectful way of doing things. To all those who have written me to ask what our position is, I can tell them that the NDP's position is clear: the NDP does not support the government's position on this at all. We are going to vote against this measure and we are certainly going to clean up the mess. Heaven knows that there will be plenty of cleanup to do after the October 19 election.

I will now move on to the issue with division 18, which I find most worrisome. When we were debating the time allocation motion, the Minister of Finance answered a question regarding the division on ending the long gun registry. His response concerned me. Let us not kid ourselves. All of the members will hear about the letter from the Privacy Commissioner, Ms. Legault, who wrote to the Speaker of the House. She informed him of some facts that I find extremely worrisome. In short, she said that illegal acts were allegedly committed and documents were apparently destroyed, even though they should not have been destroyed and their destruction was not legal in any way. She even informed the Attorney General of Canada that the RCMP had committed this offence. Our RCMP. I get worried when these allegations come from an officer of Parliament as important as the Privacy Commissioner. Once again, we see a pattern. Just a few sentences in a budget implementation bill and the RCMP is absolved of everything it did illegally without legal authorization. That is absolutely despicable. This government claims to be a law and order government, but only when it sees fit. That is extremely worrisome.

The Minister of Finance gave a big, beautiful, super-intelligent response, saying that this was a promise the government had made in the 2011 election campaign. I listened carefully, because even though I do not necessarily share the government's views on the long gun registry, I can still admit that the Conservatives did promise to put an end to the long gun registry. I congratulate them for following through on their promise. I do not agree, but they did make that promise. However, in their election campaign they never talked about destroying data, nor did they talk about absolving those who may have been involved in the obstruction of justice or committed other offences. They certainly never talked about that.

I invite my colleagues, who have to deal with this issue with very little time, to pay particular attention to that. That is the problem with the government's approach, when it goes ahead with an omnibus bill that changes everything under the sun, even things that do not necessarily have anything to do with its main objective. I do not have high hopes in that regard.

As a final point, I would like to say a few words about division 10, which has to do with the parliamentary protective service. I encourage my colleagues to read that section. It reiterates the importance of our role as parliamentarians and outlines how that protection will be carried out. The RCMP is going to take over this task, under the authority of the Speaker of the Senate and the Speaker of the House. The bill reiterates the principle that the work of parliamentarians must never be obstructed. Once again, I feel as though I am reading one thing, but living another.

My colleague from Toronto—Danforth argued this point in the question of privilege he raised, which was recognized by the Chair but reversed by the government. I heard my colleague from Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques say that it was perhaps the last time we would have a chance to speak in the House on a budget bill. The Conservatives managed to balance the budget on the backs of just about everyone. This government has been the most undemocratic government I have seen in my life, throughout all the years that I spent following politics, as both a politician and a regular citizen.

•(1240)

I hope I got everyone's attention so that they will go read these three divisions. Public servants need not worry. The NDP understands them, appreciates their work, and will be there to repair the damage.

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's comments and impassioned speech on this matter.

I would like to ask her a question about one of the provisions in the bill. It deals with the protection of intellectual property in Canada.

The protection of intellectual property is a very important part of building a knowledge-based economy, because it allows knowledge creators in Canada to protect that and put it into the marketplace in a meaningful way.

One of the sections in this bill would give patent agents privilege, which is something the Standing Committee on the Law of Patents of the World Intellectual Property Organization talked about with regard to Canada, saying in essence that in order for Canada to have a stronger intellectual property protection regime, this particular privilege should be enacted.

Could the member comment on whether this is something the NDP would support? I know the Intellectual Property Institute of Canada supports it as well, and I think it is a great thing. I hope the member supports it.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Mr. Speaker, I am very glad that my colleague asked me that question because it proves my point.

Without necessarily getting into the wording of the title of the bill, which, again, is “An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget and other measures”, this is a typical example of something that falls under “other measures”.

Government Orders

Whether we are talking about security here or the issues I mentioned in the divisions I deemed important, such as abolishing the long gun registry and the amnesty given to actions that can be perceived as crime or obstruction, these aspects should be part of a separate bill so that the right committee can study all the pertinent repercussions.

As far as the issue of copyright and registration is concerned, my colleague and Canadian Heritage critic often talks to me rather passionately about how all these rights can be reconciled. It is not easy. If we make the companies happy, then the creators are not necessarily happy.

Did this not merit a respectful amount of time for consideration, either at the Standing Committee on Finance or at the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, where this issue will likely end up and where we will not even have the right to make amendments? That is the problem with Bill C-59.

• (1245)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member talked about a real concern we have been expressing.

The member for Cape Breton—Canso, the Liberal Party's labour critic, has raised the issue of the lack of goodwill on the part of the government to negotiate in good faith with Canada's public service union.

It seems the Conservatives just do not have respect for professionalism in our public service. We have witnessed it even beyond the immediate public service in some of the crown corporations, whether it is a lack of confidence in CBC or some of the dramatic decisions that have taken place in Canada Post with regard to letter carriers and door-to-door delivery.

I wonder if the member could expand on her thoughts in regard to the general lack of goodwill the Government of Canada has toward our public servants, whether they are with crown corporations or directly with the government, and the negative impact that has in terms of service overall. We could include service centres that have been closed down over the last number of years.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Mr. Speaker, first of all, to this day I am always blown away by the quality of the work done by our public service. With resources that began to be cut back in the 1990s and continued dwindling in the 2000s and now in the 2010s, it performs miracles with very little.

When we speak to public servants, we see how burned out they are. While they might need some leave to recover from this profound exhaustion, the government is attacking something that is very important to them, and we have ended up where we are now.

I am not surprised that the Conservative government did what it did. Just listen to how the President of the Treasury Board talks about the public service, the people who work in the service of Canadians. The language he uses is so disrespectful that one would think he sees them all as people who abuse the system.

Anyone who sits down with public servants will see that they are professional people who care about the services they are mandated to

deliver to the public. There is a general lack of respect, and that needs to change.

I would simply point out to the member for Winnipeg North that the strikes that took place in the 1990s and earlier did not happen under a Conservative government, but rather under the Liberals—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

Ms. Éleine Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the more things change, the more they stay the same.

The latest budget implementation bill is, not surprisingly, another omnibus bill. This one is 150 pages long and amends dozens of acts, most of which have nothing to do with the budget. Unfortunately, that should come as no surprise. The Conservatives have gotten into this habit and have tried to make it the norm for Parliament. They have gotten us used to disdain—even outright disgust—for the basic principles of parliamentary democracy. Frankly, this is one of the biggest disappointments of my first mandate.

Since being elected as a majority government, the Conservatives have done everything in their power to sidestep their transparency and accountability obligations. They are the government, but they seem to have forgotten that the MPs, including Conservative backbenchers and opposition MPs, are responsible for overseeing and studying bills. Unfortunately, the Conservatives have repeatedly used omnibus bills as a tactic to avoid the oversight that is meant to be carried out by all of the other parliamentarians in the House as well as all Canadians.

With this clearly undemocratic process, the Conservatives are trying to rush through hundreds of legislative amendments that have nothing to do with the budget, without any study. In the case of the most recent budget, which was tabled on April 21, 2015, on one of the rare work days of our current Minister of Finance, the Conservatives saw an opportunity to launch their election campaign. For the Conservatives, it was not an opportunity to help people who really need help and middle-class Canadian families. It was an opportunity to give presents to their wealthy friends instead of helping those most in need.

Despite the warnings of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, many opposition MPs and various experts, the Conservatives are moving forward with their ill-advised income splitting regime, which will obviously help just 15% of the richest Canadian families and not those who really need help. The income splitting together with the increase in the TFSA contribution limit, which will rise to \$10,000, will mean a decrease of billions of dollars in the public coffers in future years.

That money could be used to implement social programs to help families; people living in poverty; single mothers, who the Conservatives claim to want to help; more traditional couples; and so on. However, the government prefers to work on getting re-elected. According to this government, it is not the problem of today's elected officials. Rather, it is the problem of the Prime Minister's granddaughter and future generations. Quite frankly, that is one of the worst things I have heard in the House or anywhere else.

Government Orders

In any case, that is what the current Minister of Finance and this Conservative government think. They are washing their hands of it and will leave it up to our children, grandchildren and future generations to fix all the problems they are creating now. Frankly, that is an irresponsible attitude that I do not understand, especially from people who boast about being extraordinarily strong fiscal managers. Time and time again we have seen that this is not the case.

The Conservatives would have us believe that this is their reputation, but Canadians can see right through it. They know very well that this is not the case. In fact, more and more recent studies name provincial New Democrat governments as the best managers of public funds. In 2015 we will have the opportunity to show Canadians that we will also be the best federal managers of public funds.

To get back to the budget that was just tabled, even the measures that appear to be universal will have very few positive effects on Canadian families. The universal child care benefit is the best example of that. The Conservatives announced a \$60 increase with much fanfare. Canadian families will now receive \$160 to help them with child care costs. At first glance that may seem like a lot, but with the Conservatives, the devil is in the details and you have to dig a little deeper.

The first thing the Conservatives refuse to tell Canadian families is that this universal child care benefit will be considered taxable income. It is therefore another tax that the Conservative government is imposing on Canadians, regardless of their income.

● (1250)

That tax will be imposed on families regardless of their income. The advice that financial experts are giving Canadian families is to not spend that money on child care but to keep at least half of it to cover any unpleasant surprises they may get when they file their income tax return next year. How does the government think it is really going to help families when they have to put some of the money it gives them aside to cover the cost of this new tax? Frankly, that is ridiculous.

The Conservatives do not seem to understand that \$160 per month does not even come close to covering child care costs across the country. I would like to quote a few statistics from 2012 that I obtained from the Childcare Resource and Research Unit. Unfortunately, things have not improved since then. In Nova Scotia, parents who manage to find a day care space for their child—because not all of them can—pay an average of \$825 a month. In British Columbia, parents pay an average of \$1,047 a month, and in Ontario they pay \$1,152 a month. In Toronto, more specifically, child care costs can be up to \$1,676 a month. I do not know who the Conservatives think they are going to help with \$160 a month. That amount is absolutely ridiculous when we look at the actual financial constraints faced by families who simply want to earn a living and make sure that their children are receiving the best care possible. I really do not know where the government's head is at, offering families such a ridiculously low amount, especially given that they have to save part of it to pay their taxes the following year.

Ms. Ève Pécelet: In the sand.

Ms. Éline Michaud: Mr. Speaker, indeed, as my colleague from La Pointe-de-l'Île pointed out, the Conservatives probably have their heads in the sand.

I would like to talk about another deplorable effect that the budget will have. Actually, in this case it is more of a failure to have an effect. Increasing the universal child care benefit will not create new day care spaces. For parents who have already been lucky enough to secure a spot for their child in a day care centre or in private child care, that is not a problem. They may get a minimal amount of assistance. However, the Conservatives' plan does not address the difficult situation of all the other parents who have nowhere to take their child when they go to work. The NDP has proposed a plan that the Conservatives continue to ignore, for some unknown reason. Contrary to the Conservative propaganda, the NDP does not want to eliminate this benefit. We obviously want parents to have access to what little money they can get. In addition, the NDP has a plan to create \$15-a-day child care spaces. Thus, we are offering real choice to parents. In addition to receiving the universal child care benefit, they will have access to affordable day care.

This program already exists in Quebec. The NDP program could bolster the existing program with federal moneys. The results of this program have been extraordinary. I will quote Ann Decter, the spokesperson for the YWCA:

Between 1996, when low-cost child care was introduced in Quebec, and 2008, a total of 69,700 additional mothers joined the workforce...the number of single mothers on social assistance was reduced by more than half...; relative poverty rates for single parent families headed by women declined from 36% to 22%...; and the GDP rose \$5.1 billion...

These are real, tangible effects that will benefit everyone in Canada, not just families. That is the kind of measure we want to see in the budget. We are nonetheless pleased that the Conservatives have finally seen the light after many years and have decided to establish a tax credit for small and medium-sized businesses. That is an NDP idea. They have finally seen the light. We also support the tax credit for home renovation, another of our wishes, along with the measures to assist veterans included in the budget implementation bill. I do not understand why they are there; it is a subject that deserves a proper debate in the House, but we do support these measures, no matter what.

However, because the Conservatives have decided to play political games and include these measures in an omnibus bill, we cannot support it. We must oppose it. It is clearly undemocratic and it does not help the vast majority of Canadian families.

● (1255)

[English]

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest. I wondered where the hon. member was taking us. She quoted the minister, which is not the quote at all. On page 12 of the document it says:

Reducing Canada's debt burden is also a question of intergenerational fairness—it would simply not be fair to saddle our children and grandchildren with inevitable tax hikes to pay for the expenses we could not settle ourselves.

Government Orders

There is a decided difference between saying this was what was said when in fact what is said is in print on page 12 of the book. I think it is noteworthy that we want to correct the record; the minister did not say it would be the fault of the children. He said it would be unfair. In other words, we should not do it. That is where we sit.

• (1300)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Éline Michaud : Mr. Speaker, the hon. member opposite must not watch the same news channels as most Canadians and he must not read the same newspapers, because everyone saw and heard the Minister of Finance use those words to answer a question about the impact of raising the TFSA contribution limit to \$10,000. I am not sure where he was at that moment. The question has been asked in the House several times. Everyone in Canada is aware of it.

Perhaps the hon. member is confused because I presented a lot of facts based on science, and I know that is not the strong suit of those on the other side. It is difficult to follow but he should go and watch all the videos available on the tabling of the budget, because the Minister of Finance really did say those words and they were criticized all across the country.

[*English*]

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, spinning off the last question to a certain extent about saddling future generations, there are two ways that we can saddle future generations, either with debt or with the lack of ability of governments to provide the programs to citizens for which citizens are asking.

Although the government likes to claim it is a good fiscal manager, we do know this is really the first budget, and it is kind of a fiction figure in terms of balancing the budget because the Conservatives have sold off a lot of property around the world. They have basically used the employment insurance fund to balance the books, and the list goes on.

My question for the member is this. The way the government manages its fiscal affairs, does she see that as leaving future generations the ability to have the kind of programming they need, or is that just a misnomer on the part of the government?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Éline Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

It is one of the rare moments in the House when the NDP and the Liberals agree on the fact that no one should let themselves be taken in by the idea that the Conservatives are good managers of public funds. People have repeatedly seen the evidence that it is not true. No one believes that government propaganda any more.

Unfortunately, but clearly, as I said in my speech, both the Parliamentary Budget Officer and a number of financial experts have decried the Conservative government's poor decisions, including income splitting and raising the TFSA limit to \$10,000. Billions of dollars are going to be kept out of the public treasury just to help this Conservative government get re-elected and to help their wealthy friends keep more money in their pockets.

We in the NDP have a different vision. We want to ensure equality of opportunity so that people who live in poor conditions can still

have access to services and help from the government so they too can take their place in our society. That is true for today and for future generations. Unfortunately the Conservative government does not share our vision.

[*English*]

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to be here today to speak to the 2015 budget. I have been a member of Parliament now for 22 years, and I have spoken to a lot of budgets, first from the point of view of the opposition and for the past nine years from the government side. I want to say that I really prefer the budgets from the government side. I have enjoyed speaking to them and pointing out to Canadians the benefits and changes that have been presented not only in the 2015 budget but in a series of budgets leading to a long-term plan to help make our country better.

Canada, as we all know, is a marvellous country. It is truly the best country in the world in which to live, but when we were elected as the government almost 10 years ago, there was a need for a change in direction. I would argue that the country had been going the wrong way for a number of years, with increased taxation, more interference in business, more red tape, and less freedom all around.

I am proud to be a member of Parliament in this Conservative political party, which has done a lot over these 10 years to make Canada a much better place.

I am here today to speak to budget 2015. We only have a little time to speak to the budget, but I want to take my time to focus on two topics, and they would be seniors, who are extremely important in every constituency, and as time allows, some of the changes for small business.

Mr. Speaker, I am sharing my time with the hon. member for Calgary Centre.

Since 2006, our government has strengthened the retirement income system and has increased direct support for seniors to address their changing needs. In fact, actions taken by this government have substantially increased the income seniors can earn before they are required to pay income tax.

In 2015, a single senior could claim income of \$20,368 before paying any tax at all. I remember what that number was when we got into government nine years ago, and it was considerably lower.

For a couple, it would be \$40,720 before they would pay a penny in income tax. That is a remarkable transformation for seniors across this country.

Government Orders

However, that is only one area we have worked on. In the budget there are changes that would add to the benefits seniors see. Economic action plan 2015 continues in this direction by proposing a reduction in minimum withdrawals from registered retirement income funds, RRIFs, and the creation of a home accessibility tax credit.

The reduction in the minimum withdrawal factor takes into account the longer lifespans of Canadians. We all know that we are living longer. For RRIFs, we are requiring now that Canadians take less money out so they can stretch that capital for a longer period of time so that they are far less likely to run out of retirement income before their lives end.

The minimum withdrawal factor for registered retirement income funds is determined by percentage factors, which are on a particular rate of return and indexing assumptions. For example, currently, a senior must withdraw 7.38% of the RRIF in the year he or she is age 71. The new factors proposed will reduce that minimum withdrawal to 5.28% at age 71. By permitting more capital preservation, the new factors will help reduce the risk of outliving one's savings while ensuring that the tax deferral provided on registered retirement savings plans continues to serve into retirement.

The proposed measures would benefit seniors by allowing them to preserve up to 60% more of their registered retirement income funds by age 95, if they so choose. Of course, that is a decision each senior and each couple can make.

● (1305)

The new RRIF withdrawal rates would apply for 2015 and subsequent years. RRIF holders who at any time in 2015 withdraw more than the reduced 2015 minimum amount would be permitted to re-contribute the excess, up to the amount of the proposed reduction in the minimum withdrawal limit, to their RRIFs. Re-contributions would be permitted until February 29, 2016 and would be deductible for the 2015 tax year, reducing the registered retirement income funds minimum withdrawal requirement.

The second change is the introduction of the home accessibility tax credit. A similar measure our government put in a few years ago seemed to be very successful. We would put in place a home accessibility tax credit that would apply to seniors.

Making improvements to improve safety, access, and functionality of a dwelling for seniors and persons with disabilities can be costly. In recognition of this, and of the additional benefits of independent living, economic action plan 2015 proposes a new, permanent home accessibility tax credit. The proposed 15% non-refundable income tax credit would apply to up to \$10,000 in eligible home renovation expenditures per year, providing up to \$1,500 in tax relief. For some seniors in particular, that is significant. Eligible expenditures would be for improvements that would allow seniors or persons who are eligible for the disability tax credit to be safer and more mobile and to function better in their homes. These are changes that would make a real improvement in the lives of many seniors.

Some people, as well as some in this House, talk about seniors as though they are all low-income wage earners. The reality is that a lot of the personal wealth of the nation is in the hands of seniors. We have a wide range in seniors' incomes. We have seniors who are

barely getting by living on the Canada pension plan and perhaps old age security and the guaranteed income supplement. We certainly have that group. However, too often politicians forget about others, such as people who have retired with quite a substantial retirement income, such as a teacher with teacher's income, a nurse with a nurse's income, or someone with a public service pension plan or a private pension plan, on top of the Canada pension plan. I would say that there are a lot of people in that mid range who are doing quite well. For them, of course, the pension income-splitting change we put in place a few years ago for retirement income for seniors is extremely helpful. It saves some seniors a substantial amount of money and allows them to live a lot better in retirement.

The measures in the 2015 economic action plan are on top of a wide range of other changes we have made before.

Of course, there are also a lot of seniors who are in the high-income bracket. The benefits from lowering the federal income tax rate from 11% to 9% in the next few years will help all seniors and all Canadians.

Seniors are extremely important people and are well worth government consideration because of what they have done to build our country. We should thank them on a daily basis for what they have done to build this truly wonderful country of Canada.

● (1310)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in his speech, my colleague placed a great deal of emphasis on seniors. Well, what seniors are really worried about, especially those in La Pointe-de-l'Île, is health and health care.

The Health Council of Canada, an agency that the Conservatives demolished last year, had in fact proposed that health transfers to the provinces be 6%, in order to respond to demographic changes and to support our aging population. The Conservatives had promised to implement this proposal.

However, now they are telling us that they have revised their proposal and that they have decided to cap transfers at 3%. The provinces are going to find themselves with a shortfall of \$36 billion to invest in health care for our seniors.

How does my colleague explain this?

[*English*]

Mr. Leon Benoit: Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the member opposite to actually see what our government has done and to look at the reality of the situation and not only refer to her party's talking points, which sometimes, quite frankly, are not accurate. This is one situation where the talking points are not accurate.

Government Orders

We are a government that over nine years has increased transfers to the provinces dramatically. We have increased transfers for health care, and these transfers are designated for health care, by 6% per year. The former Liberal government slashed transfers to the provinces for health care dramatically, downloading onto the provinces and causing an awful lot of problems in the health care system.

We do what is best for health care. We will continue to do that. The members opposite ought to get their talking points right.

• (1315)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened very intently to my colleague's speech, especially when he was talking about RRIFs and the new rules for minimum withdrawals under RRIFs. The question that came to mind when listening to that segment of his speech was why there should be minimum withdrawal rates at all.

If we look at it in a certain way, we can really ask that question. Is the government saying, by having minimum withdrawal rates, that seniors cannot decide for themselves how much they want to take out of their RRIFs in any given year? Does having minimum withdrawals not limit seniors' choices in some way?

Mr. Leon Benoit: Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I personally agree with him 100%. I think he is right, but it takes time to get there, so our government is taking a really important step, which would substantially reduce the required amount seniors have to take out.

My hope is that in future years, as the budget allows and over a period of time, we will in fact remove that requirement entirely. I would really love to see that, and I look forward to the day down the road when that happens. I agree with the member.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a very specific question about division 18 of the budget implementation act, which grants amnesty from civil or criminal proceedings, among others, for any act committed by a public servant in relation to the destruction of the long gun registry.

Furthermore, the most important element with regard to division 18 is that the Conservatives are exempting the long gun registry from the Access to Information Act. This could set a dangerous precedent, as the government will be able to declare that certain information will be exempted from the Access to Information Act. It would no longer be available to Canadians who make access to information requests.

What does my colleague think of this precedent set by the Conservatives, who are exempting information that would otherwise be available through the Access to Information Act?

[*English*]

Mr. Leon Benoit: Mr. Speaker, that is a good question.

This is the party that removed the long gun registry. We have always thought it was a waste of money, that it was ineffective, and that it inappropriately interfered with hunters, farmers, and anyone, really, who wanted to own a long gun.

This is just part of the process to ensure that the registry actually is destroyed, so that farmers, duck hunters, and others can feel very comfortable with the fact that the registry has been destroyed as we promised.

Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to stand to speak on economic action plan 2015, the 2015 budget.

When some people imagine budgets, they think about only the numbers and their eyes glaze over. They think budgets might have little impact on everyday people. I would like to point out how this particular budget is very significant for all Canadians and how it makes life better for people in Calgary Centre, whom I am humbled and privileged to represent.

When I spoke on the budget last year, I spoke about how we were planning for a balanced budget and the steps we were taking to lead up to it; this year, we have delivered. A balanced budget is exactly what Calgary residents have told me their number one priority is. We have done it, with a \$1.4 billion surplus, despite a precipitous drop in oil prices and an uncertain global economy.

People in Calgary Centre and across Canada are acutely aware that given low oil prices and the state of the global economy, the budget did not balance itself. It happened because of the expert guidance of our Prime Minister, the finance minister, former finance minister Jim Flaherty, and the strong encouragement of our Conservative caucus. The budget is where the rubber hits the road. The budget is the proof of the expert leadership that we getting here in Canada. By balancing the budget, keeping taxes low and delivering more benefits to families, we are keeping Canada the envy of the world.

Last year I spoke about energy being Canada's natural competitive advantage. Every province and territory from coast to coast has benefited from this industry. While the industry is now under considerable pressure, making it more important than ever to diversify our markets to China, to India, and to the EU, this budget includes new environmental measures that will demonstrate to Canadians how we can continue to develop and sustain our resources. Energy and the environment can be nurtured and developed together.

This sets us apart from the NDP, whose leader branded the energy industry as spreading Dutch disease, and the Liberals, whose leader opposes many pipelines and west coast tanker traffic, which we know we need in order to get our product to these markets.

We know that Canadians want to make sure that energy development is safe for the environment, as do we. The natural resources minister has emphasized that projects will not proceed unless they are safe for people and safe for the environment. They have to pass a rigorous scientific and fact-based inquiry by the National Energy Board as well as undergo a complete environmental assessment. This budget includes \$80 million over five years for the National Energy Board to do its job and give Canadians that assurance.

Government Orders

It is coupled with a strict new polluter pays bill, Bill C-46, that puts energy firms on the hook for clean-ups, thus giving them extra impetus to make sure they get our resources to market without incident—which, incidentally, they do 99.999% of the time. Canadians can have confidence that our environment will be protected as we develop our competitive advantage in energy.

I would like to talk about another type of competitive advantage that this budget provides, and that is economic freedom.

This year, with a balanced budget, we can maintain and grow funding to important areas in health and education, as my hon. friend just spoke about, and at the same time provide tax cuts and benefits to help Canadians balance their own budgets. Unlike the Liberals, we do not believe that Canadians will spend those returned tax dollars on beer and popcorn. “This is people's own money”, the Prime Minister said. “We want to make sure more of it stays in their pockets and creates jobs and economic growth.”

What are the differences in the way Conservatives and other parties view the money that Canadians earn? Our government believes in economic freedom, and this year Canada was ranked number six in the world by the Economic Freedom of the World report. Economic freedom gives Canadians an opportunity to earn and an opportunity to decide how they wish to spend, rather than having those decisions made by someone else. When there is economic freedom, people have more control over their lives, and yes, government has less control.

In contrast to the other parties' belief that the government should take in as much money as it can, our government is taking less, and we are balancing the budget today so we are not mortgaging our children's futures.

• (1320)

Our latest family tax cut would give 1.7 million families more control over their lives. These tax relief measure would give parents like Sara and Sam an extra \$6,640 this year that they could spend as they see fit. This measure would have a considerable impact on the quality of life of all Canadian families.

Retirees like Bill and Ruth would also have more economic freedom under economic action plan 2015. Seniors could put off taking funds out of their tax-protected RRIFs and leave the money there longer until it is needed.

What if I am not like Sara and Sam, or a retired couple like Bill and Ruth? What is there in the budget for me? For many young Canadians, owning a home looked like a distant goal, but we have introduced the first-time home buyers' tax credit of up to \$5,000 for those buying their first home.

There are incentives for people who are retired. There are incentives for apprentices who want to take apprenticeship training. There are incentives for students who want to go back to school. The bottom line is that our federal government is giving Canadians more economic freedom by giving them more money in their pockets so they can decide how to use it. We are helping the middle class and those who want to join it.

Now I would like to talk about another of the human sides of enterprise, and that is people in need.

Two years ago, Albertans suddenly found themselves grappling with the largest natural disaster in Canadian history, the 2013 southern Alberta flood. As June approaches again, Calgarians in my riding are looking at the skies and praying that there will not be another once-in-a-hundred-years flood.

I can tell them that as a government, we have been acting. As most know, \$2.8 billion in federal funds was set aside for flood recovery costs in Alberta. In addition to those funds, \$134 million is currently being put into Environment Canada monitoring networks and satellite warning and forecast systems to better predict major events like the 2013 Alberta flood.

Our government has also committed to investing \$200 million over four years into mitigation, which would include money for mapping. This is very important for insurance companies, which need it in order to provide flood insurance in Canada for the first time.

Further, federal infrastructure dollars could now be used for disaster mitigation projects. It is now up to the Province of Alberta to prioritize disaster mitigation on its agenda, and I urge the new premier to do that.

In this budget, our government is continuing the Building Canada plan. This is the largest and longest-running infrastructure program in Canadian history. Cities have never seen the kind of funding they are seeing now from our federal government. The program would see \$53 billion invested in infrastructure across Canada over 10 years. Alberta would receive \$3.2 billion, with \$942 million coming from the new Building Canada fund and an estimated \$2.27 billion coming from the federal gas tax fund. That is a lot of zeros.

Calgary has gained \$427 million through the federal gas tax fund since 2006. We have invested in such projects as finishing the Calgary ring road and improving Calgary's transit. The city sets these priorities.

Federally, we are also helping to fund some 27 summer festivals, such as Sled Island and GlobalFest. There are things like CIFF, and theatre groups like One Yellow Rabbit and the Calgary Spoken Word Festival. We have provided more than \$25 million to the gorgeous new National Music Centre in Calgary, \$20 million to the Bella Concert Hall at Mount Royal University, and \$25 million to the Agrium Centre at Stampede Park.

We have balanced the budget while maintaining and increasing transfer payments to the provinces for important things like health care.

This is happening not only in Alberta, but all across the country. People's lives are better and richer because of our budget. Albertans' lives are better, New Brunswickers' lives are better, British Columbians' lives are better, and we have balanced our budget. That is what leadership looks like.

Government Orders

• (1325)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her presentation. I think this shows us the extent to which the Conservatives like to dream in Technicolor.

My colleague ended her speech by saying that the budget was really making things better for people living in New Brunswick. I would like to point out that a lot of people in New Brunswick who work in the oil patch in Alberta have lost their jobs. I do not see anything in the budget that will help them. In addition, I would like to point out that many of the workers in New Brunswick are seasonal workers and that the budget will be digging even more deeply into the employment insurance fund, for a total of \$17 billion over five years. That will bring the amount that the government has taken out of the EI fund to more than \$24 billion. This is coming close to the \$50 billion that the Liberals took. Things are obviously going well. At the same time as they are taking money from New Brunswickers, the government is proposing measures that will benefit only the wealthiest 15% in Canada.

Is my colleague not ashamed to say that they are going to balance the budget and it will be a good thing for everybody? Basically, she is saying the opposite of what her own Minister of Finance has said. He said that it would be our grandchildren who would be paying for this budget.

• (1330)

[*English*]

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Mr. Speaker, it is hard to spin a budget with such good news as something that is bad.

I want to use the example of a fellow named Ronnie, who could be from New Brunswick. Ronnie is an apprentice. He is a Red Seal apprentice. A person like Ronnie will receive \$1,715 in tax relief and increased benefits this year.

We have programs like the Canada job grant and the Canada apprentice loan. With this budget we are also creating better harmonization of certification requirements across the country, so that if there is not a job in New Brunswick, Ronnie can move to another province for work. He can even take the training there to find work.

Businesses have told us that is exactly what they need, and guys like Ronnie from New Brunswick have told us that is exactly what they need as well. We have jobs still waiting for folks like that.

This budget provides for many sectors of our society, including students and people from New Brunswick.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here we are in an election year, and the Conservative government says we have a balanced budget. I do not believe that, quite frankly.

If we look at the government's balanced budget, what did it do? It borrowed out of the contingency fund—something that other ministers said they would never do to balance the books—and then it sold off \$2 billion worth of GM shares in order to get a surplus of just over \$1 billion.

That is a fudged balanced budget, and we will not know until after the next federal election whether or not it is, in fact, balanced.

A former speaker said we should just reflect on the Liberal provincial government. Would it not be better to reflect upon the last Liberal administration, when we had Jean Chrétien with balanced budgets and Paul Martin with balanced budgets? In fact, the Liberals handed the government the last balanced budget it actually had.

I wonder if the member might want to tell Canadians and her constituents whether she really believes that they do have a balanced budget that has actually been earned.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Mr. Speaker, members have no idea how glad I am the member asked that question, because I was there when Jean Chrétien came to Alberta and gave Alberta less money per capita for health care than every other province in Canada. We have corrected that.

Not only that: we have increased funding for health care. Funding for health care for all provinces will go up under this budget. That is what quality of life for Canadians looks like. It is not what they saw under the Liberals.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to once again participate in this debate on the budget implementation bill on behalf of the people I represent in Parkdale—High Park, in Toronto.

The people in Parkdale—High Park, like most Torontonians and probably most Canadians, are pretty fair-minded people. They are thoughtful, they pay attention to what is going on, and they are pretty community-minded. They get involved in their neighbourhood. They are good volunteers. They really want government to help them and their communities.

First of all, on their behalf I have to say that so many people have written to me that they are offended that the government insists on bringing in these omnibus budget bills that are basically an amalgam of several pieces of legislation. This particular bill is 150 pages long, with 270 clauses, and dozens of acts thrown in together, many of which have nothing to do with the budget.

My constituents are offended by the process with which the government brings in its legislation. They always ask what the Conservatives are trying to hide, in refusing to have open, thorough debate and open discussion of their legislation.

Joining me in this debate today, I would like to inform the Speaker that I will be splitting my time with the member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

This omnibus bill is a way to obscure what is in fact the real legislative agenda of the government. The other thing people in my community have said is that they find the notion that this is a balanced budget is a bit of a sleight of hand. Technically, I suppose we could call it that. However, the way to a so-called razor-thin balanced budget has been through devastating cuts to the public service in Canada. So many things that Canadians rely on, whether it is food safety, transportation safety, or the support for veterans have been cut; they are the services that government needs to be providing for Canadians.

Government Orders

That is not fair. It is not a true balance. It really is undercutting what Canadians are paying for. I think Canadians know they are getting a very raw deal with the government and its phony balanced budget. They also know that getting to this balanced budget came by way of raiding the employment insurance fund. Less than 40% of unemployed Canadians even have access to the employment insurance benefits that they need when they are unemployed, benefits they have paid into. They and their employers paid premiums into this fund, and then when they lose their job and need the fund, for the vast majority of them, it is not there. In the city of Toronto, I think only about 20% of people who lose their job are able to access employment insurance.

The government, like the Liberals before them, has dug in with both hands, scooped up a lot of money and used it to cover off its deficits.

The other thing the government has done is that it has had a bit of a fire sale, selling off GM shares at a loss, which basically gave up any opportunity to have a window on General Motors, especially when there is a lot of concern and uncertainty about continued investment by General Motors in Canada. It seemed to be a particularly bad time for Canada to sell those shares.

The government also got its supposed balance by raiding the rainy day fund, the contingency fund for Canada.

The government should not hang its hat on what a great economic manager it is, because it has in fact made choices that really have not been in the best interest of the majority of Canadians. It could have used this budget to create child care spaces. It promised to create 100,000 child care spaces. The Prime Minister himself promised that.

• (1335)

Guess how many child care spaces the government has created? The Conservatives have created exactly the same number as the Liberals before them, and that number is zero, none, nada. They have failed to create even one child care space for Canadians. That is shameful and I think a terrible legacy for this and the previous government in this country.

On infrastructure, our cities and communities across this country are crying out for effective infrastructure investment. I come from Toronto where we are effectively stuck in gridlock. The Toronto Board of Trade estimates that we lose, as an economy, \$6 billion every single year because of lack of infrastructure investment. This is cumulative. Not only has the current government failed to invest in infrastructure, but it is building on the previous failures of Liberal governments before it.

Sadly, we are now in this situation where we have gridlocked roads, crumbling bridges, bursting water mains, and electricity that goes out whenever there is a bad storm. This is no way to run the biggest city, the engine of our economy here in Canada. It is no way to run Toronto or any other community. I say it is a disgrace and failure on the part of the current federal government.

We also see a real housing crisis in this country, which is one of the biggest causes of poverty in Canada. People cannot afford a decent roof over their heads. I see it in my community of Parkdale where people are paying far too much for poor-quality rental

accommodation. We have recently seen big multinational companies like Akelius come in and do superficial, cosmetic renovations and jack up the rent, and people are forced out of their homes.

I want to pay tribute to people in Parkdale who have gone to the Landlord and Tenant Board, challenged those decisions, and won some victories for affordable housing in our community. However, we need to have the federal government at our backs supporting the community, supporting Canadians who work hard and are looking for a decent, affordable place to live. We need the government's support, and we need a national housing strategy. Sadly, this was cancelled in Canada under the previous Liberal government, but the current Conservative government had a chance to do something about housing and it has failed.

Another major issue in my community is the Union Pearson Express: the express line that goes from the largest railway station, Union Station, to our largest airport, Pearson. There will be trains running every seven and a half minutes past many houses, schools, and daycares in our neighbourhood. Sadly, the Ontario provincial Liberal government has created a diesel train to do this. No other city in the world is putting diesel trains running that often through major urban areas. It was not done in Vancouver, and other cities around the world are investing in electric trains. However, our community is subjected to dirty diesel.

We have finally, through incredible community pressure, persuaded the provincial government that, yes, electric is better, but it has not budgeted any money to actually make the change to electric. This is an infrastructure investment that the federal government could have made and should have made. The people of Toronto want to see clean transportation, clean electric, and it should have been built once, built right, but there is a chance to have this corrected.

There are two other areas that the government could have acted on but did not, and one is reducing the cost of remittances. The government did talk about studying remittances, but I have a proposal into the House to limit the cost to 5% for remittances for new Canadians to send money back to their home country, which would have been a real cost saving. Second, the government also could have dramatically improved the lot of interns. The government has made some steps in the current budget, but the Conservatives inexplicably failed to protect interns from sexual harassment and exploitative hours of work.

I could go on for some time talking about what is not in the budget. Sadly, what the Conservatives have chosen to spend the money on are the people who are the wealthiest, at the very top income level, and have used the taxes of the rest of Canadians to do that.

Government Orders

This is a failed budget, and that is why we will be voting against it. However, Canadians will have a chance to make a different choice this October, and then we will bring in a budget that is good for all Canadians.

• (1340)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to go back to the start of the hon. member's speech, when she said, quite rightly, that the government really has not balanced this budget at all, that it has done so through sleight of hand.

Just by way of analogy, when being interviewed for a job, people are often asked if they have done the job before. If they do not have a lot of experience, the interviewer may ask if they have done something similar before, if they have skills that they have proven can be adapted to that situation.

The Conservative government has never balanced a budget. Not only has the current Conservative government not balanced a budget, but the Conservative government before, the Mulroney government, did not balance a budget. Why should we believe that the Conservatives have the skills and job qualifications to balance the budget?

For the hon. member, given that the NDP made it possible for the government to get the job in 2006, are she and her colleagues not feeling a bit of buyer's remorse?

• (1345)

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting that somehow Liberals could be at the centre of a massive corruption scandal using Canadians' tax dollars and basically paying off their own people, as the Gomery commission found very well. Only the Liberals could then have the arrogance to blame New Democrats or blame Canadians for making a choice other than for the Liberals. To me, it is failing to learn from the past, and it is failing to learn the basic lesson of humility.

Having said that, I do take the point of the hon. member, and I respect the point that he is making, that we have had seven deficit budgets from the current Conservative government. I look at governments like that of Roy Romanow and Gary Doer, who balanced budget after budget. Tommy Douglas, for that matter, balanced budget after budget. Do members know who has the best record of balancing budgets in this country? It is the NDP.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on her assessment of this budget, which, in fact, is going to be good for the wealthy but will not do anything for the middle class or those who have trouble making ends meet.

I want to talk about one very specific thing in this bill. It is positive overall, but 50% of the problem has been overlooked. I am speaking about copyright. The protection for recorded works has been extended to 70 years after their composer has died, but the works themselves have been completely left out. That creates a gap of 20 years where the recording or reproduction of the work is protected, but not the work itself that a person has created. That is a real problem.

I would like to hear what my colleague thinks about this.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

The budget contains more protection for the companies who produce the recordings. Still, the works themselves and their composers do not benefit from the same protection. Artists already have enough trouble making ends meet, and we should help them as much as possible. This is another failure of this government, which has not supported artists and their works in this budget. It is another example that shows that this government really has not worked for the middle class or helped most Canadians. It is truly one of their failures.

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise and offer my thoughts on Bill C-59, the budget implementation bill.

Once again, I have a number of reservations about this budget. Sadly, we on this side of the House cannot support it. Once again, the Conservatives have slipped several measures into this budget in order to justify their lament that the opposition does not support certain measures.

For example, we would like to support the measures to assist veterans, but the Conservatives have slipped them into a mammoth budget implementation bill.

At 150 pages, it is shorter than some, like Bill C-38, which had hundreds of pages. When the Conservatives were in opposition, they denounced mammoth bills, even if they had only a few dozen pages. Today we are looking at a 150-page bill.

This is stopping us from holding a full debate on the provisions of the bill. This was the case with Bill C-38 and Bill C-45, and now it is the case with Bill C-59. The opposition members, like the government members, who should be keeping an eye on their own government, are simply not able to do so with the means available to them.

I would like to point out that the Conservatives have imposed time allocation for the 96th time, limiting the time available to debate a bill as important as the budget. This makes no sense. The NDP would have liked to support certain measures in the bill, because they are ideas put forward originally by the NDP that the government decided to borrow. For this, I congratulate the government.

For instance, the tax rate on small and medium-sized businesses will go from 11% to 9%. The change will be made over five years, because the Conservatives have decided to spread the measure over a number of years, but it will be quite helpful to SMEs, which are the ones creating jobs in Canada. This measure deserves our support, but unfortunately, the Conservatives have combined measures that we can support with ones that we simply cannot support.

Moreover, the budget contains no measures regarding the Transport Canada wharfs. The Conservatives were very happy to spend time in eastern Canada recently, to underline their \$33 million investment in the Transport Canada port divestiture program.

Government Orders

Unfortunately, this is the same \$33 million that was announced last year, and \$9 million of it has already been spent. There is only \$24 million left to be shared among the 50 wharfs that the government is proposing to transfer. Two of the Transport Canada wharfs are in my riding, and just these two would exceed the amount of money that remains for the 50 wharfs across Canada that the government would like to transfer.

When the government says it is helping people, what does that mean in concrete terms? We cannot accept their offer, because it is just too little.

Recently, I heard a Conservative MP saying that the Conservatives had introduced one of the largest infrastructure programs in Canada's history. However, this money will be spent in the future. They have announced amounts of money that the budget does not cover at all, and they are trying to make us believe that with a budget of \$54 billion over 10 years they are going to spend the largest amount of money in Canada's history on infrastructure.

Unfortunately, the facts tell quite a different story. Last year, the government spent only \$250 million of the \$54 billion. Its assistance to municipalities and organizations to implement infrastructure programs was extremely discreet.

It is disgraceful that the government is congratulating itself about money it has never spent and that it is trying to make people believe that it is carrying out this program, even though it is a phantom program, since we are unable to find this money.

Furthermore, this budget does not help the regions, and in fact the opposite is true.

● (1350)

The Conservatives say that they have balanced the budget, but once again, they have done so using both the contingency fund and the employment insurance fund.

This year, the government is planning to filch \$1.7 billion from the employment insurance fund to balance its budget. It likes to brag about its \$1.8 billion surplus, but it is pretty clear where that money came from. The government is even planning to help itself to \$17 billion from the employment insurance fund over five years. It is quickly catching up to the Liberals' record. They too bragged about balancing a budget, and they too did so at workers' expense. Since the Chrétien government's reform, the government has taken \$57 billion from the employment insurance fund. The Liberals swiped \$50 billion, the Conservatives \$7 billion. Now they are planning to snatch another \$17 billion from the fund.

They say they are going to balance the budget, but they are doing so at the expense of the poorest, the neediest. Seasonal workers and workers who lose their jobs will pay the price. Roughly four out of 10 workers are not even entitled to employment insurance benefits even though they all contribute to the fund. Those people will never see a penny. The government is busy taking money from the insurance fund and, instead of giving it to the people who contribute, funnelling it into programs that will benefit Canada's wealthiest people.

With regard to the Conservatives' proposed income splitting, the Parliamentary Budget Officer clearly said that only 15% of

Canadians will benefit, and most of them are among the wealthiest people in this country.

The wealthiest people do not need more help. There are some Canadians who are unemployed and others who are facing job losses. Today, 1,700 employees of Bombardier, a pillar of Canadian industry, are unemployed. They are facing an employment insurance fund that has been pillaged repeatedly by the government. There is no more room to manoeuvre.

When the government says that it has balanced the budget, it means that we are at the point where the government has squeezed programs so much that there is no more room to manoeuvre. Someone who has lost a job or works part time will find it very difficult to make ends meet.

Today's budget is simply not going to help the poor, and that includes measures like income splitting and tax-free savings accounts, or TFSAs. The tax-free savings account limit is being raised to \$10,000. In my riding, I can tell you that the number of people who can take advantage of that and put \$10,000 into a tax-free savings account is very small. What is more, that money will then not be spent in the riding; it will sit in a savings account.

We need programs that put money in people's pockets and encourage people to have a greater impact on their local economy. Those are the kinds of programs that will help grow the economy. We need to help small and medium-sized businesses, because they create jobs, and that is what will help create wealth. What matters to the NDP is putting money into the pockets of people who really need it, rather than giving more to rich.

I am very disappointed in this budget, which once again gives priority to people who will perhaps vote for the Conservatives in the upcoming election. Unfortunately, the people who are being ignored by this government and who will not get the help they need from this budget are precisely those who are currently unemployed or otherwise struggling. The budget contains very little for those individuals.

However, the budget does include something that I think is good for retirees regarding registered retirement income funds. Now people will have the choice to put off withdrawing from their RRIFs a little longer. This will help people who are retired. However, let us not forget that those who do not have the means to put enough money in an RRSP will have to wait until they are 67 before they can get old age security. They will pay dearly for not having enough money in an RRSP. This was done without warning and without consultation. The government simply imposed this.

● (1355)

These people did not have enough time to adjust their budget and now have a major deficit for their retirement years. This budget will do nothing to help them.

We absolutely need to have a budget that will help the less fortunate. The government has a role to play as an advocate for the people who are most in need. The government should help those in need, but unfortunately the budget before us does not do that.

Statements by Members

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine will have five minutes for questions and comments when the House resumes debate on this motion.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

TRIBUTE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an enormous honour to rise today in my place to pay tribute to a veteran, a war hero and a truly lovely human being.

Major (Retired) Charles Goodman, CD, is a constituent of mine and has an extraordinary and distinguished war record. He was part of the Normandy invasion on D-Day. He and his wife Nancy just recently travelled to the Netherlands to be part of the 70th anniversary commemoration of the Canadian role in liberating the Netherlands. Charles Goodman, known as Chic, was one of the selected speakers for the commemoration of Canada's role, particularly his role, in the liberation of the Westerbork concentration camp in the Netherlands. He played such an incredible role in battle after battle, in country after country that the French government last year chose to bestow upon him its Legion of Honour and highest award.

It is an honour to be his MP and a greater honour to be his friend.

* * *

• (1400)

YARAN

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, six of the seven members of the Baha'i faith leadership group will be entering their eighth year of incarceration in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Mrs. Kamalabadi, Mr. Khanjani, Mr. Naemi, Mr. Rezaie, Mr. Tavakkoli, and Mr. Tizfahm joined Mrs. Mahvash Sabet in prison in early May 2008. Their only crime in Iran is their membership in the Baha'i faith and their efforts to serve the spiritual and social needs of their fellow believers. This seven-member group, known as Yaran, which means friends, was formed to minister to the needs of their community at the national level. The Yaran's 20-year prison term represents the longest imposed on any current prisoner of conscience in Iran, and for some, given their advanced age, amounts to a life sentence. These seven Baha'i leaders are yet another example of the travesty of justice in Iran, and their imprisonment is a glaring abuse of human rights.

I call upon President Rouhani and the Iranian regime to respect human rights and freedom of religion, exercise clemency, suspend their sentences and immediately release the seven Baha'i leaders.

* * *

[Translation]

BEAUPORT—LIMOILOU

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, wholesale grocer Grossiste Le Frigo will be opening in mid-June in Limoilou. I applaud the arrival of this new meat and produce retailer, which will sell its products at a fraction of the regular market price.

This newcomer joins initiatives such as the Collectif Rutabaga public market and the P'tit marché solidaire de Limoilou in an attempt to increase the supply of affordable fresh produce.

However, these initiatives do not fix the problem facing hundreds of families in Beauport—Limoilou who rely on food banks. Many of them are working families that do not make a decent living.

That is why I will run for the NDP a fourth time and why I will work to implement measures that will truly help the families of Beauport—Limoilou, like a \$15 minimum wage.

The people of Beauport—Limoilou work hard to earn a decent living and they deserve policies that address their needs.

* * *

[English]

CANADIAN FRATERNAL ALLIANCE

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the insurance industry has a proud history in Canada. Over the past century, insurance companies have contributed to our economy while helping Canadians secure their financial futures.

Today, the Canadian Fraternal Alliance is in Ottawa for its first advocacy day, raising awareness and highlighting the achievements of fraternal benefit societies. They are unique organizations within the sector that provide insurance and financial products to their members, and also demonstrate a strong commitment to giving back to their communities through volunteerism and support of charitable activities. For example, FaithLife Financial in Waterloo has contributed almost \$44 million in donations and volunteer hours since its inception, and all fraternal are making a similar impact in their local communities.

I would like to thank all fraternal benefit societies for making a difference in their communities.

* * *

TORONTO AVIATION NOISE GROUP

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the increased aircraft noise in St. Paul's from the 2012 flight path changes at the Toronto Pearson International Airport has had an overwhelming impact on my constituents. Local residents were not appropriately consulted about these changes and there seems to be a total lack of public accountability or government oversight regarding these flight path decisions. I have been working closely with the impressive Toronto Aviation Noise Group on this issue to find measures to mitigate the aircraft noise in St. Paul's and to find a long-term solution.

Statements by Members

Since 2012, I have met repeatedly with Nav Canada, Transport Canada and GTAA officials to discuss the issue and convey concerns from local residents. I have also raised this issue with the Minister of Transport in person and in writing on numerous occasions. The finger-pointing among government and responsible organizations has been truly disappointing. Residents of St. Paul's have shared the impacts on the enjoyment of their homes, as well as significant health concerns. I urge the Minister of Transport to bring all the players to the table to find a long-term solution to this untenable situation.

* * *

•(1405)

MEMBER FOR YORKTON—MELVILLE

Mr. Garry Breitreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nearly 22 years as the member of Parliament for Yorkton—Melville, my work in this place is quickly coming to a close. It has been an honour and a privilege to represent the constituents of Yorkton—Melville. Who would have thought that a simple farm boy, educated in a one-room country school, would end up on Parliament Hill?

As a newbie to Ottawa and the ways of Parliament back in 1993, I grew to depend on good advice, be it from my staff, my colleagues or the countless professional employees who work for the House of Commons. There are so many employees within the parliamentary precinct who make our work here on the Hill a whole lot easier. Employees from the Library of Parliament to the Clerk's office, from printing and mailing services to IT, from the parliamentary restaurant to security services, and I could go on. Staff like Elizabeth Nye, Dennis Young, Sandy Campeau, the list is endless. I am filled with gratitude to all who have assisted me over the years.

I want to recognize all the employees who work on the Hill for their dedication and outstanding service. I am truly grateful to them all.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House today to remind everyone that May 17 is the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia. The Declaration of Montreal on LGBT Human Rights calls on all countries to recognize this day. We must continue to proclaim, loud and clear, that Canada is a society open to all people. It is also important to recognize the crucial role of community organizations that work every day to foster the inclusion of individuals by raising general awareness of their reality and their needs.

I would like to highlight the amazing work done by GRIS-Québec, the Conseil québécois LGBT, Alliance Arc-en-ciel de Québec and MIELS-Québec. I would also like to underscore the essential role played by allies of the community who, in their day-to-day lives and their work, help put an end to prejudices.

I invite everyone to promote awareness and prevention measures in support of the fight against homophobia and transphobia. Wear a pin just like me.

* * *

[*English*]

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on February 25, Bill C-586, the reform act, was adopted in this House by a vote of 260-17.

However, we are rapidly approaching the dissolution of this Parliament and the general election. There remains only five sitting weeks before summer adjournment. If the bill is not passed into law before the end of June, it will die.

There is an important constitutional principle at stake here. The Constitution and the Parliament of Canada Act provide for a bicameral Parliament where each chamber is independent of the other in respect of its own affairs and its own governance. The reform act concerns only the House of Commons, how the House of Commons and its caucuses are to be governed and how members are to be elected to the House of Commons.

On February 25, this House of Commons overwhelmingly pronounced on how it wants to be governed. Constitutional principles need to be respected and upheld, and the reform act needs to pass into law.

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MEMBER FOR NORTHUMBERLAND—QUINTE WEST

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Speaker as my time in this place draws to a close, I would like to take this opportunity to thank God for all the gifts he has bestowed upon me. I thank the constituents of Northumberland—Quinte West for putting their faith in me as their federal representative in the 39th, 40th and 41st Parliament. Of course, I would not be here without the tireless efforts of our EDA and volunteers in all those elections. My thanks to the fine folks who, under your command, make this a great place to work. To my staff, I gave heartfelt thanks. They are the reason we have such a good reputation in the riding.

To my wife Judith Irene Bangs, she is the reason I said yes to public life. We could not have been successful without the support of my sons James and Matthew, their wives Jennifer and Shawnda and the greatest grandchildren a grandpa could ever have: Macee, Ben, Luke and Fisher. The four of them make Grandpa and Yadda very proud, and we love them so very much.

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CANADA POST

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour and in communities across Canada, households that have always received home mail delivery are being forced into using community mailboxes against their will.

Statements by Members

In my riding the locations have been selected, many in spite of serious objections from residents, and the installation work begins soon. People I talk to are really upset because they know how difficult it will be for thousands of seniors, people with mobility challenges and people living in poverty. They also know that this is completely unnecessary.

Not only are 25,000 homes in my riding losing service, so are almost 200 small businesses, 30 schools, dozens of churches, even our community centres and libraries. This is unacceptable.

I am proud today to tell my constituents that an NDP government would reverse this terrible decision and restore home mail delivery to those from whom it has been taken.

* * *

• (1410)

TAXATION

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government is focused on the priorities of Canadian families. That is why we introduced the family tax cut and the universal child care benefit, which would put more money into the pockets of every Canadian family. This is in stark contrast to the NDP and Liberal plans to raise taxes for all Canadians.

The Liberal leader even said that “benefiting every single family is not what is fair”. Maybe the Liberal leader believes it is fair to pick one family over another family and somehow not be fair to all families who helped the budget balance itself.

We believe it is fair to benefit every single family and provide opportunities for all Canadians. We will make sure that families receive those benefits. We make no apologies for helping all Canadian families and we understand that benefiting every single family is, indeed, fair.

* * *

[*Translation*]

ARGENTEUIL—PAPINEAU—MIRABEL

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I feel extremely fortunate to have spent these past four years with the people of Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, a rural, diverse riding where agriculture, heritage and industry intermingle and the people are so welcoming. Working closely with my constituents, I have denounced the demolition of the Mirabel terminal and defended the people whose land was expropriated for the airport, called for the Grenville Canal to be restored, called for continued funding for the Saint-Placide kite festival and Amnesia Rockfest in Montebello, and begged for us to do better for our first nations, including the community of Kanesatake.

I was able to bring forward a motion on a housing strategy for women, debate a motion on bringing septic systems up to standard and introduce a bill to protect 37 lakes and eight rivers under the Navigable Waters Protection Act.

Thanks to my permanent and mobile offices, and with support from one end of my riding to the other, I made it my priority to meet all of my constituents.

After four years, I am convinced that what we need now is to fix the damage caused by the Conservatives. It is time to finish the job and form an NDP government.

* * *

[*English*]

TAXATION

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we promised, our government has been cutting taxes for Canadians. For example, the family tax cut and enhanced universal child care benefit would benefit 100% of families with kids, with the vast majority of benefits going to low- and middle-income families.

No one knows their children better than parents do. Our plan is the only child care plan that would give parents the final say on how to care for their children by giving all families a benefit and leaving it up to parents to decide how to spend this money.

The Liberal leader plans to take away the family tax cut and replace it with the family tax hike. The Liberal leader wants to take it all away. He wants to get rid of the tax-free savings accounts, income splitting and the universal child care benefit. He does not care about helping families. He even said that “benefiting every single family is not what is fair”. Can members believe that?

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RENEWABLE CITIES

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Renewable Cities program aims to accelerate the adoption of 100% renewable energy within cities globally and recognizes the world needs an integrated approach to energy efficiency and urban design. The five-year program has been co-designed with leaders in local government, the private sector, key innovators, thought leaders and the utilities sector. With reductions in consumption and energy system transformation, renewable cities can become a reality.

As a first step, a global learning forum is being held at the Four Seasons Hotel in Vancouver, today through Saturday. I am so proud of Vancouver's goal and plan to become the greenest city in the world by 2020, earning it the role of hosting this forum. A diverse range of visionary leaders have gathered, including a German delegation from World Future Council, from whom I had the pleasure of being briefed this week in Ottawa. The delegates will share ideas, best practices and encouragement, joining an important global movement for change.

I wish them every success.

Oral Questions

●(1415)

TAXATION

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have plans for tax hikes and massive deficits, and their numbers just do not add up.

The Liberal leader even said that “benefiting every single family is not what is fair”. That is outrageous. He went further, though. He pledged to cancel the universal child care benefit. He wants to replace our family tax cut with a family tax hike. Further still, the Liberal leader admits that there are still billions of dollars, in terms of a hole within his plan.

He also admits that he will have to raise taxes on people earning less than \$60,000 a year by cancelling their expanded tax-free savings accounts.

Canadians are smart enough not to be fooled and will stick with our plan, which would actually put money back into their pockets.

* * *

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are sick and tired of turning on their TVs to watch the game, just to see their hard-earned tax dollars being flushed down the drain on government ads that serve the interests of the Conservative Party, not Canadians.

Former chief electoral officer John-Pierre Kingsley has now spoken out, declaring these partisan ads must stop. These ads are creating an unfair advantage. In other words, this is cheating, plain and simple.

Meanwhile, the Liberals like to complain about the over three quarters of a billion dollars spent on ads by the Conservatives, but then stay silent on the over a billion dollars they spent on similar ads. Then, in Ontario, after promising to clean this up, the Wynne Liberals are now gutting their own law.

Enough of the empty promises, enough of the hypocrisy and entitlement. More and more Canadians see that they do have a choice and this October Canadians can vote to finally end this unethical behaviour, vote for the change they want, and actually get it.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Liberal Party says, “benefiting every single Canadian is not what is fair”. That is why, of course, he wants to take away from every single family the universal child care benefit, why he wants to take away income splitting, which is benefiting families and seniors, and why he wants to take away tax-free savings accounts. Even after he does all that, his numbers still do not add up.

Our Conservative government stands for all Canadian families by keeping taxes low and ensuring they can spend their hard-earned money on their own priorities.

ORAL QUESTIONS*[Translation]***MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY**

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the numbers do not lie. The Conservatives' economic policy is not getting us anywhere. Today, Bombardier cut 1,500 jobs: 1,000 jobs in Montreal and nearly 500 in Toronto. This government is completely ignoring the manufacturing sector.

Will the Conservatives address the situation? What is their plan to stimulate the manufacturing sector?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, naturally, we empathize with all those people who have lost their jobs.

At the same time, our plan for tax cuts, training and trade has created 1.2 million new jobs, 80% of them full-time and two-thirds in high-wage sectors. We will continue to follow our economic action plan in order to create jobs for Canadians.

[English]

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over 1,000 families in Montreal and Toronto are facing the bad news today as they learn of 1,500 jobs lost at Bombardier. This comes on the heels of news that Canada lost 20,000 jobs last month.

This is not about statistics; it is about thousands of lives thrown into chaos and thousands of families uncertain about how they will pay their rent or pay for their grocery bill.

Why are the Conservatives ignoring so many people in need of help, while giving billions to the wealthy?

●(1420)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our hearts go out to anyone who has lost his or her job. Our plan for tax cuts, training and trade has created 1.2 million net new jobs since the recession, and 80% are full-time, 80% in the private sector and almost two-thirds in high-wage sectors.

The NDP and the Liberals have one plan for jobs, and that is to raise taxes on those who create them and those who work at them. Taxes will only kill jobs and send shockwaves throughout our economy. That is why we are keeping taxes low.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that member should get his facts straight before misleading Canadians, because here are the facts. Last month, Halifax lost 2,600 jobs; 6,600 lost in Kitchener—Waterloo; 4,400 lost in Edmonton; 1,600 lost in Kelowna, and in Montreal, 27,000 jobs lost were in the last six months. With thousands more people losing their jobs, why are Conservatives so hell-bent on giving billions away to the wealthy few?

Oral Questions

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP and the Liberals have only one plan on jobs, and that is to raise taxes on those who create them. We have the opposite approach. Through tax cuts, training and trade, our economy has generated 1.2 million net new jobs since the recession, and 80% are full-time, 80% are in the private sector and two-thirds are in high-wage industries.

We will continue to keep taxes down to create more jobs for Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, crocodile tears are not going to help those who have lost their jobs. We want the government to do something about this.

The truth is that the manufacturing sector in Quebec has lost 102,500 jobs since the Conservatives came to power. Now, with Bombardier, 1,000 more families, 850 in Dorval and 150 in Ville Saint-Laurent, are out of work and will have a hard time making ends meet. What does the government do? It brings down a budget that contains nothing new and only helps its wealthy friends.

When will the government truly stand up to defend jobs and prevent future job losses in Quebec and across Canada?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only plan the NDP and the Liberals have is to raise taxes on Canadians and job creators.

Our plan does the opposite. We are lowering taxes for job creators, consumers and families. This will allow people to spend money in the economy and save for their future and small businesses to start hiring. That is why we have created 1.2 million new jobs since the recession and 80% are full-time and two-thirds are well-paying.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' approach does not work. We continue to lose jobs across Quebec and Canada.

Here are the facts. Since the Conservatives came to power, Quebec has lost 102,500 jobs in the manufacturing sector. In Montreal alone, 27,000 jobs have been lost in the last six months. Today, it is 1,500 jobs at Bombardier. The Conservatives have been in power for 10 years. They are completely out of touch with the reality of everyday Canadians.

When will they take meaningful action to help our workers and families and create jobs in this country? When will they take action?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have already done so. That is why we have 1.2 million new jobs, 80% of which are full-time, 80% of which are in the private sector and two-thirds of which are in high-wage sectors.

The New Democrats would implement a carbon tax, which would destroy factories and other employers in Quebec and all across Canada. That is why Canadians would never run the risk of voting in a New Democrat government.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, bad news for the manufacturing sector just keeps on coming.

As we all know, this morning Bombardier announced that 1,500 jobs here in Canada would be cut, 1,000 of them in Montreal. That means 1,500 lost jobs here in Canada. Last month, 20,000 jobs were lost across Canada. This government's laissez-faire approach is totally irresponsible. It is time to do something.

Why is the government doing nothing to create jobs here in Canada?

• (1425)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have taken action to create jobs. For example, we have reduced the tax rate for small and medium-sized businesses from 11% to 9%.

The Liberal leader has already stated his intention to reverse those tax cuts for our small businesses and entrepreneurs. The Liberal leader said that he wants higher taxes for our entrepreneurs and small businesses.

That would be the absolute worst thing to do because it would kill jobs and jeopardize our economy.

[English]

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, more nonsense answers from the minister.

The Conservatives say “cheer up” and “things could be worse, though”, so Canadians cheered up and, yes, they got much worse. They are worse for 1,500 workers just laid off at Bombardier today, with 1,000 in Montreal and another 500 in Toronto. That is on top of the hundreds of thousands about whom we have heard. Good jobs have been lost because of government inaction.

While the minister continues to sell his phony 1.2 million jobs line, unemployed families know better. Will the minister finally admit that the Conservative fiscal policies have failed?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our plan for trade, training and tax cuts has created 1.2 million net new jobs since the recession, and 80% are full-time, 80% are in the private sector and two thirds are in high wage sectors.

The worst thing we could do at this juncture is follow the Liberal leader's plan to raise taxes on small businesses. He announced, on the day of the budget, while we were cutting taxes on small business job creators, that if he got the chance, he would raise them. That would kill jobs and send shockwaves through our economy. That is why Canadians will never give him the chance.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the plan is not working.

Oral Questions

Let us look at some of the closed or closing plants in and around Toronto. CIBA Vision in Mississauga has lost 300 jobs. Auto-modular in Oakville has lost 525 jobs. Premium Brands in Toronto has lost 200 jobs. The Wrigley plant in Toronto has lost 400 jobs. There were 1,000 jobs lost at GM in Oshawa, and now 500 jobs lost in Downsview.

The track record of the Conservatives is clear. They have abandoned the manufacturing sector and the Canadians it employs. This is the question. Why?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under our low-tax plan, we created 1.2 million net new jobs since the recession, and 80% are full-time and two thirds are in the private sector.

The last thing we want now is to follow the Liberal plan to raise taxes on small business. That would compound the disastrous provincial Liberal policies of tax and borrow. The payroll taxes, the carbon taxes and the other tax increases of the Ontario Liberal government have been disastrous. The last thing we want is to see them compounded by a high-tax Liberal leader in Ottawa.

* * *

PENSIONS

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, five years after Nortel went bankrupt and 20,000 pensioners had their incomes dramatically slashed, a bankruptcy court has ruled that they are entitled to an equitable share of Nortel's assets.

The battle is still not over for these pensioners, as appeals may drag on, and their lawyer is warning that they may not receive the full amount.

Why have the Conservatives failed to protect workers and left these pensioners to the mercy of the courts?

Hon. Ed Holder (Minister of State (Science and Technology), CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, our thoughts are always with the workers and their families.

Let me say that our government has been very encouraged by this week's decision. In fact, the member opposite may not know, but the lawyer for the Nortel pensioners said that he was "very pleased" with the decision, because it upheld the interests of pensioners.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if they take a haircut on their pension, my guess is they will be less pleased about it.

The government's economic strategy is failing Ontario. Under the Conservative government, more than 275,000 manufacturing jobs in Ontario have disappeared. Today we learned that another 480 jobs are lost at Bombardier's Downsview plant in Toronto.

In spite of the crocodile tears opposite, our hearts really are with the workers who are facing an uncertain future in that plant. The question is simple. Why do the Conservatives refuse to support manufacturing jobs in Ontario?

• (1430)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if that were true, why would the NDP, along with the Liberals, propose devastating new taxes on the manufacturing sector in Ontario? That would drive up costs for employers and drive Canadians out of work.

Our approach is tax cuts, training, and trade. That is why, across Canada, we have had a net increase in employment of 1.2 million jobs. That is 80% private sector, 80% full-time, and two-thirds in high-wage sectors. We will continue to keep taxes low and employment high.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister needs to stop burying his head in the sand. The workers in our aerospace industry who are losing their jobs are sick and tired of hearing the Conservatives' empty rhetoric. One thousand workers in our aerospace industry in Montreal got bad news this morning. After Bell Helicopter two weeks ago, Bombardier just announced another round of layoffs. Some 150 workers in Ville Saint-Laurent and another 850 at the Dorval plant will be unemployed.

What do the Conservatives plan to do, apart from losing jobs, to protect jobs in my region, in Montreal?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our economic action plan is working. We have created 1.2 million new jobs since the recession, 80% of which are full-time and two-thirds of which are in high-wage sectors. We are doing this by increasing international trade, training our workers and lowering taxes for those who create jobs and those who are working.

The only plan the NDP has is to raise taxes and bring in a carbon tax, which will kill jobs in the manufacturing sector.

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 102,000 jobs have been lost in Quebec's manufacturing sector since 2006. I did say 102,000. That is the Conservative record. In Dorval, 850 workers at Bombardier's aircraft finishing plant will have to look for work along with 150 workers in the borough of Saint-Laurent who will be laid off. They support hundreds of businesses, boutiques and restaurants in the Montreal area.

Do the Conservatives have a plan for these workers or do they only have more presents for the most wealthy?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have a plan. It is the economic action plan, which cuts taxes, increases international trade and provides training for our workers. It has created 1.2 million new jobs: 80% of them are full time and two-thirds are in high-paying sectors.

Oral Questions

The NDP's only plan is to introduce a carbon tax that will kill jobs in Quebec and throughout Canada. We are opposed to that plan because we will protect jobs and stimulate employment.

* * *

PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, enough with these inaction plans.

Tomorrow, 200 workers at the Davie Canada shipyard will lose their jobs, all because the Conservative government refuses to make up its mind about the short-term renewal of our fleet of supply ships.

The Government of Quebec is calling on the federal minister to get off his butt. We are talking about 200 families without well-paying jobs.

When will the government make a decision about Canada's navy? When will it make a decision for the Canadian economy? When will it make a decision for the people of Lévis?

[English]

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Davie shipyard has been successful in pursuing federal shipbuilding opportunities, including important shipyard work to retrofit the *Louis S. St. Laurent* and the *Des Groseilliers* icebreakers. Recently Davie also obtained important federal government contracts to prolong the life of the Canadian Coast Guard ship the *Earl Grey*.

Davie will have the opportunity to bid on further publicly tendered work, including for smaller ship construction, ship repair, retrofits, and maintenance work. Moving forward, Davie is welcome to bid on these upcoming shipbuilding projects.

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EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, under the Conservatives, job losses just keep piling up, and workers are suffering from the lack of a government plan to protect Canadian jobs. Last month Ontario lost over 14,000 jobs, and many are worried that there is more to come. GM workers in Oshawa are concerned that the 1,000 jobs cut may signal trouble for the future of the entire plant.

Why did the Conservatives sell off billions in GM shares without doing anything to secure the thousands of good Canadian jobs that may very well be at risk?

• (1435)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that every single company the New Democrats have listed in their questions today is a company that the New Democrats admit they will raise taxes on. They say they will raise business taxes on companies like Bombardier and GM to punish those businesses for hiring people in Canada.

Our approach is exactly the opposite. We have a low-tax plan that focuses on training, trade, and tax cuts and that has created 1.2

million net new jobs since the recession. Eighty per cent of those jobs are full-time. Two-thirds are in high-wage sectors.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the good people of British Columbia have been feeling the hit from failed Conservative policies for years. Far too many are working harder than ever but are falling further behind. Nearly 29,000 jobs were lost in British Columbia just last month alone.

However, while Conservatives have billions for the wealthy and well connected, they have no plan whatsoever to kick-start the B.C. economy.

Western Canadians are sick and tired of being taken for granted by these Conservative MPs while the job losses mount and families pay the price. Is there even one Conservative MP from British Columbia who is willing to stand up and fight for our province?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, by delivering trade, training, and tax cuts, our British Columbia MPs stand up and fight for their constituents every single day.

That member would betray British Columbia's interests by imposing higher taxes on businesses there, forcing them to lay off people and sending shockwaves throughout their economy. The anti-trade agenda of the NDP would put a big wall around the Pacific coast and prevent goods from going in and out of the economy. That is the last thing British Columbians need. They need a low-tax plan, and that is what they are getting.

* * *

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, five years ago, the Conservatives announced their so-called Fairness at the Pumps Act. They promised that 65,000 gas pumps would be inspected annually, but Industry Canada has not yet handed out a single penalty, despite data that show that 6% of pumps fail to dispense the right amount of fuel. Can the minister explain why no penalties have been levied, or was this legislation just more empty Conservative promises on consumer protection?

Hon. Ed Holder (Minister of State (Science and Technology), CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian families expect that when they purchase gasoline, they get what they pay for. That is why our government took action and passed the Fairness at the Pumps Act. It ensures that gasoline pumps are routinely inspected for accuracy. It is clear that our legislation is working, and Canadian consumers are getting what they pay for.

If it were up to the opposition, the price of gasoline would be higher because of their implementing a carbon tax. For that, I say "shame".

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the act does not work at all. Quebeckers are tired of waiting. It has been five years since the Conservatives passed their Fairness at the Pumps Act. This act provided for mandatory inspections and harsh fines for offenders. However, Industry Canada inspectors have not issued a single fine since the act was passed. Zero. Zero sounds about right for the Conservatives.

Can the minister explain why nothing has been enforced under this act?

Hon. Ed Holder (Minister of State (Science and Technology), CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian families expect that when they purchase gasoline they get what they pay for. That is why our government took action and passed the Fairness at the Pumps Act, which ensures that gasoline pumps are routinely inspected for accuracy. It is clear that our legislation is working and Canadian consumers are getting what they pay for.

[English]

I said it in English the last time. I am going to say it again. Were it up to the opposition, we would be paying a higher price at the gasoline pumps because of its carbon tax. I say “shame”.

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*[Translation]***TAXATION**

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's family will receive the same child care cheque that a single parent family will receive, or \$120 for two teenagers. Under the Liberal plan, that same family will receive \$900 a month tax free, and the Prime Minister's family will receive nothing. That is what we call fair.

How can the Conservatives justify having the Prime Minister receive the same amount as a single parent family that has a hard time making ends meet?

● (1440)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our tax cut for families and our increased universal child care benefit helps every family, with most of the benefits going to families in need.

The Liberal leader said that assisting every family was not fair. He is wrong. Our policy is to help all families by putting money directly into their pockets. The Liberals would take that money away from them and increase taxes.

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, because the government refuses to make its child care benefit progressive, based on need and tax-free, the results for families are perverse. Families of different types but with exactly the same number of kids and income end up with very different after-tax benefits. One-earner couples get the most, two-earner couples get less, but single parents get the least of all.

If the government's credo is “identical treatment for everyone alike”, why does the government discriminate against certain types of families? How is that fair?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal leader admits that he would scrap income splitting. He admits that he would scrap the universal child care benefit. He admits that he would gut the tax-free savings accounts, but even after he does all of those things, he is still billions of dollars short. Just the other day he admitted what he really thinks. He said, “Mr. Speaker, benefiting every single family is not what is fair.”

He is absolutely wrong. We believe in benefiting 100% of families.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if it is fair that child care benefits must be paid in exactly the same amount per child at all income levels, why do the Conservatives discriminate so radically against lower-income families?

It is not just the uneven taxation of child care benefits. On top of that, their \$2-billion tax break for income-splitting means a couple earning a quarter of a million dollars can get \$2,000, but a single mom or dad at the poverty line will get nothing at all. How is that fair? How is that equal?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely false. The universal child care benefit would help a single parent at the poverty line. It goes to every single family: \$2,000 per child under the age of six. That is why it is called universal.

The Liberal leader would take away the universal child care benefit. He would take away income splitting. He would gut the tax-free savings accounts. Maybe that is why he said, “benefiting every single family is not what is fair”. He is absolutely wrong.

* * *

*[Translation]***PUBLIC SAFETY**

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in a memo to the minister, CSIS sounded the alarm about the lack of resources to handle cyberattacks in Canada.

We know that the number of attacks every day is going up and that more and more personal information is ending up in the hands of cyberhackers and foreign governments. The Conservatives' cuts are being felt, and the money allocated in the latest budget is not nearly enough.

When will the minister finally resolve the situation and ensure that Canadians are safe from cyberattacks?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Oral Questions

I can confirm that, on pages 326 and 327, the budget allocates additional resources to address the cybercrime challenges facing the government and businesses. One good way to help businesses coping with cybersecurity challenges is to support the Conservative government's budget. That is in addition to the strategy we have implemented.

While the Liberals have done nothing, we have implemented a strategy and provided additional resources. We certainly did not get any support from the New Democrats or the Liberals. Nevertheless, we will continue to take the necessary steps to address this new threat to businesses, individuals and the government.

•(1445)

[English]

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, regardless of the props the minister uses, CSIS was clear: the one-time investments that the minister made have not been nearly enough to increase the operational capacity at the agency.

Government needs to be able to ensure the private information of Canadian businesses and families. The Conservative government has not done nearly enough. Its investment in cybersecurity is nowhere near that of our allies and certainly nowhere near adequate for Canada.

When will the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness stop being a paper minister in the digital era?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member can look at the budget on the website, and I quote: “Securing Government systems”, “Partnering to secure vital cyber systems outside the federal government”, “Helping Canadians to be secure online”. That is in the budget.

The member can stand up and support the budget. Why? It is because we are investing to make sure that industry, Canadians, and the government are protected against cyberattacks.

We have a strategy. Why is the member of the NDP not supporting these measures?

* * *

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Here we go again, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of National Revenue continues to drop the ball when it comes protecting the personal financial information of Canadians. Check this one out.

CRA found that 22% of its employees were duped by a fake phishing email scam. That is like giving an all-access pass to cybercriminals. We are talking about the most important information that Canadians turn over to government.

Now the current minister and her tired, worn-out government are running out of time. She has three months left in her job. Is she not going to establish some kind of protocols to protect the private rights of Canadians?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the CRA must always be improving on its security processes and how it deals with the personal information of all Canadians. Our government expects nothing less.

This was a learning exercise conducted by the CRA to improve employee awareness about a particular cyberthreat. The results are now being used by the CRA to improve its security awareness and training for all employees. At no time was taxpayer information at risk, nor was there any capacity whatsoever for taxpayer information to be compromised.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is just ridiculous.

The personal information stored by the Canada Revenue Agency is extremely sensitive. We are talking about social insurance numbers and financial information. I think Canadians have every right to expect stringent security measures.

When employees were tested to see if they would fall for phishing scams, over 3,500 took the bait. There is nothing to celebrate here.

Can the minister guarantee once and for all that our data are protected?

[English]

Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, this was a learning exercise that the CRA conducted to improve employee awareness and our processes to respond to a particular cyberthreat. The results of this exercise will be used to improve security awareness and training at CRA. Again, at no time was taxpayer information at risk, nor was there any capacity for taxpayer information to be compromised.

The opposition has asked what we are doing about cyberthreats. That is what we are doing, exactly that.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unlike the leader of the Liberal Party who wants to divide Canadians, we want to ensure that all Canadian families benefit from our measures that keep taxes low, so they can spend on their priorities. Can the Minister of Employment please update this House on how our measures are impacting families across Canada?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the family tax credit benefit goes to 100% of families with kids. The Liberal leader, this week—I think he accidentally told the truth—said, “benefiting every single family isn't what is fair”. That is why he plans to take away income splitting, he plans to take away the universal child care benefit, and he plans to gut the tax-free savings account. These are just the clawbacks and tax hikes that he admits, but even after all of that, he is still billions of dollars short in his plan, proving that his numbers just do not add up and there would be more Liberal tax hikes to come.

Oral Questions

On this side of the House, we are cutting taxes for every single family.

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INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, unsafe abortion is responsible for 13% of all maternal deaths worldwide, but Canada will not help women in developing countries access safe abortion services, even though it is permitted in the majority of Canada's countries of focus for development assistance and in Canada itself.

Why is the minister refusing to save the lives of women and girls in developing countries by refusing to offer the full range of reproductive health services?

• (1450)

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will not export controversy; we will export our world-leading expertise. Our efforts are backed by the international community, and we continue to rally international consensus for our program in partnership with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. We will not reopen this debate, and we will not export divisiveness.

We will continue the leadership of the Muskoka initiative because what matters most are results, and that is what we are delivering.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about results.

The results are as follows: unsafe abortion is responsible for 13% of all maternal deaths around the world. This government claims it wants to save all women's lives, so it must save those women too.

Why is this government giving peanuts when it comes to family planning, and why is it putting its ideology ahead of women's health?

[English]

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, we are not going to export controversy. We are going to continue to export our world-leading expertise. The results we are getting under the Muskoka initiative are nothing short of miraculous. We are saving the lives of hundreds of thousands of women and millions of children every year.

Let me read what Melinda Gates said about this. She stated:

We have made such great progress for women on prenatal care, on providing the contraceptives that they want, and on encouraging proper care and nutrition for newborns, and we need to keep moving forward. The only way to do that is to be clear, focused, and committed

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Élane Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the minister proposed changing the National Defence Act to try to repair the damage caused by the Conservatives turning a blind eye to sexual assault in the army. The damage runs

much deeper than that: military justice does not work when it comes to addressing cases of harassment and sexual assault.

Will the minister commit to overhauling the military justice system? Is he prepared to eliminate this culture of trivializing sexual misconduct?

[English]

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the minister said yesterday at committee, we are looking at implementing changes to the military justice system so that it comes into line with the victims bill of rights that we passed in the House of Commons not that long ago.

I just want to say, on the issue of sexual assault within the Canadian Armed Forces, that we find that a deplorable act, we condemn it in the strongest terms, and we are supporting the Chief of the Defence Staff and Major-General Christine Whitecross, who has stood up the strategic response team to move forward on implementing all 10 recommendations of Justice Deschamps.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister refuses to recognize the clear evidence of a need for fundamental change in how the military justice system deals with sexual assault. He has also refused to provide a clear legal framework for our troops in Iraq, despite our having been there for nine months. The minister has failed to secure a status of forces agreement. The United States has one. In fact, they would not stay in Afghanistan without one. Such an agreement could have been an important matter in the wake of Sergeant Doiron's tragic death.

Why does Canada not have this basic and vital agreement in place now?

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the member, indeed all opposition members, that we are in Iraq at the invitation of the Government of Iraq.

Our government has worked directly with the Government of Iraq to secure all the appropriate protections for members of the Canadian Armed Forces who are participating in the coalition operations to fight ISIS, the jihadist terrorist organization.

The status of forces agreements are binding, they are treaty-level, they are international commitments between countries, and they take a long time to negotiate.

That is exactly what the member is trying to advocate here. It is about opposing the mission. The members want to delay it, and we want to get over there and help fight this terrorist organization to protect Canada and Canadians.

*Oral Questions***PUBLIC SAFETY**

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there was shocking news today from the Office of the Information Commissioner of Canada. Someone within the government broke the law.

The RCMP destroyed records, knowing those records were subject to the right of access, guaranteed under the Access to Information Act.

The destruction of government documents is a violation of Canadian law. Who gave the order, or is the Minister of Public Safety himself a co-conspirator in this illegal activity in an agency under his authority?

What has happened here? Why was the law broken?

• (1455)

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, not only is the RCMP fully complying with the law, but it is also respecting the will of Parliament.

Our government will not apologize for having ended the ineffective, wasteful long gun registry.

Our government has taken a clear position. This Parliament has decided that we would move forward, and we expect that all agencies will move forward. That is why we needed to close a loophole.

We are doing it and we are proud to make sure that the will of Parliament and this country is respected.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the will of Parliament has nothing to do with it. The facts are these: The Conservatives either destroyed or had destroyed government records, in violation of Canadian law.

Now they are trying to protect themselves by burying changes in the budget bill to cover up this illegal act.

Who is this cover-up being implemented to protect? Is it the RCMP, a minister, or both?

How far up the Prime Minister's chain of command does this illegal cover-up for illegal activities go; how far up that chain of command?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very lively question.

However, the facts are clear: the Government of Canada and Parliament put an end to the costly and ineffective gun registry. We expect agencies to apply Parliament's decision. That is why we are closing a loophole that was in the legislation.

When will the Liberals stop going after hunters, fishers, and law-abiding citizens and start going after criminals?

[*English*]

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is a crisis in my community of Surrey: 30 shootings in the past two months.

The Conservatives brag about being tough on crime, but we are not seeing that on the streets of Surrey.

The city and the province have asked for an urgent addition of 100 RCMP officers, but we are still waiting for the government to approve those officers.

Why are the Conservatives stalling, and why are they failing to protect communities like mine?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government is waiting for the support of the opposition and the NDP to take strong action to keep our communities safe.

I have walked in the streets of Surrey. I have seen the benefit of having a strong strategy with tougher sentences for drive-by shooting. The NDP members oppose those measures. They oppose the funding we have put into the RCMP and into prevention.

We are working with the British Columbia government. We are serious. I am very proud of the effort my colleagues are making. We are standing by the people of Surrey, and we will make sure that their community is safer in the great country we have, Canada.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the people in our community do not want to hear more excuses from this majority Conservative government. They want action—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. It did not sound to me that the member had finished her question, so I will ask members to hold off on their applause.

The hon. member for Newton—North Delta.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, a government that has a majority complaining it has not taken action. That is what our constituents want. They want safer streets, more youth gang prevention programs and they want the government to immediately approve the 100 new RCMP officers that the city and province have requested. There were 30 shootings in two months. Enough is enough.

The Conservatives cannot ignore this crisis any longer. Will the minister make a clear commitment today for 100 new RCMP officers and tell us exactly when they will arrive?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is working with the city of Surrey and with the British Columbia government. When will the NDP stop giving lip service for the people of Surrey and begin supporting our measures?

We have passed tough new laws to clean up our streets and put gang members behind bars where they belong. We have passed over 30 new tough-on-crime measures. We can never count on the support of the NDP. However, I am so proud to be a part of this Conservative government because we are making our streets safer and we are standing by—

• (1500)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt.

*Oral Questions***TAXATION**

Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have been travelling throughout my riding, I have been speaking to hard-working parents about opportunities that this Conservative government gives to them to save more money for their families, such as the universal child care benefit, the family tax cuts and the home accessibility tax credit. I am proud to say this government's plans benefit 100% of families with children.

Could the minister responsible please inform the House what she is hearing everyday Canadians say about these new measures to support them?

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week we learned that the Liberals did not believe that helping every single family was fair. We also heard yesterday that the NDP thought that only families that used licenced daycares were real families. These are not just gaffs by the opposition members, although we know there seems to be a lot of gaffs going on. This is actually what they believe. They believe that only a select few families deserve support in Canada.

On this side of the House, we delivered the universal child care benefit to all families. We are committed to enhancing it and increasing it. We will always give money back to Canadian families because it is their money, all of it.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of National Defence deny that the orders restricting Major General Whitecross still stand? Until these orders are changed and despite the minister's false claims, General Whitecross simply cannot act on all 10 recommendations of the Deschamps report, including the creation of an independent centre for accountability for sexual abuse and harassment. Our Canadian Armed Forces members deserve action, not confusion.

Why will the minister not assume his responsibilities and act to have these orders rescinded now?

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister, the minister and the Chief of the Defence Staff all proved that statement was absolutely false.

I will quote Major General Christine Whitecross who said, "My marching orders are very clear. My mandate is to get a team together, to get an action plan to address all 10 recommendations". She is doing just that. She will continue to ensure that we are there to support victims of sexual assault as well as change the culture within the Canadian Armed Forces so we can address this issue head on.

* * *

[Translation]

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the forestry industry is important to my riding. It employs thousands of workers and contributes to the economic development of my region. Our forestry industry needs help to modernize production and compete globally. On Sunday, we learned that the government

would be setting up a committee. Unfortunately, the government has not provided many details, leaving the people in my region in the dark.

Can the minister tell us whether this committee will be set up before the election, or is this another empty Conservative gesture?

[English]

Mrs. Kelly Block (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to talk about our balanced budget that benefits every Canadian family from coast to coast to coast. Our budget makes investments in the forest sector that will create jobs and grow the economy.

Here is what the Quebec Forest Industry Council has to say, "By this budgetary measure, the Canadian government is recognizing the forest industry's major contribution to the country's economy. With [over 200 000] direct jobs, including some 60 000 in Quebec, the industry contributes to Canada's GDP to the tune of nearly 21 billion dollars".

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government understands that small business is the backbone of the Canadian economy. While the opposition wants to raise taxes, small businesses in my riding of Huron—Bruce know that only this government supports them.

Could the Minister of Finance please tell the House why the members of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business applauded the government's economic action plan 2015 and gave it an A?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, third time lucky; those members may actually vote for the budget. If they want me to answer more questions, they should pose them.

Our government is proud that we will be bringing small business taxes to 9%. This means cutting federal taxes to almost one half. It will be the biggest decrease in 25 years.

However, the Liberal leader said that he would kill jobs by reversing these cuts. Then his finance critic later contradicted him. Did he go off script again, or is he scrambling to fill a massive hole in his discredited plan, a hole that is getting bigger with every—

● (1505)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has made it clear that the climate targets for the upcoming climate meetings in Paris will be tabled before the G7. With the G7 scheduled for June 7 and 8 in Germany, could the Minister of the Environment update us on when we might expect to see the intended nationally determined contributions from the Government of Canada?

Business of the House

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will submit Canada's greenhouse gas emission targets this month. Greenhouse gas emission targets will reflect actions by all levels of government, so we are seeking additional information from the jurisdictions, the provinces and the territories, about how they intend to meet their targets.

Our Conservative government is the first government in Canadian history that has reduced greenhouse gas emissions. We will continue to take actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions without introducing a job-killing carbon tax.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mrs. Sana Hassainia (Verchères—Les Patriotes, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I was surprised to learn from the papers yesterday morning that the Canada Revenue Agency had refused to co-operate with a Montreal police service investigation into contraband wine, even though the agency was among the victims of this fraudulent trade.

In fact, all the wine sold illegally did not produce the usual taxes that flow into the government's coffers. The Canadian and Quebec governments were deprived of about \$14 million. In the end, Canadian taxpayers were fleeced.

How can the government justify this lack of co-operation and such arrogance on the part of the Canada Revenue Agency, which was even prepared to go to the Supreme Court to avoid co-operating?

[English]

Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all of the charges have been laid. I have directed the CRA to immediately share all of the information in question with provincial prosecutors. Our government will continue to assist all policing bodies in their ongoing work to keep Canadians and communities safe.

I emphasize that the opposition has opposed all of our measures to put criminals behind bars and keep our communities safe.

* * *

VACANCY**BARRIE**

The Speaker: It is my duty to inform the House that a vacancy has occurred in the representation, namely Mr. Brown, member for the electoral district of Barrie, by resignation effective, today, May 14, 2015.

[Translation]

Pursuant to paragraph 25(1)(b) of the Parliament of Canada Act, I have addressed my warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for the election of a member to fill this vacancy.

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think we have a Thursday answer, and that is that the government is acknowledging the weakness of its own financial plan when the finance minister refuses to answer 12 questions asked by the opposition on finance, and will only answer questions that are directed from the Conservative backbench, the softball questions. That is showing huge disrespect for Parliament.

[Translation]

I have good news. Last week, Albertans voted for a stable, majority New Democrat government. That is very good news for Canadians.

Furthermore, the polls this week show that these trends are continuing. The NDP is leading provincially in British Columbia and Ontario, and also nationally. This means that two-thirds of Canadians want change and that the NDP will bring that change.

[English]

There are 158 days left until we elect a new Parliament. We will be sitting until June 23, and we will be working every day until June 23. That is what the New Democrats do.

I would like to ask my colleague, the government House leader, what the government will put on the agenda following the riding week next week.

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have no shortage of very important work to attend to.

This afternoon and tomorrow we will continue debating Bill C-59, economic action plan 2015 act, no. 1, to implement important measures from the spring's budget, such as the family tax cut, enhancements to the universal child care benefit and a reduction to the small business income tax.

The parties across the way have made no secret of their opposition to the excellent tax reduction measures we have proposed, and this week the hon. member for Papineau explained why. As he told the House on Tuesday, "benefiting every single family is not...fair". Well, that is consistent with his approach to fiscal policy, that budgets balance themselves.

However, our budget implementation bill will deliver those benefits to every family, because that is the fair Canadian thing to do.

After our constituency week, on Monday, May 25, we will debate Bill S-6, the Yukon and Nunavut regulatory improvement act at report stage. This bill will improve opportunities for economic development north of 60.

After question period that same day, we will take up Bill C-42, the common sense firearms licensing act at report stage, and hopefully third reading. Unnecessary, cumbersome red tape facing law-abiding gun owners across Canada will be reduced, thanks to this legislation.

Government Orders

●(1510)

[Translation]

Also, pursuant to Standing Order 81(4)(a), I am appointing that day, Monday, May 25, as the day for consideration, in a committee of the whole, of all votes in the main estimates, for 2015-16, related to finance.

Tuesday, May 26, will be the fifth allotted day. We will debate a Liberal proposal. I expect the Liberal leader will explain why helping every family is not fair.

We will return to the third reading debate on Bill C-52, the Safe and Accountable Rail Act, on Wednesday, May 27, when I am hopeful that it will pass.

The following day, we will continue the third reading debate on Bill S-3, the Port State Measures Agreement Implementation Act. In debate last week, the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles said, “Soon, we will pass this bill”. I look forward to her NDP colleagues proving the hon. member right.

Later that Thursday, we will start the report stage for Bill S-7, the Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act, which will reaffirm this Parliament’s ongoing efforts to end violence against women and girls.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

*[English]***ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN 2015 ACT, NO. 1**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-59, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 21, 2015 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I begin my speech, I would like to say that I will be splitting my time today with my colleague, the hard-working member for Red Deer.

I am very pleased today to rise and be given this opportunity to speak to the economic action plan 2015 act, no. 1.

As we all know in this House, the economic action plan is an important blueprint that would deliver more tax relief to individuals and small businesses; invest in communities; fund research, innovation, and skills training; help our most vulnerable; and maintain Canada's future as a world economic leader. It delivers on the priorities of Canadians, including my constituents in the great riding of Richmond Hill and throughout York Region, the region that I live in, and I am pleased today to highlight a few of the very important measures in the economic action plan 2015 act, no. 1, that would benefit all Canadians.

The first section I would like to speak about today deals with infrastructure.

Infrastructure is a major priority for residents of Richmond Hill and York Region, and indeed across the country. We know that our

ability to compete in the global economy depends in part on the reliability of quality public infrastructure. That is why our government spearheaded the largest long-term federal commitment toward infrastructure in Canada's history, the new Building Canada fund. This plan would dedicate a historic \$53 billion over the next 10 years for infrastructure. In fact, the annual federal support for infrastructure has increased from some \$571 million in 2004 to an estimated \$4.85 billion in 2015. That is a 750% increase. This is a very significant investment, and it is precisely why Canada has led the entire G7 in public investment growth over the last decade.

In Richmond Hill, we see the results of our infrastructure investments in every corner of the municipality. They include recreational facilities such as the Oak Ridges Community Centre, a new community centre funded in part from federal money coming through the gas tax fund. About \$2.4 million went into this state-of-the-art facility, which is serving Oak Ridges, a growing community in York Region and a key component of the great town of Richmond Hill. There is the Elvis Stojko Arena, to which hundreds of families, if not thousands, bring their children to participate in skating activities. They come not only from Richmond Hill but from the entire York Region area.

We also have Viva and rapid transit buses, and there is a new transit facility in Richmond Hills' Headford Business Park. Federal dollars have helped build the infrastructure my residents have come to depend on every single day.

I need to highlight that York Region is growing in leaps and bounds. It is a region that today numbers more than 1.2 million people. In fact, a lot has been said by members in the House about the fact that this year is an election year and that we will return to find 338 seats in this place. Three of the new seats created in this country are in York Region. It is growing in leaps and bounds, and our government is doing a lot for the families that call York Region their home. That includes great towns like Aurora, Richmond Hill, the city of Markham, the city of Vaughan, and the town of Stouffville. We are doing many things and we are planning to do still more.

Economic action plan 2015 would build on this funding by providing \$750 million over two years and \$1 billion each year thereafter for a dedicated public transit fund. We are also investing \$5.8 billion over six years to build and renew federal infrastructure assets, including Canadian Armed Forces facilities and on-reserve schools. All of these investments will ensure that Richmond Hill, York Region, Ontario, and all of the provinces and territories across Canada will continue to benefit from world-class infrastructure.

●(1515)

The second area I want to touch upon has to do with the folks who have put their lives on the line for the rights and privileges that so many of us take for granted: freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. I am speaking, of course, about our veterans.

Government Orders

We owe a great deal to our veterans and their families. As a proud member of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 375 in Richmond Hill and as a frequent visitor to Branch 385 in Aurora, I know our government is working hard to deliver the services and benefits they deserve. That is why I am proud to tell our Legions in York Region that economic action plan 2015 includes many improvements for veterans, such as enhanced benefits for severely disabled and part-time reserve force veterans and increased support for family caregivers. It includes a new critical injury benefit to compensate eligible Canadian Armed Forces members and veterans for the immediate consequences of very severe and traumatic injuries sustained in the line of duty.

We also propose to expand life benefits to veterans to compensate for the loss of employment potential and career advancement opportunities caused by disabilities suffered while serving in the Canadian Armed Forces. Economic action plan 2015 would improve the ratio of case managers and veterans to 30 to 1 so that veterans would receive the level of individualized care they need and deserve.

Our government will continue to stand up for veterans and provide them and their families the much-needed services and assistance they need. Now that they have completed their service to our country, it is time for us to provide the services to them that they deserve.

I want to speak a little about expanding new markets.

International trade and investment are vital to the continued growth of the Canadian economy and the prosperity of people and businesses across Canada. Access to foreign markets and the reduction of trade barriers are essential to helping Canadian exporters grow. That is why we have worked hard since taking office in 2006 to conclude free trade agreements with 38 countries, bringing Canada's total to 43. Before our Conservative government and the leadership of our Prime Minister, there were only five. Now there are 43 trade agreements with countries around the world.

The Canada-European Union comprehensive economic and trade agreement, for example, would provide preferred access to the world's largest and most lucrative market of more than 500 million consumers in 28 countries. It would provide access to a market of \$17 trillion, adding \$12 billion to Canada's GDP and potentially creating 80,000 additional Canadian jobs. In fact, because of our government's determined actions, Canada has preferential access to more than half of the world's markets.

To assist Canadian companies to take advantage of these new global opportunities, economic action plan 2015 would provide \$152 million in trade promotion investments. This money would be used to create a new export market development program and support Canadian firms with on-the-ground intelligence and practical advice on foreign markets. These investments would help the businesses in my riding and businesses across the country take advantage of these new and exciting trade opportunities.

We know that a safe and clean environment supports a high quality of life and contributes to a strong economy. That is why our government has taken significant action to protect the environment. Specific proposals include \$75 million for the Species at Risk Act, \$2 million to protect salmon habitat, \$30 million to extend the recreational fisheries conservation program, \$34 million to support

weather warning services in the Arctic, \$491.8 million to assess and manage risks to human health, and so forth.

• (1520)

The Oak Ridges Moraine is an ecologically significant land form that runs through 32 municipalities, including Aurora, Oak Ridges and Richmond Hill, and nine conservation authorities. Often referred to as the "rain barrel of southern Ontario", it forms the headwaters of 65 streams, and directly and indirectly delivers clean drinking water to millions of people.

I could go on and on about the many measures in the budget pertaining to our environment and the measures to enhance our national security, but in the interests of time I would be pleased to field questions from the hon. members here.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, here he is, trying to say that this would be the best budget ever. Well, let us be very clear: over and over again, we have seen the government put through omnibus budgets containing items that do not even belong in a budget bill.

I am from Ontario and I can say that what we see for Ontario in this budget once again demonstrates that the Conservatives just do not understand the priorities of Ontario. Hundreds of thousands of good manufacturing jobs have disappeared. During question period we indicated how many more have disappeared under the current government's watch, yet the Conservatives have offered the barest minimum of support for manufacturing and have failed to build a balanced economy.

We heard the Conservatives saying during question period that they are the protectors of jobs and job creators. If that is the case, why are we losing so many jobs in Canada under their watch?

• (1525)

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member was not listening to the answers in question period. If she had been, she would have heard that we have created over 1.2 million jobs since the depth of the global economic downturn. I might add that 80% of those jobs are full time, of which two-thirds are in high-wage sectors.

Like her, I am also a member of Parliament from Ontario. In fact, there are 76 Conservative members of Parliament from Ontario. We are here and we are fighting hard for our constituents every single day.

Government Orders

I want to bring to the member's attention page 379 of the budget document that every member of Parliament was given the day the hon. Minister of Finance presented it to the House. If the member looked there, she would see the four major transfers to the provinces. This is a key point for my hon. colleague from Ontario opposite. The transfers will amount to almost \$68 billion in 2015-16. In fact, I will inform the hon. member that the federal transfers to the Province of Ontario have increased from \$10.8 billion in 2006, when the Conservative Party took over as government of this country, to over \$20 billion this year.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this Conservative budget will go down in history as one of those budgets that truly favours Canada's wealthy, at a great cost to the middle class of Canada and those aspiring to become a part of Canada's middle class.

The best example that comes to mind offhand has to be income splitting. Less than 15% of Canada's population would benefit from it, and that 15% are Canada's wealthiest.

Let us contrast that to the Liberal plan, which proposes a 7% tax cut across the board for Canada's middle class. We would argue that even the wealthiest Canadians recognize that at times we need to assist our middle class by giving them a tax break. A healthy middle class means a strong, healthy economy. Would the member not agree?

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Mr. Speaker, I will not contrast a balanced budget that is delivering to every single family in this country from coast to coast with a Liberal plan that is not balanced and not costed and has a \$3 billion hole in it. It is a wishy little pre-election document that the Liberals are promising people over just a couple of months. They have had four years to talk in this House about the things that could be done. Now they have brought out a plan that is not balanced and they expect us to contrast it with something that has delivered proven results for Canadians.

I would say this to the member. This budget will go down in history, but it will go down in history for helping families and communities prosper. We propose to increase the tax-free savings account annual contribution to \$10,000, and 11 million Canadians have already availed themselves of this important program.

I also want to mention family support. The member spoke about income splitting, which would help families in which one parent is not earning as much money as the other. They can save up to \$2,000 on their taxes. Every single family with children will benefit—not some, as would happen under the Liberals' convoluted plan. Every family with children under the age of six would receive \$1,920 per year, and every family with children between the ages of six to 17 would receive \$720.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to outline some of the reasons I will be supporting our government's budget and its budget implementation bill, Bill C-59.

Before I go into the details about the new investments and the tax relief the budget proposes and how Bill C-59 would make this happen, I want to stress how important it is that our government has had all of these significant achievements while balancing the budget. An election promise made is an election promise kept.

As a result of our government's fiscal management, our country emerged from the recession faster and stronger than virtually any other advanced economy. When the recession ended, we charted a course to a balanced budget, but not by following the Liberal approach to budget management of making drastic, sudden cuts to social and health care transfers, or by raising taxes. Instead, we did the opposite, increasing provincial transfers to record levels to help the provinces get their fiscal houses in order and lowering taxes to put money back into the pockets of families and small businesses.

To the first point, Alberta alone would receive \$5.5 billion in transfers this year, which would be an increase of 145% over those of the previous Liberal government.

We then focused on controlling operating expenses for federal departments by reviewing all spending to make government operations more efficient. Using this approach, since the height of the great recession the deficit has been reduced from \$55.6 billion to a surplus of \$1.4 billion for 2015-16.

Due to the growth in Canada's economy and the elimination of the deficit, our total government net debt burden is the lowest of any G7 nation and among the lowest of the advanced G20 countries.

As a result of our efforts, our government has been able to cut taxes 180 times, resulting in our country's lowest tax burden since the 1950s.

To ensure that Canada keeps its fiscal house in order, economic action plan 2015 includes a number of important measures to help Canada stay on the right track, most notably through balanced budget legislation.

Part 3, on page 38 of Bill C-59, presents the framework for this balanced budget legislation by mandating that should Canada again enter into deficit, the finance minister would be required to testify before the House of Commons Committee on Finance within 30 days and present a plan, with concrete timelines, to return to balanced budgets.

Moreover, should the deficit be due to a recession or other extraordinary circumstances, operating spending would be frozen, as would the salaries of cabinet ministers and deputy ministers government-wide.

If, on the other hand, the deficit was due to mismanagement, operating budgets would be frozen automatically, and the salaries of cabinet ministers and deputy ministers alike would be reduced by 5%.

This approach would ensure that increases in spending that might be required to respond to a recession, war, or some natural disaster would be temporary, targeted, and timely.

In central Alberta, one of the key pillars of our local economy is agriculture. This budget, like previous ones, would continue to support agriculture and farmers in our great region and throughout all of Canada.

Government Orders

Agriculture is truly the backbone of our nation. As a farmer, I understand the difficulties individuals in the agriculture sector face. Economic action plan 2015 would embrace the economic importance of agriculture by increasing the lifetime capital gains exemption to \$1 million for farmers and fishermen, allowing them to keep more of their lifelong earnings for retirement.

Additionally, this budget would provide funding to the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Market Access Secretariat, allowing the agriculture sector to take advantage of new free trade deals to expand and diversify into new markets.

The economic action plan of 2015 would build upon previous support for farmers and agriculture, including over \$3 billion in investment, including provincial and territorial contributions, toward innovation, competitiveness, and market development for Canada's agricultural sector under Growing Forward 2.

We have also fully delivered on our government's commitment to marketing freedom by increasing marketing choice for western Canadian grain farmers by facilitating the commercialization of the Canadian Wheat Board, which will ensure a strong and competitive grain handling and shipping network across Canada.

● (1530)

Another major issue that is quite close to my heart is, of course, our government's support for seniors. Through this budget, our government has proposed a number of changes to help make seniors' lives better and to help them stay in their homes longer.

Having just a small amount of time, I can only focus on a few of the many policy initiatives our government has proposed. The first I would like to speak to is the increase in the tax-free savings account.

Seniors have embraced the tax-free savings account for their saving needs. This budget, through the BIA, proposes to increase the annual contribution limit to \$10,000. This, coupled with changes to RRSP withdrawal amounts, would provide seniors with even greater opportunities to manage their life savings.

As of the end of 2013, nearly 11 million individuals had opened TFSA's, and the total value of assets held in TFSA's was nearly \$120 billion. While the opposition continues to spread misinformation that the TFSA accounts are only for the rich, the facts cannot be overlooked. In the income category of \$20,000 to \$25,000, over 124,000 Canadians maxed out their limit. Of those who have maxed out their TFSA's, 60% earn less than \$60,000. Some 856,000 Canadians aged 65 and over have maxed out their contributions, and another 1.3 million 55 and older have done the same. Close to 2.7 million seniors had TFSA's by the end of 2013, and 60% of seniors who had TFSA's earned less than \$40,000.

I think this is clear proof of how tax-free savings accounts are beneficial for all Canadians and are especially embraced by seniors and middle- to low-income individuals.

The second major policy change to support seniors I want to focus on is one that would help seniors stay in their homes longer. This is important and much needed, because as seniors age, their homes become increasingly less accessible, and they are often forced to move into more accessible housing, such as retirement and nursing homes. This can be incredibly difficult and stressful.

Our government recognizes the challenges seniors face in remaining mobile and independent and as a result has introduced a new home accessibility tax credit. This proposed tax credit would be for home improvements that would allow a senior or a person eligible for a disability tax credit to be more mobile, safe, and functional within his or her own home. This 15% non-refundable income tax credit would apply to up to \$10,000 in eligible home renovation expenditures, providing up to \$1,500 in tax relief. Through the home accessibility tax credit, Canadian seniors would be able to stay in their homes longer, I cannot stress enough how important that is.

The last initiative I want to talk about is the extension of the employment insurance compassionate care benefit from six weeks to six months. This is important to all Canadians, because from time to time, a large number of Canadians are forced to leave their jobs to take care of their loved ones. This can put a huge financial stress on families. Our government has recognized this problem, and through economic action plan 2015, an allocation of up to \$37 million has been made annually to extend employment insurance compassionate care benefits. This would help reduce the stress at a very stressful time and help families help themselves.

In summary, it is clear that our government's economic action plan of 2015 and this budget implementation act, which sets the framework for legislative change, would be beneficial for all Canadians.

Our expanded limit for tax-free savings accounts of \$10,000 would allow hard-working Canadians to save more.

Farmers throughout Canada would continue to benefit from our aggressive trade policy, which has opened up new markets that will help grow our agriculture sector and our economy as a whole. The increase in the lifetime capital gains exemption would give farmers and fisherman more money they can use for retirement.

Through our balanced budget legislation, future generations would not live in fear of being saddled with irresponsible spending and mountains of debt.

● (1535)

All in all, this entire budget is something to be proud of, and I encourage members of the opposition to join me in supporting it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Government Orders

I am always surprised to hear members on the government side brag about so-called family measures. I would like to draw my colleague's attention to two regular columnists for *Les Affaires*, a very reputable business newspaper in Quebec. These columnists are both tax experts. Dany Provost's editorial was called "Conservative budget: nothing impressive". He warned families that there were pitfalls associated with the new universal child care benefit, the UCCB. He told people not to spend the cheque coming in July on their summer vacation since they will have to pay a big chunk come tax time next year. Josée Jeffrey, a tax expert and financial auditor, said that the UCCB was all smoke and mirrors. I would like to know whether my colleague agrees with the opinions of these financial planning and tax experts.

• (1540)

[English]

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, I certainly do not agree with their comments. Of course, I do not mean the opposition's comments particularly but the comments of the person the member was quoting. I have heard it mentioned by the Liberals that if we give people money, they are going to spend it on popcorn and beer. I have heard that, but I have not seen that from any credible source anywhere else.

It is rather important that people recognize some of the help that is going to be there for Canadians and certainly for families with children. One of the things we continue to hear, which I do not think people recognize, is that increasing the child care expense deduction dollar limit would allow more money to come into a family unit. If it was increased by \$1,000 for every child, which is part of the budget implementation act, it would also help on the other side. The concept is that those who have less money would be taxed less, so there will be more dollars in their pockets.

I have trust in Canadians to handle their funds.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, maybe I could give the member a clear example of why the Conservative budget is unfair in its taxation policy.

Let us use the tax-free savings account as the example. Of people who make between \$20,000 and \$40,000 a year, between 5% and 6% would actually max out the benefits of that tax break. For people making over \$200,000 a year, it would be well over 30% and would probably closer to about 36%. What they are doing is providing a tax break that the wealthiest in Canada are going to be able to take advantage of. Not very many of the constituents I represent have an extra \$10,000 kicking around the house that they can invest in a TFSA. That is where Canadians sense that the government of Canada is not being fair.

I am wondering if the member can explain to my constituents and Canadians why he believes that what I just said is wrong, because it is true.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the member opposite, it is not true.

Those who do not have a lot of money also do not have a lot of opportunities or a lot of instruments for saving. This is one they can look at and deal with. We can see that it happens. When seniors are being forced to take money out of other various financial

instruments, they want some place to put it. They are not necessarily going to be spending it all at that point, so they need to have that type of flexibility. It is important to recognize that.

All one has to do is go through the numbers. I went through that. I said that of the total number of people who have maxed out their TFSAs, 60% earned less than \$60,000. That is \$5,500 per year they have been putting in maxing out their TFSAs. There are lots of other opportunities for investments for some of his friends, I guess, who are in that \$200,000-plus club, but they will not be using a TFSA as their main instrument for investment.

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Consular, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many of us have come here on a commitment of fiscal management and we want to see government balance its books. It is important to us that the amount of income coming to the government is what it spends. I just want to take a minute and ask this for the member for Red Deer.

The member had outlined that our government achieved a balanced budget using a very different method from the one the previous Liberal government used. I wonder if he could explain a bit further what he meant by that.

In light of the comments of the Liberal member opposite here, I think the Liberals really have a hard time accepting the fact that they should allow Canadians to save their own money and spend their own money. They seem to want to claw that back from them. Does the member know anything about Liberal clawbacks and their trying to claw money back from Canadians?

• (1545)

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, sadly I know a lot of that, after having been a hospital board member and chairman for a number of years, back in the 1990s when the money was ripped out of the provincial coffers for social programs, as well as for health care. It was masterfully done, though, because if we ever listen to anybody at this point in time, they will say, "Remember how Ralph Klein destroyed the health care in Alberta". It is not true. The dollars were taken away from the province by the Liberal government, and this is an issue that can never be let go.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill C-59 today, the Conservatives' latest omnibus budget bill.

[Translation]

Bill C-59 comes from an old tired government that has completely lost touch with Canadians.

[English]

It is clear that today, as I share my time with the member for Ottawa—Vanier, we both agree that the government has to do more to create jobs and growth.

This morning we received yet another reminder of that. Thousands of workers—in fact, 1,500—at Bombardier in Montreal and Toronto are to be let go. This is not an isolated incident. It is part of a long-term trend of stagnant economic growth and a flatlined labour market.

Government Orders

In fact, we have 169,000 fewer jobs for young Canadians today than in 2008. We have twice the number of long-term unemployed in Canada, the people who are unemployed for over a year. In fact, in my riding and part of the riding next door, Kings County, Hants County, and Annapolis County, in that Stats Canada catchment area, unemployment has gone from 4.8% in 2008 to 11.6% today. There are 10,000 fewer jobs in Kings County, Hants County, and Annapolis County than in 2008.

Too many Canadians have been laid off or face having to replace full-time work with part-time jobs. This legislation does next to nothing to help those Canadians. Canada needs a government with a plan to help create jobs and growth. The Canadian economy has not just stalled; it is in reverse. According to Stats Canada, our economy has actually been shrinking in 2015.

Unfortunately, this legislation does not have a plan for jobs and growth and does not do anything to strengthen Canada's struggling middle class. Instead, the Conservatives have bundled together a large number of unrelated measures that simply do not belong in a budget bill. I would like to give a few examples.

Bill C-59 makes retroactive changes to exempt long gun registry data from Canada's information and privacy laws. That seems like an odd provision in a budget bill. What is more worrisome is that this morning the Information Commissioner revealed the real reason behind this, that she has recommended laying charges against the RCMP, almost two months ago, for withholding and destroying data in the gun registry.

Apparently the RCMP jumped the gun and destroyed the data while legislation to repeal the registry was still before Parliament. That shows a shocking disregard for Parliament, but it is also against the law.

How did the Conservative government react? Richard Nixon would have been proud of the Prime Minister. Instead of listening to the Information Commissioner and laying charges, the Conservatives decided to retroactively rewrite the law. They are using Bill C-59 to go back in time and to make legal what was illegal. In the words of the Information Commissioner, Bill C-59 "sets a perilous precedent against Canadians' quasi-constitutional right to know".

Bill C-59 also includes other measures that have no business being in a budget bill. It introduces new rules on the use of secret evidence in court as well as the use of biometric information in immigration applications. It establishes the parliamentary protective service and new security force on Parliament Hill. It makes piecemeal changes to the Copyright Act. None of these items belong in a budget bill. None of them have to do with the fiscal framework of the country.

The Conservatives have bundled them together in a single bill in order to limit scrutiny and ram these measures through Parliament in a matter of weeks. The process is sloppy. It leads to mistakes, and inevitably with the government, it will use another omnibus bill to correct the errors from the last omnibus bill. It is a never-ending cycle of Conservative incompetence and disrespect for Parliament.

One example is in the area of income splitting. Bill C-59 includes the Conservatives' fourth attempt at passing the correct income-splitting rules. Canadians already know that this income-splitting

scheme is unnecessarily complex. Now we have to follow an 85-step process just to apply.

• (1550)

Now it turns out that the process is so confusing that even the tax experts writing the rules got them wrong the first three times they came to Parliament. On Monday night, a finance official admitted that there is an error in the income-splitting rules.

The Conservatives made a mistake that is shortchanging some families by as much as \$750 on their 2014 tax return. It is affecting Canadian families that qualify for both income splitting and the tuition, education, and textbook tax credits.

This error was in the ways and means motion that the House of Commons passed last November. It was there again in the ways and means motion that the House passed on March 25. It showed up a third time in Bill C-57.

This budget bill represents the Conservative government's fourth attempt to get it right. This is the Conservatives' flagship policy. Income splitting is not just unnecessarily complex; it is also unfair, unreliable, and bad for growth. It is unfair because it excludes 85% of Canadian households from any benefit whatsoever. It does nothing to help some of Canada's most vulnerable parents, single parents, or low-income families.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer issued a report showing that high-income families are far more likely to qualify for income-splitting benefits. In fact, families in the top quintile of income are the most likely to qualify. The PBO's report also shows that the average benefits under income splitting rise with family income. Families earning at least \$180,000 per year get the highest average benefit. Yet these are exactly the people who need the help the least.

Income splitting is also unreliable. Just because people qualify for it one year does not mean they will benefit the next. The benefit can vanish whenever circumstances change. For example, a family can become disqualified when primary earners lose their job or see their pay drop.

Finally, the PBO has shown that it would actually weaken Canada's economic growth rather than strengthen it. The PBO estimates that income splitting will lead to the equivalent of 7,000 fewer full-time jobs in the Canadian economy.

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The Liberals, and the Liberal Party of Canada, have a plan that is fair, simple, and good for the economy. We would replace the Conservatives' income-splitting scheme and a complex array of benefits with a single tax-free monthly cheque that is easier to receive and means more money in the pockets of low- and middle-income families.

Under the Liberal plan for fairness, a typical two-parent family with two children, earning \$90,000 per year would receive \$490 every month, tax free. That is \$2,500 more per year than under the current Conservative plan. A Liberal government would also make the tax system fairer and cut the middle class tax rate by 7%. That is a \$3 billion tax cut for those who need it the most.

We would ask the wealthiest Canadians to help, to pay a little more so the middle class can pay less. Canada's middle-class families are tapped out. They are struggling to make ends meet. They have not had a pay raise or a real tax cut to benefit their families in a long time.

Fairness means giving more to the middle class and those working hard to join it. The Conservatives, on the other hand, are only helping those who need the help the least.

Canadians now have two fundamentally different choices. The Conservatives offer tax breaks to the wealthy. We, as Liberals, believe in a country that works for everyone. We believe we can do more for those who need it the most by doing a little less for those who do not need the help.

The Conservatives are out of touch with the challenges faced by middle-class families. They are out of ideas on how to strengthen the economy. Canadians know it is time for change. It is time for a Liberal government with a plan for fairness for Canada's middle class. We will present to Canadians a plan for jobs and growth, investing in infrastructure, investing in people and skills for the jobs of today and the jobs of tomorrow.

Our priority is clear, we must strengthen those at the heart of our economy, middle-class Canadians who have not had a decent raise in 30 years. We cannot have a sustained long-term economic recovery without a strong middle class.

Liberals will continue to present solutions to grow our economy and to help Canada's struggling middle class. We will give Canadians a real choice for hope for a better future and a plan to actually lead us to that future in October when Canadians have an opportunity to choose a better government.

•(1555)

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a little bit rich of the member to say that Canadians want a change and that they want to go back to a Liberal government. We know what the Liberals did when they were in government. We just have to look at all of the spending problems and the sponsorship, which is really not much different from what the Conservative government is doing in wasting taxpayers' dollars. It is in the budget. The Conservatives are increasing their expenses for advertising. That is quite problematic.

What is even more problematic is the fact that the Liberals, like the Conservatives, would put in a tax plan that would only benefit a

certain portion of Canadians. Under the Liberal tax plan, somebody who makes \$45,000 would get a total of \$4.49, while someone making \$150,000 would get \$670.

I am just wondering if the member can tell me how fair that really is.

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, I urge the hon. member in her spare time to go to www.liberal.ca. It is our Liberal Party website. If she looks at the Liberal plan for fairness, she will see that a family with two children making a total income of \$45,000 per year would receive \$4,000 more every single year than they are receiving from the Conservative government right now.

I am not certain on what planet she is spending most of her time, but here on earth and here in Canada, \$4,000 for a family making \$45,000 a year with two children is a big benefit. I would urge her not just to rely on the NDP talking points, but to go to the source, the Liberal website, where she can see that we have a plan that would benefit low- and middle-income families.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I pose my question, I would like to make a comment to the NDP member. One has to be very careful if one throws stones in glass houses. After all, I suspect that more than 50% of her current caucus has allegedly spent tax dollars illegally, which is a very serious offence.

My question for the Liberal member is related to a statement that the leader of the Liberal Party has made in all regions of Canada. He said how important it is that we invest in our middle class, because by investing in our middle class, we are investing in our economy, and a healthy middle class means a healthy economy.

I wonder if the Liberal Party critic could pick up on that point and add some thoughts.

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from my colleague from Winnipeg North. We do not hear from him enough in the House, so it is wonderful to hear his mellifluous voice.

It is an important question. The reality is that the leader of the Liberal Party, the member for Papineau, has, over the last three years, focused on Canada's middle class. He has made the challenges faced by Canada's middle class an important issue for debate as we lead up to an election. He was the one who put these issues on the radar of Canadian politics. He is also the first leader to actually present a real plan to help Canada's middle class.

By cutting middle-class taxes, by helping middle-class families with children, we are the only party that has a real plan for fairness and a real plan for jobs and growth. Helping the middle class is one of the best ways to create economic growth. Without a robust middle class, we cannot have a sustained economic recovery or a strong economy.

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•(1600)

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question I have has to do with balancing the books and eliminating the deficit. The reason I am asking is because this is important to Canadians. As MPs, we are asking Canadians to balance their books. They want to see the government balance its books.

The Liberal track record is not a good track record. Just have a look at the Province of Ontario, and I think we will see how challenging it is for a Liberal government to balance the books.

I would like to ask the member if the Liberal Party will commit to having a zero deficit in its budgets, particularly when it is talking about delivering so-called benefits to Canadians. Will it maintain a balanced budget?

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, the previous Liberal government actually eliminated a \$43-billion deficit, paid down around \$60 billion off the national debt. When the Conservatives took power, they inherited the best fiscal situation of any incoming government in the history of Canada: a \$13-billion surplus. Within less than two years, by the fall of 2008, they had not only spent through that surplus, Canada was actually at the edge of deficit even before the financial crisis, but since then, they have actually added \$120 billion to the national debt.

My leader has committed to a fully costed election platform that will have balanced budgets, and we will honour that as a—

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

Resuming debate.

The hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I also want to rise today to debate a particular section of Bill C-59, section 20, which deals with the sick leave and disability programs that the government wishes to impose upon the federal public service. This is nothing new.

[*Translation*]

Here is a passage from the October 2013 throne speech, in which the federal government announced, and I quote:

It will reform disability and sick-day entitlements and work with employees to get them back to work as soon as possible.

That almost implies that employees are absent not because they are sick, but because they can take sick leave. Before talking about Bill C-59, I would like to talk about a bill that was passed not long after the 2013 Speech from the Throne, and that is Bill C-4.

[*English*]

Bill C-4, which I had called at the time a rather explosive bill, indeed, exploded the relationship between our federal public service and the Government of Canada, in a number of ways. It changed legislation that governed the federal public service and, also, the workers who fell under the jurisdiction of the Government of Canada, through the Canada Labour Code, in a number of ways. I will mention three.

The government gave itself the ability to define “essential services” in a way that had not existed before. It was, before the

adoption of Bill C-4, a mechanism where both parties, the employer and the employees, could present their arguments and the body that rendered the decision was a rather respected one. However, this law now, essentially, gives the authority entirely to the government.

The other thing is that the unions will no longer have the right to arbitration, which was a very important tool that has been used repeatedly over the past decades. However, now, arbitration would be an option only if 80% of the members do a job that is considered essential. The government has given itself the right to very easily control the union's ability to use arbitration by taking away the essential right to the renegotiation tool that works well when the parties cannot come to an agreement.

If the unions manage to win the right to an arbitration, the government had also changed the conditions that arbitrators can use. They can only refer to the government's financial situation or recruitment and retention issues in the public service, nothing else. That was not the case before.

Finally, the arbitration boards will no longer be independent. Basically, they report to the government.

In addition, there is another matter that I should mention. The definition of “danger” is changing, which would affect not only the 200,000-plus core public servants, but also the 800,000 other employees in Canada who fall under the Canada Labour Code, and the minister, or one of his delegates, is now responsible for defining “danger”. That sets us back at least 50 years. Given the tremendous progress we have made, regarding the rights of unionized workers in our country, I believe, now, that the public service and the workers governed by the Canada Labour Code are less well-served.

Back, now, to Bill C-59.

I wrote a blog on October 15, 2014, and I will quote it now.

•(1605)

[*Translation*]

[The President of the Treasury Board] has now proposed replacing the current system of banked sick leave with a new short-term disability plan and has warned that annual sick leave may be limited to five days a year [he has now offered six], which is a draconian cut from the 15 days currently allowed through negotiated collective agreements. Paid sick leave is not a perk that can be given or taken away at the discretion of the employer, but a contractual benefit of employment negotiated over time and representing, along with salary and other forms of leave, the mutually agreed worth of the work provided by employees.

A Treasury Board report has warned of a heavy fiscal liability that the government's obligation to provide sick leave apparently represents, but the report is mistaken or misleading in several respects. To start with, a theoretical liability is meaningless when a great number of public servants do not use all their sick leave entitlements. Furthermore, the Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO) has noted that the so-called liability includes work-related injuries and unpaid sick leave which are not relevant to the current discussion and negotiation. The PBO has also argued that the incremental costs of paid sick leave are minimal when departments do not backfill sick employees, which is the case with most departments and agencies. Finally, numbers are skewed when individual sick leave days are placed in the same basket as the forced draining of an employee's banked sick leave immediately prior to long term disability.

The current system serves an important purpose: workers should not be going to work sick as this would impede their own recovery and may put co-workers—or the public—at risk of illness as well. We should be promoting healthy workplaces.

Let us hope that this situation will be resolved by good faith negotiation and not by another piece of legislation embedded in yet another omnibus bill.

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That is the end of my blog entry from October 2014. Unfortunately, that is exactly where we are now. Bill C-59 basically contains a measure giving the President of the Treasury Board the power to do whatever he wants, regardless of existing laws.

[English]

This morning we saw a headline in the Ottawa *Citizen* that made mention of the fact that the President of the Treasury Board is pressuring unions for a sick leave deal by the fall. In Bill C-4, the government established and tilted in its favour the capacity to negotiate, or dictate really, to the public servants of our country. Now, in Bill C-59, we are seeing a provision that would give the President of the Treasury Board the ability to dictate, when he wants, measures that have not been negotiated and that I do not believe would result in agreement. In the budget that was adopted in this House, the government and one of the ministers said that it is cast in stone, is expecting to recover \$900 million worth of benefits this year from the sick leave program that our public servants benefit from. Therefore, as far as I am concerned, we have a situation here that is not appropriate.

We should also note some numbers. Of the core public service staff, 25% have fewer than 10 days of banked sick leave, and 60% do not have enough banked days to bridge the gap to disability. Federal public servants currently have 15 days per year and can carry unused days over, which the government wants to stop, however the banked days are forfeited upon retirement. If there is abuse or if conditions need to be changed, five of the largest unions have been negotiating with Treasury Board since last June, apparently there are now 18, and have indicated a willingness to correct measures that may not be as solid as they should be. However, for the government to dictate that we will go from 15 to 6 days, non-accumulative, is not appropriate. That would create a situation in our public service that would not favour the service to the public.

In the past we have had a very solid relationship with our federal public service. Starting in the 60s when the prime minister at the time, Mr. Pearson, recognized the right to strike, and until 1984, 41% of our employees in Canada were unionized. That has now dropped back. In that period of time we had a great compression of the inequalities among the salaries of people. Since then it has been increasing. That is a serious difficulty that not just I but the World Economic Forum has identified as the world's single largest problem. The way we are dealing with our federal public service will not help solve that at all. It is a sad way for us to go, and I would hope that we would consider going in another direction rather than in this one.

•(1610)

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear my colleague speak up for unions. They are important and, as he mentioned, they help us with disparities. Unions allow people to have wages bargained in a way that is representative of their work, and allow employers to also accommodate and put forward their issues. I would hope his party will continue to support unions, and that means on Parliament Hill when unions are able to have collective bargaining with their employers, say with the NDP caucus in affording its members the spaces they need to do their work, but that is for another day perhaps.

I want to circle one of the issues the member mentioned, which is very important, particularly for those of us who represent public servants.

What is so wrong with this budget is that it builds on the government's track record to torque the power relationship between the employer and the employees, in other words, the government and public servants. That was in Bill C-4, as the member mentioned, which we opposed. However, in this bill, the Conservatives, instead of sitting down and saying that they are going to look at modernizing, in this case, sick leave, that they are going to look at the different changes in the workplace, knowing different things happen in the workplace, they have circled a number and have said that is it, that is all, that now it will sit down and negotiate. This is troublesome. It not only is bad faith bargaining, because the Conservatives have already come to a conclusion before they have sat down at the table, but they are talking about things that have already been agreed to.

Could the member comment on the change in the relationship between the employer and employees and what that does to the workplace, in other words, the place in which people do the work to provide services to Canadians?

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. Speaker, I have been in the government, in the House and in cabinet, and I have always thought that one of the principle responsibilities of a government as an employer is to deal in good faith and straight up with the unions. I have interfered and intervened a number of times to ensure that our government would indeed behave in that way. I believe that fundamentally. That has provided us with a very strong federal public service, one that has served the Canadian public very well.

However, over the last few years, as my colleague for Ottawa Centre said, the government has tended to torque the relationship in a way that is not fair and is not appropriate as far as I am concerned, and it has to be corrected.

•(1615)

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated very much the tone of my colleague's comments, because he very much reached out to the government to indicate that there were some serious concerns with this budget when it came to our public service.

The fact that the government has already decided on the amount as far as requirements for the various workers, I would be interested to hear what my colleague has to say about what happens if we do not achieve the goal the government has set aside in the budget for those kinds of negotiations. Does that mean workers will end up on strike, whether they want to or not, and the government will simply say that it does not have anymore money because it budgeted x amount of dollars?

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. Speaker, it is not clear what the government intends to do. One may believe that the government is hoping to basically abolish all of the banked days that the public servants have accumulated, and that is where it may recover its \$900 million. However, as the Parliamentary Budget Officer stated, those numbers are not accurate and not relevant.

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If indeed public servants are sick and they use a sick day, there is no cost to the government if they are not replaced, which is essentially the way most departments and agencies function. We have enough in the federal public service to fill in when someone is sick, which is why the PBO has essentially said that the report that the Treasury Board has based its position on is essentially erroneous, which is a generous way of putting it, and therefore should not be relied upon.

I am not too sure what the Conservatives want to do, but I do know that the way they are approaching negotiations is not in good faith and therefore not appropriate, and that has to change.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise in the House today to discuss the 2015 economic action plan—a plan that is tailor-made to meet the needs of hard-working families in Orléans and across Canada.

[*English*]

Before I go forward, I would like to advise that I will be sharing my time with the dedicated member for Lethbridge.

[*Translation*]

This budget is prudent, reasonable, responsible and, most of all, it gives middle-class families some breathing room.

[*English*]

A balanced budget is the best way to protect public service jobs and the programs that are so important to Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Canada was the last country to fall into the worst recession since the Great Depression and it was the first country to recover from it. We now have our first balanced budget since that financial crisis.

[*English*]

Thanks to the brilliant work of the late Jim Flaherty, the current Minister of Finance and their economic teams, we have gone from a deficit of \$55.6 billion at the depth of the great recession, to an estimated surplus for this year of \$1.4 billion. Canada no longer has to use its credit card to cover its bills. This new state of affairs will increase investor confidence in Canada's economic potential.

[*Translation*]

The future is bright for the best country in the world. More than 1.2 million net new jobs have been created in Canada since the lowest point of the recession.

[*English*]

More than 80% of these are full-time, private-sector jobs and more than half are in high-paying sectors of the economy. The budget is also proof that the city of Ottawa can depend on solid federal support.

Since 2006, we have invested more than \$1 billion in close to 100 infrastructure projects in the capital. More than \$760 million has gone to phase one of the light rail transit project, \$600 million of which came from the building Canada plan and more than \$170 million from the federal gas tax fund. Close to \$100 million have

been invested in the three-phase Ottawa River action plan, a moral issue for the region's environment.

● (1620)

[*Translation*]

A total of \$110 million has been earmarked to renovate the National Arts Centre.

[*English*]

More than \$80 million has been allocated to the Canada Science and Technology Museum to upgrade the facility and keep it in east end Ottawa.

[*Translation*]

Fully \$50 million has been invested in building the Ottawa Congress Centre.

[*English*]

Furthermore, the government's decision to extend, double, index and permanently establish the federal tax fund means that the city of Ottawa can benefit from more than \$50 million per year for its projects.

[*Translation*]

These are outstanding results, but you can be assured that we do not plan to rest on our laurels. The 2015 economic action plan is proof of that.

[*English*]

The new budget proposes an investment of \$10 million over five years, starting this year, to support the Ottawa Police Service.

[*Translation*]

This initiative reflects the overall nature of the budget: prudent, reasonable and responsible.

[*English*]

Given the federal presence in Ottawa, the municipal police service has responsibilities that other forces do not, for example, helping to provide security around embassies. We agreed in 2008 that the federal government should provide stable funding rather than reimburse expenses on a case-by-case basis. All parties have benefited from the agreement.

[*Translation*]

We are very pleased to renew this agreement and continue to assist our Ottawa police force.

[*English*]

Everyone in the region and around the world was saddened by the events of October 22 that took the life of the late Corporal Nathan Cirillo. Once again, the government exhibited discretion and some judgment by significantly improving security, while not turning Parliament Hill into an armed fortress. In addition, the government plans to allocate more than \$60 million over three years to tighten security on the Hill.

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[Translation]

This funding will enhance security not only for parliamentarians but also for the people who work on the Hill and the many visitors and tourists who come here.

[English]

Not a week goes by without someone telling me how excited he or she is about the celebrations to mark Canada's sesquicentennial. Whether I am at the Royal Canadian Legion in Orléans, the friendliest legion in the region, or the Carlsbad Springs Community Centre, the wise people of Ottawa—Orléans want to talk about the this upcoming event.

As an aside, I would like to take a moment to congratulate the recently retired city councillor, Rainer Bloess, for his work as co-chair of Ottawa 2017.

Residents of the National Capital Region and people across the country welcomed our plan to invest \$210 million over four years to support Canada's 150th anniversary.

[Translation]

Yes, 150 years is worth celebrating!

[English]

When the good people of Orléans first elected me to serve them in this House, and it was 3,399 days ago, I chose to make autism my personal cause.

[Translation]

On my recommendation, the Société franco-ontarienne de l'autisme has received close to \$1 million in funding since 2006 through Canada Summer Jobs.

[English]

Thanks to this program, the agency will be able to hire 36 students this summer.

[Translation]

Naturally, I hoped that the 2015 economic action plan would give additional support to these vulnerable members of our society.

[English]

Through the teamwork of some 50 government MPs, we convinced the Minister of Finance to include \$2 million in funding to create a working group in partnership with the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorder Alliance.

• (1625)

[Translation]

Of this amount, \$1.5 million will go to support stakeholder participation in the working group.

[English]

The group will develop a plan for a Canadian autism partnership that will address three key areas: sharing information and research; early identification, diagnosis and treatment; and to support families.

[Translation]

This initiative is very promising and it marks the start of what I hope will be a great future.

[English]

My time is running out and I would like to conclude by talking about our decision to support families. I have always supported income splitting for families.

[Translation]

In most families, the wage earners pool their incomes. Canada's tax system must reflect this reality.

[English]

As a result of actions taken by the government since 2006, a typical four-person family will receive increased benefits of up to \$6,600 following the adoption of the 2015 economic action plan.

[Translation]

Once again, the opposition is crying foul and saying that these measures will only help the rich.

[English]

However, this initiative will support middle-class and lower-middle-class families.

[Translation]

According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, 68% of the people benefiting from this tax relief have a family income of \$120,000 or less. That is more than two-thirds of households!

[English]

The Parliamentary Budget Officer also noted that 17% of households would benefit from income splitting having a family income of less than \$60,000.

If I had more time, I would talk about our other progressive proposals, such as reducing the amount of mandatory withdrawals from registered retired income funds, tax cuts for small businesses and greater support for caregivers, but I will have to leave that for another time. For today, I am just satisfied to give the facts instead of the ideology.

[Translation]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker I would like to thank the hon. member for Ottawa—Orléans for his desperate attempt to sing the praises of this tired, worn-out government. We are going to talk about real issues instead.

Earlier I asked one of his Conservative colleagues about the opinions of two renowned and credible tax experts who write a column in *Les Affaires*, a newspaper my colleague certainly knows. Both experts warned people about the Conservative measures, including the universal child care benefit, which they said was just smoke and mirrors in the end.

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I am lucky to have my constituency office right next to the office of a tax accountant who has just finished the busy tax return season. He said he was going to recommend that his daughter not spend her lovely July gift cheque, because she will have to write a big cheque to the taxman next spring.

I wonder if the hon. member would be making the same recommendation to his four children.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Mr. Speaker, I think this kind of sociological debate intended to divide Canadians is really regrettable.

The economic plan we presented this year will be good for all families, especially those with a low or average income.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the member is aware of the Minister of Finance's significant blunder, as many would call it, immediately following the release of his budget, when talking about the TFSA and realizing that there were going to be future revenue shortfalls for the government. This is where the government wants to give a significant benefit to some of Canada's wealthiest over others. The Minister of Finance responded by saying that this was, in essence, going to be a problem that the Prime Minister's granddaughter is going to have to deal with.

I wonder if the member could provide some comment on whether or not the government should take its responsibility more seriously about future generations, for whom we are supposed to be providing support.

• (1630)

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Mr. Speaker, we are taking a very reasonable approach, combined with everything else we have done since 2006. After the approval of this budget, the average four-person family would have a reduction in taxes of \$6,600.

We are doing it in a very safe way, not like the party he belongs to, which in 1995 cut as many as 40,000 bureaucrats from the public service and cut federal health care transfers to provinces from 50¢ on the dollar, which had been held for 30 years, from 1965 to 1995, to 14¢ on the dollar, with unbelievable consequences to health care services across the country.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague's excellent speech. It was well balanced and made me think about the very fact that we have balanced the budget. In a day and age when governments seem to get deeper and deeper into the mire of spending and doing the very opposite of balancing budgets, our government has managed to not only do that but to give money back to families so they can balance their budgets.

I wonder if the member, who spoke so eloquently, could possibly tell us what consequences of the reckless behaviour and challenges we would face as a nation, should we begin to reverse that and start to spend money so that our budgets would no longer be balanced. I wonder if he could just tell us what the consequences of those reckless actions would be.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Ottawa—Orléans, a short response, please.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Mr. Speaker, the shortest response is that Canadian families right across the country know that budgets do not balance themselves. There is one fellow who thinks they do. He sits in the corner over there, and that is probably where he is going to stay.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina, Infrastructure; the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Superior-North, National Defence; the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, Justice.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Hillyer (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in April we introduced economic action plan 2015, this year's federal budget. As we promised in the 2011 election, we have balanced the budget. In fact, we have a \$1.4 billion surplus. We have also kept our commitment to balance the budget without raising taxes and without cutting transfer payments to our most cherished social programs like health care. Not only have we not raised taxes, but we have cut taxes and provided even more tax incentives for individuals, families, and businesses.

In fact, this budget builds on measures introduced since we first formed government, providing a typical two-income family of four tax relief and increased benefits of up to \$6,600 more than in 2006. The 2015 budget has been praised by a broad and diverse group of business experts, economists, entrepreneurs, and most importantly, ordinary Canadians.

This budget is family-friendly and sensitive to seniors' needs. It addresses students' concerns. It is pro-business, the economy's job creators, and supportive of our veterans and Canadian Armed Forces. It supports communities through significant infrastructure investments and it is designed to create jobs, spur economic growth, and ensure long-term prosperity for all Canadians while ensuring future generations.

[*Translation*]

Our Conservative government remains focused on what matters most to Canadians. Our priorities are and will remain jobs and economic growth. We are keeping taxes low and supporting families. We are investing in infrastructure and helping to create jobs, while keeping to our plan to return to a balanced budget.

This year's budget is a balanced budget. We have taken steps to control expenditures without reducing transfers to individuals or the provinces. We cannot say as much for the opposition parties. The Liberals, for example, are offering nothing of substance in terms of the economy or job creation. Their leader has no plan for balancing the budget.

In fact, what is even more disturbing is that the Liberal leader said that the budget would balance itself. Even with the tax increases he proposes, his plan leaves a \$2 billion gap that can only be closed by increasing the debt and creating new taxes.

Government Orders

The NDP does not offer any more hope. It continues to defend risky economic schemes and unwise spending. It is proposing a total of over \$56 billion in new, imprudent spending, which would increase the tax burden and plunge Canada into permanent deficit.

Providing real support to Canadian families is an important responsibility for our Conservative government. Our economic prosperity plan is a plan for lower taxes, which puts money back into the pockets of hard-working Canadians.

We are proud of our solid record of tax relief, a record that reduces the federal tax burden to its lowest level in a generation. We have implemented unprecedented tax-saving initiatives, such as cutting the GST to 5% and introducing the tax-free savings account, thereby reducing the tax burden of all Canadians.

Furthermore, the latest tax relief measures for families taken by our government will help make life more affordable for all Canadian families with children. Our Conservative government has improved and expanded the universal child care benefit. This reduces the cost of child care still further, while enabling parents to choose the type of child care that best suits their family.

We have increased the benefits to \$1,920 per year for each child under the age of six and we are introducing a new benefit of \$720 per year for children between the ages of six and 17. This is in addition to the \$1,000 more each year that families can claim under the child care expense deduction.

In addition, we are helping more families enrol their children in sporting activities by doubling the children's fitness tax credit and making it refundable.

• (1635)

Moreover, the government has established the historic family tax cut, which allows couples to transfer up to \$50,000 of taxable income to the spouse who is in a lower income tax bracket.

This reduces the income tax they would have to pay by up to \$2,000. The family tax cut helps make our income tax system fairer by ensuring that families with the same earning power do not pay completely different amounts of income tax.

[*English*]

We hear a lot about the injustice of income splitting, that it is only going to help a very small portion of the population, and that it is only going to help the rich. Nothing could be further from the truth. I grew up in a family of 14 kids. My dad was a school teacher, my mom was a stay-at-home mom, and income splitting would have helped my family.

That is not just a rare exception to the rule. Every single family on my block would have benefited from this. Almost every single family in my community would have benefited from this. None of us were rich. The only few families who would not have benefited from this were the families who were not paying taxes anyway because they were in a low income tax bracket or a non-existent tax bracket, which is a sad place to be, but their taxes could not be reduced if they were not paying any taxes.

We also do not claim that this one measure would solve all the world's problems. I am going to give a bit of a metaphor as a critique

of our measures. Suppose that every day 10 men go out for a root beer and the bill for all 10 comes to \$100. If they paid their bill according to the way we pay taxes, it would go something like this: the first four are the poorest and they would pay nothing; the fifth would pay \$1; the sixth would pay \$3; the seventh would pay \$7; the eighth would pay \$12; the ninth would pay \$18; and the tenth man, who is the richest, would pay \$59. He has the easiest ability to do so, so that is what they decide to do.

The 10 men drink their root beer every day and seem quite happy with the arrangement, until one day the owner of the bar threw them a curve ball. He said that they were such good customers and that he did not want them to leave, so he was going to reduce the cost of their daily root beer by \$20. Drinks for the 10 men would now cost just \$80.

The group still wanted to pay their bill the way we pay our taxes, because that is fair. So the first four men were unaffected. They would still drink root beer for free. What about the other six men? How could they divide the \$20 windfall? If they divide the \$20 by six, it is \$3.33, but if they subtract \$3.33 from everybody's bill, the fifth man and the sixth man would each end up being paid to drink his root beer. That did not seem fair either.

So, the bartender suggested reducing each man's bill by a higher percentage the poorer that man was, following the principle of our fair tax system. They worked it out so that the fifth man, like the first four, now paid nothing; the sixth would now pay \$2 instead of \$3, a 33% savings; the seventh would pay \$5 instead of \$7, a 28% savings; the eighth would pay \$9 instead of \$12, a 25% saving; the ninth would pay \$14 instead of \$18, which is a 22% saving; and the tenth now paid \$49 instead of \$59.

Now, each of the six who had been paying was better off than before and the first four continued to drink for free. However, once outside the bar, the men began to compare their savings. Then along came a guy who had grown up with a silver mug. He pointed out that the sixth man only got a dollar out of the \$20 saving; he then pointed to the tenth man and said that he got \$10 in savings. The fifth man exclaimed that he only saved a \$1 too, and that it was unfair because the tenth man got 10 times more benefit than he did. The seventh man shouted that it was true and asked why the tenth should get \$10 back, when he himself had only gotten \$2, and that the wealthy get all the breaks.

The man with the silver mug hollered that they should not forget that the first four guys did not get anything at all—and remember, they had been getting free root beer all along—that the new tax system exploits the poor, and that the guys should reject the \$20 discount because it was nothing but a giveaway for the richest guys in the group.

They ganged up on the tenth guy and shamed him for being so selfish and for taking their money, so he quit going to the root beer get-together every night. When they went back the next day, there were only nine there. They found out when paying the amount they had to pay that they only had half the amount of money that they owed for the root beer.

Government Orders

The man with the silver mug said that they would have to pay back their discount, and their price would be raised by 7%. They were still \$37 short, so he would cut the root beer in half and find another way.

• (1640)

That is the injustice we are talking about. Our budget is good, it is fair, and it helps all Canadian families.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Éleine Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating my colleague for taking such efforts with his French. It is appreciated. Frankly, it might have been better if he had continued in French rather than getting stuck in rambling, open-ended allegory.

In any case, in his speech, I did not hear him explain to Canadian families why his government is establishing a new tax by making the universal child care benefit taxable, that is, considering it taxable income. The Conservatives boast about helping all families and putting more money in their pockets, but at year-end, they will be taking back almost half of it. Financial experts have recommended that Canadians set aside most of the universal child care benefit in order to cover any unpleasant surprises they get when they file their income tax return next year.

I would like to know why the government, in addition to real universal child care benefits, is not trying to create affordable day care spaces in order to give parents a real choice, as the NDP has proposed?

Mr. Jim Hillyer: Mr. Speaker, it is funny to hear the NDP say that our tax deduction is not high enough.

[*English*]

The member from the NDP is saying the tax deduction is not high enough. It is a little bit of a disingenuous criticism to say we should not be giving this benefit at all, but now that we are, we should give it all without it being taxed.

People are used to paying taxes at the end of the year. I would prefer nothing to be taxed, but it cannot be that way. The fact that it is taxed at the end of the year would also make it fairer, since the people with higher incomes end up getting slightly less benefit than those with the lower income because their tax brackets are higher. I am not quite sure what they are complaining about.

I know what the people who are Conservatives are complaining about: they would rather not be taxed at all. However, we cannot get everything we want just yet.

• (1645)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thought it was an interesting example. It would be interesting to see the member explain that example as he goes door-knocking, that is for sure.

To get right down to the basics, the government's income-splitting proposal would apply to less than 15% of the population. Even the government members, the Minister of Finance, and representatives of the government have acknowledged that less than 15% of Canadians would benefit from it. That 15% is predominantly some

of Canada's wealthiest, and no matter what sort of example we come up with, that is the reality of it.

That commitment alone amounts to a loss of \$2 billion in taxes in a year. It seems to me there is a much better way. Would the member not agree that a 7% tax relief for Canada's middle class would be a fairer way of administering a tax break here in Canada?

Mr. Jim Hillyer: Mr. Speaker, income splitting is long overdue. It addresses an injustice that has been around for a long time. Undoing an injustice does not solve every injustice in the world, but that does not mean we should not address that injustice.

Income splitting acknowledges the real benefit and value that stay-at-home parents provide to their families and to society as a whole. It acknowledges the real value of spouses who do not make as much as the person to whom they are married. It acknowledges what they contribute to their family and to society in a non-financial way.

I would not have trouble explaining this measure door to door because people already understand that it is a just offer and a just principle. They are confused about the notion that it really does not help. They know it helps. They are the ones who would benefit from it. I would not have to explain that for very long.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise and speak for a few moments on Bill C-59. Let me indicate that I will be sharing my time with the wonderful, hard-working member of Parliament for Beauport—Limoulu. I am pleased to have that opportunity.

Bill C-59 is a bill that I cannot accept. I will be opposing Bill C-59 for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that it will implement the unfair tax scheme that the government introduced in its budget to transfer money to the wealthiest 15% of Canadians in the country. I refer, of course, to income splitting and increasing the TFSA.

A number of my colleagues have been talking about these issues in some detail. Since we only have ten minutes, I want to talk a little bit today about a couple of issues that I found particularly noteworthy and that would have an impact on people in my constituency. I will set it up as the good, the bad, and the missing. I will proceed to explain why.

Let me first of all say that the practice of omnibus bills that was introduced by the Liberals has really been put on steroids by the Conservatives. This bill is over 150 pages long. It deals with more than 270 clauses. It would amend dozens of acts, many of which are not within 100 miles of the budget. This kind of bill undermines the ability of MPs to do what it is that we were sent here to do, which is to scrutinize legislation.

Let me talk for a moment about something that I think is good in this bill. A couple of days ago it was called Bill C-58.

Government Orders

The government put Bill C-58, dealing with veterans, directly into this bill, and I will speak to that in a second. I supported Bill C-58, as it was known, because it would have improved the transition process for Canadian Forces members and veterans moving into civilian life. It would have established the retirement income security benefit to provide eligible veterans and survivors with a continued financial benefit after the age of 65 years. It would have established the critical injury benefit to provide eligible Canadian Forces members and veterans with lump sum compensation for severe, sudden, and traumatic injuries or acute diseases that were service-related, regardless of whether they result in permanent disability. It would have established the family caregiver relief benefit to provide eligible veterans who require a high level of ongoing care from an informal caregiver with an annual grant to recognize that caregiver's support.

I mention this in particular because my colleague and neighbouring MP, the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore, has been fighting tirelessly on behalf of veterans and spoke the other day in support of these changes for veterans. The Minister of Veterans Affairs actually accused that member of trying to hold up these changes and delay the implementation of Bill C-58. That is why he stuck it into the middle of this omnibus bill.

What is interesting, though, as has been explained by the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore, is that if the Conservatives had left Bill C-58 as a stand-alone piece of legislation, it would have been in committee today. It would have been dealt with, it would have been reported back by the end of this month, and it would have been ready to be put into law by the end of May or the early part of June.

• (1650)

However, as a result of sticking it into this omnibus bill, it is going to be at least the end of June before this legislation will be completed. In other words, belying his words, the minister is himself intentionally delaying these provisions, and that is something I am completely opposed to. I must say I expected better from the minister than misrepresenting the position of my colleague, an articulate and hard-working advocate on behalf of veterans.

I also want to commend the government for agreeing with a position that the New Democratic Party has taken for many years, something proposed in its platform of 2011, which was to extend the compassionate care benefits for Canadians caring for loved ones. In our 2011 budget proposal, New Democrats talked about moving that out to six months. It is extremely important.

That was in the NDP platform in 2011, before the government introduced changes that denied eligibility to Canadians and placed constraints on which Canadians would be eligible for this benefit. While New Democrats agree with extending it, we face the same problem that exists with the EI benefit program in its entirety, and that is access.

Let me refer to a couple of points that were made by a representative from the Canadian Alliance of United Seniors on this particular issue. He stated:

Extending this program is a good idea, but there still are some major problems with this initiative. The first problem is the fact that the measure can be used only for caring for a terminally ill person dying within six months. This is not good enough as many persons, who are very ill, are not diagnosed as terminally ill in this short time

frame, but could still use important care. As well, many persons who are the potential caregivers are not working or are self-employed, and thus will not have access to any funds through this program. So while a good improvement, this program needs more work, because as the population ages....

While there may be a slight increase in costs if we were to deal with the access issues, it is certainly a much more effective way of providing care than the options.

I also want to say that I have talked to constituents who have made representations to me on behalf of ALS Canada and would like to be included in this benefit through a change in the wording to include those who are in “significant need of caregiving because of terminal illness”. It is too bad that was not part of this change.

Among the things that were particularly noteworthy on the negative side is what the government has done with respect to public sector sick leave. The government is overriding its own recently redrafted Public Service Labour Relations Act and allowing Treasury Board to arbitrarily set sick leave and disability plans for employees in the federal public service. This is an affront to the ongoing collective bargaining process. It is completely wrong and it is utterly disrespectful to the whole process of collective bargaining.

I have already spoken about my concern with the government raiding the EI fund once again, just as the Liberals did, to the benefit of the wealthy few. I am also disappointed that the government did not come up with a plan for providing affordable daycare spaces, as New Democrats proposed, at \$15 a day. The bill would implement the enhanced universal child care benefit. We have committed to keeping it, but we also think that affordable quality daycare spaces are necessary.

• (1655)

Some of the things my constituents would like to see include: develop a comprehensive strategy to deal with persistent structural youth and underemployment; immediately reverse the federal government plan to raise the retirement age for old age security and guaranteed income supplement to 67; fix the Veterans Affairs by reopening those closed offices; and start to listen to Canadians and show them some respect.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

The hon. member clearly did not have enough time to say all he wanted to about this budget. There is one important point for me, and it is the whole issue of how federal employees are treated. It bothers me that the government has decided to claw back money without any negotiation. Salary, pension and sick leave are all part of the concept of a total compensation package, wherein union members accept lower salaries in exchange for valuable benefits.

I would like my colleague to say more about the unilateral cuts in total compensation for federal public service employees.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, I find it not only disrespectful but counterproductive. Employees who work for the federal government work hard. They are dedicated to their jobs. They provide important services to Canadians. They are also represented by a collective agreement. In collective bargaining, the right to be represented by a union is a constitutionally-recognized right in our country. The government seems to be ignoring that. In the past, the government unilaterally increased the cost of the health benefit plan for federal public servants without any question of negotiation, without any issue of negotiations.

• (1700)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from the member. There is one aspect of the budget I would like to point out because I do not think we get to talk enough about it. I know Canadians are very much concerned about Canada's health care system. A 10-year accord was achieved with provinces and that led to record high amounts of investments in health care in all regions of our country. The government has failed to recognize the importance of having a new agreement with the provinces, which no doubt raises a great deal of concern. I share those concerns.

I know members of the Liberal caucus, and I think even members of the New Democratic caucus, would be concerned about the future of health care, given that the government has not been able to meet with the provinces, whether it be the Prime Minister or the Minister of Health, with the premiers, in a very genuine way, to try to strike a new accord which would ensure we would have ongoing health care throughout the country.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate those comments. The government unilaterally made that change in the funding formula for health care, which the Parliamentary Budget Officer estimated would cost the health care system \$36 billion.

My leader has made it very clear that when we are elected in October 2015, we will return to the formula that was used before. We will ensure that in provinces like mine, where the population is not increasing, but is in fact aging, changes to the formula will be made to ensure that they will not be disadvantaged. We will recognize the need for greater resources because of an aging demographic.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is very concerned about increasing taxes to pay for all the programs that his party would like to implement, but could he at least give me the assurance that, on these two measures, he would support our budget?

First, is the reduction of business taxes down to 9%. This would result in savings of over \$36,000 for a company that is earning \$500,000. It would be great to be able to plough that back into the company and produce greater productivity. Would he at least support that one?

If I had time, I would ask him another question.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, it is laughable when members on the government side talk about balanced budgets. They talk about living within one's means when we know they have run up deficits in our country at a level not seen in recent memory, to the point now where we have a debt in the country of over \$140 billion.

The Conservatives have done two things: first, they have continued to spend like crazy; and second, they have cut back on our revenue sources. They simply cannot talk about being prudent with taxpayer money.

[Translation]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to thank the hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for generously sharing his precious speaking time with me.

As my Nova Scotian colleague pointed out so well, we are debating a very large omnibus bill, even though it is smaller than its predecessors. This morning, sadly, the Conservative government once again imposed closure through a time allocation motion in order to put a limit on debate. Thus, many of my colleagues who would have liked to speak on this budget implementation bill, which has many complex ramifications, will not be able to do so because they have been refused the right to speak for their constituents.

In my speech on the budget several weeks ago I attacked the finance minister's bill because it was very pretentious to try to impose a balanced budget act. It is pure comedy. I have studied the clauses relating to this balanced budget act; I have them here. I do not understand how a single Conservative member of this House can extol the merits of this part of the omnibus bill.

Had it been in force for the past seven years, the Conservative cabinet would have had to pay huge sums of money as a result of its intentional, unilateral decisions to reduce taxes on the richest and biggest businesses in our country.

The most reliable institutions estimate the shortfall caused by all the Conservative measures at tens of billions of dollars per year. It was no accident that the government found itself with a record-breaking operating deficit in one budget in the past seven years. It was the government's will and its poor decisions that created a whopping deficit a few years ago. We can see the number of years it took to return to what the Conservatives call a balanced budget, but what is really sleight of hand and a shameful diversion of funds.

My colleague from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour did well to point out, among other things, a further misappropriation of money from the employment insurance fund, amounting to about \$2 billion.

He could also have talked about the contingency fund, which serves as insurance for the Government of Canada in the event of a catastrophe or some major disaster that affects Canadians directly, so that the government can provide support to the provinces and municipalities affected.

It is not very surprising that so many seats were won by the NDP in Calgary during the provincial election in Alberta, because this city had been flooded so disastrously. If Calgary were to experience a similar disaster this summer, what would the government do? How would the Conservatives manage after taking all the money out of this fund, which is so essential in the event of a catastrophe?

Government Orders

The Conservatives boast repeatedly about being good managers. It is a myth they are trying to spread by spending millions of dollars on extremely partisan advertising paid for out of the public purse. Unfortunately, as the facts show, the emperor is not wearing any clothes. That is the reality.

● (1705)

Over the past nine years, we have no doubt had the government that has been the worst manager. For months it denied the existence of an economic crisis on which everyone agreed, including all the opposition parties. The NDP had a ringside seat to lobby the government and say that we had to take action to deal with the crisis before us, a crisis which came in large part from the United States. Our American friends suffered enormously, but the government turned a deaf ear. Unfortunately, the late minister of finance, Jim Flaherty, refused to see reality, and with the complicity of the Prime Minister, resisted for months before finally taking action, under pressure from experts and the opposition parties.

This worn-out government's record over the past nine years is extraordinarily bad. It inherited a budget surplus. However it must be said—and there is nothing for the Liberals to be proud of in this—that the surplus was built in large part by depriving the provinces of legitimate transfer payments under the federal contract that had been in place for decades and by making deep cuts in transfers to individuals. The recipe that the Conservatives are using by making giving large corporations huge cuts has also been used by the Liberals. It is very interesting to see that after borrowing and stealing ideas from the NDP for years, the Liberals have now changed their target and are stealing many of the Conservatives' ideas. The latest example is, of course, the lacklustre plan presented by the member for Papineau, who is trying to win the race of who is going to give the most money to the richest families, such as his own family and the Prime Minister's. I have not been able to figure out who will win this race, the Conservatives or the Liberals. Of course, I will let them run after the richest people in our society to try to grab their votes.

The concrete reality facing the middle class is that it is suffering from stagnating incomes despite the huge increase in the cost of living, which is forcing people to borrow heavily. We have heard many warnings about the huge debt loads that Canadian households are taking on. I have the immense privilege of serving on the Standing Committee on Finance. I did so in 2013 and I have been serving again since January of this year. I remember the concerns that the chief economist for the TD Bank, Mr. Alexander, very clearly expressed during our study of income inequality. He said that the household debt situation was very troubling for the Canadian economy and that it was an immediate concern. If you look at the macroeconomic data, Canada has nothing to brag about. Despite our wealth of natural resources, our extraordinary human capital and our capacity for innovation, Canada's gross domestic product has stagnated and has been very low. My colleague and immediate neighbour is quite right: our trade balance is a disaster and in a substantial deficit. Maybe this is the Conservative government's new strategy to help developing countries around the world, but for the cost, they should be ashamed for wasting billions of Canadian dollars like that.

In closing, we have a worn-out, tired government. Canadians are really going to have to ask themselves if they want to replace an old

horse that is on its last legs with another old horse that already proved its incompetence for four terms about 10 years ago.

● (1710)

People will have some important decisions to make, and the countdown has begun.

[*English*]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his speech. I have very high regard for him. We have worked across party lines on different issues, and I certainly respect him highly.

I have a question on the first part of his speech. He was critical of our government for spending into deficit. In 2008 and 2009, I recall very clearly that when we decided to put some stimulus funding in place to stimulate the manufacturing sector and to create better infrastructure in our communities not only the NDP but the Liberals as well encouraged us to spend more. They said that we were not doing enough. How can one continue to spend more and more and not have the problem he is accusing us of now of having spent too much?

● (1715)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

I am going to point out some good things about the budget implementation bill. We are pleased that the government has borrowed ideas. It did not steal them; there is no copyright on our ideas. I would like to congratulate the Conservative government for borrowing our idea of lowering taxes for small business and also keeping the accelerated capital cost allowance for small business. I would like to thank the government.

Unfortunately, as is usually the case—and the member will acknowledge it—these worthwhile measures that we could have supported on a stand-alone basis are buried in a host of other measures, including the theft of public servants' right to negotiate sick leave. That is shameful. It is clearly a breach of a constitutional right. This government will lose in court once again before losing for the last time this fall on October 19.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member put the challenge out to Canadians that they will be able to make a decision. I concur. They will be able to make a decision. They will be able to do a comparison. They will be able to compare this government to the Liberal governments of Paul Martin or Jean Chrétien, when we saw consistently balanced budgets, trade surpluses, and economic activity that generated hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of real jobs. There was beneficial economic growth in all 10 provinces and our territories.

When we talk about health care, the record high amounts in health care spending we have today are because of a Liberal government agreement called the health care accord.

Virtually on every front there is a reason for Canadians to look at the Liberal Party and say that it is a viable alternative.

Government Orders

We have our current leader now focusing attention on the middle class. Prior to the current leader of the Liberal Party being elected leader, the words “middle class” were rarely used here. It has only been since he was elected leader that all the other parties are now jumping on board saying that they too want to help out the middle class. However, the leader of the Liberal Party has consistently been advocating for it.

This is something we believe Canadians are going to tune in to come October 19 and they will recognize and reward us.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Winnipeg North for his question, or rather his comment, because in the end he did not really ask a question.

I will let the member—like his leader, the member for Papineau—race with the Conservatives to put as much money as possible in the pockets of the wealthy.

That said, I will help him nonetheless. I have his email address and I will send him a lovely table that shows the impact of the decisions made by the Chrétien and Martin governments on the budgets of all the Canadian provinces. Paul Martin was minister of finance at the time. We clearly see the line drop off sharply and then all the provinces post huge operating deficits. It was really difficult for the provinces to recover.

In those days, the PQ government in Quebec had negotiated terrible sacrifices from Quebecers. We have not recovered from the shortfall of funds, especially in the Quebec health system.

[*English*]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House today to speak about some of the key provisions of the economic action plan, 2015, and to support its implementation with Bill C-59.

I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Kitchener Centre.

On April 21, our Minister of Finance delivered a balanced budget that shows strong support for seniors and families, encourages growth, supports our business and manufacturing sectors, and focuses on the security and prosperity of our great nation. Today I would like to speak to those elements that stand out for me and especially to the constituents of Kitchener—Conestoga, whom I am so humbled and honoured to represent.

As a long-time supporter of and collaborator with the Mental Health Commission of Canada, I was beyond proud to see economic action plan 2015 announce a renewal of the Mental Health Commission's mandate, starting in 2017-18, so that the commission can continue its important work of promoting mental health in Canada and fostering change in the delivery of mental health services, giving specific attention to suicide prevention.

The Mental Health Commission has achieved a number of important milestones since its creation in 2007, including creating a national mental health strategy, developing a national anti-stigma initiative to help reduce discrimination faced by Canadians living with mental illness, and establishing a knowledge exchange centre as

a source of information for governments, stakeholders, and the public.

I am proud to have collaborated with the Mental Health Commission of Canada on numerous occasions, and I am hopeful for what the future holds for mental health initiatives and suicide prevention with this 10-year extension. I know that it is eager to continue its work across the country and to implement new programs to help youth, veterans, and all Canadians.

The Waterloo Region is home to organizations such as the Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council, which works tirelessly with partnering organizations, professionals, and the community to help those struggling with mental health issues.

I have said in the past that the conversation about mental health is just as important as the legislation, and I know that local groups in my riding would benefit from the ability to continue their work on mental health issues and suicide prevention efforts.

All of these efforts are very effective in getting important conversations out in the open, thereby reducing stigma and bringing hope. Hope is what this is about. I have said on many occasions that hope is the oxygen of the human spirit. Without it, the spirit dies. While the budget implementation act is about numbers, dollars, and cents, at its core it is a message of hope for Canadians.

As the Mental Health Commission of Canada stated, “This is wonderful news for the mental health community.... Together, we have advocated for change. And together, we are succeeding”.

When we put a strong emphasis on mental health as a key priority for our country, we all succeed.

I was honoured to be co-founder of the Parliamentary Committee on Palliative and Compassionate Care and to have served as its co-chair since 2010. We worked across party lines to promote awareness of deficiencies in palliative and compassionate care in Canada. In 2011, we released a landmark report entitled “Not to be Forgotten”, reporting on the state of palliative care and suicide prevention, which was endorsed by key organizations, including the Canadian Medical Association, among many others.

One of the recommendations arising from our report was to expand the provisions of the employment insurance-based compassionate care benefit to 26 weeks and to ensure its flexibility to allow partial weeks to be covered, allowing caregiver leave for episodic care.

Through the employment insurance program, compassionate care benefits provide financial assistance to people who have to be away from work temporarily to care for a family member who is gravely ill. Canadians should not have to choose between keeping their jobs and caring for their families.

I have always advocated for better availability of care for our society's most vulnerable. The new extension of the compassionate care benefit under EI from six weeks to six months, allowing those taking leave to care for their families, will make a significant difference in the lives of many families who want to care for their loved ones in times of severe health challenges.

Government Orders

•(1720)

I was thrilled to see that the parliamentary committee's palliative and compassionate care report was actually quoted in the budget along with this exciting initiative. As the report states:

Family and friends have been described as the invisible backbone of the Canadian healthcare system.

I am proud of our government's achievements in supporting families.

Speaking of families, there has been tremendous support in my own riding and across the country for the new credits and tax cuts for families. Let me list just a few of them: the doubling of the children's fitness tax credit to \$1,000; the family tax cut, saving couples with children up to \$2,000 through income splitting; an enhanced universal child care benefit, providing up to \$1,920 per year for each child under six and up to \$720 per year for each child between the ages of six and 17; and, finally, a \$1,000 increase in the maximum claim amount for the child care expenses deduction. These measures would support Canadian families and put money back into the pockets of all families with children.

There is even more good news in the budget to help families and communities prosper. I am particularly pleased with the new initiatives to help seniors and persons with disabilities.

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. We have doubled the \$2,000 maximum amount of income eligible for the pension income credit. We have introduced pension income splitting, which the opposition parties say they would take away. Actually, 2.2 million Canadians take advantage of pension income splitting. I have heard from dozens of pensioners, seniors in my riding, who have told me what a big difference this makes for them.

This budget also supports seniors by reducing the minimum withdrawal factors for registered retirement income funds, RRIFs. This measure, in conjunction with the increase in the TFSA limit to \$10,000, would support the retirement income needs of seniors by providing them with increased flexibility to manage their own savings in a tax-efficient manner.

I am also proud of the new home accessibility tax credit to help seniors and persons with disabilities who may face special challenges related to gaining access to their own homes or being mobile or functional within their own homes. Making improvements in their homes can be costly, which is why this new permanent tax credit would apply on up to \$10,000 of eligible home renovation expenses per year, providing up to \$1,500 in tax relief. These improvements would help ensure that seniors and persons with disabilities could live healthy, independent lives in the comfort of their own homes.

Allowing families to make arrangements to care for their family members through EI compassionate care benefits, helping seniors to have more flexibility with their retirement funds, and introducing new tax credits to help with mobility and accessibility are all concrete efforts to help all Canadian seniors.

As Canada's population ages, age-related cognitive impairment and chronic conditions are sadly becoming more prevalent. The burden on families is vast and continues to grow. Research on aging and brain health issues, such as dementia, can lead to better diagnoses and more effective treatments, which will improve Canadians' quality of life. That is why I am hopeful that the establishment of the Canadian centre for aging and brain health innovation will support new research and the development of products and services to support brain health and healthy aging. This investment would build on the government's strong record of investment in research and support for Canadians suffering from dementia and other neurodegenerative diseases.

Since 2006, our government has cut taxes 180 times, reducing the overall tax burden to its lowest level in 50 years. Bill C-59 would continue our record of reducing taxes with measures such as reducing the small business tax rate from 11% to 9% by 2019, saving Canadian small businesses billions of dollars, and increasing the tax-free savings account annual contribution limit to help make it easier for all Canadians to save for their futures.

While the benefits to all Canadians included in this budget are important, it is crucial to remember that as promised, this is a balanced budget. Canadians understand the importance of living within their means, and they expect their governments to do the same. Balanced budgets keep taxes low and also ensure that government services like health care, education, and money for bridges, roads, clean water, and sewage treatments are sustained over the long haul for Canadians.

•(1725)

I am proud of this balanced budget and the benefits it would bring to Canadians, especially families, seniors and, finally, the most vulnerable among us.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my Conservative colleague used the word “family” a lot in his speech, and he talked about all the amazing things his party is doing for Canadian families.

I received a document from some very competent people about the universal child care benefit for middle-class households, meaning a household that earns, on average, between \$44,000 and \$83,000. Once you receive the \$720 benefit, if you subtract the provincial or federal tax you will have to pay, since the benefit is taxable, and if you take into account the loss of the over \$2,000 child tax credit that was cut in this budget, you will be left with about \$150 in your pocket. From \$720 you will get just \$150. That is so little that accountants are calling their clients to tell them to keep the money in the bank because they will have to pay taxes on it later as a result of the government's decisions.

Government Orders

The Conservatives have a funny way of helping families by giving with one hand and taking almost all of it away with the other hand, all in the same year. It is rather strange.

• (1730)

[English]

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, I did not hear a question, but what this shows is the clear difference between our party and the NDP and the Liberal Party in how we help families.

The NDP and the Liberals would create a big institutional child care system, which would be mandated on all children, including those who do not even use it in rural areas and who would not be able to access a child care system from a 9 to 5 position because they would not be able to get there. They would like to tax every Canadian in Canada to pay for a system and pay for a bureaucracy that would not help every child and every family.

I am proud that the system we have in place with the universal child care benefit will help every family with children between the ages of 0 and 17. That is something of which we can be proud.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I have an observation. I am always amused to hear every Conservative MP talk about how there are tons of people in their riding who are benefiting from income splitting. If we added it all up, we would think that the majority of Canadians would get benefits from income splitting. I have news, and here are the facts. Fewer than 15% of Canadians will benefit from it.

I would like to say that I have great respect for my colleague, particularly for his concern for mental illness, which I share, and he has done great work on that. He brought out the concept of hope, which is very important.

However, having brought it up, what hope is he offering to the 14% of young people who are looking for something to do in their lives but cannot find jobs? What hope is he offering to veterans who have, frankly, given up on the government? What hope is he offering to the homeless, and there are many in my riding, who not only have no home, but are suffering with addictions and have mental health problems?

What hope would this budget offer them?

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, I hope my colleague was listening to my comments, because I clearly outlined many areas of hope within my comments. One area that I was not able to mention, because of time, was the area of job creation, of our economy and of small business.

We know that small business is our economic engine. By reducing taxes on small businesses, we are allowing them to create jobs for those young people who currently are unable to get a job. By reducing the taxes on small business from the current 11% to 9%, for a company that is earning \$500,000, this will mean a savings of over \$36,000 per year. Businesses can plow that money back into their companies and create more jobs for youth and for all Canadians.

However, we cannot create more jobs with high taxes, high spending and borrowing more money, which the NDP and the Liberals would have us do.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to have the opportunity to comment on another great budget from a strong, stable, majority Conservative government.

The budget has been described in my community as centrist, cautious, keeping old promises as well as making new ones, and at times surprisingly compassionate.

The first budget of Minister of Finance, the first balanced one since the great recession of 2008, provides substantial benefits to many Canadians. The budget helps seniors by giving them more flexibility and withdrawals from retirement income funds, and a new tax credit to make homes more accessible. Seniors will also benefit from the new \$10,000 contribution limit for a tax-free savings account, as well as new help for people caring for seriously ill relatives.

Families with children will receive improvements for the universal child care benefit and the child care expense deduction, in addition to the previously announced family tax cut. There is help for post-secondary students seeking loans through the Canada student loans program.

To stimulate the economy, the budget offers tax breaks for small business, investment incentives to manufacturers and new infrastructure spending. There will also be more money spent on security measures, both in Canada and abroad.

Despite losing \$6 billion in anticipated revenue due to plunging oil prices, the government squeezed out a small surplus in this budget. Now the question is how can we boost the economy? I can tell the House, further deficits are not the answer. No one knows how long such deficits would have to continue, meanwhile increasing debt charges continue to drain economic resources.

The Conservative government promised to balance the budget, and it did. We promised to save money for taxpayers, and we have. We said that we would improve the quality of the lives of people, and we did. We said that we would protect Canadians from security threats and defend democratic values against totalitarian states and terrorist groups, and that is exactly what we are doing. Promises made; promises kept.

Government Orders

Economic action plan 2015 emphasizes supporting Canada's families through tax relief and benefits. Here are some important measures: increasing the tax-free savings account contribution limit to \$10,000; introducing the family tax cut to allow a higher income spouse to transfer taxable income to his spouse in a lower tax bracket; tax relief of up to \$2,000 per family for couples with children under the age of 18; increasing and expanding the universal child care benefit to provide every family in Canada with \$2,000 per year per child under the age of six, and \$720 per year per child between the ages of 6 and 17; increasing the child care expense deduction limit by \$1,000; doubling the child fitness tax credit to \$1,000 and making it refundable; renewing the mandate of the Canadian Mental Health Commission for another 10 years to help tackle mental health issues that affect some Canadian families; and enhancing support for child advocacy centres across Canada to deliver community based programs helping children and families recover from victimization.

Over 11 million Canadians are currently earning tax-free income in their tax-free savings accounts, saving for a down payment on a home, for their kids education or for their retirement. In 2011, the Prime Minister promised to double the contribution limit of the tax-free savings account once the budget was balanced, another promise kept.

The opposition threatens to reverse this increase, claiming it only benefits the rich. However, the Department of Finance has shown that the vast majority of maximum contributors are low to middle-income earners, and many are seniors. It is little wonder that the Canadian Association of Retired Persons strongly endorses the increases to the TSFA limit.

• (1735)

Here are some interesting statistics that contradict the assertion that such measures only benefit the very wealthy. Almost 60% of TSFA maximisers make less than \$60,000 per annum. Just under half of TSFA maximisers, 46% of them are seniors. Overall, 80% of the 11 million Canadians who hold tax-free savings accounts have incomes of less than \$80,000, and 50% have incomes less than \$42,000. All of them will benefit from an increase in the limit.

These measures do not involve taking money from the government, as some oppositions members claim. These measures simply ensure that hard-working families across the country get to keep more of their own money.

The family tax cut will permit a higher-earning spouse to transfer taxable income to a lower tax bracket spouse. Tax relief is capped at \$2,000 for couples with children under 18.

Now the opposition asserts that income splitting only benefits 15% of Canadian families, but two things are misleading about that assertion.

First, 15% of Canadian families represent approximately two million households. Any single tax measure that provides relief to two million households is extremely far-reaching. The NDP's proposed child care measure by contrast would benefit only half of this number of Canadians, and that does not even take into account the grandparents who will see the benefit of this in their children's families.

Beyond even that, the Parliamentary Budget Officer found that middle and middle-high income households would benefit most from income splitting. Most of the tax relief would be provided to middle-income families. More than one million families, representing 83% of those earning between \$60,000 and \$120,000, would qualify for the family tax cut.

Instead of calculating income on an individual basis, the family tax cut would provide moderate relief based on household income, widely accepted as the fairest measure of any family's resources. This is a question of fairness. Families with the same income should be taxed at the same rate. The current system forces some families, which are exactly equal to others, to pay significantly more in taxes, and that is simply unfair. The family tax cut would solve this problem.

Another important facet of economic action plan 2015 is its emphasis on manufacturing as a key engine for the Canadian economy, and this is good news for my residents of Kitchener Centre and Waterloo region. In this budget, the government has delivered an incentive for manufacturers, which provides them with an accelerated capital cost allowance to spur continued investment in required equipment. This measure alone is expected to reduce federal taxes for manufacturers in Ontario by \$473 million over the period of 2016 to 2020.

The government's new economic action plan would create an automotive supplier innovation program to deliver \$100 million worth of support over five years for automotive part suppliers. The government will also develop a national aerospace supplier development initiative, a made-in-Canada solution, working with industry and government stakeholders, to aid aerospace firms.

Manufacturing is also be assisted by the most ambitious pro-export plan in our country's history so Canadian businesses can pursue global opportunities. Since 2006, the Conservative government has concluded free trade agreements with 38 countries, compared to just five before taking office. Canadian exporters will soon have preferential access to more than half the global marketplace. Opening up new markets is just one of the many ways this government is fostering growth and job creation for Canadians.

As members can see, economic action plan 2015 builds on Conservative government strategies that have helped the Canadian economy emerge stronger and more quickly than any other G7 nation from the worst global recession in over 80 years. That is why every member of the House should support Bill C-59.

Government Orders

• (1740)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I would like to pick his brain, seeing as he is a lawyer.

I would like to draw his attention to division 20 of the budget implementation bill. It creates completely new rules despite the Public Service Labour Relations Act. Authorized experts have indicated that there may be a risk of violating the Canadian Constitution, not to mention disrupting free and healthy negotiation.

As for division 18, which is about the Ending the Long-gun Registry Act, the Canadian Press reported that experts said this was rewriting history, plain and simple, and that they were very uncomfortable with the precedents this would set, considering that the Ending the Long-gun Registry Act is retroactive to the day it was introduced.

How comfortable is my lawyer colleague with this kind of legal approach?

• (1745)

[*English*]

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his confidence in my legal expertise. I did spend almost 30 years practising law, so I have a good sense of how the law operates. Having been here for seven years now, I also have a sense for how things get spun out of all proper proportion in the political world.

My colleague is placing unfounded fears before the House. With respect to labour negotiations, the budget of course sets the framework. As a lawyer, he will know that the frameworks establishes parameters, negotiations continue, and it is still open to the parties to reach a negotiated solution.

With respect to the long gun registry, my colleague knows full well that the intent of this honourable House was to abolish the long gun registry and to get rid of the data that went with it. This implementation bill would correct any oversight in that regard.

I want to close by reminding my colleague that this budget would reduce the small business tax rate to 9% by 2019. I know that, on his side of the House, he has recently become a convert to low business taxes. Will he support that in this budget?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member really needs to expand his reading to go beyond the Prime Minister's Office. The numbers he throws out are truly amazing. I suspect he might actually believe what he is espousing when he glows about the millions of dollars going from Ottawa to the manufacturing industry. I can tell him that it is not working. Hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs have been lost in Ontario alone. That is a record high. No federal government other than the current one has seen so many jobs disappear.

When the member talks about the income-splitting issue, the bottom line is that less than 15% of people would benefit, the majority of whom are Canada's wealthiest.

When we talk about a deficit, the current government has added \$4,400 for every man, woman, and child living in Canada.

My question is this. Does the member exercise any reading outside of the Prime Minister's Office?

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Mr. Speaker, quite frankly this question demonstrates one of the worst aspects of this particular Parliament, which is when one descends to personal slurs and attacks. It does not bother me, as I am used to hearing it, particularly from the Liberals. I respected and appreciated the comments made by my NDP colleague earlier, because he did not take the same low road that the member who just asked about my reading ability has done.

Just to establish beyond a doubt, let me read some of the things that I have read about this budget to my Liberal colleague, particularly with respect to Canadian manufacturing.

The Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters stated:

...this year's budget backs up the importance of both manufacturing and exporting with a number of important tax and investment measures that will have a very positive impact for CME members.

Most importantly, the budget provides an Accelerated Capital Cost Allowance over the next ten years for investments in manufacturing and processing technologies.

Aéro Montréal stated it is:

...proud that the Government of Canada recognizes the importance of deploying such a program nationwide. This will...[provide a funding boost to programs] already in place in Québec.

Let me close with the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce, which stated:

From the business perspective, this is a good-news budget. Economic growth in Canada is delivered—

• (1750)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, order.

Resuming debate with the last 10 minutes this evening, the hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that the member could not put his speaking notes down. He really, truly believes that his speaking notes are his bible.

It is important to speak to this budget, which does such a bad job of addressing real need in Canada. It is a budget that is primarily focused on one thing, and that is the electoral prospects of the Conservative Party. To do that, Conservatives have questionably balanced the ledger and found new ways to reward Canadians who are doing very well.

In addition to that, they have wrapped these measures up in another omnibus bill that is stuffed full of items that have little or nothing to do with the federal budget. That has become a standard move from the Conservative playbook, and Canadians are getting tired of the budget shell game the government plays, with all sorts of measures that have nothing to do with spending and everything to do with keeping debate at a minimum.

That is among the reasons that New Democrats oppose this budget legislation. We oppose it on its content and on the anti-democratic process the Conservatives are using to force it through Parliament.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

In many ways, this bill is like all of the other Conservative budgets we have studied in this Parliament. One thing they all have in common is the speed at which the Conservatives pass them, regardless of what is in them. Every day we see that the Conservatives are prepared to use undemocratic measures to impose their laws at breakneck speed. The more controversial the bills are, the faster the Conservatives push them through the House and through committee without proper study.

The other constant with these budgets is the government's ability to completely ignore the measures it could take to truly address the key issues facing the Canadian public. Too often the Conservatives choose to focus on the people they think will vote for them. This group never seems to include the growing number of families who work hard but cannot manage to make ends meet, no matter what they do.

If we look at how this budget was developed, it is clear that the Conservatives balanced the budget by making devastating cuts to the public service, by raiding the employment insurance fund—something they learned from the Liberals—and by selling Canada's shares in General Motors Canada. All of these measures will have an impact on the quality of the services that Canadian families rely on.

[*English*]

Balancing a budget in that way might get a pass at the cabinet table, but it would not get a pass at most kitchen tables, and it certainly would not in northern Ontario. In northern Ontario, people understand the value of hard work and the notion of a fair deal, and they are not seeing much of either in this budget legislation. They see right through things, like the unfair and top-heavy income-splitting scheme in the budget. Northerners understand it is nothing like the income-splitting plan for seniors.

This new scheme is designed to reward the wealthiest among us at a time when Canada has still not replaced the hundreds of thousands of well-paying jobs that were lost in the economic meltdown of 2008. This is not a measure to address need. It will not do anything to help with the jobs that are still being lost at places like Bombardier. That is what a budget should be addressing, but this one does far too little to address real need.

Another item that will not fly in the north is the notion that the employment insurance fund is a stream of revenue for the Minister of Finance to tap whenever things become a little difficult. Employment insurance is not supposed to provide mad money for the government so that it can dubiously balance the budget, but that is what has happened. This turns employment insurance into another level of taxation in this country. This means there is no truth to the Conservatives' low-tax stories that they like to tell themselves.

The real truth is that the budget is being balanced on additional taxation that is arrived at by turning employment insurance into a program that is less responsive, less well funded, and as we have seen, less available for those who actually pay the freight. I know that the Conservatives learned this from the Liberals. They turned raiding public funds into something of an art form, but it is stealing, nonetheless, and just because one party did it does not mean it is

acceptable or wise. What it amounts to is just more tax for the privilege of having a job, and nothing less.

• (1755)

There are elements of the budget that are acceptable and, in a few cases, pretty good ideas, but that is what happens when we turn to New Democrats for ideas. An example of that is the way we have led the fight for tax relief for small businesses for some time. We heard the Conservatives say it was their idea. In actuality, they voted against it when we put it forward. Now they are saying it is their idea, but it is actually the New Democrats' idea. New Democrats understand that these businesses are Canada's real job creators, and we are happy to see that the government is starting to take action by lowering the tax rate for small and medium-sized businesses. Better late than never; that is the way we feel about this move.

The same can be said for measures that would remove some of the red tape these businesses are forced to navigate. Again, the New Democrats have called on the Conservatives to reduce red tape on small businesses for a while now, so the small amount of movement on that front in this budget is welcome too.

We can also point to the way the government is trying to repair its battered relationship with veterans, as a welcome addition to this omnibus bill. At the same time, we understand that this is just a start and the Conservatives should have gone further and committed to finally fixing Veterans Affairs, implementing the veterans charter, and reopening the nine veterans service centres across Canada. The Conservatives supported our motion this week. Let us hope that they will actually respect it and put it into action.

They are doing something and, as I said during debate on our opposition motion earlier this week, the Conservatives could remove the section related to veterans from inside the budget and bring it before the House of Commons immediately to be debated on its own merit. They may be laughing on that side, but when it comes to veterans, we are supporting them and we are the ones who are taking action. That would be a strong move that would remove the matter of veterans from the debate surrounding more contentious aspects of this budget and allow them to see—as they did when the New Democrats' motion was passed this week—how support for our veterans comes from all parts of the political spectrum. Without pursuing that course of action, the sad fact is that the government is planning to use veterans as a wedge in a cynical political move.

However, that is not what Canadians need or want. There are too many significant challenges to get sidetracked by an argument that has been planned for and is brazenly calculated.

Private Members' Business

What we need to be seized with, and what is missing from this budget, are measures that would deal with some of the bigger problems our country faces, like persistent and structural youth unemployment and under-employment. In fact, there is not much for young people in this budget at all. There are no messages of hope from the government on that front. The Conservatives should try to implement a youth hiring and training credit that would help businesses create jobs for young Canadians, but they did not. That is a New Democrat idea that the Conservatives could have borrowed as well. It would have been smart. Instead, the government is all in on items that would benefit a small and well-off portion of the population, with wasteful and unfair tax schemes like income splitting and increasing the tax-free savings account, which would cost billions. To pay for this, the Conservatives are nickel and diming most everyone else.

I encourage Canadians to understand that we are paying for these measures in some part on the backs of seniors who are being allowed to live under or at the poverty line for another budget cycle. That is because there is nothing in this budget to lift seniors out of poverty. New Democrats would never hand out lavish tax breaks without first addressing the circumstances of vulnerable seniors. We would immediately reverse the federal government's plan to raise the retirement age of old age security and the guaranteed income supplement to 67. New Democrats would also move forward on proposals for provincial and territorial finance ministers to increase basic public pension benefits under the Canada and Quebec pension plans and implement a plan to begin phasing in such an increase without delay, because that is what seniors need and what they deserve.

What Canadians need and deserve is a government that delivers for the whole country and not just for its supporters. Canadians deserve budgets that concern themselves with economic measures and that are not chock-full of the government's dirty work. Canadians deserve a budget that will bring back some of the good jobs we have lost during the Conservatives' reign, and of course, they deserve a budget that works to bring people together and not divide them.

• (1800)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The time for government orders today has expired, but the hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing will get five minutes for questions and comments when this matter next returns before the House.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

NATIONAL URBAN WORKERS STRATEGY

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP) moved that Bill C-542, an act to establish a National Urban Workers Strategy, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in this place on behalf of the good people of Davenport, in the great city of Toronto.

It used to be that we could leave school, university or high school or college, and get a job that paid a decent wage and we could consider raising a family, buying a home. We would also consider staying with that company for our entire working career and, at the end of it, have a pension that we could count on, a pension that would keep us, in our seniors years, living in dignity. In fact, we could have a job that we could build a life on.

All that has changed. Today, more and more people are working freelance, are self-employed, are working multiple part-time jobs, are working on short-term contracts, are working through temp agencies, and some, I think too many, are working for free, as unpaid interns. These are what I refer to as "urban workers". What do they all have in common? They cannot access a workplace pension; they have no extended health benefits; they have no job security.

Tonight, we begin the important work to fix that with this national urban workers strategy.

Our labour laws, our policies, are predicated upon a post-war work reality that no longer exists, or barely exists. We need to pull our labour policies and our labour laws into the 21st century. We need to reflect the reality of work today. We are doing that, tonight, with this national urban workers strategy. It marks the first time in Parliament that we debate, in a comprehensive way, measures that would help freelancers, the self-employed, people who are working multiple part-time jobs, people who are on contract.

It would be one thing if there were just a few workers like that in our economy, but that is not the case. It used to be the case. In fact, my own father worked as a self-employed person. I remember those days because in grade school, he was the only dad I knew who worked for himself. Everyone else had traditional jobs.

A couple of years ago, the United Way and McMaster University came out with a very important report, that showed that almost 50% of all workers in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area could not access stable, full-time employment. They could not find it. We have a more recent study, in fact, it was just last month, from the CIBC that showed that job quality in Canada was at an all-time low, and this particularly affects young workers.

This is the legacy and the record of the current Conservative government. It was the legacy and the record of the former Liberal government, as well.

Tonight, we enter a new chapter in the proud history of the NDP. The NDP has always stood with and for workers. We are the party that has fought to protect workplace pensions. We have fought to protect extended health benefits for workers in the workplace. We fought for occupational health and safety measures. We fought for the protection of job security.

Private Members' Business

Tonight, we are fighting for all those workers who cannot access a pension to begin with, all those workers who have no extended health benefits, all those workers in the economy who do not have any job security, who could wake up tomorrow and have no job. This bill marks a new chapter.

I would like to just say a word about why the word “urban” is in the bill. The word “urban” is in the bill because about 80% of Canadians live in urban areas and this issue of precarious work is manifesting itself in significant measures in the economy of our urban centres. That said, this bill would positively affect all precarious workers, whether they live in a big city, a small town or a rural municipality. These issues are universal.

● (1805)

People cannot access job stability. They do not have access to a pension. They do not have access to extended health benefits.

What are some of the measures in the bill? I would like to speak to some of the core measures. I would like to do that by first telling a personal anecdote.

I was working, as I have for about 25 years, as a freelance arts and culture worker in Toronto. Around 2008 we had a significant health crisis in my family, one in which both myself and my partner had to put all hands on deck in order to deal with the crisis. That took a good four or five months to deal with.

For people working freelance what generally happens is while they are working they are also working to find the next job too because they never know when that next job will come. In that space of time when we were dealing with a health crisis at home I was not working. After the crisis subsided and I went back to finding employment, it took some time to ramp up to stable employment again and we incurred significant debt. We were in debt for quite some time. It took several years to get ourselves out of that debt.

It made me realize just how precarious my work life was, that there was this razor thin line between stability and economic calamity. I started to look around and realized that it is not just people in the arts and culture sector, although most of those folks are working in precarious situations, but it is many people. It is taxi drivers, graphic designers, office cleaners, clerks, cashiers, personal support workers and micro entrepreneurs, people who are cobbling together a living doing a variety of things in our economy. None of them are able to access the kinds of income security measures and supports that buffer workers from the calamities of life, whether those are job loss due to a changing economy or family crises or health crises. These workers cannot take time off to tend to sick loved ones. They cannot access paternity and maternity leave. They cannot access compassionate leave.

At the end of one job and the beginning of another, there is often a gap and there is no way to bridge that gap. We have no policies in place to bridge that gap. Tonight, we begin to build those bridges with a national urban worker strategy.

The bill compels the federal government to do something that this government seems almost frightened to do, which is to sit down with other levels of government, like the provinces, municipalities, labour groups, employers and other relevant stakeholders and start to really get into the meat of this issue of how we support these workers.

These workers pay taxes, raise families and contribute in significant ways to the cohesive social fabric of our cities and our communities right across the country and yet we have not addressed their concerns, until tonight.

Some of the measures in the bill that we are suggesting the federal government look at are issues around, for example, employment insurance. We need to fix our employment insurance system so it is there when workers need it and we need to find ways to expand that so it is available for all workers. It currently is not. In fact, in the city of Toronto, even if they pay into it, oftentimes there are only about 30% of workers who can actually access it.

We know that this federal government has raided the EI fund. The last Liberal government did the same thing. Neither government had its eyes set on the issues of precarious work and how we build a system that takes care of all workers and gives them those supports.

● (1810)

We need look at the tax system. It is incredibly complex for those who are self-employed, those who are freelance and on contract. It deals with significant issues which we can look at. As an example, when the GST was first implemented, people with incomes at \$30,000 had to start collecting GST for the federal government. We need to look at measures that will make it easier for urban workers to build a business, to build their careers and not just foist people who try to cobble a living together into a situation where they act as free tax collectors, essentially, for the federal government.

We need to take a look at a living pension for Canadians. We need to do this and we can do this. The NDP has fought for this for years. We need to expand the breadth and scope of the Canada pension plan.

We need to address the issues of the exploitation of workers and unpaid interns. We need to tighten our labour laws. We need to sit down with the provinces to talk about some of these issues. We have heard the debate around the issue of unpaid interns, young people working in situations where they have no rights or protection. This is outrageous. We should all think this is outrageous, that we are putting our young people into positions where they do not get paid for the work they do and they do not get the same workplace protection regimes that other workers have.

On top of that, we also need to acknowledge some of the very large issues that will significantly help urban workers, such as affordable child care. This is a major offer by the NDP to finally put in place affordable child care right across the country. We will not just promise it and then pretend we never said anything about it. We will promise it and we will deliver it.

Trying to find measures that are going to support urban workers is also another reason why a \$15 an hour minimum wage is important because that provides an upward pressure on wages and it will help all precarious workers negotiate better wages for themselves. We have to look at any measure that will help both large and small urban workers.

Private Members' Business

I want to acknowledge the many people who have helped get this bill from the streets of Toronto to the floor of the House of Commons, people who prior to this felt that nobody was really taking on their issues and concerns. I am extremely proud to be part of a caucus that understands we have to move the marker for all workers in the country. The current government has left too many people at the side of the road in its rampant march for tax cuts for its wealthy friends at the expense of hard-working people and hard-working families across the country.

More and more people are working this way and this debate is an incredibly important one for Canadians who deal with this issue. Whether people watching this are precarious workers or not, everybody knows someone who is. Everyone has relatives or know teachers who cannot get a full-time, teaching gig. The bill is for them. The bill will help move Canada forward in a more equitable and fair way for all workers. I am very proud to stand here on behalf of all of those workers to present the bill. I look forward to the debate to come.

•(1815)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend my colleague, a member from a neighbouring riding. This is a critically important conversation, and he deserves a lot of credit for sparking it and for framing it in a way that makes sense for Torontonians and for people living not just in urban areas but anywhere in this precarious form of employment that is particularly tied to the cultural sector and to the social sector.

We know there are organizations that exist from grant to grant, from cycle to cycle, and we know that often they find themselves almost taking themselves apart before they can put themselves back together. The individuals working in those areas have a very difficult time stringing together the salaries and the contracts and the stability that are required to be able to produce and contribute to a better community.

One of the challenges that they also have is that they are effectively a group of employees, and they get contracted out to employers. What is the relationship between organized labour and this informal pool of labour? How do we bring those two groups into harmony, when quite often one prevents the other from proceeding in clear solidarity?

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I do not think there is some kind of mutual exclusivity between the issues that affect precarious workers and organized labour.

In fact, many unions are very focused on this issue and are trying to find ways to organize and to help or support workers in precarious fields. I have had many conversations with trade unionists from both private sector unions and the public sector. I think they understand that these issues are crucial and that we need to find a solution together.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to support the bill introduced by my colleague, because it is a very important bill.

My grandfather worked at the Singer factory in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu for 44 years. My father was a French teacher at a CEGEP

for 30 years. However, those labour market realities are becoming less and less common.

I have hosted many meetings in Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie with my colleagues from Montreal to try to deal with this new labour market reality. Many people are self-employed, have precarious jobs or work on contract. We need to change our legislation to address this reality, support them, help them and make sure that they too have some security and a social safety net.

Would my colleague like to elaborate on where we should be going in order to be able to help young workers, who need more modern legislation?

[*English*]

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank my colleague for his work on labour issues right across the country. It has been extremely important, and I am proud to work with him in this caucus.

Too often we have let young people down in terms of building a solid base upon which young workers can build a life. What this bill will do is essentially build a new, stronger, broader floor upon which workers can build a more stable life.

When I bring up issues around employment insurance, we need to remember that fewer and fewer young people can count on income security measures that workers from a generation ago, like his father, and a generation before that, like his grandfather, could count on. Workers fought for those things.

Today we have a new fight on our hands. That is why this bill is so important. That is why we need the support. That is why, quite frankly, precarious workers from right across the country are looking at this bill with great interest.

•(1820)

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have a chance to comment on Bill C-542 because, while I applaud anybody bringing forward ideas in this place, I think that this one is significantly flawed.

The bill would create an act to establish a national urban workers strategy to be developed by a task force of the ministers of Employment and Social Development, Labour, National Revenue, Industry and the President of the Treasury Board. That is a recipe for more bureaucracy with little to show as a result.

Though it purports to be an national urban workers strategy, the bill is nothing more than a collection of vague generalities about reducing this, raising that, and maybe broadening or extending a few other things. It starts off by telling us that its provisions would apply to all workers in Canada, but then it adds “with particular attention to urban workers”. I have no problem with supporting all workers in Canada, and I will talk about that a little bit more later. However, is it really a national urban workers strategy? It is this kind of vaguely worded proposal that does not reflect well on Parliament, in my view, and the thoughtful and thorough approach that we should taking with private members' bills.

Private Members' Business

The bill appears to apply to every Canadian who works. On the surface, that is certainly not a bad idea. It appears to apply to them whether they live in the city or the country, work as a bicycle messenger or in an office, operate a farm or drive a truck. It uses words like “vulnerable” and “precarious” to describe the economic interests of the people that it says it wants to help, though it does not offer any specifics about how significant the problems are and how to improve things.

For something called a strategy, the bill does not contain anything that is strategic at all. For example, the bill says that we should be reducing the hours of employment required to qualify for employment insurance benefits. It is nice to see that the opposition has not forgotten about its \$6-billion, 45-day work year. It does not say by how much it should be reduced, though. Would the opposition go even further than the previously misguided 45-day proposal? Would it be 35? How many hours? Would it be 1, 10 or 100? This does merit careful consideration, given the labour market impacts and the potential cost to premium payers.

We need to be working collaboratively with all players in the labour market, including businesses and workers, to ensure that Canadians have access to fulfilling employment and that they are encouraged to actively pursue education and employment.

The bill also says that we should be raising the level of EI benefits, but, again, it does not offer any indication as to how much. Would it be another \$2 a week, \$20 a week or \$200 a week? We do not know. Once again, the opposition shows its desire to raise job-killing payroll taxes that are paid for by employers and employees.

The vague nature of the content is only my first concern. Where I think this bill would do the most damage is by simply ignoring anything and everything that has been done over the past several years to help Canadians improve their lives. Surely, it makes more sense to take stock of where we are before starting on the next big plan. Our plan for the past nine years has been simple: trade, training and tax cuts.

Let us start with the big-ticket item of tax cuts. Putting more money back into the pockets of hard-working Canadians and making life more affordable for families is essential to jobs and growth. That is why our government has cut taxes over and over again. The opposition has said that it will raise them, over and over again.

We have reduced the lowest personal income tax rate to its lowest level since John Diefenbaker was prime minister. I can remember that, if only vaguely. We also increased the amount of the basic personal deduction. I was not paying taxes then.

We have cut the GST twice, from 7% to 6% and down to 5%. We have brought in pension income splitting, which applies to millions of Canadian families and gives them more options about how to live their lives. We have created tax credits to support working, low-income individuals and families, public transit users, first-time home buyers and families caring for disabled relatives.

Most recently, we proposed a new family tax cut and enhanced the universal child care benefit and child care expense deduction. These benefits will help every single Canadian family with children under 18. That represents 100% coverage and many millions of Canadian families. Today, because of tax relief and benefit increases

introduced by our government, the average two-earner family of four is better off by some \$6,600. That is not a vague generalization. It is real money in the pockets of real people who need it, wherever they live in the country.

At the same time, our government increased the transfers we make to the provinces and territories to help pay for the social programs that Canadians want and need. These transfers will amount to an all-time high of almost \$68 billion in 2015-16, and they will continue to grow year over year. Canadians take a lot of pride in these social programs, because how we treat those who are less well-off really matters.

That is why we brought in tax relief for seniors, some of the most vulnerable people in our society. The record there speaks for itself.

● (1825)

The guaranteed income supplement for the lowest-income seniors was increased up to \$600 annually for single seniors and to \$840 for senior couples. This alone has improved the financial security and well-being of approximately 680,000 seniors across Canada.

More people, particularly low- and middle-income Canadians, are also using RRSPs and tax-free savings accounts to shore up their retirement income over and above their Canada pension plan and old age security amounts. In 2013, nearly 2.7 million seniors had TFSA, including me, and to help Canadians save even more on a tax-free basis, the recent budget announced an increase in the TFSA annual contribution limit to \$10,000.

Contrary to suggestions from across the way, TFSA are held by over 11 million Canadians, and they are not the supposedly rich few. TFSA are a terrific vehicle for people as an alternative to the RSP, which is less useful to people as they get older. It is also a great way to shelter money from things like a small inheritance, a house sale, or a withdrawal from a RRIF. In fact, the incidence of low income among seniors has dropped dramatically, from 21.4% in 1980 to just 5.2% in 2011. This is real progress.

The latest budget also introduced a new home accessibility tax credit for seniors and people with disabilities. This 15% non-refundable income tax credit would apply on up to \$10,000 of home renovations that allow a senior or a person eligible for a disability tax credit to be more mobile, safe, and functional in their own home.

Private Members' Business

The government also provides a wide range of support for young people preparing for and getting into the job market. During the 2012-13 academic year, the Canada student loans program gave out upwards of \$2.6 billion in loans to approximately 477,000 post-secondary students. Nearly 357,000 students received a total of \$695 million in Canada student grants, and most of it went to students from low- and middle-income families.

However, not everyone who studies does so in a multi-year program at a college or university. Some people, particularly those preparing for the trades, need help for shorter terms of education. As attractive as a university degree may seem to many, it is in the trades where Canada's labour shortage is the most acute and where younger people joining the workforce can find high-tech, secure, and very well-paying jobs to secure their own and their young family's future. That is why budget 2015 proposes to extend the Canada student grants to students in programs running for a minimum duration of 34 weeks. This means an additional 42,000 students will be eligible to receive financial help.

The government also has made it a top priority to help Canadians get the skills they need to find and keep good jobs. We introduced the Canada apprentice loan to help more apprentices complete their training, and the Canada job grant to involve employers in better matching skills training to market demand.

For those already in the workforce, we introduced the working income tax benefit, the WITB, a refundable tax credit for working low-income individuals and families.

For those who have lost their jobs, our recent budget also announced an extension of the existing EI working-while-on-claim project. EI recipients are able to earn money while still receiving benefits. The aim of this measure is obviously to help them stay more connected to the labour market.

These are some of the concrete initiatives that we have undertaken to help those who are among the most vulnerable in our society to improve their lives. In fact, this year Canadian families and individuals will receive some \$37 billion in tax relief and increased benefits as a result of actions taken since 2006.

Both opposition parties have a one-point plan for Canadians: higher taxes. Our plan is simple: trade, training, and tax cuts.

I hope that all hon. members will agree that \$37 billion in real support is de facto a national workers' strategy and much more, and is much better than the vague promises contained in this bill. I hope all hon. members will join me in voting against this bill.

• (1830)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am really pleased to join the debate today. I have been here 15 years now. My friend and colleague from Edmonton Centre identified the fact that his inability to support this bill was based on the fact that it is an urban workers bill and is not for all workers. After what we have seen come from the government side since the Conservatives took power—what is their batting record at the Supreme Court of Canada? I think it is zero for nine years. They pass legislation that does not stand up to charter challenges—if that is the only flaw, we are in pretty good shape with this particular bill.

An hon. member: It is a perfect record.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: They have a great run going here, Mr. Speaker.

I want to comment on what my colleague from Davenport said during his speech. He said that putting together this group would allow for a comprehensive debate, or debate in a comprehensive way. I want to seize on that point, because I think anyone who has been in the chamber for any period of time would understand that in the last number of years, that has evaporated. The opportunity to really look at real issues that are impacting Canadians in any kind of real way has disappeared in the last number of years.

I think back to when I first came here. In my first six years, I sat on the fisheries and oceans committee with John Cummins. On the other side we have the right, the far right, and the extreme far right, and John was a little further right of that. He was a hard-working committee member who did his homework, came to committee, and offered his insights. My friend and colleague from Sackville—Eastern Shore was a long-standing member of the fisheries and oceans committee. Over that six years, we did something like 18 different studies, everything from Pacific salmon to the east coast fishery to the seal hunt. Sixteen of the 18 studies were passed unanimously. Only twice were there dissenting reports. All members of the committee would see their issues reflected in the final presentation of those committee reports.

I believe that when a government is armed with unanimous reports like that, it has a chance of moving forward in some kind of positive way. We have all these moving parts, and to get it right, the chorus of opinions has to be brought in and synthesized, a decision has to be made as to what is going to work, and it needs to be brought forward. That needs to be a main function of the House. Anyone who has been here would have to agree that this has been lost in the last number of years.

On the human resources and skills development committee we have tried on four different occasions to look at temporary foreign workers and the temporary foreign worker program to get it right for Canadian workers and businesses that need access to the workforce. My colleague from the NDP brought motions forward twice and I brought two forward myself. However, the government said no, it was going to make the changes that had to be made, and it made the changes. It took the shackles off and it was wide open. There was a big influx of temporary foreign workers, a couple of headlines in the paper, and then it slammed the door shut. Rather than get it right, the Conservatives responded to headlines.

We know that committees have not been able to do their work.

Private Members' Business

Another aspect that my colleague from Davenport talked about, which is fairly novel, is consulting with the provinces. What an idea that is. We saw what took place with the Canada jobs grant. The government said, "Here is the program. We have it all set, so let us buy a couple of million bucks worth of advertising". It never even spoke to the provinces. The people who were supposed to deliver the program never spoke to the provinces.

● (1835)

I think consultation is good. I think consultation is proper, and on that merit alone, I will encourage my caucus colleagues to support the bill.

I want to talk a little bit about some of the issues they raised.

Obviously, as my colleague from Edmonton Centre said, it is broad, but when we look at something in isolation, I do not think we give it a fair hearing and we probably do not get it as right as we could. I think it makes sense to have a task force thinking at 38,000 feet.

The rise in precarious employment has a huge impact not only on the social programs put forward by the provinces but on federal programs as well, including employment insurance and pension programs. Temporary employment has accounted for more than 75% of the jobs created in Canada in 2014. We know the government likes to pat itself on the back. The Conservatives almost separate their shoulders patting themselves on the back for jobs creation, but 75% of the jobs created in 2014 were part-time jobs.

The rate of employed Canadians working part-time has risen from 12.5% in 1976 to 19.3% in 2014. Since 1976, the number of people working multiple jobs has increased by 150%. Self-employment has increased by 29%. I do not see that as necessarily a bad thing, but I think a task force like this would at least be able to go in and measure why these people are going into businesses. Is it because of opportunity, necessity, or what? I see the merit in learning why.

We see more Canadians trying to run their lives on precarious employment. Since the government took over, there has been an increase of 66% in the number of people working for minimum wage. It is now over a million Canadians. When there is a 66% increase in the number of Canadians who are working for minimum wage, that should be frightening.

In other aspects of the bill, he is talking about EI and access to EI, and we know that access to EI is at a 70-year low right now.

With regard to processing and wait times, 600 processing agents and call centre agents have been carved out of the call centres. It is great that computers can do certain things; that is all well and fine and wonderful, but we have seen processing times go from typically three weeks to five, six, and seven weeks. When the square pegs go in the square holes and the round pegs go in the round holes, an individual can get an EI cheque within 28 days, but if there is anything out of whack at all, we see that dragged out to six, seven, and eight weeks. I think all Canadians understand that people cannot go that long without some type of income.

Finally, if I could close on this, the other aspect is pension provisions and changing the age of eligibility for OAS. That is

another one we could have studied at the human resources and skills development committee, but they said no.

We know for a fact that it is low-income Canadians, Canadians who live their lives with disabilities, who will be hurt most by this change, and that has to be looked at. I am sure any task force in its right mind would say that there is no need for this change. It should be put back for the good of all Canadians.

I want to tell the member for Davenport that I will strongly encourage my colleagues to support his motion.

● (1840)

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with great enthusiasm that I stand tonight in this place to speak in support of my colleague from Davenport's private member's bill, Bill C-542, an act to establish a national urban workers strategy.

The bill stands in the spirit in which it is presented to this House, as a positive, constructive response to the economic reality of largely, but not exclusively, urban Canada. I will return to the positive and constructive momentarily. The bill also stands as an indictment of not just the current federal government as a wayward and destructive and/or delusional government, but as an indictment of successive federal governments, Liberal and Conservative alike, that have lost touch with the real circumstances of the vast majority of Canadians and the real concerns and anxieties of just about every Canadian, particularly in urban Canada. These governments have governed as though urban economies, environments, and communities do not exist, much less have their own peculiarities and needs and present their own great opportunities as well. We just heard a classic example of that from the member for Edmonton Centre.

Canada needs a federal government that understands that a national agenda must also be an urban agenda; a federal government that understands that in the 21st century, nation building is also city building. Successive federal governments have done nothing to respond not only to our own urbanization but to the fact that our own urbanization is part of a global trend. The world is connected through cities, and our Canadian cities are either fully global cities or rapidly globalizing cities. The implications of this are obvious. Economically, they are the conditions that this bill seeks to address. The mapping of this global urban transformation tells a story of growing economic exclusion and precariousness. The emergence of a large population that has difficulty earning a living in urban labour markets defined by, or increasingly defined by, high-end economic activity is a hallmark of the global and globalizing city.

The recent Metcalf Foundation report about working poverty in the Toronto region put it in the starkest terms. It states that Toronto and Vancouver, Canada's two richest and most global cities, are becoming:

...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.

Private Members' Business

In only one of Canada's largest cities—Quebec City—did the percentage of working poor decline, and then just marginally. In the Toronto region, the report concluded, working poverty grew by 11% between 2006 and 2012. That is significantly short of the 39% growth in Toronto's population of working poor for the first five years of the new millennium under the Liberal federal government. However, 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 Toronto's falling employment rate.

A study done in 2013 by the United Way and McMaster supports the findings of the Metcalf Foundation and the basis of this bill. It showed that, in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, about half of all workers cannot find full-time employment with benefits and job security; 20% are in extremely precarious employment: temporary, variable hours, and no benefits; and 9% are in permanent part-time work; and so on and so forth.

The report also shows that people who work in precarious employment earn 46% less than those in secure employment; that they rarely receive employment benefits beyond a basic wage; that they are more likely to be new immigrants; that they often do not know their work schedule a week in advance; that they have limited career prospects and less job satisfaction; and that they often have to hold more than one job at a time.

It is into this context that the member for Davenport offered this private member's bill. The bill proposes to establish a task force that would consult municipal, provincial, and territorial representatives, as well as labour and industry groups and other relevant stakeholders, to develop a national strategy that would identify policy and legislative changes needed to address the issues facing Canadians in precarious employment, including but not limited to fixing employment insurance for all workers.

• (1845)

All successive federal governments have done is tighten the screws on people who lose their jobs and pilfer the EI fund to the tune of nearly \$60 billion, money that had been set aside by workers to provide income for workers when they lost their jobs.

From a high-water mark of 80% eligibility in the 1980s, eligibility for EI has fallen steadily down to about half of that on the national level. In Toronto, it is about half of that again. Only about 20% of the unemployed in Toronto are actually eligible for EI benefits.

It is about ensuring a livable pension for all. We have a public pension system in Canada that was designed around and meant to complement a private pension system in the form of a labour relations regime that would allow workers to negotiate deferred wages in the form of defined benefit pension plans and benefits. That labour relations regime has been attacked by successive federal governments and it has not kept abreast of changes to the nature of work. Therefore, we are the only country in the OECD with the number of seniors living in poverty actually on the rise. Since 1995, the percentage has tripled.

Clearly, the next federal government will need to restore the old age security eligibility to age 65 and ensure that the Canada and Quebec pension plans are more provident to ensure that seniors can

retire in dignity and out of poverty. It is about addressing the lack of workplace benefits as well. As with pensions, that which is not covered by our public health care system was to be dealt with at the bargaining table under our labour relations regime. As with pensions, workers are increasingly without and all Canadians are increasingly paying out of their pocket for health care, if they have money in their pocket to do so. It is about strengthening labour standards to prevent the exploitation of workers and unpaid interns.

My colleague from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles has a private member's bill dealing with the issue of unpaid internships, so let me highlight the issue of job quality and worker protection.

Canada ranks 26th out of 28 countries on the OECD's index of employment protection. Canada ranks last amongst OECD nations in having the highest proportion of men identified as low-wage workers. Qualitatively, these kinds of assessments are confirmed domestically by the CIBC's Canadian Employment Quality Index. That index has fallen 15% since the 1990s, and 10% over the last decade. A 2013 study of labour markets in the east end of Toronto, entitled "Shadow Economies: Economic Survival Strategies of Toronto Immigrant Communities", showed that just shy of half the respondents were paid less than minimum wage. The report went on to detail all sorts of other employment standards breaches.

At a minimum, it is time for the federal government to re-institute a minimum wage and set it higher and show leadership on this issue. My party's pledge is to re-establish a federal minimum wage at \$15 an hour. There are of course other things outside the ambit of this bill that need to be done to make life more affordable for workers, indeed to even give them the opportunity to participate in the workforce. Most obvious amongst these is accessible, affordable child care. A recent City of Toronto report lays out the problem in my city very clearly. The cost of licensed child care for a single infant exceeds \$20,000 per year, but there are only 65,000 spots in licensed day cares in a city with a child population of nearly six times that. There are only 25,000 subsidized spots in a city with almost 90,000 kids living below the poverty line. This is why the NDP's commitment to create nearly one million child care spaces at up to \$15 a day is a critical part of the context to this bill and this discussion.

Private Members' Business

The world has changed dramatically over the last few decades, and Canada has changed along with it. The Liberal and Conservative parties have not. They have failed to recognize the importance of cities and urban economies to the fortunes of this country. However, it is clear to us, in the official opposition, that the goals we set for ourselves as a country and as Canadians will not be realized until we understand and respond to both the possibilities and vulnerabilities of our cities in this new context. I believe there is nothing inevitable about how we respond to this context.

• (1850)

We have choices to make and, on this side of the House, we choose to respond in an urban agenda that builds thriving urban economies with a prosperity shared more equally. We choose to put forward bills like the one before us today and we choose to support them and make life more economically secure for Canadians.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, Bill C-542 asks the House to do what has already been done. However, what I guess is most surprising about the bill is that it does not take into consideration, or even mention, any of the actions our government has already taken to help the most vulnerable workers in our society. I refer specifically to the EI program. The bill proposes a number of changes to the EI program.

[Translation]

Let us not forget that the employment insurance system provides temporary income support to workers who become unemployed through no fault of their own or are off work for things like pregnancy, childbirth, parental or sick leave or to take care of a child or other loved one who is seriously ill.

Under this bill, we are supposed to improve access to EI benefits. However, the bill does not take into account all of the important measures that our government has already taken to improve the equality, flexibility and responsiveness of the employment insurance system. It also does not take into account the system's current ability to adapt to variations in the economic conditions in our various regional labour markets.

[English]

When the unemployment rate in a region goes up, entrance requirements go down and the length of benefits increases. In fact, Statistics Canada data from 2013 shows that among EI clients who either lost their jobs or quit with just cause, eligibility rates have increased from about 81% to 86%.

The bill also suggests that we reduce the waiting period for claimants before they can get EI. Currently, it is two weeks and following the same best practices of other insurance programs, is similar to the deductible portion of private insurance plans. The elimination of the waiting period may also not help those most in need of additional benefits. Removing the two-week waiting period would only result in an additional payment of two weeks for claimants who found work quickly and did not use all their EI benefits.

The estimated cost for a change like this is in the range of \$1 billion, or \$1 billion on the backs of EI premium payers. The bill also says that the government should lower requirements needed to

qualify for EI. This is another unnecessary change and reminds me of the time the opposition proposed a \$6 billion 45-day work year that would be paid for by job-killing payroll taxes.

The EI system already has variable entrance requirements depending upon regional unemployment rates. When a region's unemployment rate rises, the entrance requirement is reduced and the duration of benefits increases.

Therefore, the amount of assistance provided increases and support adjusts to the changing needs of regions and community. In the absence of any details in the bill, I am curious as to what might be considered an acceptable number of work hours needed to qualify for benefits.

Currently, the minimum threshold for eligibility is 420 hours. It is higher in areas with lower unemployment rates. If we were to consider using a standard rate of 420 hours for regular benefits across the whole country, it would cost the program an additional \$600 million annually. What if we lowered the 420 hours to 360 hours, or a 10-week work year, and applied it to all claimants regardless of any regional differences. This has been suggested by the NDP.

A 2010 Parliamentary Budget Office report looked exactly at this question and stated that doing so would cost over \$2 billion annually. That is \$2 billion out of the hands of hard-working Canadians and employers. Simply put, changes like this need to be founded on sound analysis of the evidence with careful consideration being given to labour market impacts.

The bill also says that we should improve income security for self-employed people. Thanks to the changes brought in by our government, self-employed individuals can already opt-in to the system on a voluntary basis and take advantage of a range of special benefits.

• (1855)

I was very surprised that the bill did not even mention the working while on claim pilot provided under the EI program. Working while on claim allows EI claimants, including low-income EI claimants, to take on work and earn extra money, while keeping some of their EI benefits.

The recent budget announced that the pilot would be extended for another year, with early results showing that claimants are working more while on claim. It provides over \$50 million and helps claimants, including low-income and marginally employed individuals, stay connected to the workforce so they may return to work sooner.

It is benefits like this that remove disincentives to finding work, and put money in the hands of those who need it the most, low-income workers, whether they live in rural or urban areas.

*Adjournment Proceedings**[Translation]*

I think it is important to consider the impact of the changes this bill proposes. Our government is spending billions of dollars on initiatives to help Canadians better prepare for the labour market. These initiatives are on top of existing programs, such as employment insurance. We regularly modify these programs as society and the workforce evolve.

[English]

For example, in our latest budget, we announced expanded eligibility for student grants. This reflects the fact that more people are going into fields like the trades, which typically involve a course of study that is vastly different from the one needed for an undergraduate degree. Training is critical for success in the job market. It is even more critical that employers and educators come together to design training that actually works in the real world.

That is why the latest budget is investing \$65 million over four years to support partnerships between employers and educational institutions to develop curricula and programs that are aligned with the specific skill needs of our labour market.

Our government has also introduced the Canada job grant, which provides shared funding with private sector employers to train employees, and the Canada apprenticeship loan, which provides interest-free loans for apprentices who need to leave their jobs for a time to complete their studies.

It is also why our government is making substantial investments in labour market information, including \$14 million per year for a new job vacancy survey and a new national wage survey to provide timely accurate information on occupation demand and wages by region.

[Translation]

The list of the initiatives we have taken to help urban and rural workers enter or stay in the job market is very long. The bill before us vaguely outlines the measures the government must take. In fact, some of these proposals would do absolutely nothing to improve the situation. This bill could even make matters worse for urban and rural workers. I do not think that Canadians want that.

[English]

I therefore hope all my colleagues will join me in continuing to improve supports for working Canadians and vote against this bill.

- (1900)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to discuss a question I first raised not too long ago, on January 30, in which I talked about the wait list in Toronto—92,000 families and close to 200,000 people—and the fact that the government has recently signed agreements with provinces. However, in the case of Ontario, the Government of Ontario does not provide housing anymore. That was downloaded to municipalities. So, when the minister responded by saying that the provincial minister for housing was happy, yes, he was happy that the agreement was renewed, but the housing providers in Ontario were furious. They are the ones who receive this money, and they are saying that the status quo is not good enough. The status quo is sustaining a waiting list in Toronto of close to 1,500 years. This money would only deliver to the City of Toronto, the largest housing provider in the country, the ability to add 60 new units per year, for the next five years.

I remind the House that there is a waiting list of 92,000 families looking for affordable housing in Toronto, and the government has put no new money on the table.

The other response we have been hearing lately from the government is that it has unveiled \$150 billion in the new budget process and that this process of allowing housing providers to renegotiate their mortgages is suddenly going to provide them with no new mortgage.

The reality is that they still have a mortgage, because they are renewing a mortgage, and this money does not actually deliver the capacity to do anything other than the refinance. The refinancing is there so that they can reinvest in the state of good repair but, at the end of the day, there is no new money for the subsidies. What we have heard from the minister is that when they renegotiate, they lose their subsidies.

What the current government claims to be doing is investing in housing, but it is not. It is maintaining the status quo, and the status quo is failing, and when it made changes, it was a bait-and-switch. The provisions it put into the budget actually hurt affordable housing providers, which would make the waiting list even longer and push more people onto the waiting list because affordability would disappear with the refinance scheme.

This is appalling. We have a situation in Toronto that is intolerable, requires a national program to step back up, for a federal government to reinvest in housing, to re-mandate CMHC, and to ensure that housing providers do three things: build new housing; repair existing housing; and sustain subsidies so that those people living in housing do not lose their affordability.

Adjournment Proceedings

Please, could someone on the government side say that their status quo is not good enough and please stop telling us it is good enough when it is failing people? It is not unique to Toronto. I have yet to find a city without a wait list, and I have yet to find a city without a wait list that is growing.

If the renewal of the agreement is meant to solve a problem, why is the problem getting worse; and if the budget provisions are meant to help providers, why is it that they get punished for participating? Why is it that providers actually end up losing money if they take advantage of a government program, and why would the government seek to put seniors and people with disabilities in harm's way, under some sort of a claim that refinancing would make one mortgage free when it won't, and not tell people that when they do it they lose their subsidies?

How is that a housing program that anybody in this country can support?

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the member's comments. He is fairly new in the House. He was not here back in 2004 when you and I were elected, Mr. Speaker, and the Liberals were governing. I guess he does not remember the total incompetence of the Liberal Party in handling this and the total lack of investment in infrastructure across the country. I am glad to correct the record for him and let him know a little about the last 10 years of history.

Since 2006, we have nearly doubled the annual funding for provincial, territorial, and municipal infrastructure across the country. We continue to build on our government's historic infrastructure investments: \$75 billion for public infrastructure over 10 years. This includes the \$53 billion new building Canada plan, the largest and longest federal infrastructure plan in our nation's history. Seventy per cent of the new funds available through the plan are directly supporting infrastructure in municipalities across the country.

The plan includes the \$14-billion new building Canada fund, which is supporting projects of importance to provinces, territories, and municipalities. A subset of the new building Canada fund is the small communities fund, which is providing \$1 billion in funding dedicated solely to supporting communities of fewer than 100,000 residents. Eligible municipalities can use the small communities fund to support a variety of infrastructure projects that support economic growth, a clean environment, and stronger communities.

We also have the federal gas tax fund that goes to municipalities to address their needs. The federal gas tax fund has been extended and doubled to \$2 billion annually and has been legislated as a permanent source of federal infrastructure funding for municipalities. It has been indexed at 2% a year, providing an additional \$1.8 billion over the next decade. The fund represents certainty to every municipality across Canada, something they never had under the previous Liberal government.

When municipalities requested more flexibility to prioritize their local infrastructure projects under the federal gas tax fund, we increased the number of eligible categories and allowed municipalities to pool, bank, and borrow against this funding. More categories and financial flexibility means more opportunities to

address a wider range of priorities in municipalities across Canada. Again, that is something that was never available under the previous Liberal government.

The new building Canada plan has been open for business since March 2014, and programs are well under way. We are working with provinces and territories collaboratively to identify projects, and we are processing proposals as quickly as they come in. In fact, more than \$6 billion in total project costs have already been announced, and we look forward to announcing many more projects in 2015.

Late last year, our Prime Minister announced another \$5.8 billion to address national infrastructure priorities that will have long-lasting benefits, including job creation. There is also significant funding from existing federal infrastructure programs that continues to support public infrastructure in municipalities across Canada.

Here are some examples of the work we have been doing with municipalities and the investments we have made to meet their community needs. There are so many here. In North Vancouver, we have made an investment of \$12 million on the Highway 1 and Mountain Highway interchange. In Toronto, where the member comes from, GO Transit network improvements received \$385 million in federal contributions. Still in Toronto, there is \$622 million for the Toronto-York-Spadina subway extension. There is \$660 million for the Scarborough subway. Here in Ottawa, there is \$600 million for light rail transit. There is \$83 million for Mississauga bus rapid transit.

I could go on and on. All these things of course were never available under the former federal government.

● (1905)

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, I do not know what it is about the House, but when one asks a question about housing, one never gets a response on housing.

The question I asked was bloody specific. The government has not increased by one penny money available to housing providers to house people on housing wait-lists. The program it has put in place in this year's budget that is supposed to help housing providers refinance actually punishes them by removing the subsidy they used to support seniors and people with disabilities on low incomes who are housed in those very same complexes.

Adjournment Proceedings

The question is very specific, and I would love a specific answer instead of talk about the gas tax, which was former prime minister Paul Martin's idea, not a Conservative government idea, by the way. I would love to hear an answer about this. Why, when they renew their mortgage under this new budget program do they lose their subsidies? Why does that happen, and how does that help people who need those subsidies to afford the housing they live in?

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, the member does not want to listen to the horrible things that happened under his government and the good things that have been happening under our government. Like I said earlier, in 10 years our government will invest more than \$75 billion in infrastructure to deliver results and partner with the provinces and territories when they set forward their priorities. It includes \$53 billion in the new building Canada plan, the largest and longest federal infrastructure plan in Canadian history. The plan offers a flexible approach to infrastructure financing, working with and allowing municipalities to address their specific infrastructure priorities, because it is the municipalities that bring these issues forward and we partner with them.

Again, the federal gas tax fund alone makes close to \$2 billion in predictable infrastructure funding available to municipalities each and every year. In addition, the small communities fund provides \$1 billion for projects in municipalities with fewer than 100,000 residents, allowing smaller communities to build projects that deliver on local needs.

● (1910)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, GP): Mr. Speaker, MSK injuries, musculoskeletal injuries, are increasingly becoming a major problem and health concern here in Canada, particularly among our military population. MSK is by far the biggest health problem facing members of Canada's armed forces, including many in my riding of Thunder Bay—Superior North.

MSK injuries are a very serious health issue that is often both misunderstood and underestimated in its severity. MSK is a broad term used to describe injuries and chronic problems with the musculoskeletal system. It is currently the second greatest cause of disability in the world, according to a newly released study called "Global Burden of Disease".

MSK injuries are increasingly common, costly and a significant cause of long-term sick leave and work loss across Canada. The Canadian Chiropractic Association has said that it should be at the forefront of all government health discussion and policy, and yet the current Conservative government has given it no attention in any of its many years in power.

MSK injuries cause long-lasting and chronic health problems and impact the ability of Canadians do their jobs. Members of the Canadian Armed Forces are suffering from MSK injuries at an alarming rate. MSK conditions are associated with 54% of all medical releases from the Canadian Forces and half of all veterans' health claims. They are the number one reason why a Canadian Armed Forces member is unable to redeploy.

Currently, the Canadian Armed Forces spends \$60 million a year on dealing with MSK injuries, and it is not even doing an adequate

job. These soldiers are protecting Canadians and it is time we start protecting them. MSK injuries are a burden on the well-being of civilians and veterans alike. They are by a large margin the biggest health problem facing the armed forces, and they are a burden on both the taxpayer and the Canadian economy.

The status quo is not good enough for a problem of this magnitude. We need to develop a nation-wide strategy for dealing with MSK injuries. The burden of those injuries has increased by 45% over the last 20 years and will continue to do so unless we take action. The Canadian Chiropractic Association has recommended implementing a strategy for MSK injuries that addresses the entire continuum of health, including preventative strategies, assessment, diagnosis and appropriate management of MSK conditions.

Canadians and our military need a robust MSK strategy that has health care providers, patients and governments working together to support Canadians, including the military, with MSK injuries from all backgrounds so that they can continue to be independent, contributing members of society. Also, chiropractic care should be supported not only in Thunder Bay—Superior North, but right across Canada by both the federal and provincial governments.

Implementing this strategy makes economic sense and political sense. Every dollar spent on relieving MSK will not only ease the lives of Canadians, but will also allow the military to make better use of its resources, and make Canada more productive in the long run. It is more of a long-term investment than a short-term cost.

When will the Conservatives begin giving this problem the attention it deserves? When will members of the armed forces actually see action on MSK strategies?

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I first want to thank my colleague for bringing the issue of musculoskeletal problems to the House. As he knows, my background is as a chiropractor. I have treated people with musculoskeletal problems throughout my career, and I am actually in agreement with him. There should be better benefits for chiropractic care. It is mostly a provincial jurisdiction and I agree that more and more provinces and territories should put funds aside for people who have musculoskeletal problems.

The good news is that a full package of benefits and services already exists for veterans with musculoskeletal problems. As the Minister of Veterans Affairs mentioned in his response to this question, when an armed forces member medically releases, a system of medical and vocational rehabilitation services are in place, which can be tailored to a veteran's individual needs.

Adjournment Proceedings

At the time of release, Veterans Affairs and National Defence share responsibility for the care, treatment and re-establishment of veterans into civilian life. This is also shared with provincial and territorial governments. The goal is continual care at the same high level that the member and his or her family have come to expect.

Officials with both Veterans Affairs and National Defence work side by side at integrated personnel support centres located on or near bases or wings. They assess what is required to help veterans improve or maintain their health or medical conditions. Veterans can also take advantage of something called treatment benefits, which consist of a full range of services such as medical, surgical or dental examinations or treatment provided by health professionals such as chiropractors. As I said, as a chiropractor, I know chiropractic care can be essential for veterans in their treatment and recovery.

They can also get surgical or prosthetic devices or aids and their maintenance, home adaptations to accommodate the use of devices or aids, preventive health care and prescription drugs. Veterans may also be eligible to receive supplementary benefits such as costs for travel to receive treatment. These treatment benefits and services are delivered by registered health care providers in the veteran's community and the costs are covered by the department.

When veterans choose a registered practitioner, this provider can even submit invoices directly so veterans do not incur out-of-pocket expenses. The department works closely with other federal and provincial authorities to locate and facilitate access to resources to meet each individual veteran's needs. In fact, the member opposite will be happy to know that there are 35 exceptional registered chiropractors in the Thunder Bay area and I am quite confident this large network of practitioners means veterans in the area are being well served in having their MSK injuries professionally and efficiently treated.

● (1915)

Mr. Bruce Hyer: Mr. Speaker, MSK injuries are a growing problem in Canada. Not only is it detrimental to the health of those affected, but it also affects their ability to work, which is bad for all Canadian taxpayers. It is both unfair and expensive.

The government needs to realize that the status quo has not been sufficient, and we cannot just pass the buck to the provinces. We need a nationwide strategy to help MSK injuries in both Canada's civilian and military populations in every riding, like Thunder Bay—Superior North, and in all provinces and territories.

When is the government going to see the light and treat our veterans and service members with the respect and health care they deserve?

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Veterans Affairs and our government have been working hard to ensure the needs of veterans are being met, and we are always working to improve benefits for veterans.

Over the last few months, for example, we have announced many improvements, such as broadening the eligibility criteria for permanent impairment allowance, enhanced benefits for injured part-time reserve force veterans, introduced the retirement income security benefit, announced a new family caregiver relief benefit,

and we will be hiring more case managers and disability benefits staff.

Our government is delivering benefits for veterans and their families, and I am hopeful the opposition supports these benefits and our budgets moving forward.

JUSTICE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, ironically, I am rising to pursue a question on a bill that has now passed the House but is still before the Senate, so I think it is relevant to take up the issues relating to Bill C-51.

It is ironic to revisit this question. Let me share with the House what transpired on February 6 in question period. I asked the hon. Minister of Justice about two aspects of Bill C-51. One aspect related to the use of the word “lawful” to qualify protests in describing those exclusions from activities that might be seen to threaten the security of Canada. The second dealt with the new powers given to CSIS agents.

I used the word “ironic” in referring to the first part, and it will become evident when I repeat my question of February 6 for the Minister of Justice relating to the use of the word “lawful”. I asked:

Will [the Minister of Justice] amend the act to ensure that non-violent civil disobedience is precluded from the ambit of the act?

To that part of my question, the Minister of Justice responded by saying:

...protections against lawful protest [are already] covered by the act. This would not pose a threat to individuals who engage in lawful assembly.

Of course, my question was very specifically about the question of non-violent civil disobedience and protest that was, by definition, not lawful.

Time has passed, and we are all aware that in the clause-by-clause study, it was the Conservative members of the committee who, anticipating that this was a simply untenable piece of legislation and that the language used in the section would not work, actually made the change that I was requesting. In a rare instance in this place, I can say that although the Minister of Justice on February 6 denied that there was any problem with the word “lawful”, in the end that word was removed to ensure, or at least to increase the likelihood, that people engaged in non-violent civil disobedience would not be caught up in the ambit of the act.

The second point remains quite relevant. The second question that I asked the Minister of Justice was:

...please explain to the House the purpose of part 4, clause 42, that in taking measures to reduce the threat to the security of Canada, CSIS shall not “violate the sexual integrity of an individual...”

Adjournment Proceedings

I was cut off at the end of the question, but I was trying to ask him why such a section would be included. His response was to say that:

...the mandate of CSIS [is] not extending beyond its lawful authority and, of course, being subject to judicial oversight.

Let me pause for a moment on the Minister of Justice's claim that Bill C-51 includes judicial oversight. It clearly does not. Many witnesses testified to this extent and to this point.

Judges are involved in the section that I related to the minister. Clearly, a judge is involved. A judge is allowed to grant a warrant to a CSIS agent to break domestic law or to violate the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but that is not judicial oversight. It means there would be secret hearings at which only government would be represented. There would be no special advocates to ensure that the public interest is protected. Moreover, there would be no opportunity for the judge to ensure that the warrant that he or she would issue would be executed properly or appropriately. As well, there would be no ongoing oversight of any kind over CSIS' activities, now that they have been empowered by the House but not yet by the Senate to engage in disruption activities, nor would there be any oversight over security operations, in particular between the RCMP, CSIS, CSEC, and Canada Border Services Agency.

This is where the risk lies. These different security agencies would operate without knowledge of what the others are doing, thereby making us less safe.

● (1920)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak tonight and address some of the misinformation that is still being spread about this bill. There was a lot of unusual stuff in that question from the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

The international jihadist movement has declared war on Canada. Canadians are being targeted by jihadi terrorists simply because these terrorists hate our society and the values that our society represents. Jihadi terrorism is not a human right; it is an act of war. That is why our government has put forward measures to protect Canadians against jihadi terrorists, who seek to destroy the very principles that make Canada the best country in the world in which to live.

That is also why Canada is not sitting on the sidelines, as some would have us do. Instead it is joining its allies in supporting the international coalition in the fight against ISIL.

[*Translation*]

The concept of a threat to the security of Canada is clearly defined in the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act. That definition has been there since the legislation was originally passed, and the anti-terrorism act, 2015 does not change that definition at all.

[*English*]

In the CSIS act, threats to the security of Canada comprise terrorism, espionage, sabotage, and foreign influenced activities. They also include violent or unlawful covert acts to overthrow our constitutional system of government.

To further clarify misinformation being spread by the opposition continually, I want to remind members that CSIS is not permitted by

law to investigate lawful advocacy, protest, and dissent. Under its new mandate, it would not be able to disrupt these activities either.

● (1925)

[*Translation*]

In fact, it is our police forces that work to protect our rights and freedoms and it is the jihadist terrorists who threaten our security and want to take away our freedoms.

[*English*]

While I am on my feet I will take this opportunity to ask the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands to do the right thing. Several days ago, that member made ridiculous comments about admitted terrorist Omar Ahmed Khadr. He pleaded guilty to heinous crimes, including the murder of American army medic, Sergeant Christopher Speer, and our Conservative government has vigorously defended against any attempt to lessen his punishment for these admitted crimes.

While the Liberal leader refused to rule out special consideration for this convicted terrorist and the NDP actively tried to force Canadian taxpayers to compensate him, we believe victims of crime, not the perpetrators, are the ones who deserve compensation.

That is why the member opposite must apologize to Tabitha Speer, who was left without a husband, and Tanner and Taryn Speer, who were left without a father at the hands of this cold-blooded terrorist.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has created the impression that the issues I raised about Bill C-51 are taken in ignorance or denial of the risk of jihadi terrorists. It is quite the contrary. My point, which he would have heard had he been listening, was that by creating disruption activities by CSIS agents without proper oversight and with no requirement for pinnacle control between CSIS and the RCMP, we are in fact leaving ourselves more vulnerable to such terrorist attacks.

The advice to the public safety committee from John Major, the former Supreme Court judge who oversaw the Air India inquiry, was very clear. He advocated for a national security adviser to operate in pinnacle control. However, witness after witness urged that we have some way to ensure that CSIS agents and RCMP officers connect with each other, that they know what each other is doing, and that someone provide oversight. That is what is missing in this bill. That is what makes it more dangerous.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the hon. opposition member to read Bill C-51, the anti-terrorism act, 2015. I find that reading the bill is the best way to find answers to these questions.

[*English*]

Once again, I will repeat that CSIS is forbidden from investigating or disrupting lawful advocacy, protest, and dissent.

This bill would also place firm limits on what CSIS could do to disrupt threats.

*Adjournment Proceedings**[Translation]*

Canadians expect security and intelligence agencies to have the tools they need not just to gather information, but also to prevent threats from being carried out against Canadians and Canadian interests. They also expect politicians not to glorify terrorists.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:29 p.m.)

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