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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Monday, December 7, 2015

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, December 7, 2015

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed from December 4 consideration of the motion for an address to His Excellency the Governor General in reply to his speech at the opening of the session.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by recognizing that yesterday was the anniversary of the Montreal massacre. It is a day that we should never forget because it reminds us all of the need to work together to end violence against women. There is still much work to be done, and our party wants to work with all members in this area.

[*English*]

I want to welcome back to the House my colleagues in all parties and acknowledge that despite the disagreements we have had in the past, and I am sure that we will have in the future, we all share a deep and abiding love, a true patriot love, for our country.

We wish our colleagues across the floor well and we respectfully remind them that in their new role they must govern responsibly for all Canadians, not only for the millions who voted for them but also for the millions who did not.

On a personal note, I want to thank the voters of Sturgeon River—Parkland for their vote of confidence in me on October 19. I love the region that I represent and I love the people who I represent, many of whom are going through tough times right now. I want them to know that the challenges they face are top of mind for me. I will be pressing the government on finding solutions to help the thousands of Albertans who are going into Christmas without a job.

[*Translation*]

As Her Majesty's official opposition, our role in Parliament is to hold the new government to account, particularly with regard to its management of the public purse. We will be the taxpayers' watchdog.

[*English*]

It is already abundantly clear that we have our work cut out for us.

If there is a common thread woven throughout everything that we heard on Friday, it is that the Liberal devotion to big activist government is alive and well. We on this side of the House find this disturbing for the following two reasons.

First, big government is expensive government. It makes an assumption that runs counter to one of the most deeply held beliefs we have as Conservatives. We trust Canadians and the money they work so hard for is better left in their own pockets than in the hands of politicians here.

Second, activist government is often intrusive government. It restricts our personal and our financial liberty. It operates under the assumption that important decisions, decisions about everything from how we raise our children to how we go about our business, to how we spend our golden years, are best made by the state rather than by an individual. We disagree with that.

Therefore, we will be steadfast in our efforts to hold the government to account and we will be generous with constructive and respectful advice when we see it going astray. We hope in turn that the government will listen.

An example was the plans for resettling refugees. We are encouraged that Canadians were able to convince the government of the errors in its original plans, that it was willing to embrace a more sensible approach that reflected our ability to help the most desperate people from a war-torn region, while minimizing the risks of the safety and security of Canadians. So many questions still remain about this process, and let us face it, the Liberal Party had a promise but not a plan. However, as I said, we are encouraged that it listened and it has revised its approach.

We would like to think that the same is possible when it comes to the government's election promise to remove the Royal Canadian Air Force and our CF-18s from the bombing mission against ISIS.

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

It is alarming that the threat of ISIS, as well as the men and women who are putting their lives on the line in the fight against ISIS, did not warrant a mention in the throne speech.

Unlike the Liberal government, President Obama did talk about the threat of ISIS last night.

*Address**[English]*

He told the American people:

In Iraq and Syria, air strikes are taking out ISIL leaders, heavy weapons, oil tankers, infrastructure. And since the attacks in Paris, our closest allies—including France, Germany, and the United Kingdom—have ramped up their contributions to our military campaign, which will help us accelerate our effort to destroy ISIL.

[Translation]

President Obama did not mention Canada because it is clear that we have scaled back our contribution since November 4.

[English]

The Prime Minister has told our allies that we will be pulling out our CF-18s in the fight against, what President Obama called “cult of death”, ISIS.

While on the international stage we saw leaders of the western world come together, coalescing around the fight against ISIS. The impression that was left with Canadians and the international community was that our prime minister was consumed with taking selfies. I mention this because it was mentioned to me many times by constituents. It was not that we had a leader who was going to step up and stand resolutely shoulder to shoulder with our allies, but one who consistently reminded Canadians of an election promise, even after the attacks in Paris and Beirut.

The Prime Minister has offered no sensible argument for pulling our air force out of this fight because, frankly, there is not one. Meanwhile, President Obama made clear last evening that the reasons for remaining part of the bombing mission were clear and unambiguous.

It is not too late for the Prime Minister to change course. The reality is that when we talk about Canada's new approach to fighting ISIS, Canada is not back, Canada is backing away. Our offer stands. Should the government change its position and allow our air force to continue bombing ISIS along with our allies, it would have our full support.

[Translation]

We heard a long list of promises on Friday, but where are the plans for fulfilling them? We certainly heard nothing about an economic plan.

[English]

The government was silent on support for private sector businesses and industries, which actually create the good, stable, well-paying jobs on which Canadian families depend. There was no mention of the auto, forestry, or energy sectors. There was no mention of a plan to help the more than 60,000 Albertans who would be facing Christmas without a job. It was silent on the role of the agricultural industry and farmers from coast to coast in Canada. It was silent on whether it would leave us on the outside looking in when our friends and partners ratify the trans-Pacific partnership, the biggest trade deal in history.

What we did hear was a recipe for big government and big spending. Therefore, the question that every taxpayer wants us to ask the government is where the money will come from to pay for all of

this. It comes from one place, and that is out of the pockets of Canadians.

• (1115)

[Translation]

We know that the government plans to grab as much money as it can by ending tax fairness for families with its plans to take away the universal child care benefit and income splitting for couples.

All of that will come out of the pockets of hard-working Canadians.

[English]

We have no indication to date that the Prime Minister and his Minister of Finance have a plan beyond hoping that the budgets will finally balance themselves after years of high spending. Rather, if left unchecked, every indication is that the Liberals will run massive deficits, raise taxes, and in the end will cut programs and benefits because they cannot tax their way to prosperity and spend their way out of debt. This is the choice facing all governments: responsible fiscal management in the present or painful austerity in the future; living within our means today or leaving our children and grandchildren to pay the bills for years to come.

In conclusion, we will continue to demand at every turn a fiscally responsible approach that is fair to all Canadians. We will be a voice for taxpayers as we believe, and we are confident most Canadians share this belief, that is the best path forward for our country.

[Translation]

We believe and we are confident that most Canadians share the belief that Canadians know how to manage their money. They know how to go about their lives, how to manage their own families and businesses, and how to achieve their goals. They do not need the government to do it for them. They want their government to create an environment in which all Canadians can turn their dreams into reality.

[English]

These are our Conservative values. They have always been our values and they will continue to guide us as we fulfill the time-honoured responsibility of our current office as Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

Given our values and our position, the official opposition cannot support the throne speech as it is presently written.

With that, I propose the following amendment to the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne. I move:

That the motion be amended by adding the following: “And regrets to inform Your Excellency that your government has not acknowledged that many of its promises do not provide transparent cost estimates, implementation plans, or consider cost burdens to the provinces, and as such your government should put the best interests of Canadians first by reversing its plan to deliberately put Canada back into deficit, since such a move would ultimately lead to a higher tax burden for Canadians, just as it reversed its unrealistic promise to bring 25,000 Syrian refugees to Canada before the end of 2015; and

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further regrets to inform Your Excellency that your government has failed to outline a plan to create jobs in Canada's private sector, and has ignored important economic drivers such as the agricultural, energy and manufacturing sectors, despite the billions of dollars in economic activity they produce every year; and your government has also failed to mention Canada's responsibility to stand shoulder to shoulder with our allies against ISIS at a time when they are stepping up their fight against terrorism.

The Speaker: The amendment is in order. Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[*Chair read text of amendment to House*]

The Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. President of the Treasury Board.

● (1120)

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her speech here today. She used the term “big government” repeatedly during her speech. I find that curious, given that she was part of the biggest cabinet in Canadian history. In fact, that cabinet had the biggest ministerial office budget of any cabinet in Canadian history.

The government of which she was a member spent more on advertising. It was the biggest advertising budget of any government in Canadian history, almost \$1 billion, much of which was on quasi-partisan advertising. As a result, that government added \$150 billion to the national debt.

My question is, how could she speak about big government when she was part of a government that was one of the biggest spending and most wasteful governments in Canadian history?

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Mr. Speaker, I think it has been 25 minutes and the sunny ways are over. Let the record show that at 11:26 a.m., the sunny ways were over.

The member brings up a good point, but in terms of what is important to Canadians and to taxpayers, under our watch the size of government spending shrunk as a percentage of GDP. That is what Canadians care about. That is what Canadians are watching for, and we will be holding this new government across the way to account.

The Liberal government has promised a \$10 billion deficit. Apparently it is already backing away from that. Of course it is, because within the first 30 days it has already blown that budget.

The C.D. Howe Institute recently said that the Liberals' new tax measures will cost Canadians. Only the Liberals could have a tax cut that costs people money. We are now up to \$14 billion and counting, and we will be holding them to account.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the new interim leader for the Conservative Party. I was enjoying the image of small town Conservative values being presented here, and thinking that it does not remind me in one degree of the last ten years of a big, intrusive, nasty, mean government.

We will set aside the record deficits for a moment, and the profligate spending on cronies and patronage, but with regard to this word, “intrusive” that I heard again and again, what about the tracking of people on the Internet without warrants? Remember Vic

Toews? What about Bill C-51 and its outright attack on basic Canadian civil liberties?

In this new sunny Parliament, let us shine a light on the issue of the Conservatives' track record on intrusive government. Will they work with New Democrats to restore basic notions of civil liberty and the right to privacy in this country, which was taken away under her government?

● (1125)

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Mr. Speaker, I think I heard the New Democrats say that they want to work with the Conservatives. We are off to a good start.

It is a new Parliament. I will say to the member that I have always been an advocate of civil liberties. What we saw under the Conservatives was a balance between that and the real threat of terrorism in this country and abroad, and a government that brought forward solutions to balance civil liberties.

I hope that the NDP will work with us. I assume that they will press the government across the way for bigger and bigger government. I can assure the member that we will be pressing in a different way. We will be asking the government to reduce its deficit. We will be asking the government to bring in tax cuts for Canadians. That is exactly what our government did for 10 years, to the point where we had the lowest tax burden on Canadians in 50 years. As they watch their spending go up, their taxes go up, deficits increase, and their benefits being clawed back, they will remember the lowest tax burden in 50 years, brought to them by the Conservative Party of Canada

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a great pleasure. This is my first question in this House, and it is to my leader.

I am very glad that my colleague mentioned natural resources and the energy sector in her speech; there is at least one party in the House that recognizes the vital role that they play in our economy.

Canadians know that the previous Conservative government stood up for our energy sector. It kept taxes low and enticed and attracted investment. It supported new pipeline projects, got better prices for our energy, and it kept the economy as its number one priority.

The Speech from the Throne failed. It failed to even mention this important economic engine, which creates hundreds of thousands of well-paying jobs. Many of these jobs are in my riding of Calgary Shepard. It ignored the thousands of people who were recently laid off across Canada—many of whom I met while door knocking in my community—and it promised to run massive deficits.

Can the hon. member please share with the House the fears and concerns she has heard from workers and businesses throughout the country regarding the lack of a plan from the Liberal government?

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Hon. Rona Ambrose: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Calgary Shepard for his hard work and for representing his constituents. I know that his constituents, like mine, are suffering.

Mr. Speaker, in my first conversation with the Prime Minister, we spoke about working together to find solutions to the job losses in Alberta. I will be holding him to that.

The estimate is that there could be close to 110,000 direct and indirect job losses in Alberta and Saskatchewan in the energy sector. I hope that everyone in the House recognizes that if 110,000 job losses had happened in the manufacturing sector, the auto sector, or the aerospace sector, it would have warranted a mention in the Speech from the Throne. However, there was not a word. There was not a word in the Speech from the Throne. In fact, there has not been a word out of the government to date.

However, I will be patient. I hope that the government will work constructively with us, and the people of Alberta and Saskatchewan, to find solutions for the thousands of families who are going into Christmas without a job.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my constituents, and I do have a question. The interim leader talked a great deal about deficit, but what she did not tell Canadians is that the Conservative government created a huge deficit. It took the surplus from the Paul Martin era and turned it into a multi-billion-dollar deficit.

Now she has the tenacity to say that the Liberals are going to have a deficit this year. Will she, at the very least in her maiden speech, make true comments about how Liberal governments have demonstrated time and time again that they know how to manage—

• (1130)

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member from “sunny ways” for his question. I will remind him that while we were also struggling against a recession—and yes, we did invest in Canada—we never made cuts to health care. In fact, we increased funding to health care.

We will be watching the new Liberal government to make sure it does not act like the last Liberal government, which when it did need to cut, it cut health care.

[*Translation*]

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to respond to the first Speech from the Throne presented by this government. I also want to congratulate you on your election. Through you, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to congratulate all members of the House of Commons.

[*English*]

I look forward to working with all members, a group as diverse as Canada itself, in this 42nd Parliament.

In his address last week, His Excellency presented the government's agenda for the upcoming session. It is an agenda endorsed by Canadians, who on October 19 gave our government a strong and clear mandate to make real change happen. Canadians elected this

government to do different things and to do things differently. Many of those changes are already under way.

Our first substantive bill, the tax cut for the middle class, will be introduced in this House on Wednesday.

Also this week, the first flights carrying Syrian refugees from camps in Jordan and Turkey will land on Canadian soil.

[*Translation*]

The mandatory long form census has been restored and will be implemented next year. In addition, federal government scientists can once again speak freely about their work. Furthermore, for the first time in Canadian history, we have gender equality in cabinet.

Other changes mentioned in the throne speech will begin to take shape in the weeks and months to come, as the House resumes and as the committees resume the important work they do.

[*English*]

Today I would like to expand on the government's broader mandate to develop the five things that Canadians expect us to do, and the steps we will take to ensure that we meet those expectations.

First, we will invest to grow our economy, create a strong middle class, and provide help for people working hard to join it. That is what Canadians voted for, and that is what we will deliver.

We will grow our economy by making significant new investments in public transit, green infrastructure and social infrastructure, creating jobs and economic growth now, and making our economy more productive over the long term.

We will strengthen our middle class by putting more money in Canadians' pockets. As I have said, that starts with Wednesday's legislation, which will deliver a tax cut for the middle class.

[*Translation*]

We believe that everyone deserves a fair and real chance at success. Canadians believe this too. We will do more to help those in need by giving less to those who are not. That is the basic principle behind our tax cut for the middle class and the new Canada child benefit, which will be introduced in our first budget.

This new benefit will give nine out of 10 families more money than they are receiving right now. That is the type of real change that can be made when a government puts the interests of Canadians at the top of its priorities and in its plans.

• (1135)

[*English*]

Second, we are committed to delivering real change in the way that government works. It means setting a higher bar for openness and transparency, something that is needed if this House is to regain the confidence and trust of Canadians.

One thing is very clear. We will not be able to meet the challenges that we are facing, from growing our economy to responding to the threat of climate change to keeping our citizens and our communities safe, unless we have Canadians in our corner.

People want a government that is honest and open, transparent and accountable, and relentlessly focused on those it exists to serve. We will be that government.

Canadians want a government that acts honourably and treats all others with respect, both inside and outside this House. We will be that government.

[*Translation*]

Canadians are tired of the cynicism and distrust that have defined federal politics for far too long. They are ready to trust the government again, but that trust does not come for free. If we want Canadians to trust their government, the government must trust Canadians.

We are going to work hard every day to earn and keep Canadians' trust. This Parliament belongs to Canadians and must continually prove that the voices of all Canadians matter.

Third, we will keep proving to Canadians and the rest of the world that we can have both a healthy environment and a strong economy. That is true when it comes to investing in and supporting clean technology, something our government is determined to do. It is also true when it comes to climate change. The changing global climate is a major and immediate challenge, but it is also an historic opportunity. We have an opportunity to build a truly sustainable economy based on clean technology, green infrastructure, and green jobs.

● (1140)

[*English*]

There are billions of dollars and hundreds of thousands of good jobs on the table for the countries that get this right. As I told our international and domestic partners in Paris last week, building a clean economy will create growth, not sacrifice it. Our ambition cannot end with making sure that Canada makes the most of a challenging situation. As we know, the atmosphere does not care where carbon was emitted. That is why we will invest \$2.65 billion over the next five years to help the developing world grow in a cleaner, more sustainable way.

Here at home, we will protect the environment with new environmental assessment processes, respect for science and scientists, and more public input, including greater engagement and respect for indigenous peoples.

Canadians are smart, practical people. They do not expect us to solve all the world's problems. All they ask is that Canada do its part and lead by example when it comes to protecting the environment and growing the economy. Our government will do just that.

Fourth, we will continue to work with Canadians to build a more peaceful and prosperous country, one that is strong not in spite of our differences, but because of them. Canada's success culturally, politically, economically, proves that diversity and inclusion work, but we still have much more work to do.

Address

For indigenous peoples, life in Canada has not been and is not today easy, equitable, or fair. Our history also shows that too often those who chose to come to Canada and build their lives here have been treated with indifference, or worse. Some Canadians who were born here have, at times, been the targets of hateful words and deeds simply because they look different, speak a different language, choose to wear different clothes, or practise a different faith. Painful as that may be, we need to acknowledge these truths. We are not well served by ignorance.

At the same time, it is important to remember that Canadians are good and decent people. Against the warm hearts and welcoming spirit of Canadians, intolerance stands little chance, because no amount of fear can extinguish the understanding that we are all in this together. No act of aggression can separate us from the deeply felt knowledge that wherever we come from, we are united in our struggles and in our dreams.

[*Translation*]

All efforts to close us off from others will be in vain because when Canadians have a choice, as they did in the recent election, they always reject attempts to divide them.

As I have said before, Canada's success as a diverse and inclusive nation did not happen by accident and will not continue without effort. There should be no doubt that Canada and Canadians are worth the effort, and on this point, the government will not waiver.

Fifth, we will do everything in our power to ensure that Canadians are safe and secure at home by promoting Canadian values abroad. People need to realize that Canada is a safe and peaceful country, a country where it is possible and necessary to strike the right balance between our collective security and our rights and freedoms.

In part to ensure the security of Canadians, we must also export the ideas and the institutions that serve us so well here in Canada. We can show other countries and their citizens how to govern with respect for diversity, with openness and transparency, in peace and prosperity. We can and we will continue to co-operate with our allies in the fight against terrorism. We know what it takes to be an effective partner in international peacekeeping operations and, therefore, we can make a greater contribution to efforts to enhance peace and security around the world. We can and we will do so.

*Address**[English]*

It has been just over a month since our government took office. In that time we have held bilateral talks with the leaders of all UN Security Council permanent members: the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, France, and China. We have also represented Canada at four major international summits. In Turkey we met with the G20 leaders. In the Philippines, with leaders of APEC nations. In Malta, with Commonwealth heads of government.

[Translation]

Last week, the premiers of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, and Quebec, along with the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, the leaders of the NDP and the Green Party, and the Conservative environment critic joined our government in participating in the international talks on climate change in Paris. In other words, we have been busy. We have all been busy working together.

Personally, I love working long hours, spending sleepless nights, and dealing with demanding schedules, and I know that all my colleagues here in the House do as well because that is just the kind of hard work we have been sent here to do.

● (1145)

[English]

I am reminded of a quote by Nelson Mandela who said that he discovered that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb.

I have no doubt that we will encounter many such hills in the years ahead, but I also know that our success or failure as a government will be measured in more than recorded yeas and nays. We will succeed when we deliver an economy that works for the middle class, when we make government open and transparent by default, when we combine, for all Canadians, a clean environment and a strong economy. We will succeed when we affirm that Canada is a country strengthened by diversity, when we realize greater security and opportunity for Canada and for the world.

Those are the things that matter most to Canadians. That is the real change they desire and deserve.

[Translation]

When we asked them, Canadians told us that good enough is not good enough, and that they do not believe that it is impossible to do better. In fact, based on the confidence and ambition that have always defined our country, they know that in Canada better is always possible.

[English]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, throughout the campaign, the Prime Minister made reference to the Ontario retirement pension plan, known as the ORPP, as being the pinnacle of support for Ontario. He said he would do to Canada what the Wynne government has done to Ontario. I have spoken to many small-business owners in my riding of Elgin—Middlesex—London, and they are extremely concerned with these payroll tax hikes, which would result in staff cuts, loss of jobs, and a negative impact on the economy.

In the throne speech, the Prime Minister told us his plan to increase payroll taxes. Can the Prime Minister tell us how many jobs would be lost because of his job-killing taxes?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London for her question, and congratulate her on her election.

One of the things we heard many times from Canadians across the country, throughout the election and even before, is that people are worried about their retirement, they are worried about their security, and they are worried about their future. People are facing impossible choices between saving for their retirement or paying for their kids' education. We made a strong and clear commitment to work with the provinces to enhance the Canada pension plan.

The hon. member needs to be reminded that in order to change the Canada pension plan we need two-thirds of the provinces representing two-thirds of the population. That is why we will sit down and work with the provinces to ensure that we create a Canada pension plan that provides the retirement security that Canadians deserve.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the right hon. Prime Minister on his re-election as a member of Parliament, and congratulate him on his excellent speech in his capacity as Prime Minister in this chamber today.

I am extremely proud to be here and, since this is the first time that I have risen, I would like to thank the wonderful people of Windsor—Tecumseh for entrusting me with their voice here in Ottawa for the next four years. In light of the weekend that we have just had and the anniversary of École Polytechnique and that tragedy of our sisters, one thing that really resonated with me in the throne speech is the fact that we need an inquiry into our Canadian sisters, our missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

I would like to ask for some further clarity, more meaningful details about how we are going to get under way with the timelines for this.

● (1150)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Windsor—Tecumseh for her question and congratulate her on her election to this House. I congratulate her for bringing forward an issue that is extremely important to all of us in this House: to ensure that there is an inquiry into the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

We need such an inquiry to provide justice to the victims, to provide healing for the families, and to ensure that as we go forward this tragedy is ended. The way to do this from a national level is to ensure that all the various initiatives that different groups have moved forward with already become folded into something that is both responsible and responsive, that is informed by all the broad stakeholders that are concerned about this, and that moves forward in a responsible way.

I am happy to say that our Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs has been working very hard with a broad range of stakeholders, and will have more to announce.

[Translation]

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if you read the Speech from the Throne carefully, you will see that it is economic suicide. The Liberals believe that the country will prosper if they spend more money, but that is absolutely false. An increase in spending will not stimulate the economy; it will sedate it.

What Canadians do not realize is that the people who will benefit the most from the tax cuts are the members of the House of Commons who earn between \$89,000 and \$200,000 a year. That is the most discouraging thing about the tax cuts for the middle class outlined in the throne speech.

I am therefore asking the Prime Minister why he will not really help the middle class by cutting taxes for the real middle class. Why will he not manage the economy properly by cutting spending and giving people more leeway? That is what will allow Canadians to generate wealth in this country.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Beauce for his question.

The fact is that we have proposed a plan to help the middle class and to help the people who need it by investing in our communities, because we know that a confident country is not afraid to invest in its future. That is what we will do, by putting more money in the pockets of the middle class, by asking the wealthiest 1% to pay a little more, and by making significant investments in our communities, in green infrastructure, in social infrastructure, and in public transit.

Such investments will create the kind of economic growth that we frankly have not seen in ten years.

[English]

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the first thing I would like to do is thank the good people of Eglinton—Lawrence for providing me with the mandate. I am very honoured to be here among a very strong Liberal caucus. It is nice to see them all, as well as the members of the opposition.

My question is for the Prime Minister. We campaigned on a theme of real change. Canadians awarded us with that mandate. Would the Prime Minister share with this House his thoughts about the importance of the cut for middle-class Canadians and why is it he feels inspired that is the right way to go, from this point forward?

• (1155)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, one of the things all of us in this House heard as we went door to door, across the country, is that Canadians need help. The people are worried that it is getting harder and harder to get by and that the middle class, which has always been at the centre of our economy's success, is not drawing upon the same kinds of benefits from growth that other segments of society have.

Therefore, we made a commitment to help the middle class and help those working hard to join the middle class. By asking the wealthiest 1% to pay a little more in taxes and lowering taxes for the middle class, not only would we put more money into the pockets of people who need a little extra help, but we would actually put more money into circulation, as well. Investing in the middle class is good for our economy. It is money that would be spent, that would help

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local consumers and small businesses, and that would be a piece of how we create greater prosperity for all Canadians in the coming years.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government says it campaigned on real change. Yet, we just heard of all the job losses at the De Beers mine in the Northwest Territories, and we also heard about a loss of more than 400 jobs, as well, in Hornepayne, Ontario.

I wonder whether the Prime Minister would tell us what the government is going to do for these communities and how it is going to protect jobs, because we are seeing the same thing we saw under the Conservatives.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, obviously we are always concerned at job losses across the country, wherever they happen, and that is why we put forward a commitment to Canadians to work to grow the economy and create job growth and not job losses; to invest in clean technology and renewable resources; to make sure that we are actually able to export our natural resources by getting the balance right between the environment and the economy; to not pretend that we can build a strong economy and ignore the environment, that they go together—

The Speaker: Debate. The hon. member for Outremont.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to stand here on behalf of more than 3.5 million Canadians who gave the New Democratic Party of Canada the mandate to serve as the progressive opposition in this Parliament. I thank each and every voter who gave us their trust and confidence. We will stand up for them and for our shared values.

[Translation]

I would like to congratulate the new government on its win in the last election. The Prime Minister and his cabinet have been entrusted with tremendous responsibility. They were given this mandate based on ambitious commitments, and I sincerely hope that they will fulfill them.

On behalf of New Democrats across Canada, I commit to working with the new government to bring in the change that an overwhelming majority of Canadians sought in the last election.

Today, as leader of the progressive opposition, I commit to working with the Prime Minister when our values and policies overlap.

[English]

I would also like to congratulate every member of the House on their election. We are 338 commoners representing this wonderful country of ours from coast to coast to coast. We differ on policy and outlook, but what unites us all is the conviction that this great country can be even better.

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Like all members, I met thousands of Canadians during this campaign. We are an optimistic bunch and we know that we live in one of the greatest countries on earth, but many Canadians are also deeply worried. There has been a hollowing out of the middle class. Good manufacturing jobs have been lost. New jobs are temporary, part-time, and precarious.

Families have a hard time making ends meet. I met child care providers and airport workers who work full-time but live in poverty because there is no federal minimum wage.

I met women who had survived sexual violence only to be denied a shelter when they needed it most. I spoke to young people crushed by the weight of student debt, worried about their job prospects, and deeply concerned about climate change and its effects on their generation.

I met families of murdered and missing indigenous women, who lost their loved ones brutally, and they fear that we are not doing enough to prevent future violence. I spoke to seniors who built this country but who now live in poverty; seniors who cannot afford lifesaving prescription medication; seniors who have to live in hospitals because we do not have enough home care services.

• (1200)

[*Translation*]

Despite the tremendous wealth of our nation, too many children are still going to school with empty bellies. Too many women are giving up their careers—and it is nearly always women who make the sacrifice—because they do not have access to affordable child care. Too many homeless people are living and sleeping on the streets. Too many families are living paycheck to paycheck. Too many workers are living with a sword of Damocles hanging over their heads because they could lose their jobs if the trans-Pacific partnership goes through in its current form.

When the Prime Minister tells us that we can do better, I feel relieved because I truly agree with him. Here in Parliament, we must commit to working together to make real and positive change for Canadians.

I paid very close attention to the Speech from the Throne. Like most Canadians, I am pleased with the new tone of the government and many of the promises it has made. Now we have to roll up our sleeves and get down to business. As they say back home, it is time to walk the walk.

Canadians need the assurance that, from now on, Parliament will fight for their jobs, their families, and their communities.

[*English*]

There were, at the same time, some troubling omissions in the Speech from the Throne. There was no mention of bringing the age of retirement back to 65. There was no mention whatsoever of better oversight for Bill C-51. There was no mention of restoring door-to-door mail delivery, despite an absolutely crystal clear promise to restore door-to-door mail delivery. There was no word about child care. On health care, there was no engagement from the government to cancel the planned cuts to federal transfers. We have an obligation to help the five million Canadians who do not have a family doctor. We have to fund a prescription drug plan. We must expand long-term

care and palliative care for seniors. The government has the legal obligation to uphold and enforce the principles of the Canada Health Act against creeping privatization. Real change must mean real help for people. It is time to make quality child care affordable and ensure universality, so it is not just the rich who are entitled to high-quality child care.

When it comes to the government's proposed tax cut, let us get it done right. As it stands, the government's proposed middle-class tax cut would not give a penny to nearly 70% of Canadian taxpayers. Ironically, most of the benefit from the proposed Liberal tax cut would go to wealthy Canadians and give the average family absolutely nothing. Someone making the median income in Canada, which is \$31,320 a year, would get nothing. A family that is middle class, earning \$45,000 a year, would see zero benefit from these so-called tax cuts, whereas as my colleague from Beauce said a few minutes ago, a member of Parliament who earns \$167,400 a year would get the maximum tax cut, and that is just not fair.

• (1205)

[*Translation*]

The plan proposed by the government does not include a tax hike for wealthy Canadians. In fact, the rich will get a tax cut, while a middle-class family earning \$45,000 a year will get nothing. We can and we must do better.

Although we are an opposition party, we also believe we must bring forward proposals. The NDP did in fact propose an adjustment to improve the policy brought forward by the Liberals in order to include all middle-class families. That is what was promised.

Instead of introducing a tax cut for the second tax bracket, we propose applying it to the first tax bracket while enhancing the working income tax benefit. That change alone would give a worker who earns the median income an extra \$200 in tax cuts.

With the NDP plan, workers who earn between \$11,000 and \$45,000 a year would save an average of \$172, while under the Liberal government's plan, those workers will get nothing. This one small change to the government's policy would have a real impact on middle-class families. By including our suggestion in its proposal, the Liberal government could respect the spirit of its election promise.

[*English*]

Parliament must protect the most vulnerable. We agree that it is time to build a nation-to-nation, respectful relationship with indigenous peoples in our country. We have to close the funding gap for first nations education. That is an obligation. We must call a public inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women, immediately boost funding for child and family services, and provide clean drinking water on all reserves in Canada.

Resettling Syrian refugees is also a national project that we should all be proud of. Let us be clear with Canadians on the numbers and let us not disqualify a whole group of refugees based on the politics of fear. Let us instead show the generosity of our great country in living up to our international obligations and give these Syrian refugees the peace and opportunities they need.

It is time to fight against poverty. Let us close stock option tax loopholes for the richest CEOs in the country and invest the money in helping eliminate child poverty, a goal set by Ed Broadbent and supported by the House a full generation ago. Also, let us make Canada's largest corporations start paying their fair share of taxes. Let us give tens of thousands of Canadian families a raise by bringing in a federal minimum wage, a living wage of \$15 an hour. Let us increase the guaranteed income supplement to lift 200,000 seniors out of poverty. We can all agree on that. Let us also return the retirement age from 67 to 65.

I hope we can also agree that it is time to start reversing the damage the previous government caused to our employment insurance system.

• (1210)

[Translation]

The new government's change in tone on climate change is welcome, but actions speak louder than words. The time for talking the talk is over. It is now time to walk the walk. In concrete terms, we need firm targets for reducing greenhouse gases in Canada. Nothing else will do if we are to meet our obligations. There needs to be a coherent plan and a binding deadline for achieving those targets. The government must also review the environmental assessment process and add climate impact to project assessment criteria.

[English]

Also, it is time to fix Ottawa. It is time to strengthen our democracy. In his last full year in the House, the outgoing prime minister only attended one-third of question periods. The best way to show respect for this institution is to show up in Parliament regularly and be answerable to Canadians.

The Prime Minister has made a bold commitment that 2015 would be the last election wherein an archaic first-past-the-post system produces phony majorities and a Parliament that does not reflect the true democratic will of Canadians. Every vote must count. We are ready to work with the government in ensuring that this fundamental value in our democracy, proportional representation, is truly honoured in Canada's new electoral system.

[Translation]

It is time to clean house here in Ottawa, and it is time to put an end to the old patronage ways. Politics should be noble and should inspire people to become involved and make others' lives better. It is time for Canadians to start trusting politics again. Politics should not be synonymous with scandals and partisan appointments. Politics should not sacrifice the public interest to serve the interests of those at the top. Again, the progressive NDP opposition is ready to work with the government to advance the public interest. However, we are also here to hold the government to account. If the government does not make the real change that Canadians are longing for, then we will

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be here to remind the government that it was elected with a mandate for real change. Canadians deserve nothing less.

• (1215)

[English]

In ending, I move, seconded by the member for North Island—Powell River:

That the amendment be amended by deleting everything after the word “by” and replacing it with the following:

“working in collaboration with opposition parties to present realistic, structured and concrete changes that benefit some of Canada's most vulnerable citizens including: seniors through an increase to the Guaranteed Income Supplement; middle class families through reducing taxes on the first income tax bracket; low-income workers with leadership by introducing a \$15 per hour federal minimum wage; and supports to those struggling to enter the workforce with a robust and reliable employment insurance program.”

[Translation]

Let us carry on.

[English]

Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first off, I want to congratulate the member for Outremont, the leader of the NDP, for his election and, of course, his caucus colleagues.

In the past, I have had many discussions about democratic reform with many NDP members. There have been many substantial conversations with former members and current members that I see here today. However, I do have some concerns about that and other measures, because the member started his speech talking about the imposition of certain measures upon Canadians.

I, too, have some concerns about some of the things that transpired during the campaign and now I see here today. There is the imposition of certain measures regarding child care upon the provinces, who have to pick up the tab. There is the imposition of Senate reform without any discussion with the provinces. There will not be an open discussion with partners within Confederation. There is the imposition of a system of electing our members of Parliament without substantial discussions in the vast majority of the provinces.

I would ask, very simply, the following: as a progressive opposition, will those members join with us in a truly national discussion about what is to be democratic reform? That is what progressive oppositions do.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, I realize that we will have to get used to our new riding names. However, the Coast of Bays evokes so much of my colleague's home province of Newfoundland and Labrador that I find it one of the most lovely toponyms we have heard in this place in a long time.

Let me reassure him that when we were talking about child care, it was quite clear that of course we would work with the provinces. We had a proposal to pick up 60% of the tab to do one thing, to create a universal program of quality affordable child care in Canada. As I mentioned in my remarks, it is almost always women who have to sacrifice their career, and that one measure alone would have gone a long way toward removing inequality in Canadian society.

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With regard to the Senate, we have not had a habit of having very long interventions in this place about the other place. However, I would just say that anyone who cares about democracy realizes that it makes no sense whatsoever. It is the antithesis of democracy that people who have never been elected, and indeed in most cases have been defeated and rejected by voters, somehow take it upon themselves to believe they are in a position to not only make laws for the rest of us but to unmake laws adopted in this place as well. I think of Mr. Jack Layton's famous bill on climate change, which was reversed in the Senate.

I will end by noting that with respect to the discussion, there will be no problem whatsoever, as we will be there every step of the way because we also agree that 2015 should be the last election in this country under the unfair first-past-the-post system. My friend and colleague Craig Scott, the former member of Parliament for Toronto—Danforth, did extraordinary work on that. However, if the Liberals intend to bring in something that is only to their advantage, I can assure them that we will do our job of revealing that to Canadians as well.

•(1220)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate you on your appointment to your new role.

I thank the hon. member for his speech. Our parties share a concern about the need to balance the budget. The Parliamentary Budget Officer's numbers and those of the C.D. Howe Institute suggest that the government's numbers do not add up and will in fact give us a permanent structural deficit.

Will the member agree that the Liberal tax changes will not benefit most Canadians and will lead to higher deficits for my children and his grandchildren to deal with?

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, we can agree on some parts of that. However, I am not sure that the member will agree with our prescription for dealing with it.

We in the NDP believe that individual Canadians should pay their fair share in taxes. However, we also know that Canada's largest corporations do not pay their fair share in taxes. That is why we were going to give them a tax increase, so that we do not leave an economic debt, on top of the existing social and environmental debt we are already leaving, on the backs of future generations.

I welcome the new member from Saskatchewan. It is good to have that many members from the west and so many new members of Parliament. I will take advantage of this opportunity to say that in Saskatchewan we now have three members of Parliament and are proud to have broken through there for the first time in three elections. The member is indeed lucky to have the type of leadership in Alberta that Rachel Notley is showing by bringing in a \$15 an hour minimum wage.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to be rising in the House to speak on behalf of my hometown. I want to thank the voters in Elmwood, East Kildonan and Transcona who have trusted me with their voice in this place.

I want to commend the hon. leader of the NDP for showing how the government's Speech from the Throne could be improved. I urge

members opposite to take his suggestions seriously. I would ask him to speak for a minute on the need for a national pharmacare plan in Canada. We know that one of the biggest challenges to a sustainable health care system in Canada is tackling the costs of drugs. I know there are people in my riding who are struggling with those costs. We have had many governments over the decades who have failed to take action on this, including some that promised to act on it. Would the hon. leader of the NDP explain to some members on the opposite benches, who may need it, the urgency of including and implementing a national pharmacare strategy as part of any future health accord?

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, I am proud that my new colleague from Winnipeg was able to bring that seat back to the NDP.

It is important to realize that the Conservatives have proposed cuts which, when they would come into effect, could represent \$36 billion in lost transfers to the provinces. This is the first thing that has to be taken care of.

When Tommy Douglas, the father of health care in Canada, brought in free, universal public medical care in Saskatchewan, he always made the point quite clear that we had to complete the system with a pharmacare program worthy of the name, and it is not hard to understand why. We have a lot of acute care beds in our hospitals that are being taken up by people who simply cannot afford their medication. They will get that medication in the hospital, but if they stay at home, they cannot afford it. That is having a throttling effect on the availability of beds in our system, and it is an easy fix.

There are things like group buying with the provinces that could save billions of dollars. All it takes is the will to do it. Never let them tell us that it cannot be done.

•(1225)

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this moment to thank all of those who voted for me in the riding of Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking. I would not be here again if it were not for them.

In the Speech from the Throne, as well as in the letter to the Minister of Natural Resources, there was no mention of the Ring of Fire. Perhaps my esteemed leader could speak about the importance of the Ring of Fire and the economic impact that it will have on a variety of communities, especially first nations communities.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, the sustainable development of our natural resources in partnership with our first nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples is the way of the future. Like a lot of Canadians, I was surprised to see that the government was completely silent on whole sectors of economic development in our country.

The Ring of Fire is an incredible opportunity if done right, but it seems to just be sitting there, and the Liberal government does not seem to have an idea about how to move it forward. That is a shame, because it could be a win-win situation, both for the general economy of Ontario and for the first nations communities there, in bringing in new infrastructure and allowing them further economic development along the way.

We certainly hope the government will realize the importance of the Ring of Fire, as my colleague has just pointed out, and come up with a plan worthy of the name.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Mr. Speaker, I seek consent of the House to allow the Leader of the Bloc Québécois, the member for Rivière-du-Nord, to respond to the Speech from the Throne.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member for Montcalm have the unanimous consent of the House to have the Leader of the Bloc Québécois speak in reply to the Speech from the Throne?

Some hon. members: No.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Vancouver Centre.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard—Verdun.

I am proud to stand here and speak to the Speech from the Throne. It is short, it is focused, it is clear, and it sets priorities for promises that were made during the election.

What is really important is that the people of Vancouver Centre who re-elected me will be pleased with some of those promises, especially the ones we have heard before the Speech from the Throne such as the fact that we will reinstate the Kitsilano Coast Guard base and the marine communication segments that were cut to British Columbia. This Speech from the Throne talks about promises that were made, and this was one of them.

I want to congratulate all the members in the House who were re-elected and who were newly elected. I really hope that the tone set in the Speech from the Throne will be held dearly by all of them, as they begin to learn how to work together, respecting each other. Part of that respect would have been to allow the leader of the Bloc Québécois to speak today.

The Speech from the Throne recognizes the diversity of Canadians not only demographically but regionally, the fact that we are so very different in all parts of this country in which we live. It recognizes that diversity is what has made this nation great. It vows to bring back that diversity and to ensure that all Canadians, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, or where they live in the country, will have the opportunity to succeed.

I heard the interim Leader of the Opposition speak about big spending promises in the Speech from the Throne. I think we all believe that it is about spending but it is also about investing in Canadians. It is about helping Canadians have the opportunity to succeed regardless of where they live, their socio-economic conditions, or their status as indigenous peoples, immigrants, or refugees. That is reflected in the Speech from the Throne.

We have heard real promises made with regard to treating indigenous peoples on a nation-to-nation basis, to bringing in an inquiry on the missing and murdered aboriginal women, to sitting down and bringing in recommendations from the truth and

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reconciliation committee. These important pieces have been promised in the Speech from the Throne.

Bringing in 25,000 refugees by February 16, 2016, is a promise that will be kept, and it is not just bringing them in. It is about these refugees having access to something that was denied under the last government, access to health care. This is an important, ensuring that immigrants and refugees who come to our country, like I did at one time, will have the opportunity to succeed, to have a dream, and to know that they and their children can have better lives.

This is part of what good government does. It invests in people. It is something the last government never did understand. It played games with people, and it only invested in things in which it was interested.

One of the most important things is not only investing in Canadians but investing in them in every phase of their lives. We see the child benefit. It is a real child benefit. It is not going to be taxed. I know the former government talked about the child tax benefit, but it was taken away in the form of taxation. We are not doing that. We are giving it to Canadians so middle-class Canadians can afford to bring up their children.

We are looking at how we can help middle-class Canadians get the kinds of tax cuts they need to move forward. We are talking about how we can help seniors retire in dignity. That is one of the things the last government obviously did not understand. So many seniors are living in poverty. Expanding the CPP is one way of helping our seniors.

We are looking at a very bold plan. It is a plan about people. As we have heard our leader say today in his speech, we know it is not possible to create jobs and improve our economy unless we look at environmental sustainability, that one cannot work without the other and that it is possible to do both. This is why we see a strong piece about the environment in the Speech from the Throne and the work that needs to be done in reaching goals, which were very ambitious in Paris.

● (1230)

Our country has agreed to look at how we can achieve those goals. To do so, we will work in a very new tone within our government, which is to work in partnership, not only with aboriginal peoples but the provinces. We saw the Conservative government turn its back on provinces and allowed them to fend for themselves. It treated them quite miserably, especially in health care, where the provinces were beginning to show that they could not deliver the care needed, as promised in the Paul Martin \$42.1 billion health accord. When the previous government came into power in 2006, it did not cancel it but it ignored it and the provinces, and it did not sustain medicare, which is really important.

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The Speech from the Throne talked about a new accord with the provinces, meaning we must change the system by which we deliver health care. We must move to community-based care, interdisciplinary care, and home care. Indeed, acute care is the old way of delivering care and should be part of the system only when intervention is needed. We have seen some changes that need to be made, again, because of cuts made by the last government in health care, decision making that was done unilaterally that changed the transfers on a per capita basis that began to hurt the smaller provinces.

There are so many things in the Speech from the Throne that I do not even know how I can cover them all, but I will try.

We have not only talked about children and how the new child benefit will help them, but we have also looked at how low and middle-income Canadians, when they finish school, will get access to post-secondary education. This is part of the creating opportunity. This is part of giving people the tools they may need to succeed.

We know that today many young people cannot afford post-secondary education. I have heard that the official opposition thinks we are spending a lot of money and doing all kinds of silly things. We are investing in people, we are investing in the economy, we are investing in the environment, we are investing in the diversity of our people, and we are investing in those who have had a very difficult time making it. Again, that is what good government does.

We are creating partnerships with provinces, with first nations people, and with Canadians. We are promising to consult, and have already begun to consult, with Canadians. That is part of the democratic process. It is not just about how one votes, but how one respects civil society. There is a real promise of working with civil society. Task forces are going to be set up to talk about how we should move forward and work to ensure that as we move forward it will be implementable and achieve the objectives of what we are discussing.

We have talked about evidence-based decision making. For a decade, we forgot what evidence-based decision making was in the House. We have seen ideological decision making in health care, which hurts people, public safety and the environment. All Canadians and all of us in the House have to work together, in the spirit of good faith, to make the changes and rebuild what was destroyed by the last government. This is a job that we must undertake.

I have heard the leader of the NDP talk about rolling up our sleeves. That is the first thing we have to do. We have to roll up our sleeves and get the job done by using science, evidence, consultation and with the people in the House working together. There is now a new respect for members of Parliament in the House. Every one of us was elected by Canadians. How we treat each other in the House, the way we respect each other, the way we work together without putting up roadblocks when we have common goals is what I and the Speech from the Throne hope will happen.

I ask hon. members to let us move forward in the spirit of hope and optimism, to do the best for Canadians, and create the country we know we can have.

• (1235)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member spoke about investing in Canadians, but the government wants to reduce the tax-free savings account contribution limit. This is a critical vehicle for Canadians to keep more of their own money and invest in themselves. Almost two-thirds of tax-free savings account holders make less than \$60,000 a year.

Why is the government giving with one hand while taking away with the other?

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question and to congratulate him for being elected to this House.

I also want to say that investing in Canadians is about creating a lot of opportunity for them: the opportunity for skills and training; the opportunity to get a post-secondary education; the opportunity to be on an equal footing. The tax cuts for the middle class would help Canadians.

However, the other piece we need to talk about is access to health care. That is investing in Canadians. Healthy people work, they produce. When they produce, Canada gains by their production and by the ability to be competitive in a global economy.

The idea of looking at investment as only one tiny piece that has to do with taxation is really not the way of looking at the problem with a broad stroke and understanding all the various ways in which Canadians need a hand up to be able to do the best they can do and to create the best opportunities for themselves.

• (1240)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech. Much has been said about what the previous government did away with, such as environmental assessments and protections. The fact that climate change was mentioned in the Speech from the Throne is in itself an improvement. However, I must say that the bar was not set very high from the outset.

I would like my colleague to tell us whether there will be news about a real target that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In the last election campaign, the Green Party and the NDP were the only parties to propose a target, and an ambitious one at that. Representatives of the new government are in Paris right now, and the targets are virtually the same as those of the previous government. As my colleague so clearly pointed out in her speech, they are not very ambitious targets.

In view of the fact that climate change is an urgent matter, does this government intend to have not just any target, but an ambitious target, one that is meaningful for our country and future generations, who will be affected by climate change?

[*English*]

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member had listened to the speech from our leader and listened to my speech, he would see that indeed we did talk about looking at the mandate of Paris. We are talking about ambition.

However, we are also talking about not imposing anything as a federal government. The days of the federal government imposing are gone. We are talking about working collaboratively with the provinces in order to be able to achieve all of those targets and in order to be able to achieve the environmental sustainability that we desire.

It is important for us to do that, because the environment does not recognize borders or provincial boundaries. It is important to work together to create that change, working globally, which Canada has not done in the last 10 years. We have not been a global player. We went there with good faith, and we intend to move forward.

Now, as we speak to provinces as a government and as we speak to Canadians, we will be able to start moving forward with an implementable plan that would achieve the targets that we set.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my former seatmate, in the last House, on her election for her eighth term in this House. Both as a doctor and as a parliamentarian, she has a strong passion for health care. We know, from being in several parliaments together, that some governments look at spending as just adding to the debt and spending in itself.

This government has a hope and desire to invest in Canadians' future. I wonder if the member wants to expand on what she sees a federal government can do in building a better health care system for Canada as a whole.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague from Malpeque. I also want to congratulate him for being re-elected for the eighth time, because we all came here as rookies in 1993.

My colleague asked me about health care. Health is a resource for living. Healthy people work. People who are unhealthy, who have to spend a long time being ill and not getting the care they need, do not produce. Productivity is at the heart of what a country needs. How do we help people get the health care they need, when they need it?

One thing is that we cannot do this alone. The provinces have jurisdiction for delivering health care, where, when, and how. We have the opportunity, as we did in the 2014 accord, to be able to work with the provinces and to look at a change in the system; from acute care, to home care, to multidisciplinary community care, to managing chronic disease.

[*Translation*]

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising in this hallowed House for the first time as the member for LaSalle—Émard—Verdun.

I would first like to thank the people of LaSalle—Émard—Verdun for placing their trust in me. I will work hard to serve them with all my heart and to the best of my ability.

[*English*]

I would also like to thank my family, my wife Geneviève Saumier, my children Andre Vito, Gabrielle Vanda, and Dominique Charleen, as well as my volunteers and organizers for their support, patience, and hard work.

I would like to recognize my mentors, the Hon. Justice Peter deCarteret Cory, formerly of the Supreme Court of Canada, and the

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Hon. Gilbert “Gib” Parent, who sat in your chair at one time, Mr. Speaker, for teaching me about the values of humility, justice, decency, and hard work.

Finally, I wish to thank my parents who chose this country to escape the ravages of poverty and war, and who made many sacrifices such that their children could be formally educated, a privilege they never had, in order to have a better life.

It is a story common to many people in this House, whether immigrants or children of immigrants, grandchildren or descendants of immigrants. It is precisely because this is a common story in this House and across this country that this is such a great country.

● (1245)

[*Translation*]

The first nations welcomed wave after wave of newcomers, but unfortunately the kindness they showed those newcomers was not reciprocated. The way the first nations were treated was not fair or humane. It was a terrible tragedy.

We must correct this historical and modern injustice by working with our aboriginal peoples to adjust the moral compass of this great country and ensure that everyone is treated with respect and dignity. In the Speech from the Throne, this government promised to make that a priority. It is never too late to correct the mistakes of the past, and those mistakes must be corrected. We are taking the first steps toward doing so with the measures announced.

[*English*]

As a number of members of this House will attest, in almost 20 years of teaching property law at the Faculty of Law at McGill University, I have promoted the cause of justice to our first nations.

By choosing to introduce to my students the varieties of aboriginal property normativity, and by critiquing the vastly imperfect western concepts of aboriginal title and aboriginal rights, I have emphasized that much more was needed, and that reconciliation and justice toward aboriginal peoples remains the single most important priority facing this country.

I pledge to work with all members of this honourable House, with first nations, and indeed with all Canadians to work toward reconciliation and help restore justice and peace.

In so doing, I also honour the legacy of my teacher, friend, and mentor, the late Professor Roderick Macdonald, who as president of the Law Commission of Canada penned a report on residential schools that helped lead to the historic apology to aboriginal peoples and the establishment of the truth and reconciliation process.

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The welcoming tradition, first exemplified by our first nations, must and shall continue as people across Canada and in LaSalle—Émard—Verdun move to welcome refugees from Syria. We must be compassionate in the face of human catastrophe. We will be helping local organizations to step up, and we will be encouraging others to do likewise.

At the end of this, there will be another 25,000 Canadian stories to add to the narrative of this wonderful country.

[*Translation*]

The riding of LaSalle—Émard—Verdun needs an agenda like the one the government set out in the throne speech. It is a new riding, and part of it was previously very well served by the Right Honourable Paul Martin. This riding is a microcosm of the country.

In fact, in my riding, francophones, allophones, and anglophones, members of various cultural and religious communities, and people with a variety of beliefs and from very different socio-economic backgrounds live together in an atmosphere of peace and respect. This riding, which is surrounded by the river, the Lachine canal, an aqueduct and highways, is attracting more and more young people because of the quality of life there.

What my constituents need now is a positive and progressive government that has an active vision for the future and a detailed plan. They need real change.

A significant proportion of the population in my riding is made up of middle-class families with young children. They will benefit from the tax cuts and the family benefit described in the throne speech.

[*English*]

The riding is also a poster child for infrastructure spending and investment. The major highways that bound the riding are crumbling visibly and are in dire need of rebuilding. Happily, some of this work has already begun, on the new Champlain Bridge and the replacement of the Turcot interchange, but much more needs to be done.

For security and safety, as well as to encourage and improve public transit use, Verdun needs another smaller crossing to Nuns' Island. The only current crossing is a busy highway. Thankfully, Verdun and Ville Émard are generally well served by the Montreal Metro, but LaSalle needs better transit links both to the metro and to the downtown, in order to break the culture of the automobile. The infrastructure program proposed by the government could be used to accomplish these very important goals.

In Verdun, a city with a great history and an increasingly trendy part of Montreal, there is an urgent need for social housing. This is also the case for Ville Émard, Côte-Saint-Paul, and LaSalle. Infrastructure spending in social housing and incentives to encourage the maintenance of the stock of affordable rental housing would help alleviate this acute need.

Government must invest in LaSalle—Émard—Verdun and across Canada.

● (1250)

[*Translation*]

My riding also needs jobs. Poverty is a real problem in the riding of LaSalle—Émard—Verdun. There are many people who would like to be part of the middle class but who do not have meaningful jobs. The quality jobs generated by our infrastructure investment program will create the opportunities these people need, directly or indirectly. This is particularly true for cultural communities in which the unemployment rate is especially high.

My riding could make a name for itself in the area of innovation, since it is close to universities and a CEGEP, as well as being home to rapidly evolving post-industrial spaces. Programs to invest in accelerators and incubators, and in new technologies, could help reinforce the trends we are already seeing.

Furthermore, the commitments to seniors and veterans will alleviate poverty in this riding.

[*English*]

I turn lastly to the jewels of the riding, the St. Lawrence River and the Lachine Canal. The river links the riding from end to end and provides a sublimely beautiful recreational space for the riding's residents and non-residents alike. Its banks and the quality of its water need protection. It was with a heavy heart and a commitment to make real change that the Minister of Environment and Climate Change was forced to approve the dumping of raw sewage into the St. Lawrence River, some of it at points in this riding, in order to undertake necessary infrastructure work.

We must invest in green infrastructure, brown water infrastructure, water treatment, and sewers to ensure that such a move must never again be taken. All along the river, we need to ensure water treatment capacity is not only adequate for present needs but is enhanced to meet the demands of a changing climate. The wildlife along the river and its islands also requires vigilance in the protection of its habitat.

The Lachine Canal is a historic waterway that has undergone transformative change, and here too we can develop this as a wonderful park space for Canadians across the country.

[*Translation*]

The people of LaSalle—Émard—Verdun voted for real change. They want something better. They want something positive. They want to rebuild their riding, physically and emotionally. Our government committed to doing so, not only in LaSalle—Émard—Verdun, but also across the country. The throne speech set out our first steps.

[*English*]

It is time, in a spirit of co-operation and good faith, to get to the heavy lifting.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate this member, and the last Liberal member who spoke. They had a lot of nice things to say about investing in Canadians. However, I could not get an answer about what that really means, so I will try again with this member.

Most Canadians who use tax-free savings accounts make less than \$60,000 a year. Those who would benefit the most from the Liberals' tax proposals are those who are making over \$90,000 a year. Clearly, we have a problem. Could the member explain how the Liberals' plan to cut tax-free savings accounts gels with their comments about investing in Canadians?

• (1255)

Mr. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member on being elected.

The overwhelming evidence is that tax-free savings accounts are used by people who frankly are among the highest income earners in the country. Our program is aimed at helping those who really need it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not thank the voters of Sherbrooke who put their trust in me to represent them here in the House a second time. I also want to recognize and congratulate the member for his election to the House.

I was a little surprised that his speech did not mention Canada Post as a priority. He raised a number of issues in his speech, but he did not mention Canada Post. I have to wonder whether that omission was intentional, since the government is being unclear about the return of home delivery and about the commitment made by his party, which now forms the government.

Did he intentionally fail to mention this issue? It is a very important issue for the riding of Sherbrooke, for municipal officials in Sherbrooke, and for the mayor of Montreal, who expressed his interest in and concern for Canada Post and the return of home delivery.

I would like to know whether his government was truly and unambiguously committed to bringing back home delivery across Canada, including his riding and my own, the riding of Sherbrooke.

Mr. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Sherbrooke and congratulate him on his election victory in that riding.

Our position has been clear from the beginning of the election campaign, and nothing has changed. We proposed a moratorium on the installation of community mailboxes and we will examine possible solutions going forward with Canada Post.

[*English*]

Mr. Arnold Chan (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me first congratulate you on the assumption of your role in the chair. I look forward to working with you, along with all hon. members, in your new role.

Let me also congratulate the member for LaSalle—Émard—Verdun on your election and for your maiden speech in the House.

Address

As you noted in your speech, you will have very big shoes to fill, given the predecessors who have occupied your riding in the past.

As I was listening to your speech, I noted that you gave a very colourful description that shared with all members what a wonderful riding you represent. In many ways, it reflects my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt.

Related to his discussion on public infrastructure, in particular public transit, how does the hon. member see that unfolding in a way that would allow less reliance on cars and movement toward a greener, more prosperous way to move our residents around?

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Scarborough—Agincourt for his kind remarks in his opening. I would remind all hon. members that when they are directing comments that they direct them to the chair and use the third person when referring to other hon. members.

Mr. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Scarborough—Agincourt for his warm congratulations, and I return them in kind.

LaSalle—Émard—Verdun is on the fringe of the city and the suburbs. Therefore, anything we can do to increase rapid transit, train service, bus service, or extend and improve the metro, will help to reduce car traffic and increase our greening of Montreal. Those are precisely the kinds of infrastructure investments that the riding needs.

• (1300)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Calgary Signal Hill.

Yesterday was a day of remembrance to commemorate what happened at École Polytechnique in Montreal, and I would like to recognize the women who were the victims of that terrible event. It is important for everyone to remember that on December 6, 1989, our lives were once again marked by tragedy. I thought it was important to remind everyone before I begin my speech.

I also want to thank the voters in the beautiful riding of Lac-Saint-Jean, which used to be Roberval and later became Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean. They have placed their trust in me for a fourth time.

As the official opposition, we welcome the openness announced by the new government. I want to congratulate the government and give our assurance that we will work with it in the interest of the Canadian public. Of course we are ready to get to work in the House to advance the issues, to keep taxes low for Canadians, and to put more money back into their pockets.

Address

However, we are concerned about what we heard in the throne speech because many of the Liberal government's promises could end up costing Canadians a lot of money. We agree with the new government that the voices of all Canadians matter. That is why we will be the voice of Canadian families and taxpayers in Parliament and why we will hold the government to account on its policies, which will most certainly result in tax hikes for families and more debt for future generations, as well as centralization of power in Ottawa at the expense of provincial jurisdiction.

[*English*]

We will request that the government explain, in an open and transparent manner, how it intends to manage the economy. The Liberals must explain to Canadians how they will pay for all of the promises they have made.

Already the Liberals have announced that they will not respect their own \$10-billion deficit limit. The government must be transparent with Canadians and tell them exactly how large a deficit it wants to run and for how long.

[*Translation*]

That is particularly important because reports like the one from the C.D. Howe Institute—which was, until recently, run by the Minister of Finance—are already suggesting that changes to federal taxation might make it difficult for national tax revenue to cover the cost of keeping those promises.

There could be a shortfall of more than \$4 billion over and above the deficit that was already announced. We will see how this turns out, but we cannot spend money we do not have. When people spend more than they earn, sooner or later the bank will come get the keys to the car or the house. That is exactly what those people want to do.

The Conservative Party has always been in favour of low taxes, cost cutting, and sound economic management. Under our government, federal tax revenues relative to GDP were at their lowest level since the Second World War, over 50 years ago.

[*English*]

The government has laid out its plan for the coming years. We will make sure it also has a plan that includes a return to a balanced budget, as promised.

[*Translation*]

Not only are the new government's many commitments terribly short on economic and fiscal details, but a number of the commitments on infrastructure, education, and health fall under provincial jurisdiction.

I just listened to my colleague talk about infrastructure in his riding. Everything he talked about falls under provincial jurisdiction. The provinces own 93% of the infrastructure in the country. As usual, the Liberals want to interfere in provincial matters and have everything centralized in Ottawa.

[*English*]

Our Conservative government has always maintained solid co-operation and great respect in its relations with the provinces, practising an open federalism. In this respect, we are the only party

that honours the spirit of our Constitution and the founding principles of our Confederation.

[*Translation*]

We are also the only party that made sustained and significant increases to the transfers to the provinces. Our government made sure that equalization payments will continue to grow in relation to the economy.

Under the Conservative government, federal transfers increased by 63% between 2006 and 2015. It is that unparalleled support through the equalization program and the Canada health and social transfers that allowed the provinces to respond appropriately to the needs of their citizens.

● (1305)

[*English*]

What we saw in the Speech from the Throne indicates that the Liberal government's planned spending will most certainly lead to falling revenues for the provinces, and that it also intends to pursue its long tradition of centralizing power in Ottawa against the interests of the provinces.

[*Translation*]

It is incredible to see that the speech makes no mention of agriculture. How can the Liberal government claim to represent the voice of all Canadians and not make a single mention of the agricultural community?

Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector contributes more than \$100 billion to Canada's economy and employs more than two million people. It is the backbone of the Canadian economy. The quality of life of Canadian communities big and small from coast to coast depends on agriculture. That includes helping farmers penetrate new markets through free trade agreements such as the trans-Pacific partnership, which the new government must ratify as soon as possible.

[*English*]

We know that our farmers and their products can compete with the best in the world. We are therefore urging the government to pursue our party's work and defend our farmers' interests.

[*Translation*]

The Liberal government's reluctance to support Canadian businesses by ratifying the historic TPP is alarming. This agreement is one of the excellent legacies of the previous Conservative government. It opens up some of the largest markets to Canadian businesses and will lead to the quickest growth in the world. Every sector of the Canadian economy will benefit from the TPP, including the forestry industry, which our government always vigorously supported. In the Speech from the Throne, the forestry industry was conspicuous by its absence.

It is also notable that there was no mention of ISIS in the throne speech. How can the government increase Canadians' security, as it has promised, if it does not recognize one of the greatest threats to that security?

[English]

ISIS has demonstrated its ability to carry out attacks around the world and has repeatedly called upon its members to target Canadians at home and abroad.

At a time when our allies are strengthening their resolve to defeat this terrorist group, we must stand side by side with our partners. Canada must remain a contributing member of the international coalition's air bombing campaign.

[Translation]

We continue to urge the Liberal government to reconsider its decision and ensure that the Royal Canadian Air Force remains engaged in the fight against ISIS.

[English]

We are ready to work respectfully with all of our colleagues in the interest of all Canadians. However, our new government must know that we will be watching it very closely.

[Translation]

We will be carefully monitoring the situation.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate listening to the member's comments. One thing that crossed my mind is that if we were to canvass Canadians, we would find that they are very concerned about Canada's economy. They want us to be moving forward, which is something the Harper government was not successful at doing.

The question that I have—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I know we are starting a new Parliament. The hon. member may realize that we do not use members' given names in the House. The hon. member for Calgary still sits in this place. I would ask the hon. member to respect that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I do apologize.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member would generally stay seated while I'm standing in my place. We will get started again once I recognize the hon. member.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Again, my apologies, Mr. Speaker.

The point is that if we want to drive Canada's economy, we have to invest in the middle class. A healthy middle class means that we have a healthier economy.

I wonder if the member might recognize that by supporting the Liberal Party's initiative to reduce the taxes for Canada's middle class it would give strength to our middle class, thereby giving more jobs for the Canadian economy. We would all benefit when that type of action takes place.

• (1310)

Hon. Denis Lebel: Mr. Speaker, when we lowered taxes on income, we did it for the whole population. When we set in place a system to help families with kids, we did it for all families.

Address

The Liberals are already cherry-picking. They are deciding which part of the population they want to help in order to get votes. That is not the way we want to work.

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, I want to thank the member for the speech that he gave here today as our deputy leader. We are very proud of his leadership. He will work with our interim leader.

Already in the newspapers, we are seeing that the Liberals have conceded to flaws in the fiscal plan. They have talked about a secure and dignified retirement, yet they announced today that they are going to cut back on the tax-free savings account, where individuals were able to save and watch their retirement fund grow tax free. We see that the government wants to tax those who are successful and prosperous, and who are, in many cases, job creators.

I wonder if the hon. deputy leader would tell us the importance of a secure and dignified retirement, and why the tax-free savings account was such an important plan for over 11 million Canadians, most of whom are either in the low- or middle-income brackets.

Hon. Denis Lebel: Mr. Speaker, I have heard ideology in many questions and comments since the beginning of this session. In the past, the Conservative government preferred to put more money back in the population's pocket, instead of deciding on its behalf. That is how we were managing the economy.

What my friend and a former minister of the last government is talking about is how we decided to put more money in the population's pocket, helping people have a savings account where they could save on taxes, and the Liberals have decided otherwise. We will see what they do.

[Translation]

We have not yet seen what this government will introduce. However, it is clear that putting more money in Canadians' pockets is part of our DNA. We have always believed that Canadians are just as intelligent as we are, if not more so, when it comes to managing money, including the money paid out under the universal child care benefit and the money we helped them put in tax-free savings accounts. It seems that this new government wants to make those decisions for Canadians.

[English]

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to stand in this House today as the newly elected member for Calgary Signal Hill. I will talk a bit about the riding in a few minutes. Before I do that, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, the member for Simcoe North, and the member for Halifax West for your new roles in this assembly in trying to ensure that we maintain those so-called sunny ways referred to by our leader this morning. I would also like to congratulate all 337 of my colleagues who were successful on October 19. We all know that it was a long campaign and it is truly an honour to be representing our constituents. Congratulations to each one of us.

Address

I would like to take a moment and talk about my constituency of Calgary Signal Hill and the support that I received and continue to receive from my family and the volunteers of my constituency. I was fortunate to have sat in the provincial legislative assembly of Alberta for two terms, and those same volunteers and constituents were there when I asked for their support on October 19. I am extremely grateful.

Calgary Signal Hill is a riding that has a new name, but it is primarily made up of the former riding of Calgary West. It has always been a Conservative riding, but we have a little different representation today than we may have had in the past. I look forward to working with each member to ensure that our constituents feel as though they are represented in this House.

On November 11, I participated in the celebrations at Battalion Park. For those who do not know, our constituency of Signal Hill is one of the many foothill ridings I have the pleasure of representing. However, 100 years ago our young troops were being assembled at Camp Sarcee, by the Elbow River. Prior to leaving our country, they had a remembrance of the battles they were going off to fight. They carried 16,000 stones all painted white and marked across the side of Signal Hill. The numbers on the side of Signal Hill are 137, 113, 151, and 51, which are the battalions of those soldiers who went off to war, many of whom did not come back.

We celebrated on November 11 not only to recognize the contributions our soldiers made to preserve the freedom that we enjoy here today but also to recognize the 100th anniversary of this park. There is an initiative to designate it as a national historic site. I would ask the government to seriously consider endorsing this initiative to declare Battalion Park a national historic site.

Standing there on November 11, I just could not help thinking about those soldiers who gave up their lives for the freedom we enjoy today, and then turn that clock ahead 100 years when we have a government that is steadfastly refusing to defend our country against the thugs who are wanting to kill people in this world. We are withdrawing as defenders of freedom where those young men and women were the fighters for freedom 100 years ago. It is shameful. The throne speech, in my view, is shameful. It is shameful for what it does not say.

We had a Prime Minister stand in this House earlier today who had the opportunity to fill in those blanks. Yes, we could have missed some things, he could have said. He could have talked about, as we have mentioned, agriculture, forestry, the economy, pipelines, energy, or any number of things, but no. What did we hear? We heard all this fuzzy good news stuff.

I am really happy that it is not me who has to go back to Calgary and sell this throne speech. I would not want to be the member for Calgary Centre, the Minister of Veterans Affairs, or the member for Calgary Skyview and have to go back and sell this throne speech in a city that has lost 110,000 jobs in the last year. It is shameful.

● (1315)

In some of the response to the throne speech on the other side of the House, there seems to be a view that somehow if we just spend more taxpayers' dollars, we will fix the economy. I even heard a member say in this House that all we need to fix the unemployment

problem in the member's riding is to create more federal service jobs. I was shaking my head wondering if I heard correctly. That is hardly the way we are going to fix the economy.

We can fix the economy by working as a government to get out of the way of the private sector doing its job. We can start tomorrow, ensuring that we get access to tidewater for our products from western Canada.

When the price of oil is at \$100 internationally, a \$20 differential is workable, but when the West Texas crude is selling at \$40 a barrel and we in western Canada are getting half that, that is not right. The main reason for that is because we are not moving forward on getting pipelines to the coast, because we are advocating to the environmental groups that continue to stand in the way. All I heard from the Prime Minister today was more support for that kind of standing in the way of development of the private sector.

I am going to conclude by saying that the Minister of Finance will be in for a rude awakening when he starts preparing his budget in a few months. We have heard about taxing the rich crowd. We heard the Prime Minister talking about it again. That so-called rich crowd lives in my riding. A whole bunch of the so-called Liberal-designated rich crowd members are not working today. They do not have jobs.

This particular finance minister has his work cut out for him to bring in a budget that is going to cover all the expenses that we already see in that throne speech. I am not sure where the money is going to come from. As has been mentioned by both the deputy leader and the leader this morning, that deficit is already rising. By the time the budget comes in, I do not know what the number is going to be but it is not going to be pretty.

The Liberal government is going to have to answer for it. It is all the promises that the Liberals are making in that fairytale world that they are living in over there, that world where that bunch actually out-NDP'd the NDP in the election. Now, how bad was that?

I will conclude by saying this. Albertans made a decision last spring to elect an NDP government in Alberta. Members should hold the applause. We are in a mess in that province. Unfortunately we elected a couple of those Liberals in the last federal election on October 19.

Thank goodness the majority of the province came to its senses and elected a large number of Conservative members of Parliament who are going to fight to ensure that we have jobs in this province, created by the private sector and not by a bunch of government programs on green technology and stuff that will create nothing. We have seen what has happened in Ontario with hydro. I think there is more of that coming.

● (1320)

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as this is the first time I am rising in this House, I would like to thank the residents of Whitby for allowing me to be here today and to congratulate my fellow members in this chamber for their successful elections.

The member pointed out that it was shameful that we do not join with our partners in eliminating ISIS and defending Canadians. Perhaps we should hold the applause.

I want to ask the member if his party is not up to date with the current strategy that Obama laid out yesterday, the strategy consisting of both hunting down terrorists and training Iraqi and Syrian forces on the ground. President Obama is re-evaluating his foreign policy and he is also thinking of doing things differently rather than continuing with air strikes.

Is the member making a statement to gain political points or is he in fact up to date with current strategy?

Mr. Ron Liepert: Mr. Speaker, they will never get me standing in the House and agreeing with very much of what President Obama says or does. Let us forget Mr. Obama and talk about the British House of Commons.

The British House of Commons, just two weeks ago, with the support of the Labour Party, agreed that the British were going to start air strikes in the Middle East. That is the House of Commons of Britain that I want to ensure we emulate, versus a president of the United States who does not have the courage to do a lot of things, including improving the economy by approving a pipeline to the United States. I am never going to be agreeing with that particular president, but with the members of the British House of Commons.

• (1325)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was a great honour to listen to the member speak so eloquently about his beautiful riding and also about its military history.

There was one line in the throne speech that particularly concerned me. It was about having a leaner military. This is not what we heard during the campaign, but, frankly, it is what a lot of us expected. Not only are we pulling out of the fight against ISIS, but also, going forward, the Liberal government would reduce our capacity to use our military as a force for good in the world.

Can the hon. member comment on what he thinks the government means by having a leaner military, going forward?

Mr. Ron Liepert: Mr. Speaker, as was mentioned several times, the federal budget deficit is increasing by the day. The member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan is bang on. The Liberals are going to be looking for money wherever they can, and the easy way to do it and the history of past Liberal governments has always been to cut funding to the military. I would not be the least bit surprised. Would it be the right thing to do? Absolutely not.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to stand in the House for the first time since being re-elected. Of course, I thank the good people of Lac-Saint-Louis for putting their faith in me again.

To the hon. member, yes, Alberta is struggling. This is a government that represents all regions of the country and cares about the unemployed in all regions of the country. Does the member not recognize that a middle-class tax cut would benefit local and regional economies across this country by putting more money in the hands of the middle class?

Address

My second point has to do with the fact that a Conservative government was in power for 10 years, and one of its first priorities was to get a pipeline through. It was not able to get any pipelines through in 10 years. What does the member think about that? No pipelines were put through because there was no co-operation with communities.

Does the member not think that it is a positive sign that this Prime Minister has already started reaching out to people, including the premiers, on issues like climate change?

Mr. Ron Liepert: Mr. Speaker, frankly I despise that term “middle class”, but we will use it since it is a term that the government wants to use. However, a tax cut for middle-income folks is hardly of value if they do not have a job. That is one of the issues we have in Alberta today.

All I am saying is that in the throne speech we needed to ensure that the energy industry was recognized, and the government failed to do that in either its throne speech or in the Prime Minister's remarks in the House today.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

[*English*]

It is an honour to rise for the first time and introduce myself and the great riding of Sudbury.

[*Translation*]

Before I begin, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my wife and my children, Mylène, Henri, and Théo, for their love and support, which gave me the strength to win my seat in the House of Commons.

[*English*]

I would also like to thank my team of hard-working supporters and all the voters in Sudbury for their confidence in me.

[*Translation*]

I also want to thank my family and friends in my home town of Kapuskasing in northern Ontario for their ongoing encouragement.

[*English*]

Today, I would like to tell members a bit about my great riding and the vast potential of the region of northern Ontario, and how the speech from the throne, in its elements, will profit it.

Sudbury also is a microcosm of Canada. With a majority anglophone population and over 45,000 French-speaking residents, Sudbury has the third-largest francophone community outside of Quebec and a strong indigenous population. Sudbury was built on the backs of waves of immigrants from Italy, Finland, Poland, Ukraine, and Greece, and today a strong South Asian population. It is a rich arts and culture hub of Northern Ontario, reflecting Canadian diversity.

Address

[*Translation*]

Sudbury is located in boreal forest in the heart of the Canadian Shield and is rich in natural resources.

[*English*]

As stated in the Speech from the Throne, in Sudbury people see the result of immigrants building successful lives in Canada, and I am proud to stand with this government in working hard to bring in immigrants and refugees to contribute to Canada's economic success.

There is a total of 330 lakes within the city of Sudbury, more lakes than any other municipality in the world. In fact, Lake Wanapitei is the largest city-contained lake in the world. Ramsey Lake, in the heart of my riding, is the second-largest lake and provides over 40,000 homes with fresh water. Sudbury is also home to the fourth-largest film festival in Canada, the third- and eighth-largest science centres in Canada, a burgeoning film industry, and a variety of cultural and music festivals, such as the jazz festival, which I am proud to have helped launch.

● (1330)

[*Translation*]

I am therefore proud to be part of a government that plans to invest in culture and in Canada's creative industry, as set out in the throne speech.

[*English*]

I will return shortly to the many hidden gems that make Sudbury a great place to live, but I want to talk first about what my riding is known for.

Most know that Sudbury is home to one of the largest integrated mining complexes in the world. Without a doubt, it is the richest mining district in North America and is one of the leading hardrock mining regions in the world. It was a sector largely ignored by the past government and I find it important to raise it today.

From my business office in the centre of the city, I see three headframes, a smelter, and the second-largest smokestack in the world. Nowhere else in the world is the mining industry so pervasive. In fact, there are 5,000 kilometres of underground tunnels. If they were put back to back, they would go from Sudbury to Vancouver underground.

However, the real story of Sudbury's mining industry is its growing mining supply and equipment sector. As new technology and innovation led to new products and processes, these homegrown companies found eager national and international markets looking to improve their productivity. Today, the sector represents more than 300 companies in Sudbury, employing almost 14,000 skilled workers and professionals and generating approximately \$4 billion in revenue each year, some 40% of the mineral production in Ontario.

Because of this innovation boom, mining research and development in Sudbury has evolved into a world-class industry all its own. Many of the brightest minds and mining-related sciences are being drawn to Sudbury to be part of one of the world's most advanced clusters of international mining research. Greater Sudbury's innovation cluster is made possible through partnerships involving post-

secondary institutions, all levels of government, and some of the world's largest mining corporations.

The long-term sustainability of these mining companies is dependent on the innovative research coming out of facilities like CEMI, the Centre for Excellence in Mining Innovation, and MIRARCO, the Mining Innovation, Rehabilitation and Applied Research Corporation, both located at Sudbury's Laurentian University, as well as NORCAT, the Northern Centre for Advanced Technology Inc., which is the third major innovation partner.

Other world-class research facilities include the SNOLAB, which I will come back to in a moment, and the Vale Living with Lakes Centre at Laurentian University, where I had the great honour of welcoming our then soon-to-be prime minister last August, when he announced \$200 million in annual funding in support of technology incubators and research facilities and financing for small businesses looking to grow.

[*Translation*]

Obviously, when it comes to Sudbury's success stories, it is important to mention environmental restoration.

[*English*]

Sudbury has received numerous awards for its aggressive land reclamation program, including a United Nations Local Government Award and the U.S. Chevron Conservation Award. Over the past 30 years, dozens of community partners have planted over 10 million trees, transforming our sulphur-damaged moonscape into a reforested vista of green. In fact, a prime example of the sustainable transformation of our mining industry and our city's landscape is coming online right now.

Currently, Vale is wrapping up a \$1 billion investment in pollution controls to further reduce sulphur dioxide emissions 80% below current levels, well below government standards. When completed, Vale will be in a position to demolish its iconic smokestack. Yes, the second-largest smokestack in the world may be demolished because of the innovation in research that has been done.

In Sudbury, we strive to protect the environment and grow the economy. These have been compatible goals in Sudbury. However, more work is needed, but that is the success of the Sudbury region.

Earlier I mentioned the SNOLAB, and I want to take a moment to recognize it and its staff, particularly Dr. Arthur McDonald, for their historic contributions to humanity's understanding of our world and how it works. I am sure some of my colleagues recall that Dr. McDonald and his colleagues last month won the Nobel Prize in Physics for work largely conducted at Sudbury's SNOLAB.

SNOLAB is an international underground research facility specializing in neutrino and dark matter physics. Located two kilometres underground in the Vale Creighton Mine, SNOLAB has 5,000 square metres of clean space underground for experiments and the supporting infrastructure. It is the perfect example of what we have done in Sudbury to transform our community into a world-class centre of innovation. Sudbury has made tremendous strides and succeeded in diversifying the local economy away from only the mining extraction sector.

[*Translation*]

Sudbury is a major educational centre in northern Ontario, with two colleges and a university that offer courses in both official languages. The Regroupement des organismes francophones or ROC in Sudbury works to promote Franco-Ontarian culture through theatre, literature, visual arts, music, and books, as well as through a cultural centre that makes Sudbury a veritable hub of Canada's Francophonie.

I am proud to be part of a government that encourages and promotes the use of both official languages.

● (1335)

[*English*]

Looking forward, thanks to the support of the federal government, Health Sciences North is launching the Advanced Medical Research Institute of Canada, which is attracting specialists in medical research conducted on an ongoing basis.

I am also proud to be part of a government that has promised to stand up for Canadians who need support. Seniors, veterans, young people, those suffering from mental illness will be my priority.

My grandfather fought in World War II. He came back physically fine but was never the same. We now know that he suffered from PTSD and my family suffered with him. After his experience, it is important for me to ensure that no veteran or their families have to fight the government for the support and compensation they have earned. It is important that we work as hard to provide supports for people suffering from mental illness as from physical illness.

I want to conclude today by sharing with the House details of the most significant economic opportunities presented to Canadians in a generation, the Ring of Fire. In the far north of Ontario there is unparalleled opportunity for Canada and Ontario to follow Sudbury's lead and continue to diversify our economy and solidify our place as a global leader in mining innovation and technology.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my remarks.

[*English*]

The numbers on the Ring of Fire speak for themselves. Analysis shows that within the first 10 years of its development, the Ring of Fire will make significant contributions to Canada's economy, and will sustain up to 5,000 full-time jobs annually, create more than \$25 billion in economic activity, as well as generate more than \$6 billion in government tax revenues. All of this provides a compelling incentive for all governments to invest in this economic opportunity.

Address

I know that along with my Northern Ontario caucus colleagues we will champion this opportunity by standing up for the leaders who are prospecting and investing in northern Ontario; the researchers and innovators whose work allows us to mine, process and transfer ore sustainably; and importantly, the indigenous peoples of that area who have called these lands home for generations, and ensure that they are fully engaged in reviewing and monitoring this project as promised in the Speech from the Throne. We will stand up for the men and women seeking to earn a living and support their families in one of the oldest and most respected industries in Canada, hard rock mining.

I look forward to working with my colleagues in the House of Commons to build Sudbury, northern Ontario, and Canada into a global centre for sustained mining excellence.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as it is my first time speaking in the House in this Parliament, I want to deeply thank the constituents of my riding for placing their trust in me for another term.

I also want to welcome my colleague to this place.

My colleague spoke about one of the cornerstones of his riding being the natural resource industry. Given that, I am wondering if he could explain to the House why his party opposes the mineral exploration tax credit at a time when the natural resource sector is under a great deal of stress. Like him, I also have a riding that is dependent on mineral exploration and the oil and gas sector. Tens of thousands of people are losing their jobs, and yet his party is talking about anything but the oil and gas sector.

In solidarity with the workers in these industries, I am wondering if the member would stand up and support Canada's oil and gas sector and also reaffirm his support for the mineral exploration tax credit.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Mr. Speaker, in the last campaign our leader and our platform were quite clear. We want to invest over \$200 million annually in the natural resource sector for research and innovation. I am proud to be part of a government that does not want to see things stay the same but to invest in research and innovation so that the sector will prosper and to make sure that it is environmentally sustainable.

● (1340)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his first speech in the House, and I congratulate him on his election. He spoke about mines, and in particular those in Sudbury. Since my husband works in one of those mines, I know how important natural resources are.

Address

First, why does my colleague think that there was no mention of the Ring of Fire in the throne speech? Second, when will we see some real action on the development of the Ring of Fire? Third, why is there no member of this government who is responsible for FedNor? Will it increase the FedNor budget, and if so, will these funds be fully invested in our communities?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Mr. Speaker, I also want to congratulate the member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasung on her election.

Members of the Liberal Party do not want to just talk the talk. We want to walk the walk. I am not the only member in the caucus from northern Ontario. I am joined by the minister and member for Thunder Bay—Superior North, and the members for Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Kenora, Sault Ste. Marie, Nickel Belt and Nipissing—Timiskaming.

We will work together to get things done in northern Ontario and to develop our mines. We do not want to just talk the talk. We want to walk the walk.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking the people of my riding, Joliette. I also want to congratulate all hon. members of the House on their election or re-election, including the hon. member for Sudbury.

The Speech from the Throne is mum on the fight against tax evasion. I would like to know where the hon. member for Sudbury stands on this subject and what measures he would like to see implemented in order to effectively fight tax evasion.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Mr. Speaker, I thank and congratulate the hon. member for Joliette on his election. As a tax specialist and former professor of international tax law at the University of Ottawa, I appreciate his question.

It is clear from our platform that we want to clean up and rework Canada Revenue. We want to allocate resources to the right places in order to tackle tax havens. There is a lot of work to be done because this issue was largely ignored in the past 10 years. I want to play a role and work together with the minister to see what we can do to reduce the number of tax havens and make them less attractive.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as this is the first time I have risen in the House, I want to congratulate you on your election.

I would also like to congratulate all my colleagues in the House on being voted into office. I have the opportunity to rise today because more than 34,000 voters put their trust in me, and I am extremely grateful. I want to assure the House that I will be representing all the people of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

I would also like to thank my family, my girlfriend Kathryn, my brother Mathieu and his wife Anick, my nephew Noah, and my parents.

If nothing changes, we will have to honour the greatest supporter of the House, the person who has yet to miss a session, and that is my father, who is again seated in the gallery watching the House conduct its business. One might say that he is a true supporter of Canadians.

As a Franco-Ontarian, I am delighted to debate the throne speech. Nearly seventy per cent of the wonderful riding of Glengarry—

Prescott—Russell is francophone. Our region has a rich cultural and heritage legacy.

I am proud to say that the only francophone agricultural college outside Quebec, Collège D'Alfred, is located in my riding. It is important for Franco-Ontarians, and for all francophones outside Quebec, to preserve their language and their cultural heritage. I know that my colleague from Orléans believes this as well.

It starts with our public institutions providing adequate service in both languages. I am proud to be part of a government that understands and respects that fact.

That is why our government will support CBC/Radio-Canada and encourage the use of the country's two official languages by investing in Canada's cultural and creative industries.

That is real change. Diversity matters to this government, and we recognize that it is a source of strength, not a weakness. Diversity is what brings us together here in Canada. That is why it is so important for us to bring 25,000 Syrian refugees to Canada.

In Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, nine out of 10 families earn less than \$150,000. The new Canada child benefit will help 90% of families with children under the age of 18 and will lift 315,000 children out of poverty. That is a fair plan for Canadians.

Yesterday was the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. To my dismay, last week I found out that 107 cases of sexual assault were reported in Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, more than last year. That is unacceptable.

In the throne speech, the government committed to introducing legislation to provide better support for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

I will work with my colleagues on this because I hope that, next year, I will be able to rise in the House to say that that number has gone down.

• (1345)

[*English*]

Two weeks ago, I was in here after my swearing-in ceremony with my three-year-old nephew. It got me thinking about the legacy that I wanted to leave him. I want to ensure that the next generation inherits a house with a stronger foundation.

Can a homeowner really claim that the family budget is in the black when the roof is leaking? The answer is no, because down the road, major repairs will cost a lot more money, which will have an even greater impact on the budget. This is why we need to make infrastructure investments now. This is not a Liberal idea; it is simply a government listening to Canadians. It is what all mayors across Canada have been asking for. It is what all nine mayors in Glengarry—Prescott—Russell have been asking for.

Address

For instance, the municipality of Clarence-Rockland has been advocating for the expansion of Highway 174/17 for many decades now. Residents are telling me that while they would love to take public transit to come to work in Ottawa, it is simply not advantageous for them to do so. After all, what is the point of taking public transit if one is stuck in traffic, just like everybody else? It also makes sense, as Ottawa is building its light rail transit system.

Another example is Maxville, where every year the largest highland games in North America are hosted. It still relies on water wells. Unfortunately, the wells are getting dry. A senior's residence is forced to truck water in, which is costing it over \$100,000 per year. This only increases the cost for our seniors to stay there. Surely, we can do better than that. Our seniors deserve better.

[*Translation*]

For over two months, we had the opportunity to ask people what they thought as we went door to door. Access to home care was a recurring theme. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the excellent work done by Prescott and Russell Community Services. This organization provides home care services to people who need them. A large part of the population is aging, but these people want to stay at home. That is why it is important to continue investing in health care. That is why it is important for our Prime Minister to sit down with the provincial and territorial leaders to sign a new health care accord.

We can choose to ignore the fact that our population is aging and not invest in our health care system, but that would mean governing with our heads in the sand. A responsible government looks at what is coming.

[*English*]

The last point I want to raise is the importance of agriculture. While some might worry the word "agriculture" was not included in the Speech from the Throne, I and many of my colleagues who come from rural ridings will work to ensure our agricultural sector is a growing part of our economy. However, the only way to create the jobs of tomorrow is to invest in research. That is the commitment we made during the campaign.

● (1350)

[*Translation*]

That is the promise that I made to Ferme d'la sept, to the Lafrance, Lemieux, and Lalonde families, and to others.

[*English*]

I know we will honour our commitments.

[*Translation*]

In closing, the throne speech presents a vision for Canada that brings Canadians together, invests in the middle class, seeks to grow the economy by investing in our infrastructure, respects official languages, and will rely on fact-based decision-making.

[*English*]

I look forward to working with all of my colleagues from the two sides of the House. I know we will not always agree, but we must

keep the level of debate to a mutual respect. After all, we all share a common goal, and that is to improve the lives of all Canadians.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am extremely honoured to be in the House today for the first time. I would like to congratulate all members of the House on their election and I would like to thank the residents of Sarnia—Lambton for their confidence that is placed in me.

We have heard today already about the tragic events of December 6. Those were my sister engineers. As the first female engineer rising in the House, I respect that and we need to ensure this never happens again.

I heard the hon. member from Sudbury and others talk about the government's commitment to research and development. As the critic for science, I thought that was very absent from the throne speech. There was little emphasis on anything except clean tech. There was no mention of agriculture, mining, fossil fuel sector, genomics, nanophysics or IT big data.

With the billions of dollars that the government is spending in every other area, I would hope the Liberals would commit the billions of dollars that are needed to inspire innovation but also to inspire basic research so Canada does not continue to fall further behind.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member on her election as well. During the campaign we spoke about the need to invest in innovation, and our commitment was to invest \$200 million a year to increase the access to accelerators and incubators. It is extremely important for small businesses to contribute and have access to those types of services so we can create the better jobs of tomorrow.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to ask my colleague a question. After my own riding, of course, his is probably my favourite riding. It is where my wife is from. She is also Franco-Ontarian, from Hawkesbury in fact.

Knowing his region, I also know that many farmers took part in the demonstration on Parliament Hill. Some of the farmers there were from his region, but many were also from Quebec, including my region. The demonstration was about the trans-Pacific partnership and the fact that supply management will be gutted if that agreement is adopted in its current form.

Since farmers are at the core of the economy in the member's riding, is he not worried that not only did his government fail to mention agriculture in the throne speech, but it is also prepared to ratify that agreement without adapting it to our reality and that it basically plans to adopt it as it was presented by the Conservatives?

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Speaker, I first want to congratulate the member on his re-election.

Statements by Members

I was here on the Hill one Tuesday when the farmers came to demonstrate. We heard them say that they want their voices to be heard. I know that my colleague, the Minister of International Trade, has already consulted certain farm groups. We have committed to holding open, transparent consultations with farmers. The people of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell will have their voices heard loud and clear.

I will be working with the Minister of Agriculture and his parliamentary secretary to discuss these issues.

• (1355)

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member on his election. I also want to give a shout-out to André and Justine, who live in his riding. It is truly a beautiful riding.

I heard the member talk about CBC/Radio-Canada in his speech, but he just touched on it briefly. I would like to know what funding commitments this government is making for CBC/Radio-Canada, because this is an extremely important issue. He mentioned that it serves linguistic minorities across Canada. The broadcaster needs stable, multi-year funding, which we committed to providing during the last election campaign.

However, the throne speech did not mention this topic and I have not seen any figures about funding for CBC/Radio-Canada. Does the member also have a particular interest in the crown corporation and its funding, to ensure that it can provide quality services across Canada in both official languages?

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Speaker, I also want to congratulate the member on his election and I thank him for his question.

Radio-Canada obviously plays a key role in francophone minority communities outside Quebec. This is what I have heard from the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario and the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada. I plan on working with the Minister of Canadian Heritage to ensure that the \$150-million commitment we made to CBC/Radio-Canada during the campaign will be honoured.

Of course, I invite my colleague to work with us to talk about the issues affecting Radio-Canada. I know that this is an issue that also affects my colleague's constituents in Sudbury.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to be here representing the people of Gatineau.

I congratulate my hon. colleague on his speech. I know him well.

Considering his background, I wonder if he might comment on francophone minority communities and the French language and bilingualism in Canada in general.

I know these things are important to him, so I would like to hear what he is planning to do in this area.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Gatineau on being elected. I am proud to be here alongside him.

Official languages are certainly a very important issue to us and to my colleague from Gatineau. Certainly, in my riding, Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, I have often heard people talk about the

importance of having official languages in Canada and of ensuring that the public service honours that fact.

I know that this is an issue that really matters to my colleague, so I will work with him and with other members whose ridings have francophone minority communities outside of Quebec because we must honour official languages in Canada.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

MIRAMICHI—GRAND LAKE

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to send greetings to the good people of my riding of Miramichi—Grand Lake.

[Translation]

Since the early days of our great country, the four Mi'kmaq communities in my riding have shared their magnificent land with newcomers from Acadian, Irish, Scottish and so many other backgrounds.

[English]

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the western provinces, particularly Alberta, for providing good work for our men and women as our local economy was struggling. My goal, however, is to bring back economic prosperity to my region.

As my region is a historical trade gateway to Europe and the rest of the world, I trust that the final touch on the European trade agreement will happen soon, so our region can take advantage of this tremendous opportunity.

[Translation]

Lastly, I would like to thank the people of my riding for putting their trust in me. On behalf of my wife, Lise, and myself, I wish them happy holidays and a prosperous and healthy new year.

[English]

I wish happy holidays and a prosperous year to all.

* * *

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as this is my first opportunity, I would like to congratulate and welcome all members into this place. I cannot say their names, but obviously they know who they are.

This weekend I returned to my amazing riding of Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola. Over the weekend I heard a fair bit of concern over last Friday's throne speech. In my experience, it is unusual to hear concerns over a throne speech.

Many citizens were concerned that the government's upcoming priorities made no mention of a softwood lumber agreement. For communities such as Princeton, Merritt, and West Kelowna, forestry is the single largest employer. These communities critically depend on market access and obviously on a softwood lumber agreement.

As the Liberal government has not yet named a lead British Columbia minister, I am hopeful that the importance of a softwood lumber agreement to many B.C. communities, like my own riding and elsewhere, is not overlooked.

* * *

● (1400)

DECORUM IN THE HOUSE

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart (Fundy Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today as the first female member in the history of Fundy Royal and the second Liberal member since Confederation. This is a true testament that real change is afoot in Canada.

I am truly honoured to represent the hard-working people of Fundy Royal, and I thank them for the trust they have placed in me. I would like to take this opportunity to thank one of those hard-working New Brunswickers. His commitment to government, his vision, and his wise counsel guided me to my journey to take my seat here in the House of Commons.

Please allow me this opportunity to recognize Mr. Roly MacIntyre. Mr. MacIntyre is a former long-time member of the New Brunswick Legislative Assembly and a former cabinet minister. The sentiments he expressed in his last speech in the legislature are sentiments I wish to begin my career with here in the House. Mr. MacIntyre said we should treat each other with respect and we should leave here as friends.

I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the House in this 42nd Parliament to strengthen our communities and our country.

* * *

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I come from Coast Salish territory, sent here by the voters of Nanaimo—Ladysmith. I thank its voters, its volunteers, my family, and friends. I thank all Canadian voters who sent the great diversity to this Parliament. It holds great promise.

So too was the case 26 years ago when 14 women were killed in the École Polytechnique massacre. They too held great promise. New Democrats will work across the aisle with the government on its promise to implement a national action plan to fight gender-based violence. We stand with grassroots indigenous and women's organizations across the country, including especially in my own riding, I think of Nanaimo's Haven Society that has been doing the hard work this last dark decade of supporting victims of violence in our communities.

New Democrats will work with the government to ensure that those organizations have the funding they need to support the inquiry, the domestic violence action plan, that comes before us. New Democrats will stand with all Canadians.

Statements by Members

LOBSTER FISHERY

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan (South Shore—St. Margarets, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in recognition of dumping day, in Nova Scotia. Dumping day marks the opening of the lobster fishing season in southern Nova Scotia and takes place on the last Monday of November.

The brave captains and crew gather on the wharves, at daybreak, to dump their traps as they head out to sea in search of the most lucrative and prosperous fishing grounds.

The south shore of Nova Scotia is world renowned for the quality of its lobster, and this industry is vitally important to the sustainability of many rural communities, as well as to the greater provincial economy.

It is for this reason that many risk their lives in treacherous seas and unpredictable weather in order to provide for their families.

This past dumping day was marked with tragedy, as one fisherman lost his life and two others fell overboard before being rescued.

I wish to thank all the fishermen of district 33 for all they do to provide for our communities and to wish the fleet and their families a safe and successful lobster season.

* * *

EVAN LEVERSAGE

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, seven-year-old Evan Leversage of St. George, Ontario, lost his battle with cancer.

Many have heard about Evan's story and the way it brought together a community and galvanized our nation.

Having been told by doctors that Evan's time might be running out, his aunt Ashley asked neighbours to put up their Christmas lights early so that Evan could take in the joy of Christmas one last time.

The town of St. George responded in an overwhelming way, beyond anyone's expectations.

On October 24, it was incredible to be part of Christmas in St. George, which brought more than 7,000 people together to support Evan and his family.

To his mother Nicole, his father Travis, his brothers Logan and Tyson, and his family, I know that I speak for this House in expressing our deepest condolences for their loss.

Evan's obituary reads:

Some say he was an angel, placed here to remind us of the important things in life.

May the open arms of our loving God embrace Evan and may he rest in peace.

Statements by Members

●(1405)

[*Translation*]

LAURENTIDES—LABELLE

Mr. David Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to rise and speak here today after working in the back rooms of this place for many years.

I want to begin by thanking the people of Laurentides—Labelle for placing their trust in me and this new government.

The riding of Laurentides—Labelle is the most beautiful riding in Canada. It is where I was born and raised. Our 43 municipalities, spread over 20,000 km², can count on me to give them a strong voice here in Ottawa and across Canada.

[*English*]

In honour of my great-great-uncle Leon Crestohl, who served 13 years in this place, and my great-great-grandfather Hirsch Wolofsky, the founder of Canada's first Yiddish daily, I wish everyone *Chanukah Sameach*.

When a flame is lit, its benefit is not restricted to the one lighting it; it is for everyone.

Let us all benefit from the flame of this Hanukkah in the year 5776.

Joyeux Hanukkah.

* * *

RON HYNES

Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I advise the House of Commons that on November 19, 2015, Newfoundland and Labrador's pre-eminent songwriter Ronald Joseph Hynes died at the age of 64, following a second bout of throat cancer.

Ron Hynes's body of work, from *Sonny's Dream*, to the *St. John's Waltz*, to *Godspeed*, captured the spirit of our people and inspired a generation of musicians, artists, and actors.

Since his passing, he has been publicly and spontaneously feted in parks and pubs throughout the province, and he continues to be celebrated.

His work was fostered through performing arts grants, his work on CBC, and other public arts funding. Our lives are richer for it and for him.

While his life was not a model for governance, it is a lesson for all parliamentarians that the heart of a just society is the freedom to live, love, succeed, fail, and be redeemed.

Godspeed to Ron Hynes. May he pass into the source of all that is good.

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MANMEET SINGH BHULLAR

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I stand today and give tribute to a friend

and past colleague, Mr. Manmeet Singh Bhullar, who was a member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta for Calgary—Greenway.

Manmeet was struck and killed by a vehicle two weeks ago, after stopping to help a motorist during a storm on an icy section of the Queen Elizabeth II Highway just north of Red Deer.

Manmeet was the youngest MLA ever elected to the Alberta legislature. He was well known for his humanitarian work at home and abroad, most recently advocating tirelessly on behalf of Sikh and Hindu Afghan refugees.

I had the honour of working with Manmeet in the Alberta legislature for many years. We both served at one time as cabinet ministers, and we worked closely on numerous issues related to our portfolios.

Today I want to extend my sincerest condolences to Manmeet's wife Namrita and the Bhullar family, as well as his legislative colleagues, some who now serve in this chamber.

Rest in peace, Manmeet.

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●(1410)

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, which was on December 3. This day was proclaimed by the United Nations. This year's theme was "Inclusion matters: access and empowerment for people of all abilities".

[*English*]

It is an honour to do so on behalf of the Hon. Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities. Legally blind since birth, my hon. colleague is Canada's first ever minister dedicated specifically to Canadians living with disabilities.

[*Translation*]

Canada is proud to have been one of the first countries to sign the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and will continue to ensure that this convention is upheld.

We look forward to working with our colleagues in the House and across the country on pursuing these efforts. Over the coming months, we will contact the provinces, territories, and municipalities and stakeholders to work on drafting legislation for Canadians with disabilities. Let us never forget the importance of making tangible improvements to the quality of life of Canadians with disabilities.

The Speaker: Although this is a new Parliament and an exciting time, new members need to know that we do not mention the name of another member, including ministers.

The hon. member for York Centre.

*Statements by Members**[English]***HANUKKAH**

Mr. Michael Levitt (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last night at sundown marked the first night of Hanukkah. In communities across Canada and around the world, Jewish families will gather to light the menorah and celebrate the festival of lights with their loved ones.

The Hanukkah story is one of perseverance and great resilience, a story of hope and triumph against oppression. When we light the menorah, the candles help us remember the universal desire for the right to celebrate and express our own beliefs.

This celebration of triumph over adversity gives all Canadians an opportunity to reflect on the great contributions of our country's vibrant Jewish community. This serves as a reminder that our country has been made strong, not in spite of our differences but because of them.

With the festival of lights upon us, I, on behalf of my riding of York Centre, would like to wish all members of this House, and all Canadians, a season of health and happiness.

Happy Hanukkah.

[Member spoke in Hebrew]

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*[Translation]***JUSTICE**

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize the tremendous courage of Isabelle Gaston, the mother of Olivier and Anne-Sophie, who lost their lives at the hands of their father, Guy Turcotte.

For six years, Isabelle set aside her own life in order to exact justice for her children. She fought for the reconsideration of the bewildering first ruling, which found Guy Turcotte not criminally responsible. She worked very hard to improve the lives of victims' loved ones. She asked questions, met with elected officials, and shared with us what a mother feels when a part of her life is so violently ripped away from her. She condemned violence against innocent victims. Today, justice is on her side. Isabelle said that she is relieved by the sentence handed down yesterday, and I think all Quebecers are as well. I hope now that she will find some peace and serenity again.

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*[English]***NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Ms. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women, and I had the honour of attending a candlelight vigil organized by the December 6th Committee of the Moncton and District Labour Council, which was held in Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe.

As we remember the 14 women who lost their lives in the attack at École Polytechnique in Montreal on December 6, 1989, we also have to reflect on all of the women and girls who have experienced violence.

[Translation]

That includes the 1,200 missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls in Canada. We are duty bound to remember them and, above all, to take action.

● (1415)

[English]

Today we remind all Canadians that everyone can do something to help end violence against women and girls.

Together our actions will make Canada safer for all.

* * *

*[Translation]***VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank the voters of Hochelaga, who have done me the honour of allowing me to represent them for a second term. I will continue to work to make their voices heard in Ottawa, and I will continue to fight for the issues that matter to us.

Today, the day after the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, we have a duty to remember the events that took place on December 6, 1989, at École Polytechnique in Montreal, when 14 women lost their lives in an act of gender-based violence. As parliamentarians, we also have a duty to take the necessary action to ensure that such incidents never happen again.

To this day, too many women all across Canada are victims of physical and sexual violence, and aboriginal women disproportionately so. The Liberals must take action. Today seems like the perfect day to announce a clear timeline for setting up a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women.

* * *

ISLAMIC STATE

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will thank the people of my riding when I share my comments on the Speech from the Throne later today. Right now, I want to talk about a troubling situation.

As we know, the so-called Islamic State poses a real threat and must be taken seriously, so much so that the President of the United States felt the need to address Americans yesterday evening. In that speech, he indicated that the unfortunate incident that occurred in San Bernardino, California, was basically an act of terrorism and he promised Americans that he would destroy ISIL.

Meanwhile, in Canada, I get the feeling that our Prime Minister does not realize how serious this situation is, and I believe that our allies are beginning to sense it. I was shocked that the President of the United States had no reason to mention Canada when he spoke about the countries in the international coalition that are increasing their anti-terrorism efforts.

Oral Questions

Could this have something to do with the government's decision to withdraw our fighter jets from a combat role? Time will tell, but I believe that Canadians are anxiously waiting for the Liberal government to show some leadership in the fight against the Islamic State.

* * *

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it saddens me to rise in the House today to recall the horror that we all felt the evening of December 6, 1989. The École polytechnique tragedy is and will always be part of the lives of the 14 families for whom the absence of a loved one is a constant reminder.

[English]

It saddens me all the more because the root causes of the massacre remain as real today as they were 26 years ago.

Violence against women is tenacious; it is borderless, and it is more often than not endemic. We have only to remember the missing and murdered indigenous women to realize that violence against us is still so often the norm.

[Translation]

All the statistics prove that vulnerable women are not the only victims of violence; women of all social classes, all backgrounds and all ages experience violence and intolerance just because they are women.

I want to invite everyone to take a moment to pay tribute to all of the victims—those from the École polytechnique and those who wonder, day after day, if they will wake up the next morning—and to spare a thought for Nathalie Croteau of Brossard, who died in 1989.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last night, President Obama stated that air strikes were a key pillar in the fight against ISIS. In the last week, we have seen the Obama administration, Germany, France, and the U.K. step up their efforts in their air strikes. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister has ordered our CF-18s to stand down.

Why is the Prime Minister stepping back from the fight when our allies are stepping up?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has spoken clearly in this election. It wants Canadians and our military to continue to engage in the fight against ISIS, and we are committed to continuing to do that.

However, we have also made a clear commitment to withdraw the six CF-18 fighter jets and to engage in a continued way militarily, in humanitarian efforts, and in refugee efforts, which we are continuing

to do. I have engaged with our allies on these issues and they have reassured me that we are continuing to be helpful.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us just be clear about what ISIS is. It is a death cult that sells children and women into sexual slavery. It targets and kills gays and lesbians, and it has murdered thousands of Muslims, Christians, Yazidis, and other religious minorities. Yet the Prime Minister says he is going to take our CF-18s out of the fight.

Just how bad does it have to be in Iraq and Syria for him to leave our CF-18s there?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is not a Canadian in this country who does not think that ISIS is a group of terrible terrorists who should be stopped. The question has always been how best to engage, how can Canada use its strengths and the extraordinary strengths of men and women in the Canadian Forces to support in the fight against ISIS?

Ongoing right now, there continues to be air strikes. We have committed to end those air strikes and to transform our engagement in a different way, equally militarily, to ensure that Canada continues to be a strong member of the coalition fighting against ISIS.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last night President Obama also said that his closest allies had stepped up their air strikes. Then he went on to name France, Germany, and the U.K., but no mention of Canada.

Stepping back from the fight against terrorists is not stepping up. Will the Prime Minister just admit that he is more committed to his ideology than he is to our allies in the fight against ISIS?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just a couple of weeks ago I sat down with President Obama and discussed and confirmed that Canada would continue to be a strong supporter of the coalition against ISIL, and would continue to be engaged on a humanitarian level, on a refugee level, and indeed on a military level. Right now, we are in discussions with our allies about how best Canada can continue to participate and to help in the fight against ISIL since we are withdrawing our CF-18 aircraft.

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Lebel (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last night President Obama had some harsh words for ISIS. He said, and I quote:

The threat from terrorism is real, but we will overcome it. We will destroy ISIL and any other organization that tries to harm us.

Can the Prime Minister assure us that he shares the same vision as President Obama?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course Canada, the Liberal Party, the Government of Canada, and I remain resolved in our desire and our conviction to continue this international fight, within the coalition, against ISIS.

However, what we will not do is continue trying to talk about it and give ISIS any free publicity, since we know that that group uses propaganda in order to grow and gain credibility.

Oral Questions

Hon. Denis Lebel (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister just mentioned his meeting with Mr. Obama. It is quite interesting that just a few days after their meeting, when speaking about his trusted allies, President Obama mentioned Germany, France, and the United Kingdom.

An hon. member: But not Canada.

Hon. Denis Lebel: One can use whatever nice catch phrase one likes, such as “Canada is backtracking”, regarding its support for its allies, but how is the Prime Minister going to defend Canada from ISIS?

● (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have always said, Canada remains committed to fully participating in the fight against ISIS. We will remain engaged in terms of our military, but we are withdrawing our fighter jets. We have been talking to Canadians about this for months now, and Canadians trust us to remain strong against ISIS in a way that is appropriate for Canada.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by congratulating the Prime Minister. I also want to assure him that the NDP will be an opposition that intends to help the government implement the changes promised to Canadians.

However, many Canadians are disappointed that the Prime Minister packed his suitcase for Paris with the former Conservative government's plan, targets, and deadlines for greenhouse gases.

Can the Prime Minister promise here today that in 2016 Canada's greenhouse gas emissions will decrease? Yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my hon. opponent on his election.

The reality is that we proposed a new plan in Paris. During the election campaign, we promised to provide tens of billions of dollars for new investments in green infrastructure, innovation, green energy, and clean energy. We have a plan that will help us achieve what the previous government was unable to achieve, namely reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, therefore there is no plan to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions next year.

[English]

Canadians are proud to see a change in tone on climate change, but they are also hoping that the change of tone will bring about a concrete change of direction.

Once it finally decides on Canada's targets, will the government make them binding by enshrining them into a climate change accountability law here at home?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that my hon. colleague seems to forget from time to time is that Canada is a federation with ten provinces that all have different approaches and different requirements. We have committed to sitting down and engaging with those provinces,

listening to them and working out not just targets but a plan that is going to ensure that Canada meets its international and domestic obligations to reducing climate emissions and developing a strong economy.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thought he just said that he had a plan.

During the campaign, the Liberal leader said that he would “restore robust oversight and thorough environmental assessments”, but last week, the environment minister said that projects initiated under the Conservative system would “continue on that path”.

Could the Prime Minister reveal whether pipelines, for example, now under review, will undergo a thorough assessment that includes greenhouse gas impacts, or will they simply continue to use the woefully inadequate assessment system left by the Conservatives?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that Canadians know that we need both a strong economy and a strong environment at the same time. That is why Canadians want a system for environmental assessment that they can trust.

We will launch a public review, and we will make the changes needed to restore public confidence in the environmental assessment of natural resource projects. We will modernize the National Energy Board to ensure that its composition reflects regional views and has sufficient expertise in environmental science, community development, and indigenous traditional knowledge.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA POST

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the pipeline projects will then continue under the Conservatives' system.

During the election campaign, the Prime Minister said this about Canada Post: “We are committed to restoring home mail delivery”. However, there is no mention of this in the Speech from the Throne. Furthermore, the Minister of Public Services said last week that the service will not be restored. Who is telling the truth?

Will the Prime Minister respect—

● (1430)

The Speaker: The Right Hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that we clearly promised to provide Canadians with the services they expect from Canada Post.

We will work with Canada Post. We imposed a moratorium on the installation of mailboxes and we will continue to work with the ministers and partners in order to ensure that Canadians have the services they need.

*Oral Questions**[English]***FINANCE**

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by welcoming the hon. Minister of Finance to the House. I am sure we will have a lot of fun in the coming weeks.

The Prime Minister made two fundamental commitments to Canadians: one, that the deficit would not go above \$10 billion per year; and, two, that any tax increases would be revenue neutral. Unfortunately, neither of those are true and it seems as if we are leaving those commitments in the dust. Therefore, my question for the Minister of Finance is this. How much will these broken promises cost Canadians?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure and a privilege to be here.

We made commitments to Canadians during the course of our campaign. We recognize that the economy is slowing and that it is slower than we expected. We will make significant investments in our economy through infrastructure investments. We will ensure that we reduce our net debt-to-GDP over the course of our mandate. We intend on getting to a balanced budget during the term of our mandate. We look forward to serving Canadians in this way.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will hold the minister to his promise to Canadians of balancing the budget by 2019. One way of balancing that budget is by increasing taxes, and indeed the government has already said it will increase taxes. However, it will not pay for what is happening on the other end of the balance. There is no revenue neutrality here.

Therefore, my question for the minister is this. As he supposedly will admit later on today that this will not work, will he now admit that increased payroll taxes, increased taxes on retirement savings, and the complex re-engineering of how children receive their support will not work either and is also flawed?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think this will be fun.

Today we are starting with a very important part of our plan, and that is middle-class tax breaks, which is a key part of our initiative to help Canadians.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one thing is for sure. The current government is very good at giving out money, but is it good at growing the economy?

Today oil is at \$38 a barrel. We understand that 185,000 job losses in the oil and gas sector in 2016 are possible. This affects everyone who works in that sector, including those in Alberta. Albertans are hurting, yet this sector was not mentioned even once in the Speech from the Throne. Why is Canada's economic engine not a priority for the government?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have inherited a situation that is more challenging than was foreseen in the budget. We are looking forward to making significant investments in our economy to help the growth of the economy because we recognize the challenges that Canadians are facing across this country. We look forward to doing a better job for Canadians in the years to come.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign, the Prime Minister made two major promises.

First, he promised to cap any deficits at \$10 billion. Second, if any taxation changes were made, they would benefit all Canadians.

Unfortunately, Canadians got a reality check today: those promises will not be kept. They were unrealistic and unfeasible.

Will the Prime Minister rise and tell Canadians directly how much these broken promises are going to cost them?

● (1435)

[English]

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we aspire to be transparent and open with Canadians. Our goal is to give Canadians a clear understanding of the fiscal situation from which we can make investments that will make a real long-term difference for Canadians. That is exactly what we intend on doing by bringing forward our plan over the course of our budget that will show Canadians how we can improve our collective future.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, some important people were overlooked in Friday's Speech from the Throne. Among them were those who create wealth, our entrepreneurs. There was not one word about our entrepreneurs. There was no real plan to help them, to help our small and medium-sized businesses, or to help our manufacturers.

On this side of the House, we believe that our entrepreneurs are the real creators of wealth.

Why did the government neglect our job creators? Why did the government neglect our wealth creators? Why is our government neglecting Canadian entrepreneurs?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member.

[English]

We have recognized that we need to deal with all Canadians. Our goal is to help entrepreneurs, to help businesses across the country by setting forward a plan that will allow us to invest in our country so that we can make our country more productive and increase growth going forward while helping those who are struggling to get by, which is exactly what we are starting with today.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Liberals are already increasing payroll taxes, clawing back tax-free savings accounts, and implementing a job-killing carbon tax. They are also planning to get rid of boutique tax credits without any details of who will be affected.

Can the finance minister tell us whether he plans to eliminate tax credits for first-time homebuyers, students, apprentices, families with children in sports and arts, or all of the above?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we can tell the House today is that we are starting our program to help Canadians.

Today is the day we have said we are going to reduce middle-class taxes by asking those Canadians who are doing very well to pay a little bit more. This is an important first start in our tax program, a program that will make Canada a fairer place for Canadians and a better place for all of us to do business.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is now admitting its tax plan does not add up. It will have to make changes. The new government's plan gives maximum benefit to wealthy Canadians while giving nothing to nearly 70%. The NDP has proposed constructive change to ensure benefits go to 90% of Canadians.

Will the minister work with us to help millions more by fixing the government's plan and making the tax system more fair?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the hon. deputy on his election.

Our plan, when looked at in totality over the coming months, will show that nine out of 10 Canadian families will be better off through the course of our mandate, through our projections, because of our changes.

We will also raise 315,000 Canadian children out of poverty. Our plan will start by reducing taxes and move forward to help Canadians across this country from coast to coast.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that being the case, under the Liberals' fiscal plan, people who earn a median income do not get anything. However, those who earn between \$89,000 and \$200,000 will receive the maximum tax cut.

Does the minister believe that people who earn a median income are not part of the middle class or will he agree to work with the NDP in order to ensure that 90% of the population gets something out of this?

[English]

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are looking forward to working together with all of our colleagues in this House in trying to come up with policy that best helps Canadians move forward.

Our plan enumerated during our campaign will help nine out of 10 families to be better off. It will raise 315,000 children out of poverty. We know that we can start with a tax cut for Canadians in the middle class so that they will have more money to help our economy, and then we can move forward with other initiatives that will help other Canadians even more.

* * *

● (1440)

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have admitted that their campaign promise to bring 25,000 Syrian refugees to Canada by year's end was not within their

ability to achieve. The governments of Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan require exit permits to be issued to refugees before they can come to Canada.

Given that there are only 24 days left for the Liberals to meet their diminished refugee target, can the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship tell the House exactly how many exit permits have actually been issued by these governments for refugees coming to Canada since November 4?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague for her re-election and her rise to the noble post of immigration critic in the opposition.

I would simply say that we have pursued a totally open communication policy with Canadians. From the beginning, we have said that yes, there are issues surrounding exit permits from Lebanon. We are also dealing with Jordan and with Turkey. We are working extremely hard on the ground to secure those exit permits so we can—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, given my colleague's focus on rising to the occasion, I would say that sunny ways have actually met reality here. Given that there are only 24 days left before the end of the year, could the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship please inform the House, since he was not able to answer that question on exit permits, how many Syrian refugees have been identified for resettlement to Canada, the exact number, and how many Canadian permanent resident visas have actually been issued to Syrian refugees since November 4? There are only 24 days left.

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to answer that question because when I ask provincial immigration ministers how many refugees from Syria their province could receive, we know that we are oversubscribed. If we take all the numbers presented by every provincial minister, that number exceeds 25,000. Those people are not here yet, but it is a huge indication of early support and enthusiasm from our provincial governments, which spreads across the whole country.

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, even the Liberals' diminished refugee targets will require significant resources to be achieved. We still need to process applications in the other immigration streams including refugee claims from other parts of the world, spousal applications, and visitor visas.

Could the minister explain how diverting human resources to process Syrian refugee applications will impact other areas of our immigration system?

Oral Questions

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I asked my department this question and I was a little bit sceptical when I was told it would have no impact on refugees from other countries. I persisted and officials explained to me that while some resources are being diverted to the Syrian cause, no resources are being diverted for other refugees. I can say very clearly, other refugees will not be affected by the Syrian case.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is vital that our government provide assistance to Syrian refugees, but security on the ground is key to provide aid to those vulnerable people. Our Conservative government understood this importance of both engaging ISIL militarily and providing aid, but the new government has decided to sit on the sidelines on one flank, making it even more dangerous for the people still in the camps.

Will the Minister of International Development explain the logic of helping the victims of war while not engaging the aggressor?

• (1445)

[Translation]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week we said that we would contribute \$100 million in humanitarian assistance on the ground to help the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees prepare a larger number of refugees. In addition, \$90 million has been allocated to helping the refugees who are currently living in camps in neighbouring countries.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in its throne speech the government reiterated that it wanted to establish a nation-to-nation relationship between Canada and aboriginal peoples.

We commend this commitment and offer our full support. We have had decade after decade of broken promises, but maybe this one will stick. However, we are still waiting to hear details on the \$2.6 billion for first nations education they promised during the campaign.

Can the minister tell us when her government will share its plans?

[English]

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou for all of the work that he has done on this issue, and particularly on the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The member has taught us a lot.

This government is committed to a nation-to-nation relationship. We will begin the important work of reconciliation and we will need the help of all members in the House.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am heartened by the minister's language on reconciliation but she does know as we do that the reconciliation has to begin on the

ground in communities like Shoal Lake, Marten Falls, and Neskantaga where children are facing bacterial infections from dirty water. We all have a responsibility to change that. The Prime Minister has committed to ending the boil water advisory within five years.

Could the minister tell us what her timeline is for an action plan and will that action plan have clear guidelines and commitments so we can get results for these communities?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Timmins—James Bay for all of his hard work not only in his community but for first nations coast to coast to coast.

As our government has committed to a nation-to-nation approach, it means that we will have to work with first nations, Inuit, and Métis nation for us to be able to achieve this goal. I look forward to working with the member to make sure that happens and then we will have realistic timelines and goals and the budget assigned.

* * *

*[Translation]***PUBLIC SAFETY**

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, three times over the course of the 41st Parliament, I asked why the government of the day was still deporting citizens of Burundi. I am very proud that our government decided to stop those deportations last week.

Can the Minister of Public Safety tell us what Canada is planning to do to stabilize Burundi?

• (1450)

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to have my first question in this portfolio from that distinguished member.

When people need to be removed from Canada according to the law, one of the factors taken into consideration is whether that can be done safely. The most recent information available to us on Burundi indicates that removals cannot be done safely at the present time. Consequently, the Government of Canada has announced that the Canada Border Services Agency has imposed an administrative deferral on all removals from Canada to Burundi, effective immediately.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the Speech from the Throne the Liberal government told Canadians it wants a leaner military, and we all know leaner is just a code word for cuts.

Last spring the parliamentary budget officer acknowledged in his report on national defence spending “the most significant...cuts...occurred from 1995 to 2004”. That was under the previous Liberal government. Are we going back to the future?

Could the Minister of National Defence tell us what he is going to be cutting to make—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Minister of National Defence.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I first want to say that it is a privilege and an honour to be standing for the first time in this honourable House.

Our government is committed to the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces. We will be making sure that the planned increases remain in place and making sure that when we send our men and women to the important missions around the world, they actually have the capabilities to achieve those missions.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the throne speech was 1,700 words and not one of those words was “ISIS”. In the past few days, we have watched the leaders of France, the United Kingdom, and the United States announce that they are stepping up in the fight against ISIS. Back here, the Liberal government is stepping back. Canada is back all right, way back behind our allies in the fight against ISIS.

Why will the Prime Minister not stand shoulder to shoulder with our allies in the fight against ISIS?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member expressed the view of his party. Our view is that we will be more optimally effective with our allies in fighting this awful terrorist group if we stop delivering only 2% of the air strikes and focus on where Canada will make a real difference.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was a lieutenant-colonel in the Canadian Armed Forces. I endured the Liberal budget cuts back in the day.

In Friday's throne speech, the Liberal government said that it would build a leaner military.

Rather than talk about looking for efficiencies, can the minister be specific about which Canadian Armed Forces divisions will be hit by budget cuts?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to making sure that the Canadian Armed Forces has the right capabilities. We want to make sure that every department strives for efficiency and our government plans to do so, making sure that we have the right resources at the pointy end where our men and women need them the most.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, rather than support our allies in the fight against terrorism here in Canada and abroad, our country will merely sit on the sidelines and contribute nothing more than training. That worries me.

Can the Minister of National Defence tell us why Canada is a bit player in the fight against terrorism instead of a leader?

Oral Questions

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada will do its part to fight this terrorist group. It will do so efficiently by drawing on its own strengths, such as training military and police forces, supporting governance and building institutions that Iraqis can trust. Canada will do this confidently and courageously.

* * *

● (1455)

[English]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 26 years after 14 women were murdered simply for being women, for daring to study engineering, violence against women remains unacceptably high. We in the NDP believe we can work together to end violence against women, but federal leadership is required.

The new government promised a strategy on gender violence, including an immediate inquiry into the terrible issue of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. Can the minister please tell us when her government plans to call this important inquiry?

Hon. Patricia Hajdu (Minister of Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member asked an excellent question.

We are very excited to move forward on this file. The murdered and missing indigenous women are a national tragedy that not only affects women but also their families and communities. We intend to move forward incredibly quickly and with a great deal of respect. We will do this by ensuring that we work with families, communities, and national stakeholders to make sure we get it right the first time.

[Translation]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 26 years after the Polytechnique tragedy, too many women are still victims of violence simply because they are women.

According to Quebec's Fédération des maisons d'hébergement pour femmes, 10,000 women were turned away last year alone. When I worked at a shelter, I had to turn women away myself. Women who are victims of violence need to have access to this essential service.

Can the minister tell us when her government will invest in shelters?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Patricia Hajdu (Minister of Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a former executive director of a homeless shelter in Thunder Bay, I can tell members that there is nothing more heartbreaking than not being able to provide women a safe shelter. Therefore, it is my incredible honour to be able to work on this file and ensure that when women need a safe place to stay, barriers will be eliminated, and even more, that we move forward to transitional housing that would eliminate the need for the cycle of sheltering.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the newly minted Minister of International Trade continues to confuse Canadians with statements like: it is not her job to promote trade.

Of course, she is not ratifying the TPP until the Americans do. This deal has been years in discussion and is now the gold standard on environmental and labour chapters.

She claims to be pro-trade, so when will she stop stalling and sign this deal?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government supports free trade so strongly, I could not wait to answer that question. We understand how important it is for middle-class prosperity. We also understand that on a deal this big, it is essential to consult Canadians and have a full parliamentary debate.

I must say to my hon. colleague that he is a little mistaken on the facts when he suggests that we could be signing the deal now. The deal is not yet open for either signature or ratification. The member might want to have a coffee with the hon. member for Abbotsford who is well versed in the details of how trade deals work.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government is ignoring the problems facing farmers. The Speech from the Throne did not contain a single word, let alone a paragraph, about agriculture. The Liberals have banned the words “agriculture”, “farmer”, and “agri-food” from their vocabulary.

Our supply-managed farmers want to know if the trans-Pacific partnership compensation agreement will be honoured.

The Minister of International Trade says she is not bound by the compensation commitment. Can the minister clarify her position?

● (1500)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government supports free trade and we understand the importance of international trade for economic growth and prosperity for the middle class.

Regarding the TPP, we are committed to ensuring full transparency and having a full debate in Parliament. We will stand up for Canadian farmers. My colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, and I have already met with farmers on this matter. That was our commitment.

[English]

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning the World Trade Organization ruled that the United States' country-of-origin labelling was in fact blatantly protectionist. This is a rule that has cost our farm families over \$3 billion on an annual basis.

Our government was prepared to move expeditiously as soon as this ruling came out. I wonder if the Minister of Agriculture, who has been invisible on this and other files, will stand in his place and finally do his job and defend the interests of farm families.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the discriminatory COOL legislation was in place for eight years during the previous government's rule. I welcome the ruling by the WTO. It is the fourth time the WTO has ruled in our favour, with a record \$1 billion quantum. We are pursuing this matter. I welcome the fact that the House of Representatives has repealed COOL. We are calling on the Senate to do the same. Senator Pat Roberts, chairman of the agriculture committee, has already, today, called for the repeal of COOL. I would like to say to the hon. member—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Vancouver Centre.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this morning, the WTO sided with Canada for the third time on the matter of discriminatory U.S. COOL legislation. The WTO arbitrator has found that the nullification and impairment under COOL costs Canada about a billion dollars a year and costs Mexico about \$228 million U.S. annually.

Would the minister tell us how this ruling will affect Canada's pork and beef products?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Vancouver Centre for her question. I am delighted to back in the House with my cherished colleague.

We welcome the WTO ruling. This is a vindication of the Canadian position. We are working very hard in Washington with the Senate and we are very pleased that Congress has already repealed this.

I do want to say to Canada's beef and pork producers that the Minister of Agriculture is a former farmer. I am a daughter and granddaughter of ranchers. We are on the side of Canada's producers. We are in their corner, and if we have to retaliate we will.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the new government was not given a blank cheque. Canadians expect due diligence.

Oral Questions

On June 2, when the truth and reconciliation report was released, the current Prime Minister pledged his unwavering support for all 94 recommendations, the full list, no exceptions. Could the Minister of Indigenous Affairs give us the full cost of keeping this promise?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo for her question and for the work that we will get to do together on this really important file.

We are so pleased to see that already the provinces and territories have taken up those calls to action that are theirs. The universities in the country have already committed to help with the things that are theirs and that we will be able to do this.

It was inappropriate for us to cherry-pick out of the 94 recommendations. With political will, leadership, and partnership, nation-to-nation, we are going to get this done.

* * *

• (1505)

[Translation]

CANADA POST

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign people told us that they wanted to keep the home mail delivery service.

In my region, 50,000 families, including 20,000 in Jonquière, lost their home mail delivery service.

While the minister has reneged on her promises, can she at least confirm that community mailboxes are no longer being installed anywhere in the country?

[English]

Hon. Judy Foote (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we certainly can commit that there will not be any more roadside mailboxes installed. We have put a stop to that, which means that anyone who did have roadside mailboxes would get their door-to-door mail delivery resumed.

We are in a position where we have committed to home delivery. We are going to have a complete review of Canada Post and they will determine the next steps.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to stand in this place and again represent the people of the Yukon.

Over the past several months Canadian have made it clear that they not only want a new tone in leadership in Ottawa but they also want a more accountable government. During the election the Prime Minister made a commitment to implement a prime minister's question period. I now ask if the Prime Minister could please update this place on the status of this important promise.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians voted for change, and we are committed to delivering that change. We are committed to open, honest, transparent government.

I have asked the government House leader to work with other parliamentarians to reform question period so that all ministers, including the Prime Minister, can be held to greater account.

The House leader has already initiated discussions with other parliamentarians in the opposition, and I look forward to participating in Prime Minister's question period some time in the future.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the past 15 years, three provinces have held referenda on electoral reform. In all three, voters rejected the proposals, so it seems a bit undemocratic, or even anti-democratic, for the government to assert in the throne speech that 2015 will be the last federal election conducted under the first past the post voting system.

Would it not make more sense for the government, once it has designed a new system, to follow the example of British Columbia, Ontario and Prince Edward Island and allow Canadians to vote directly for or against the proposed new electoral system?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in this election, Canadians were clear that they were expecting us to deliver a change. This will be the last first past the post federal election in our history.

We have committed to listening to Canadians, not just in British Columbia but coast to coast to coast, and including them in a process and in the conversation that would change the history of this nation's democracy.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

In the Speech from the Throne last week we heard that the Liberal government intends to start working with the provinces and territories on developing a new health accord. During the election, the Prime Minister sent a letter to his counterpart in Quebec that referred to the 2004 10-year plan to strengthen health care, where Quebec had the right to opt out with full compensation.

Will the Prime Minister do what Quebec is asking for and set the health transfer increase at 6%, while respecting Quebec's right to opt out with full compensation?

[English]

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak about the Canadian health care system which has provided health care to Canadians now for well over half a century in offering universal, publicly insured health care. It is something Canadians hold dear.

On the matter of the Canada Health Act, we sincerely uphold the Canada Health Act and its principles, including universality.

Routine Proceedings

I have already had the wonderful opportunity to speak with my provincial and territorial counterparts, and we will be meeting together in January to discuss a new health accord, which will provide ongoing health care for Canadians in years to come.

• (1510)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

The Quebec National Assembly has legalized doctor-assisted death as part of end-of-life care, in accordance with the express will of a terminally ill person. The Prime Minister even praised Quebec's legislation.

Can the Minister of Health guarantee that the six-month extension the federal government is asking for will not adversely affect the coming into force of Quebec's legislation?

[English]

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the topic of physician-assisted dying is highly complex, sensitive and we need to ensure that we have a real discussion with Canadians that focuses on health care, personal choice and ensures that we protect the vulnerable.

We are committed to working with parliamentarians and asking the House to strike an all-party committee to examine this issue and proceed in a—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Manicouagan.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister plans to move forward with the new Canada child benefit. The details will be in the next budget. In the meantime, parents are being shortchanged by the universal child care benefit that was introduced this summer and the elimination of the child tax credit.

Will the Prime Minister undertake to make the universal child care benefit a tax-free benefit for 2015, even though he plans to introduce a new benefit in the next budget?

[English]

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we intend to bring forward a new Canada child benefit in the course of our budget 2016. We believe that this is the appropriate way to get at this issue, and we will do so expeditiously to ensure that Canadian families can do better as they pursue their options for how they want to raise their children.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1515)

[English]

WAYS AND MEANS

NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 83(1) I wish to table a notice of a ways and means motion to amend the Income Tax Act. Pursuant to Standing Order 83(2) I ask that an order of the day be designated for consideration of the motion.

* * *

ECONOMIC AND FISCAL UPDATE

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I would like to table, in both official languages, a document entitled "Update of Fiscal and Economic Projections, 2015". It was released on November 20.

* * *

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (B), 2015-16

A message from His Excellency the Governor General transmitting supplementary estimates (B) 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.

* * *

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS OF CANADA

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour today to table, in both official languages, the Public Accounts of Canada for 2015. The Auditor General of Canada has provided an unqualified audit opinion on the Government of Canada's financial statements.

The government is committed to sound financial management and oversight of taxpayer dollars, and we will continue to strengthen financial reporting to Parliament to ensure accountability and transparency.

* * *

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE LABOUR RELATIONS

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin this brief statement by first of all congratulating the member for Durham for becoming the official critic for Public Safety, and also the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke for assuming those same responsibilities for the NDP. I look forward to working with both of them in what I expect to be a constructive and cordial relationship.

[Translation]

I am pleased to inform the House that the government is taking action as a result of an important ruling by the Supreme Court of Canada concerning the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Routine Proceedings

● (1520)

[English]

Nearly 11 months ago, in January 2015, in a case titled the Mounted Police Association of Ontario vs. Canada Attorney General, the Supreme Court found that certain federal legislation and regulations were unconstitutional in that they prevented the formation of an independent RCMP employee organization for labour relations purposes. As such, according to the Supreme Court, they contravene the “freedom of association” guarantees enshrined in section 2(d) of the Charter of Canadian Rights and Freedoms.

The Court gave Canada 12 months—that is to January 16, 2016—to consider its options and to respond with a charter compliant labour relations framework.

Our government is acting as swiftly as possible to bring the law into compliance with what the Supreme Court said.

[Translation]

My colleague, the President of the Treasury Board, and I are announcing today that the government will introduce a bill early next year in order to create a new labour relations regime for members and reservists of the RCMP.

[English]

The proposed legislation would provide members and reservists with both representation and freedom of choice in labour relations matters that are independent of management. These are key requirements of the decision of the Supreme Court.

This past summer, a consultation process sought the views of RCMP regular members through a survey and a number of town hall sessions on the potential elements of a new labour relations framework. The members underlined the importance of having the freedom to choose for themselves who should represent them.

Other matters to be dealt with in the new legislation include binding arbitration as the mandatory dispute resolution process for bargaining purposes, with no right to strike; the requirement that the RCMP bargaining agent has the representation of RCMP members as its primary mandate; a single national bargaining unit for all RCMP regular members and reservists; the exclusion of commissioned officers and a process for the exclusion of other managerial positions from representation; and the preservation of the recourse mechanism in the RCMP act for issues regarding member conduct and discipline.

The bill that we intend to put forward would ensure that RCMP members can exercise their charter-protected right to engage in collective bargaining, by providing a labour relations regime that both complies with the judgment of the Supreme Court and at the same time reflects the policing operational environment of RCMP officers.

[Translation]

It is important to note that the negotiation of collective agreements is a charter right that has been enjoyed by other police officers in Canada for a long time. The government will uphold that right while recognizing the particular circumstances of the RCMP as the national police force.

[English]

As is appropriate, we are also consulting with those provinces and territories that have an RCMP police service agreement in place.

In closing, I want to thank the Supreme Court for its ruling and also thank all of the RCMP members who provided advice. The Government of Canada is obviously anxious to move this initiative forward as quickly as it can.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. minister for his kind words. He is one of the most experienced ministers in the House. I know that he will take on the public safety portfolio with that experience and with forethought, and I will be here to provide wise counsel when necessary.

On my first occasion to rise in this Parliament, I want to thank the good people of Durham for giving me the honour to represent my hometown in Parliament. I am also proud of our RCMP, Canada's police force. I am very proud of the detachment in Bowmanville, Ontario, and the men and women who work hard every day across this great country, those in uniform and in the organizational structure of the RCMP.

Despite the sunny ways, I am sad to say that the minister has failed his first test. With the House returning on January 25, we are going to miss the deadline imposed by the Supreme Court of Canada in its decision. Much like the euthanasia case, if the government had wanted more time, it might have been prudent to seek more time from the Supreme Court of Canada, not just to express an intention, but to table the collective bargaining process outlined in the case. It was twelve months that was directly cited in that decision, and that is what the court expected.

The decision in the Mounted Police Association of Ontario v. Canada dealt with section 2(d) of the charter and highlighted the charter right to collective bargaining. The court said that the government needs to ensure there is a meaningful collective bargaining process, and it outlined in the decision that it must have two parts. The first requirement is that there must be employee choice, and the second requirement is sufficient independence.

Those items, as the minister outlined, were canvassed extensively over the last year with public safety advocates, members of the RCMP, and the various associations that brought forward this court challenge. It was to get into the details of what constitutes employee choice: the right to say who their representatives are, and the right to have some say on the prioritization of one's association. The independence is the freedom to then make sure that the bargaining unit representative is sufficiently free from management—in this case, the department—to allow the collective bargaining process to take root appropriately.

Routine Proceedings

I had hoped that the government would have tabled this new process in the House today because the Supreme Court gave the government a lot of leeway with respect to its decision. In paragraph 140 of the decision, it in fact gave Parliament “much leeway” to set up a collective bargaining process that meets the spirit and intent of its decision. It also said that the government was not forced to choose the Public Service Labour Relations Act, or any specific bargaining model. As long as the two elements of choice and sufficient independence were met, the government was free to set up a process that fit with the unique nature of a public safety arm like the RCMP.

It also noted that it did not need to be adversarial. It did not need to be the traditional union construct that is covered in the Wagner policies and others. In fact, the court highlighted and suggested the designated bargaining model as a possible option that the government could consider. It said clearly that there had to be a system in place to show that the government could not substantially interfere with the right established in section 2(d) of the charter to have a collective bargaining process for members of the RCMP.

I thank the minister for addressing the timeline that is looming when the House will not be sitting. I sincerely hope that by the time the House gets back, the hon. minister has asked the Supreme Court for additional time so that we do not have a technical breach of its decision, and that it certainly has an intention to table this new collective bargaining process in legislation in the House early in 2016.

• (1525)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will start my response by thanking the Minister of Public Safety for the advance notice that I received of his statement, a practice which bodes well for future co-operation in this Parliament. I also want to congratulate the minister on his re-election, which I believe is the eighth time he has been re-elected to this House, and also on his appointment as the public safety minister.

As this is the first time I have risen in the House in the 42nd Parliament, I would also like to take the opportunity to express my gratitude to the voters of Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke for returning me for a second term in the House.

New Democrats look forward to this promised legislation, which will be implementing the Supreme Court decision from January 2015 in the case of the Mounted Police Association of Ontario v. Canada. This is the decision which recognized that the members of the RCMP have the same rights to collective bargaining as all other Canadians, and indeed as all other police services already enjoy in this country.

Of course, introducing this legislation in the new year will miss the January 16 deadline from the Supreme Court of Canada. However, given the attitudes of the previous government on public sector labour relations, I guess we should all be grateful that it failed to act in a timely manner. It is a bit rich for Conservative members to stand and say that the government is going to miss the deadline when they spent nearly a year trying to reinvent the wheel in collective bargaining.

However, despite the welcome notice of this legislation, there are two concerns that remain.

The first concern is that we hope this new government will take the time to fully consult with the Mounted Police Association on its very specific proposals. No matter what has happened under the previous government, I think there is a need for new and fresh consultations on whatever the government will be putting forward.

Second, as with all legislation, the devil is in the details. We will be watching closely to make sure that this new government does not try to impose undue restrictions on the collective bargaining rights of members of the RCMP. As I said earlier, all other police forces at the provincial level already have collective bargaining in place. I would hate to see a regime that gives fewer rights to RCMP members that are already enjoyed quite successfully by other police forces.

The strong and effective representation of workers that is created in a unionized workplace should help the RCMP address critical workplace challenges, like harassment in the workplace and the critical ravages of PTSD on our first responders. When we have independent representatives of the RCMP, they will be able to speak up on both the problems that exist and the solutions we need to address those two urgent issues.

We look forward to this legislation, which can only help make the RCMP more effective in keeping all of us safe.

I will conclude by wishing good luck to the new recruits who have begun their training this fall at Depot, in Regina, while we were all otherwise occupied. That includes one of our family friends, Nick Brame. I will give a shout-out to our former dog sitter who has given us up to join the RCMP.

As I said, New Democrats look forward to this new legislation, as a contribution to the long and successful careers of the public service and for these new recruits to the RCMP.

• (1530)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Mr. Speaker, I would ask for the unanimous consent of the House to allow the member for Mirabel to speak to the minister's statement.

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

There is no unanimous consent.

* * *

[*English*]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association respecting its participation in the fourth part of the 2015 ordinary session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, held in Strasbourg, France, from September 28 to October 2, 2015.

The Address

[Translation]

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY SPEAKER

The Speaker: I am now prepared to propose to the House a candidate for the position of Deputy Speaker and deputy chair of committees of the whole.

Pursuant to Standing Order 8, I propose Mrs. Carol Hughes for the position of Assistant Deputy Speaker and deputy chair of committees of the whole.

The motion is deemed moved and seconded. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[English]

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to table a conventional paper petition to the Government of Canada regarding the tax-free savings account.

The petitioners note that about half of Canadians currently have tax-free savings accounts. That is a high level of participation given that the program only began in 2009. Of those TFSA holders who have taken advantage of the current \$10,000 limit, 60% earn \$60,000 or less per year, which demonstrates that this current TFSA limit is not for the rich only.

The petitioners ask that the Minister of Finance leave the tax-free savings account limit at \$10,000 annually to ensure fairness for all working Canadians.

As well, here is some technological breaking news. I am delighted to also sponsor the tax-free savings account on a brand new Parliament of Canada e-petitions website, which I invite all Canadians to visit, look over, and support as they may choose. The website address is petitions.parl.gc.ca.

• (1535)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for bringing attention to the new process of electronic petitions.

The hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from a number of residents in my riding who are concerned about the Liberal refugee settlement plan. Canada has a long and proud tradition of being an open and welcoming society for immigrants and refugees from around the world. However, notwithstanding Canadians' openness and generosity, citizens of Canada have expressed legitimate security concerns over the resettlement of refugees emanating from the Syrian conflict.

Whereas the Liberal promise to settle an arbitrary number of refugees by an arbitrary date was made during the heightened

political atmosphere of an election campaign; and whereas recognized experts in resettlement procedures have raised serious security concerns regarding the Liberal refugee settlement plan; and whereas it is incumbent upon the federal government to exercise its primary duty to protect the safety and well-being of Canadians; the petitioners are asking that all members of Parliament have a clear and open debate and vote on a binding motion with respect to the Liberal refugee settlement plan through an emergency debate in Parliament.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

[English]

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed consideration of the motion for an address to His Excellency the Governor General in reply to his speech at the opening of the session, of the amendment, and of the amendment to the amendment.

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that, because of the ministerial statement, government orders will be extended by 14 minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker, hon. members of Parliament, and all Canadians.

I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville. I want to acknowledge my colleague and congratulate her on her election.

I want to start by congratulating all the members of the House on their wins and on their dedication, which is so important to keeping the democratic institutions that make up our political system alive and well.

I am honoured and extremely proud to rise here for the first time to address all Canadians, and in particular Quebeckers in Beauport—Limoilou. Because of them, I have the unbelievable privilege of being a member of this very important parliamentary institution.

If I am here today, it is also thanks to some important people in my life. First, there are my parents, without whom none of this would have been possible. They are the ones who, throughout my childhood, guided me, taught me, and most importantly, loved me. Then, there is my wife Pascale, who has been by my side for 11 years now and supports me in all of my incredible adventures, including politics. Finally, my daughter, Victoria Clarke, reminds me every day of what is important in this life here on earth. I would like to thank all of those who are dear to my heart, including my brother and my sister.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank all of our ancestors who built a country based on the principles of the rule of law and political freedom.

The Address

Canada, as a whole, is part of my identity. In fact, my parents are from opposite ends of the country. My mother is a French Canadian from Beauport, Quebec, and my father is an English Canadian from Victoria, British Columbia. Canada's duality, an undeniable part of our common history and our political past and present, is alive and well in me and is always driving me.

I do not want to boast, but I have believed from a very young age that having this personal characteristic meant that I had an inescapable duty to participate in Canada's political community.

That is why, since my teen years, my sole purpose has been to serve my country and my fellow citizens. This burning desire, coupled with an iron will, compelled me to become actively involved in Canadian politics at 18 and to join the Canadian Armed Forces at 24.

In recent years, I have been an active member of the Conservative Party of Canada, I have served as a member of the 6th Field Artillery Regiment in Lévis, I have worked with charities in my community, and, to better understand the significance of these activities, Canada's history, and our political system, I earned a master's in political science.

I applied for and received my discharge from the Canadian Armed Forces on November 11, Remembrance Day. On my father's side, fathers and sons have served in the Canadian Armed Forces since the 1890s. My great-grandfather, my grandfather, my father, my brother and I are all veterans.

That is why the privilege of being named the official opposition critic for veterans affairs is so deeply symbolic to me: it is linked to a long-standing, deeply rooted family tradition.

On that point, I want to thank our party leader for the trust she has placed in me. Our leader and all veterans in this country can rest assured that I take this role very seriously. I will remain politically invested every day, and I will work as hard as I have to in order to hold this government to account when it comes to veterans.

I would also like to present to the House my priorities as the member for Beauport—Limoilou. My team and I have three main objectives we want to achieve. We call them the three Ps: pursue, promote, and participate.

The first objective is about pursuing the economic revitalization of our riding. More specifically, it is about focusing on the development of these main arteries: d'Estimauville, Canardières and des Capucins, 1st Avenue, 3rd Avenue and Seigneuriale.

The second objective is to promote the flow of ongoing investments in local infrastructure.

The third objective is to participate in nurturing the personal growth of newcomers and those most in need by reaching out to them, by knocking on doors throughout my term, in order to meet their needs and, more importantly, overcome the feeling of social exclusion.

• (1540)

Last summer, the previous Conservative government announced its support for a very important project for my riding and the entire greater Quebec City region. I am talking about the Beauport 2020

plan to almost double the area of the port of Québec's wharves. This makes sense because "the port of Québec is a strategic transshipment point between the industrial and agricultural heart of North America and the world. The port is open to navigation year-round and is one of the largest ports in Canada in terms of tonnage and economic spinoffs." Consequently, I would hope that the new government will stay the course on this crucially important project and ensure that it is completed in accordance with the strictest environmental criteria around.

On another note, I think nothing illustrates the ideal of serving one's country better than donning a military uniform and confronting the dangers that face any free society. We have courageous veterans who did just that for our country and our freedom during the 20th century in various places around the world, and more recently in Afghanistan. Today, in Canada, we have more than 700,000 veterans. If we include their family members, we are talking about millions of individuals. They all have served and serve Canada in their own way.

What amazed me the most when I met with veterans in recent years was the unwavering passion with which they spoke about serving their country and ensuring a better future for all of us, including the MPs in this House.

I was stunned that there was only one sentence about veterans in the Speech from the Throne that opened the 42nd Parliament on Friday. However, the Liberal government has used other communications tools to announce measures that will generate significant annual deficits in the coming years, even if the Canadian economy does well in the global economic context.

The government is proposing to post deficit after deficit, have Canada go into debt in a period of economic prosperity, increase taxes and thereby discourage consumption and economic growth. This will inevitably lead to a significant slowdown in job creation.

Furthermore, the government is proposing to create new measures and to improve others for veterans, which is a very good thing. However, that is where we part ways, because the Conservatives want to finance these measures with the money generated by a healthy economy and not by running deficits in future years.

Where is the long-term vitality of these measures? How can they be permanent if the government is incurring national debt to pay for them? How can the government be sure that these new measures will be sustainable in the long term when they are incurring a deficit to pay for them? Will it do so by raising taxes for Canadians and businesses?

The Address

My friends, this is a Liberal smokescreen designed to make Canadians believe that all of the new measures that have been proposed will be implemented. They will not be, at least not permanently. Veterans will be the first to doubt the Liberals' proposals, which I will refer to as the Liberal smokescreen from now on.

We, on the other hand, were and still are in favour of measures for veterans that are sustainable in the long term, measures that are not funded by incurring continuing deficits. In that respect, the previous Conservative government focused on the long-term sustainability of essential services for veterans. That is why we made major cuts to the department's bureaucratic red tape in order to make the department more productive. This measure also made it possible to make necessary cuts to spending and especially to bring about welcome improvements in services to veterans.

Our first priority has always been to ensure that programs and measures for veterans are sustainable in the long term, while maintaining a strong economy based on balanced budgets and, of course, continued tax cuts.

The holiday season is approaching. Soon, we will all gather with our families to celebrate, but also to remember the many sacrifices that our veterans made and are still making today. It is thanks to them that I am here today.

In closing, I would like to say that there is no doubt in my mind that everyone here only wants what is best for veterans. In that respect, when it comes to working for the well-being of veterans, the government will always find in me an ally.

• (1545)

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have promised an increase of \$80 million a year for veterans' education benefits. What are my colleague's concerns about the viability of this promise?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question and I want to congratulate her once again on her election.

Like my colleague from Yorkton—Melville, I am comfortable with the new measures put forward. However, our concern is that these measures cannot become permanent because of the deficits announced by the new government. That is what is dangerous for veterans. They need long-term measures, not election-time measures.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member on his election to the House of Commons.

I would like to talk about one of the topics that came up most often during the campaign. I am talking about Canada Post, which I brought up earlier with another member. The Conservatives were the ones who decided to put an end to home delivery, a decision that affects all Canadians. This decision has already had an impact on a number of communities across Canada.

Sherbrooke would soon have been affected by this decision. Does my colleague think that home delivery is important in his community? Is he in favour of cutting Canada Post services? Will

he applaud the new government if it keeps its word and does not put an end to home delivery, but instead decides to restore it?

• (1550)

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, and I congratulate him on being re-elected.

I will reiterate what we said throughout the campaign. Canada Post is a public corporation that makes its own operational decisions. The previous Conservative government expressed concerns about decisions affecting mailboxes in ridings. I would say to my colleague that it is up to the current Liberal government to talk to the corporation to see what the priorities are and figure out how to reverse the decision.

[*English*]

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate our new member of Parliament for Beauport—Limoilou and also thank him for his service. As a veteran of the Canadian Armed Forces, he has done outstanding service for the country.

In that vein, I would like to ask him, in reflection of the throne speech, his thoughts with respect to where we should be going as a nation with respect to veterans. In my riding of Simcoe—Grey literally thousands of individuals have retired from the Canadian Armed Forces, from Base Borden and otherwise. They have done outstanding service for our country as has the member.

What does he see from our perspective as the opposition moving forward with respect to veterans affairs?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question, and I congratulate her on being elected.

As I said, we believe that, on the whole and in principle, the measures are laudable. When I talk to veterans, including family members and fellow members of the armed forces, they all want to see a model that prioritizes open-ended measures. The opposition, the Conservative Party and veterans want viable, long-term measures that they can count on now and for the rest of their lives, not electioneering.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased to be here today, representing the constituents of Yorkton—Melville in the 42nd Parliament of Canada. I am humbled and grateful for the confidence that they have placed in me.

I want to thank all of those who gave sacrificially of their time, talents, and treasures to support me through an open nomination in my election campaign.

The Address

I also want to thank Elections Canada for the stellar job it did in dealing with the challenges of new boundaries, new polls, new rules, and the magnificent turnout of Canadians at the advance polls on Thanksgiving weekend and on October 19.

I am thankful for my Christian faith that is the plumb line for how I seek to live and serve others, while also leaning very heavily on God's grace, love, and continual patience with me.

My husband, our parents, children, and grandchildren are committed to ensuring that I do not live in an Ottawa bubble.

The previous member of Parliament for Yorkton—Melville, Mr. Gary Breitreutz, served both his riding and his country selflessly for 22 years. His tireless work to end the long-gun registry that failed to protect Canadians while penalizing law-abiding citizens was a resounding answer to the call of Canadians across the country for real change. His integrity, commitment to God, family, and his country is the example I hope to emulate. As I have said often to those who ask, I cannot fill his shoes, but I will definitely walk the same path.

As I travelled through the 43,272 square kilometres of my riding, hosting meet-and-greets, door knocking, and mainstreeting in 24 unique communities, I fell in love with our wide, creative skies, rolling fields, valleys, lakes, rivers, timberland, the wildlife, fresh air, and the warm, hospitable people.

Along with the rest of Saskatchewan, the riding of Yorkton—Melville is the bedrock of strong economic growth in Canada. We have world-class agriculture and agrifood producers, yet the growers in my riding were not even mentioned in the Speech from the Throne. Already, it appears that the government does not value our farmers. The government has placed the TPP on the back burner when it is vital to opening up significant markets for our producers to be able to compete on an ever-expanding world stage.

Yorkton—Melville's potash, timber and energy resources, our small and medium businesses, our innovators and manufacturers all know that the Liberal carbon taxes and payroll taxes would hurt the productivity of the very people and industries from which true growth and prosperity come.

Greatly increased federal debt is the only promise we are sure of and even that the Liberal government has failed to define or cap.

The government said it would lift Canada out of debt and balance the books in 2019. The only thing its looming federal debt can guarantee is higher taxes for today's families and a higher debt burden left for our young people and their future children.

My riding of Yorkton—Melville is home to one of the highest percentages of seniors in Canada, wonderful people who have invested their lives in their communities and families and played a significant part in making Canada the strong and vibrant country it is recognized to be all over the world. Yet, they, too, are taken for granted by the throne speech. As history repeats itself, the unnecessary Liberal debt will once again mean an increase in costs in providing essential safety nets that only a healthy, stable economy can provide.

The hon. member for Sturgeon River—Parkland, the leader of the official opposition, entrusted me with the position of deputy critic for

Veterans Affairs, and I am pleased to already be working alongside the shadow cabinet Veterans Affairs critic, the hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou.

How fitting that my first responsibility and privilege was to lay a wreath on Remembrance Day in my hometown of Esterhazy, Saskatchewan. That evening, I also attended the Yorkton Legion banquet to honour our veterans by bringing greetings on behalf of the Government of Canada. At that time, before being given this mandate, I assured them that they had my deepest gratitude, my prayers, my heart, and my ear.

I was pleased to hear that the government will do more to support veterans and their families. However, this single sentence in the throne speech gives no indication as to which of the 15 Liberal campaign promises made to Canada's veterans will be brought before the House or, in fact, made a government priority.

I acknowledge that there is still much to do to improve the new veterans charter.

The minister is likely aware that under the last minority Liberal government, in 2005, the then minister of veterans affairs was in the process of bringing about the new veterans charter to better meet the needs of the next generation of young veterans when it appeared that government would fall. Realizing that all the work done would be lost, that minister and the leadership on both sides of the House met and agreed that it was too important for the future service to our veterans to not bring the new veterans charter into being.

● (1555)

All sides worked together, and as a result the first, second and third readings took place in a matter of seven minutes and were unanimously passed by the House. The Senate then met with the stakeholders and after a 12-hour meeting, the bill passed that same evening. The next day, it received royal assent. This was a historic event of which we can all be very proud. Shortly afterwards, the government fell and the new Conservative government began the task of implementing a challenging new direction for Veterans Affairs.

The Address

Many initiatives and significant funds have been allocated to the new veterans charter and the transformation agenda, which is the strategic plan of the department intended to help anticipate the changes related to the decline in the number of traditional veterans and a greater focus on younger veterans of modern day conflicts. One was the implementation of improved mental health services for our veterans by creating a network of 25-plus front-line mental health clinics across Canada, and 31 integrated personnel support centres. The challenge has been to find enough qualified health services individuals to meet the need.

I applaud the current Liberal government's desire to continue to fully implement these recommendations on mental health services for veterans.

As well, under the previous Conservative government, the minister brought Veterans Affairs into relationship and consultation with injured soldiers while they were still under the Department of National Defence, encouraging an overlapping of services to better meet the needs of our wounded soldiers while waiting in limbo to know if they would continue their services or be discharged. I look forward to the current government improving even more upon this co-operative environment, strengthening partnership between National Defence and VAC.

However, as I met with veterans in communities throughout my riding over the past year, I heard the same concerns voiced over and over again. Now it seems that these concerns are about to come to pass, concerns for the needs of our armed forces under the new Liberal government.

My veterans recall the destruction of support for our special forces, ill-equipped combat troops sent to Afghanistan in green rather than desert fatigues as a result of the previous Liberal government's massive cuts to the Department of National Defence.

The veterans of Yorkton—Melville will be watching closely to see if the Liberal promises made will be promises kept. My question on their behalf is this. What will those promises cost Canadians and will the Liberals ensure that they will not be implemented on the backs of our current armed forces?

If there is one thing I am confident in, it is that veterans of Canada care very deeply about our future veterans, the men and women serving our country now. Our Canadian rights and freedoms, our Canadian privileges and responsibilities, all come from a price paid by those willing to face death and life-altering trauma and tragedy.

The veterans serve our country, and they deserve appreciation, respect and to be understood. They and their families deserve to be cared for.

• (1600)

Hon. Judy Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by congratulating the new member to the House. I very much look forward to working with her in the next four years, as with others.

I can certainly assure the member that when it comes to veterans, I believe each and every one of us on all sides of the House has an utmost appreciation and a debt of gratitude for every man and woman who puts on a uniform on behalf of our country.

I am very pleased to hear the sentiments, desires and commitment the member has put forward to ensure that we can make a sincere difference in the lives of the men and women who put on a uniform to defend us.

As the budget and opportunities for extra support come forward, will the member have the confidence to stand in support?

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member as well.

This is a file that is so important across our country, especially in the circumstances that our entire world finds itself in. The care for these people who invest so much in our safety has to be paramount.

I look forward to hearing what the budget brings forward and reviewing it with my colleagues. My hope and desire is that this is something on which we will be able to work together.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on her election to the House.

I have a question regarding something she touched on at the beginning of her speech. It has to do with protecting all farmers across Canada, and particularly those in my region, the Eastern Townships. Farmers are very worried about the trans-Pacific partnership, which was negotiated by her government and opened up the supply management system for the first time. The day the negotiations ended and it was announced that an agreement had been reached, a compensation package for farmers was also announced.

Does my colleague really believe that an agreement that was negotiated and culminated with an announcement that the agreement had been reached and that farmers would be compensated is a good agreement for the Canadian economy as a whole, when losses are predicted for one sector of our economy and compensation had to be announced the very same day?

Is it really a good deal for Canada?

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question, and I congratulate him as well.

Free trade is very important to my riding, as well, and to the people who are involved in agriculture there. We have the challenge in this country of being very large, having large regions, and having needs right across the country. The responsibility of a federal government is to do what is best overall for Canada. Unfortunately, at times, one region will succeed where another one possibly may not, so I was pleased to see that compensation placed in there right away to ensure that those who are going to find it hard to make this transition have the support they need to be able to do the things that they need to do in business to become successful.

The Address

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to congratulate the new member on her election. I actually worked with her predecessor on various committees. He did great work, and I am sure she will offer as much, if not more, in terms of eloquence and sincerity. I felt that her speech was excellent.

She did raise some points. The previous Liberal government implemented the new veterans charter. There was not a lot of discussion. In fact, as she noted in her speech, it sped through all stages in the House rather quickly. My concern is that we have also heard talk in the Speech from the Throne about a leaner military, and very little information is coming from the government side as to what that means.

Again, I am concerned that a previous Liberal government implemented a new system for our veterans without proper parliamentary oversight or committee review, and it seems that the new Liberal government is not giving us the transparency that it portends to offer. I would like to ask the member if she is also concerned about a lack of process and, perhaps, what some of the ramifications of that may be.

•(1605)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, yes, I am concerned. That is a thread that went throughout what I had to say. We all want to see the lives of our veterans taken care of, and those of their families as well. However, the process we have faced to date has been challenging in that it is a huge file with a huge number of responsibilities that require systematic organization so that veterans are served in the best way possible. There is an extensive amount of red tape that has really frustrated a lot of them.

I do look forward to challenging and encouraging the government in anything it does put forward, to not be piecemeal but to produce something that will end up being profitable for our veterans in the long term.

Hon. Judy Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, congratulations to you as well. It is nice to see you back, as well as all of my colleagues. We get to know each other, regardless of what party we represent, and we all wish everybody would come back, but that is not the reality. For those of us who had the good fortune to be able to come back, we are thrilled to be here and truly look forward to moving forward to bring our Canada back, to really have a country that cares about its people, puts its people first in consultation with respect to the provinces and to the people of Canada. It is an honour for me today to offer, on behalf of the people of Humber River—Black Creek, my thoughts on the throne speech. I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Egmont, another new member here in the House.

Before I do, there are a few comments that must be given, Mr. Speaker, so I hope you will permit me a slight deviation from the subject at hand.

First, I want to take the opportunity again to congratulate you as the Speaker, and our Assistant Deputy Speaker. Those are great choices we have made, and that shows the wisdom of the House. I congratulate all 338 of us as we move forward to make a better Canada. I am confident that you will oversee our discussions here with fairness, diligence, and a stern even-handedness, as I have seen

you do in the past. That can only add to the effectiveness of our work.

I would also like to extend my appreciation to the people and communities of Humber River—Black Creek for their support over the last 16 years. I am humbled by their trust, and I recommit to working to make sure their voices are heard clearly as we craft programs and services to help all of those living in my riding. In the areas of Jane and Finch, Sentinel, Cabana, Plunkett, and everywhere in between, my constituents know that their voices will be heard from one point and one corner to the other.

Humber River—Black Creek is a place made up of countless cultures, language groupings, historical backgrounds, and family structures, but it is perhaps the warmest and most genuine place I have ever been. Whether enjoying the fare at West Finch Bakery or drinking a glass of wine at Vin Bon, visiting at the Elspeth Heyworth Centre or the Delta Family Resource Centre, or connecting with friends at the Jane Finch Mall or the Jamaican Canadian Association, my riding is thriving and, with the right supports, will continue to be a great place to live, work, and play.

Last, I have to thank my family. Former Prime Minister John Turner once said there are two great columns in life: one is service to God and the other is public service. I agree entirely with Mr. Turner, but public service is a vocation that takes a real toll on families, especially young families. I know this because I have been an elected official for almost 30 years. I am, however, blessed with a wonderful and supportive family, one that has stood by me for my entire public life when things were good and when things were bad. They were always there: Deanna and Lou, Cathy and Graz, Sam and Claudia, our wonderful grandchildren, and of course most important, my husband Sam, who is still there after 30 years. All our new members will realize how important our spouses are and how much we ask of them, when we leave them at home every Monday to come here and they are home taking care of all of the other responsibilities a family has.

Now let me address the matter at hand. Last week, our government delivered a throne speech that focused the entirety of its energy on the middle class, people like those living in my riding. This government recommitted to lowering taxes and fees for lower-income seniors, students, families, and workers across Canada. It also committed to using every mechanism at its disposal to create jobs, to improve services, and to restore Canada's glory, for all citizens and residents not just for those who can afford it.

For too long, pension security, affordable tuition, infrastructure renewal and expansion, and quality job creation have been on the national back burner; but this throne speech showed that real change is going to happen.

The Address

•(1610)

The middle class is more than a line item on a budget. Our Prime Minister and the entire Liberal team believe that it is time for those sitting at the kitchen tables of the nation to enjoy some of the opportunities offered to those sitting around the boardroom tables for the last many years. That is not to say that corporate Canada does not deserve success, just that it should not get the whole of that prosperity. It is time for everyone to enjoy prosperity, and that is what the throne speech is all about.

For the record, I applaud the government's particular priorities: growth for the middle class, open and transparent government, a clean environment, diversity as a national strength, and security and opportunity for all. These are goals that we should all get behind, not because they are Liberal commitments but because they will strengthen every community in every riding and every person in this country.

Canadians elected a government to bring us together, not to set us up against one another. Canada is strong because of our differences, not in spite of them. This theme was central to the throne speech, and the speech set out a plan to accomplish that.

First and foremost, the government will, as an immediate priority, deliver a tax cut for the middle class. Not only is it the fair thing to do; it is also economically smart to do that.

The government has also committed to direct help for those who need it most. The new Canada child benefit will do just that.

There is more on the horizon, including a recognition that public investment is needed to create and support economic growth, job creation, and again, economic prosperity for all.

New investments in public transit, green infrastructure, social infrastructure, secure pensions, and a stronger EI system will promise real and meaningful change for all of those whom I have been elected to serve. This will all be done in a framework that promises to end the negativity that has divided us for too long.

The trust Canadians have in their public institutions, including Parliament, has been compromised, and that needs to change. By working with greater openness and transparency, trust can be restored and we can again move forward together.

We as a nation have always been at our best when we shoot for the stars. If we look back on our history, Canada's lustre has always shone brightest when we banded together for a common purpose, and I hope that can begin today for all of us.

I am excited to support the throne speech, not just as a document but as a plan for real change. I am pleased to vote in support of this blueprint for tomorrow because of what it represents for lower income seniors, students, families, and workers in my riding and in ridings all throughout Canada. The middle class has not had a decent raise in years, and it is time for working families and the unemployed to catch a break. It is time to put more gold in those golden years, as we say, and it is time for the leaders of tomorrow to be able to afford the skills training that they need and deserve.

Our 15th prime minister once said, "Canada will be a strong country when Canadians...feel that all of Canada belongs to them".

Today we take a giant leap toward that kind of just society, and I am tremendously proud to be part of it.

•(1615)

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have known my colleague from Humber River—Black Creek for my 10 years here. We both have had the opportunity to spend a number of years before we arrived here in municipal politics or some other political field, and I thank my colleague for her service.

The member stated that everything in the throne speech focused on the middle class, or the middle-income group as I like to call it, which in Canada right now is the wealthiest it has ever been. Agriculture is one of the largest industries in this country. I do understand that there is likely not a lot of agriculture in that member's riding. However when the Prime Minister stands up and says that the small businesses of this world—and I look at the member for Malpeque sitting next to my colleague, who I think would agree—and all the agriculture businesses in this world, except for maybe on one hand, are all families in small business, he says this is a venue where rich people go in order to save paying taxes.

I wonder if the member could explain why agriculture is being looked at in such a detrimental manner by the Prime Minister.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, whom I was thrilled to see back and whom I have worked with very closely over the last many years.

I say directly to him that the agricultural community is an extremely important part of this country of ours. It is number one. It is critical that it has investment and support as we move forward. Whether we are talking about agriculture representing a lot of small businesses throughout Canada, or the major contributions of so many very large companies, we all recognize, each and every one of us, that the agricultural community is critically important to this country. We have to make sure that we continue the kind of support and investments that are necessary for it to continue to grow.

I happen to have a chief of staff who comes from a rural community and is constantly trying to get me over to the agriculture committee to make sure that I, as an urban member, understand the importance and value of the agriculture sector. I am sure that everyone here understands that, and I know that our Prime Minister understands it, too.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am familiar with the member's long-standing work on issues facing women and issues of inequality. I would like to ask her a question, given the rather vague response we got from the Prime Minister about timelines and clear commitments on an inquiry into murdered and missing indigenous women.

The Address

We in the NDP believe there needs to be a concrete plan going forward for this inquiry. Yes, we have heard some very positive pronouncements on this front. However, would the member not agree that in dealing with something as serious as the issue of violence against indigenous women, timelines and clear commitments need to be made known to families, communities, and leaders, and more broadly to Canadians, as well, in order for us to go forward and truly live up to the promise of reconciliation that the government claims to believe in so much?

Hon. Judy Sgro: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member and I have worked together on this issue, on the status of women issue, and on a variety of issues. I congratulate her and I am so glad she is back.

However, the fact is that we are here in the House of Commons, on the third day it is sitting, and we are talking about this issue. We talked about it for the last 10 years, calling on the government of the time to take some action. We held rallies outside, and there was just no budging the government. This government, under Prime Minister Trudeau, is clearly committed. With our minister, we are moving forward to put down the kind of groundwork that has to be done.

This is day three of the House sitting. The hon. minister has done a lot of work already on that file and is really excited about moving it forward. I know that my colleague on the other side will be keen, right there, front and centre, working through it with us so that we finally get some closure to a very horrible time in our country's past.

• (1620)

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to the next hon. member on resuming debate, I have just a couple of things to remind hon. members about. The first is to avoid the use of given names in the course of one's comments here in the House, and to try to refer to other hon. members in the third person, for example, "the hon. member will", "the hon. member may wish to", and that sort of thing. That always keeps it less personal.

Secondly, if members can direct their attention in the course of their comments to the Chair, it helps for our purposes in signalling, for example, when their time is coming to an end. This is not so much in questions and comments, but with regard to speeches.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Egmont.

Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to rise in the House today for this my maiden speech in the House of Commons. I want to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your position in the chair, but first and foremost, congratulate my colleague from the riding of Halifax West on his successful re-election to the House of Commons. It is a true tribute to his character to be chosen as Speaker of the House by his peers. That speaks a lot to the member. I understand that he is the first speaker from Atlantic Canada in close to a hundred years.

We have a lot of people to thank when we are first elected, or indeed in any election where we are successful. However, I want to deviate a bit and acknowledge those people who participate in the public process, which is so important in preserving our democracy. Those are the people who were not successful. In order for me to be here, to be successful, I had to defeat a number of candidates. One was the former member of the House from my riding. I want to acknowledge the contribution that she made to our country when she served here in the House of Commons. Sometimes we forget about

the contributions that people make. If we are fortunate we will all become former members of the House of Commons, although we do not always get to choose how we become former members. Therefore, it is important that we acknowledge from time to time the contribution of former members, even of those who are not of the same political stripe as we are.

I have a lot of people to thank for my successful election to Parliament. We all get here with a very dedicated campaign team. We get here with the dedication and support of our family, our friends, and our peers. I would not be here without the support I received from my parents, who instilled in me the values and confidence to seek public office. This is my second public office. I am a former member of the provincial legislature. It was my parents who instilled in me the values that led me to pursue whatever goal I chose for my path in life. Being the son of a fisher and a work-at-home mother, they gave me those values that allowed me to be successful in the paths I chose. Today, I want to acknowledge that support and thank them.

I also have to thank the people of my riding who by majority chose me as the person they wished to represent them in the House of Commons for this 42nd Parliament. It is a very onerous task that we take on. It is one with a lot of responsibility, because once we are elected we must represent all the people who live in the riding regardless of their political stripe and whom they chose to support during that election. I am committed to do that.

My riding of Egmont is unique, as all ridings are, and I am as proud of it as all members are of the ridings they represent. Egmont is in the western part of Prince Edward Island. I am proud that it encompasses a first nations community, strong and vibrant Acadian communities, and small communities of people of Irish and English ancestry. We have a growing population of Asian people and people of various ethnic backgrounds, much like the House of Commons. It also includes the dynamic city of Summerside.

• (1625)

I may be out of step here, but I want to acknowledge one of the pages serving in the House of Commons who comes from my riding, by the name of Ryan Arsenault. I believe his name is one I can use in the House. I want to acknowledge that he is a young person who I am sure will be a future leader some day.

The people of Egmont chose me to be their representative in the House of Commons. As I indicated, I take that responsibility seriously. I am proud to be part of a government that is as diverse as the members who were elected in this last election.

I must say that I listened intently to the mover and the seconder of the throne speech. Rarely have I witnessed the kind of passion that I witnessed from the mover of the throne speech during his speech with respect to his part of the country, as well as the pride and enthusiasm he is bringing to the job. I was also touched by the seconder, who spoke about how unique her journey was to become a citizen of this country.

The Address

We are all proud to be Canadians. It is truly one of the great nations of this world. We all arrive here differently. On my mother's side I have Acadian ancestry, but I am also a first generation Canadian as well, given that she was born in the United States to an American father. However, I am proud of that background, as I am sure each and every member is of his or hers.

When I spoke about my riding and about how impressed I was with the seconder of the throne speech, it was because our small communities are reaching out to refugee families in a positive way by supporting and welcoming them to these small communities. That says a lot about who we are as a nation and as a people. We should all be proud of that.

The throne speech outlined a number of measures in areas that will have a significant and positive impact on the people whom I represent. The one that I was most proud of as a candidate in the election was our position on changing and improving the Canada child benefit, because it is our responsibility to make sure that the children of this country receive the benefits they are entitled to. We have talked a lot about eradicating child poverty. This will go a long way toward eradicating child poverty.

The second area is reform to the employment insurance system to recognize that in parts of this country we truly have a seasonal economy. With a seasonal economy we must have a very dedicated, highly skilled, highly motivated workforce to allow those seasonal industries to thrive. To do that we must have an insurance system in place that protects the earnings of those seasonal workers when they no longer have work. That is part of our platform that I was pleased to see included in the throne speech. I believe it may have been the first time that I recall seeing recognition of employment insurance referred to in a Speech from the Throne.

In another area we must signal our government's commitment to re-establishing the sacred trust and bond to the veterans who have served this country so well.

There are numerous other parts of the Speech from the Throne that I could highlight today. However, I am sure they will be covered by various other speakers over the course of time.

With that, I conclude my comments.

● (1630)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed hearing about the hon. member's riding. I would like to tell members about my riding of Sarnia—Lambton.

We produce almost a third of the petrochemicals Canada produces and provide gasoline for most members' vehicles, which I think we will need for some years to come. We have a lot of people working in that industry who are extremely concerned about the low price of oil. We already have high unemployment and the current government is talking about bringing in a federal carbon tax on top of a provincial carbon tax. This would be devastating for our economy, not to mention how it would affect the price of gasoline and supply and demand in Canada. Therefore, I would ask the government to reconsider and put that off until our industry and oil prices stabilize.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Mr. Speaker, I believe the position of the government is to work with the provinces in coming up with an

effective way of reducing carbon in this country. If we do not do that, the cost that our citizens will bear will be significantly higher than anything we may face today.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his election to the House and on his excellent, passionate, and personal speech.

I would like to come back to a subject we discussed at length in 2012, and that is employment insurance reform. Employment insurance reform had major repercussions on industries in my riding, Sherbrooke, including seasonal industries. I assume it had the same impact on my colleague's riding in Prince Edward Island, where there are many seasonal industries.

As hon. members recall, during the election there was talk about this reform and the possibility of abolishing some of the changes and going back to the way things were before or even coming up with something better.

Does the hon. member share the same concerns over the 2012 employment insurance reform? Is he also committed to reviewing the Employment Insurance Act so that seasonal employers can continue to hire employees who can benefit from employment insurance instead of hiring temporary foreign workers to fill these positions? I am sure that those positions could quite easily be filled by people from his riding.

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question from the hon. member. Of course, it is a concern.

One of the most negative parts of the changes to the EI program by the former government was that it hurt those in the lower income bracket the most. Any time that government puts forward policy, it should be to advance and improve the financial well-being of its lower income people.

This is directed toward single parents, mostly female. We have to ensure that the EI program attaches a value to every hour of work that can be achieved. This was not occurring in the former program.

I am hopeful that with our government's proposals, on which we campaigned, it will do a lot toward changing those negative aspects of the old program.

● (1635)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my fellow Prince Edward Islander on his maiden speech in the House.

The last two questions related to the terrible damage that the previous government did to the employment insurance system in this country. It was clearly an attack on both seasonal industries and seasonal workers.

The member for Egmont comes from a rural riding, where seasonal industries, especially the fisheries, are very important. The throne speech talked about reversing those damaging changes.

The Address

I wonder if the member for Egmont could spell out to this House how serious the clawback, in terms of working while on claim, was to families within his riding, so that we get to the point of making those changes quickly.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Mr. Speaker, the clawback was one of the most damaging and regressive aspects of the old EI system because it penalized people for going back to work. It took 50¢ of each dollar earned from them. The old system allowed a person to earn well over \$100 a week while on EI before it came back on them. That impacted single parents more than any other demographic in the population.

The changes that we make will have a significant economic impact on the small rural communities that depend on seasonal employment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the hon. member for Lethbridge.

I have the great privilege to speak in the House for the first time on behalf of the people of Louis-Saint-Laurent and all Canadians. I do so with some emotion. On October 19, the people of Louis-Saint-Laurent, the riding where I was born, where I grew up, where I raised my family, and where I still live today, honoured me by placing their trust in me in a big way. I won by 19,000 votes, with 51% of the vote.

This was not the first time I ran for office. It was the fourth. As per family tradition, we all went to vote as a family. That morning, I went to the polls with my parents, and in the evening, I welcomed the results with my children. My parents immigrated to Canada in 1958. Today they are 91 and 92 years old. My father fought for freedom in the Second World War. That evening, we celebrated my victory with my children and my grandchildren, who are 22 and 24 years old.

I am mentioning this because I have been deeply committed to politics for seven years. We are here because of the legacy our ancestors left us to make our society better for our children. That is why when I participate in politics and I go to vote, the most solemn moment in a democracy, I do so with my family, my parents and my children. We are here because of our parents and we are here for our children.

Once again I would like to thank the people of Louis-Saint-Laurent, the riding where I was born, grew up and raised my family. Hard-working people live in that northern corner of Quebec City. I am also thinking of the people of L'Ancienne-Lorette, Val-Bélair, Lebourgneuf, Neufchâtel, Saint-André parish, Loretteville, where I still live, and the aboriginal community of Wendake, which is at the centre of this riding.

I am very proud to represent the Wendat nation in the House. The Wendat people have lived on Canadian soil since time immemorial, but they settled permanently in Wendake, formerly known as the Huron Village, almost 300 years ago when there were no telephones or cell phones.

Wendake is in the heart of my riding, and the Wendat people have always been able to count on me to defend them. Here, in the House

of Commons, I will defend their rights and privileges as a first nations people.

I also want to acknowledge my two predecessors in Louis-Saint-Laurent. Alexandrine Latendresse represented this riding for four years for the New Democratic Party. She decided not to run again. I wish her the best of luck in her career, and I am sure that the experience she gained in her four years in the House will serve her well as she takes on new challenges.

On a more sensitive note, I want to acknowledge the legacy of the hon. Josée Verner, a former member for Louis-Saint-Laurent and current senator. Ms. Verner is currently battling cancer, and we are all keeping her in our thoughts.

I also want to acknowledge the people in the provincial riding of Chauveau. Seven years ago tomorrow marks the first of three times I was elected to the Quebec National Assembly to represent the people of Chauveau. Louis-Saint-Laurent, the riding I represent here in the House, covers a large part of Chauveau, but Chauveau also includes Shannon, Valcartier, Lac-Beauport, Lac-Delage, Lac-Saint-Charles, Saint-Émile and Notre-Dame-des-Laurentides. To those of you watching now, as the song goes, I will remember you. However, all of those people from Chauveau are in good hands, since that riding is 100% represented here in the House of Commons by Conservative members.

The people of Quebec City made the right choice: eight of the 10 ridings in the greater Quebec City area are represented by the Conservative Party. The people of Quebec City are in good hands.

I am honoured and proud to have the opportunity here in Parliament to defend the former Conservative government's record, the extraordinary legacy of the right honourable member for Calgary Heritage. I am delighted that the former prime minister is still a member of the House of Commons, and I hope he will remain so for a long time.

● (1640)

Canada is privileged to have a former prime minister in the House of Commons. We must preserve the spirit of the elder statesman in the House. By lucky coincidence, his riding is called Heritage; our country and our economy are fortunate to inherit the legacy of the right honourable member for Calgary Heritage.

It was under his leadership that the Canadian government and Canada emerged from the 2008 crisis in better shape than any other G7 country. Under his leadership, Canada balanced the budget. Under his leadership, the whole world witnessed the turnaround of Canadian public finances. History will recognize the achievements of the right honourable member for Calgary Heritage.

The Address

Life goes on. I was honoured and proud to receive my mandate from the Leader of the Opposition. I cannot name her, but I can say that I appreciate her strong and inspiring leadership here in the House of Commons. She has all the necessary qualities. She was a founding member of our political party. She was a member of the opposition and the government. Now, with honour, dignity and insight, she is leading our party on an interim basis toward the next election. I am very proud to serve alongside her.

I am very pleased to take on the role she has given me as the party's employment, workforce, and labour critic. I want to acknowledge my counterpart, the minister, who is also cutting her teeth in the House of Commons and who also sat in a provincial legislative assembly, although it was under the NDP banner. We will be watchful of her approach.

I want to point out that the Conservative government passed two important labour bills: one on union transparency and one on union democracy. What does union transparency mean? Union transparency enables lowly unionized workers to demand accountability and information on how union bosses manage their dues. In our minds, this is very important, and this is transparency. Either you believe in transparency or you do not. Our law is based on transparency.

The same goes for union democracy. Under the bill passed by our government, to form a union, workers must now get 50% plus one of a secret-ballot vote, as in any democracy. Do you believe in it, yes or no? Our democracy is not on a sliding scale. Our law speaks to that.

Unfortunately, in his ministerial orders, the Prime Minister told the minister to repeal both laws. It is never too late to do the right thing. We urge the government to reconsider that proposal, which in our opinion would be bad for Canada.

Furthermore, there was no mention of the real job creators—entrepreneurs, manufacturers, legislatures, the trans-Pacific partnership, and SMEs. It is really unfortunate.

I would also remind the House that there is one file in the Quebec City region that is really close to my heart, even though the facility is not located in my riding, but right next to it, barely 20 feet away. I am talking about the Quebec City airport. I can assure this government that it has my full support and assistance. We will work together to create a pre-deployment centre, specifically with the member for Louis-Hébert, whom I congratulate on his election.

Briefly, in closing, what surprised me the most from the throne speech is the fact that the government did not have the courage, the honour, the dignity, or the sense of responsibility to speak directly of the war on ISIS. Worse still is this government's behaviour towards our air personnel. We must respect our aviators who are risking their lives to defend our freedom, rather than treating them with contempt, which is what the government is currently doing. It is disappointing and insulting to our pilots. It should come as no surprise, however, since the Liberal Party's attitude towards our air personnel is part of its DNA.

Who could forget the sad statements made by the current Prime Minister? On October 13, 2004, when he was talking about our aircraft, he said:

● (1645)

[English]

trying to whip out our CF-18s and show them how big they are.

[Translation]

It was as though it was a contest to determine who had the bigger plane. That is not what the war against ISIS is all about. Not at all. However, that is basically what the Prime Minister thinks. That is what is insulting. What can we say about the Liberal candidate in the Quebec City region who said the following during the election campaign?

Perhaps we are not the best at dropping bombs.

As though our air force personnel were bomb droppers. That is insulting to the women and men who risk their lives.

Earlier, the Minister of Foreign Affairs said that we were delivering only 2% of the air strikes. Our air force personnel are not risking 2% of their lives when they are flying planes. They are risking 100% of their lives to help that area of the world enjoy freedom and democracy.

It is never too late to do the right thing. I urge the government to set aside the bad decision it made to bring back our pilots, out of respect for them.

Let us hope that the government changes its mind.

[English]

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your election.

I listened to the hon. member's speech. I welcome him to the House. I find it passing strange that we as a party announced almost a year ago that we would be re-profiling the mission. We put it in the platform, we ran the longest campaign in history, and the first thing that the hon. member and his party want us to do is break the election promise that we made to the Canadian people.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Canadians have decided.

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, Canadians did decide, and they asked us to re-engage in the Middle East in a way that is most beneficial to the people of the Middle East and most beneficial to our allies.

The Prime Minister has discussed this with the President of the United States, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, and the President of France. Each and every one of those world leaders understands that Canada's contribution will change and possibly be quite enhanced. Yet the member wishes us to continue to do what we said to the Canadian electorate we would not do.

Does the hon. member actually want us to break an election promise?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, may I ask a question directly for the member? Where was he on November 13? Does he not remember what happened in Paris? There was a big fight, a big attack of the Islamic State. This why the Liberals can change their mind about that. I gave them the opportunity to change their mind and to save the honour of this country.

The Address

The hon. member talked about leaders of other countries who, according to his word, said that it is okay that we are no longer involved with air strikes. We call it diplomacy. However, yesterday, the government received its *bulletin*, as we say in French. When President Obama talked about his allies, did he talk about Canada? No. It is a shame for us, a shame for the government.

• (1650)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I see that the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent has brought to the House of Commons the same legendary passion and energy he had the National Assembly.

I would like to talk to him about something important to me that was missing from the Speech from the Throne, and that is the fight against poverty in Quebec and Canada.

More and more people are using food banks to get food. I am talking about people who work full time, but earn minimum wage and live below the poverty line. I would like the hon. member to say a few words about that.

Earlier, I was surprised to hear the hon. member from Prince Edward Island say that the primary duty of any government is to take care of the most vulnerable and least fortunate, when the Liberals' tax cut for the middle class does absolutely nothing for people earning less than \$45,000 a year. They are the ones who need help the most.

Will the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent support the NDP proposal to shift the Liberal Party's tax cut to the first tax bracket?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, I salute the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie in return. I had the pleasure of sparring with the hon. member in some debates. I am pleased to be sitting in the House. Naturally, I would have preferred that the Conservative candidate be elected in his place, but we remain 100% democratic.

It is important for us to fight poverty. However, we believe that the best way to do that is to create wealth, and the best way to create wealth is to trust our entrepreneurs, our small and medium-sized companies and our manufacturers. I just spoke about three things: SMEs, entrepreneurs and wealth creators. None of these were mentioned in the throne speech.

We on this side of the House believe that the real creators of wealth must have the support and assistance of the members of the House, especially the government members. There was not one word in the throne speech about that.

As for the proposal by the second opposition party—I do not know if that is the right term, but that is the term used in the National Assembly—as a seasoned politician, I will first wait to see the documents tabled by the government and the amendments proposed by the second opposition party. Then we will make the best decision in the interest of all Canadians.

[*English*]

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking my fabulous constituents back home in the riding of Lethbridge, Alberta for electing me as their member of Parliament and entrusting me with the honour of sitting in the House

and representing their viewpoints for the nation of Canada. I consider it an immense privilege to serve in public office and I am committed to earning their trust each and every day that I sit here. I will always advocate for what is in the best interests of my constituents. I look forward to ensuring that the views of the people of Lethbridge are heard loud and clear in this chamber.

Unfortunately, the Speech from the Throne brought forward by the Liberals is not in the interest of Lethbridge. I am concerned for my riding, specifically for the rural region.

There was absolutely no mention of the importance of agriculture, and there was no mention with regard to supporting the Trans-Pacific Partnership. The beef, pork, and poultry farms in my region alone stand to lose hundreds of millions of dollars if the Liberals continue to dither and delay in ratifying this agreement. Canadian farmers face one of the most complex and competitive marketplaces in the world with little or no help from the present government. They deserve a government that will stand up for their interests, and this is clearly not happening with the Liberal government at present.

What we witnessed on Friday was a government that puts a premium on rewarding themselves and their friends. Take for instance the Liberal defence of the status quo with regard to the Senate. Does anyone seriously believe that their nominating committee will actually bring about real change? Let us look at the fine print. This is a committee that will be appointed by Liberals. This is a committee that will be advised by Liberals. This is a committee that will then freely select Liberals to be in the Senate on their behalf. Therefore, I have to beg the question: Is this in fact real change?

Instead of giving the Canadian people a say in who represents them in Ottawa, the Liberals have turned to the new aristocrats, the Laurentian elites, to pack out the Senate. We need to gain greater democratic accountability in the Senate, not patronage under a different name.

When it comes to democratic reform, the Liberals are not planning to give Canadians a say in the most fundamental aspect of our democracy, and that is the electoral system itself. Instead, we are going to see a Liberal majority try to ram through a new election method, a method to the partisan advantage of the Liberals at the expense of the Canadian public. It would appear that 2015 marks the beginning of the new Liberal tyranny. On something this fundamental, the only acceptable choice would be to hold a referendum and allow the Canadian voices to be heard.

Are the Liberals refusing to consult with Canadians because they do not trust us or is it simply because they do not want to listen to us?

The Liberals know that every single time that a provincial referendum has been held with regard to this question, the provinces have voted loud and clear to choose a first past the post system. However, that would not allow the Liberals to pick a system like ranked ballots, would it? It is a system that would predictably elect Liberal majorities if the Liberals were the second choice for both the NDP and the Conservative on the ballot. Canadians are not fooled, I tell my friends. The residents of Lethbridge and all of Canada deserve more. They deserve good, strong, stable representation.

The Address

The unfortunate reality is that the new Prime Minister appears to believe his own rhetoric. He is convinced that he can spend his way out of a deficit. I guess he inherited that belief from his father. Unfortunately, this economic approach is going to have the same disastrous effect for Canada today as it did during the time of the late Trudeau.

As we saw in the 1990s, even a nation like Canada eventually runs out of credit. At that point we see a nation such as Greece or a nation that dramatically has to cut back its government services that our Canadians desperately need. We understand how this will play out because we have seen it before. This is not real change.

The Liberals balanced the budget on the backs of the provinces in the past. They cut critical welfare funding. They scaled back provincial transfers. What was the result of this? A decade of absolute darkness.

• (1655)

Provinces had to cancel public infrastructure, thousands of health care professionals moved to the United States because they could not stay in Canada, and the result for the middle class was absolute inequality and impoverishment.

I believe that the solution is clear. I believe that it starts with controlled government spending, lower taxes, and trust in Canadian entrepreneurs to create real, lasting jobs. Canadians understand that every family has to balance their chequebook or the family will go bankrupt. This is just basic economics. Just because the Canadian government is larger does not mean that this principle fails to apply.

Already the new finance minister is retracting his commitment to limit the deficit to \$10 billion a year. Today we read that the Liberal tax plan is not in fact cost-neutral and will in fact cause a structural deficit from day one.

The Liberals have already pushed us into deficit, in record time I might add. Since the parliamentary budget officer had already confirmed this spring that our Conservative government had indeed balanced the budget, I find the Liberal plan incredibly disconcerting.

Furthermore, what concerns me is that when I look at this, I see that the first economic casualty is always our young people. Young workers work in physically demanding industries, like construction, and oil and gas, which are sensitive to the economic trends and will be the first jobs cut, or they find themselves in roles where they are at the bottom of the so-called totem pole. When the workforce has to make job cuts, they are the first to go. Already we are seeing the economic impact on our youth in Alberta as the NDP government does its best to kill jobs in our major industries, the oil and gas sector, and agriculture.

With the Liberals announcing a moratorium that kills new pipelines through B.C. and with their silence on working to overturn the negative Keystone XL decision, the Liberals are actually a part of the problem and not at all a part of the solution.

Using government subsidies to try to create youth jobs is incredibly expensive. As we saw with previous market-distorting government policies, this will only have a negative impact on our young people.

Meanwhile I would draw our attention to the former Conservative approach. It had consistently decreased youth unemployment since the height of the recession in 2008, and was working well to bring people further into the middle class and strengthen it.

Our approach focused on increasing access to skills training, improving market information on in-demand jobs, and reducing payroll taxes in order to give small businesses the flexibility to hire more employees. The Liberals are moving in the opposite direction, and I believe it is absolutely detrimental to the nation of Canada and particularly to my constituents in Lethbridge.

There is one more thing that I would like to note, and that is this Speech from the Throne missed a huge segment of this population, those with disabilities. In the diversity section of the speech, they mentioned aboriginals, Syrian immigrants, veterans, the CBC, and Canada's cultural industries, but absolutely no mention was made of those with disabilities.

I have to ask, is this real change? Is this the change that will benefit and advance Canada, and move us forward as one united nation toward a beautiful end? To that question, I would have to say the answer is no.

In closing, Canada's Conservative government provided a stable economic approach that emphasized low taxes and job creation, and this approach trusted that Canadian entrepreneurs understood how to create jobs far better than inefficient government programs. In short, Conservatives understand that the middle class does not have spare cash to pay for increased taxes.

The extravagant spending of the Liberals can only be paid for by increased taxes, and since their tax on the rich actually loses money, it means the middle class will be stuck with the bill. To state it simply, Canada cannot afford the Liberals' reckless, out-of-control spending.

Canada is not back; debt is back. Debt never serves the middle class.

• (1700)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on being elected to the House and look forward to her interventions.

I notice that she supported skills. I just want to remind the member that the government has promised to reinstate the labour market agreements. I think it was \$500 million toward skills, another \$200 million for those not prepared to take that skills training, for numeracy and literacy, and even an additional \$50 million for the very successful aboriginal skills training.

The Address

Does the member not support these initiatives, if she supports skills and training?

Ms. Rachael Harder: Mr. Speaker, to what end will these programs benefit our young people? What are the measures that we are going to see with regard to the success of these programs? I would also ask how we are measuring the need for these skills within our present society in the way that our economy is evolving.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member on her election and welcome her to the House. As this is my first opportunity to rise in the 42nd Parliament, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the good people of Vancouver Kingsway for their trust in me, for the third time.

My question is about the trans-Pacific partnership that my hon. colleague mentioned. She quite clearly indicated her support for it, and she mentioned the importance of agriculture to our country. We know that the TPP was signed during the federal election and some 6,000 pages of text have now been released; it behooves all of us to take our time to study that agreement. However, we already know its impact on the supply management sectors in this country. We know that about 3.5% of foreign dairy products will be allowed in this country, resulting in the Conservatives announcing during the election that they would have to pay \$4.5 billion of compensation to the supply management and agriculture sectors in this country. That indicates a fair bit of dislocation.

We know that dairy, eggs, and poultry are going to be affected, and we know that one of the pillars of supply management is export controls. The TPP, by allowing more exports into Canada, does represent a derogation of one of the key pillars of supply management.

Are the supply management sectors and supply management system in this country something that the member supports, or does she think the supply management system in this country ought to be dismantled?

• (1705)

Ms. Rachael Harder: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to questions like this, I believe we can stand in the House and come up with theoretical answers, or we can put our feet on the ground and talk to those who are most personally affected.

In response to the question, I have actually gone to my constituents and talked to residents, particularly those who are affected by the TPP and the decisions going forward. I would quote one of the farmers who said that with the effects of the TPP and the decision that has been made, we could not ask for a better decision. That is a confirmation for what our former prime minister did during the election, and a confirmation that we are in fact going in the right direction with regard to the TPP. The present government should move forward and should do so quickly, for the sake of my constituents, but also for the sake of agriculture across this nation.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there was much made in the Liberal campaign about changing how this House works. The member spoke a lot about democratic reform, and Liberals made a lot of effort to talk about sunnier ways and reforming Standing Orders so that this place would function with respect and collegiality. I believe this is her first speech in this place,

and while she gave this speech, the party opposite heckled her for a good seven minutes. They heckled her over and over again. I wonder if she could speak to how her constituents would feel about that behaviour on her maiden speech in the House, in light of “sunny ways”.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Mr. Speaker, while the government side of the House has promised that we are going to so-called “bring Canada back”, or already has apparently, and has promised to make changes to the House of Commons in the way that they conduct themselves, I would expect more. I would expect a greater level of maturity, and I would expect a greater level of exemplification of what it is that they are promising.

Given your conduct in the House today, I would expect the same results with regard to the promises you have made to our constituents, and that, my friends, is scary.

The Deputy Speaker: We are out of time for questions and comments. I would remind hon. members to direct their comments and questions through the Chair. It is always good to do that. It keeps it a bit less on the personal side.

Now we are resuming debate, and we have the hon. member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel.

Mr. Nicola Di Iorio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Parkdale—High Park.

[*Translation*]

I am pleased to have this opportunity to address hon. members of the House for the first time. I want to take this opportunity to thank the people of Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel for the clear and strong mandate they gave me and our government.

I congratulate the Speaker of the House on his appointment. I would also like to thank the right hon. member for Calgary Heritage. He served his country, and I thank him for that and want to express my gratitude. I hope he is not disappointed to hear me say that over the years I did not always agree with his policies. I must say that our disagreements were not limited to choice in hockey teams, but were on far more important matters. However, it is important to acknowledge that I never doubted his sincere belief in making Canada a good place to live.

[*English*]

I also wish to congratulate the hon. member for Sturgeon River—Parkland following her recent election as interim leader of the opposition.

[*Translation*]

I want to congratulate the hon. member for Outremont on his re-election and the hon. member for Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour on his status as dean of the House. Finally, I commend and congratulate the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

I also want to thank all the defeated candidates. I thank them for their involvement in our country's democratic process. Their involvement makes each one of us in the House stronger, more competent, and better able to serve our constituents. Why? Because throughout the electoral process, they tested us and forced us to give the best of ourselves.

The Address

This election helped many people discover or rediscover the full meaning of a word in our vocabulary, and that is skepticism. For that I commend the hon. member who helped us eliminate it in such a resounding way. I thank our leader, our Prime Minister.

I also want to congratulate all the other members of the House on their election or re-election.

I would like to say a few words about myself. When I was asked to run for my party's nomination, my frank and spontaneous reaction was, "What on earth are you thinking?" I have a lovely family that helps me grow and fills me with joy. I have three daughters: Arielle, Claudia, and Emma-Rose. They each speak four languages, and one of them speaks five. They are in love with their country.

I have a wonderful career as a law professor. I have been teaching my whole life. I practise law in a large firm. I have a wonderful career. I love my country. I asked myself why I would agree to run for office, and I realized that my reasons for refusing were the same reasons that compelled me to join the honourable cause of representing my fellow citizens in the House. If you have a family and good friends and are surrounded by good people, you know you will have the support you need to undertake this journey. If you have a wonderful career and you succeeded because you like taking on challenges, you know that being here is a huge challenge.

● (1710)

People who love their country should take the time sooner or later to give a little of themselves to usher it into the future and shape it for the next generation while maintaining it and adapting it for those who are aging.

Immigration has shaped Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel.

[*English*]

Between 1955 and 1971, the population of Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel grew fiftyfold. From a rural area encompassing about 2,000 inhabitants, it rose to a population of over 100,000 people. All that was in a 15-year period. In that short 15-year period, the territory encompassing Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel welcomed the equivalent of 7,000 new immigrants a year.

I suggest that we all be mindful of and learn from the positive lessons of the past. If one riding in one city in one province was capable of welcoming 7,000 new immigrants a year, surely a country like Canada, with today's resources, can do much more than that. Let us remind ourselves of that very positive lesson.

As we sit here today, the population of Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel keeps increasing. Typically, immigrants land elsewhere in the province of Quebec, and after a short period of integration proceed to Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel.

● (1715)

[*Translation*]

These people do not come to the riding of Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel because they are adventurous; they come out of necessity. They leave the country they love because they have basic needs that their home country cannot meet. These include work, security, health care, education, and religious freedom.

I mention all of those aspects to draw my colleagues' attention to a wish that I want to share with the House today. My wish is that some of these elements allow everyone in the riding of Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel to see themselves in the Speech from the Throne. Consider integration needs for family reunification, security needs, and job creation, as well as our infrastructure program. Also consider the official languages program and the huge environmental needs that must be met in order to ensure that the throne speech resonates with all Canadians.

What I want to point out to the House is that the riding of Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel has proven to be a model of integration. I would like that model to be followed across our province and across the country.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to congratulate the member from Quebec for being elected to the House.

I come from a sports background, and he talked about the hon. member for Calgary Heritage cheering for one NHL team, and I am sure that he is cheering for another NHL team. As we know, in sports, when we win, we win. Now we hear that the Liberal Party is talking about bringing in electoral reform, where we can win, but we actually lose.

My question for the member is on what reform he proposes under this system that the Liberal Party wants to bring forth.

Mr. Nicola Di Iorio: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my dear colleague on his election.

We have to consider the following with respect to reform. Election upon election we are confronted with a result. Canadians express their vote and then look at the results and ask themselves where their vote is recognized in that. First and foremost, we have to listen to Canadians. In the next election, Canadians will look at the electoral system to see one in which they recognize themselves.

Our government has been abundantly clear. It has expressed in the throne speech the firm willingness that was expressed during the campaign. We will consult all Canadians. They are welcome to come forward and express their views as to what the system ought to be. That is the system we will have.

● (1720)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on his election. I will talk a little about his riding of Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel. In fact, I am certain that there are many middle-class people and others who live in poverty, as is the case in my riding. I am certain that we have the same concerns about these people.

It would seem that this Prime Minister believes that the middle class consists of people who make between \$80,000 and \$200,000 a year, and those are the people we should focus on in the riding of Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, in my riding, and in all the other 338 ridings.

The Address

I am wondering whether he believes that those people should be the first to have their taxes cut, rather than those who make less. Does he believe that the Prime Minister's or the current government's strategy will actually help people in need?

Is it really the people earning between \$80,000 and \$200,000, who could be deemed to be upper middle class, who should benefit? In my opinion, that is not the real middle class.

Mr. Nicola Di Iorio: Mr. Speaker, I would also like to congratulate the member for Sherbrooke on getting re-elected, particularly since his riding is home to my alma mater, and I have very strong emotional ties to the university and such wonderful memories of the time I spent there.

With regard to his question, we must bear in mind the economic plan put forward by our government. This plan is not just about cutting taxes. It is about lifting 315,000 children out of poverty. The plan that we are proposing is unique. We can always try to find situations in the past where a government told people during an election campaign that it was going to raise taxes for certain segments of the population and use that money to lower taxes for other segments without ever forgetting the least fortunate members of our society. There are 315,000 children living in poverty. At some point in the future, we will meet to look at what things were like in the past, and we will see how those children's lives were changed because of our government's economic plan.

[English]

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour and a very humbling experience to make my maiden speech in the House of Commons today.

I would like to thank the good people of my riding of Parkdale—High Park, who have put their faith and trust in me to be their representative. I am committed to serving as the voice of my community in Ottawa and not the other way around in serving as Ottawa's voice in my community.

I also want to thank my family. My mother Sultan, my sister Shakufe, and my father Lutaf have been mentors, advisers and guides for me my entire life. They taught me about working hard and instilled in me the confidence to dream and dream big. Without that foundation, I would not be here in the House today. I also know that my father takes great pride in the fact that today, the date of my maiden address in this chamber, is also his 74th birthday. Happy Birthday dad.

I am also the proud father of two young boys, Zakir and Nitin, and the lucky husband of a very incredible woman Suchita, who is my best friend and also my rock of support. My ability to publicly serve is directly linked to her sacrifice for which I am eternally grateful.

On Friday afternoon, we heard the throne speech and that speech outlined the government's priorities for the first session of the 42nd Parliament. It embodies the change Canadians voted for on October 19.

[Translation]

Today, I would like to talk about three distinct themes in the Speech from the Throne.

[English]

The first distinct theme is the idea of welcoming dissent. Dissent is not something to be feared. It is something to be welcomed. It is only through vigorous debate and the challenging and testing of ideas that better, more responsive, and well-formulated policies can emerge. Our new government is committed to welcoming, and not stifling, dissent. We have moved to immediately unmuzzle scientists so they can speak freely and openly about the impact of climate change. That is a change welcomed by the many members of the scientific community in my riding, but also the large number of environmental activists in Parkdale—High Park. One example is Green 13, which is doing incredible work to promote awareness about environmental sustainability in my community.

An unfortunate pattern, however, emerged over the past decade, where charitable organizations that dared to challenge the government's position were subjected to heightened scrutiny by the Canada Revenue Agency. We believe in venerating our civil servants and the work they do, not using them as the strong arm of the government. Importantly, our government is committed to allowing charities to operate free from political harassment so they can make an important contribution to public debate and the development of public policy.

● (1725)

[Translation]

Our government is also determined to restore \$150 million in funding to the CBC.

[English]

Institutions like the CBC must and will be protected precisely so they can continue their excellent work in holding government to account. Our government also welcomes evidence-based, rather than ideology-based, policy. We do not fear facts, even if they do not corroborate or correspond to our world view. We welcome data that will inform our decision-making. I note with great pride that the very first act, 24 hours after our new cabinet was sworn in, was announcing the return of the long form census.

A second theme also emerges from the throne speech delivered on December 4, and that is the theme of governing by consensus rather than governing by decree. Our new government believes that unilateral decision-making is poor decision-making and that we will eschew that kind of model. A case in point is the Prime Minister's decision to convene the first ministers in Ottawa one week before the Paris environmental summit. That first ministers' meeting was held one month after the October 19 election, but it was the first such meeting convened by a prime minister in the country in five and a half years. The difference is palpable.

Our new government believes that to effect good policy and to be responsible stewards of this federation, one needs to engage all levels of government. Take, for example, infrastructure investment. Our government has committed to making significant investments in public transit, green infrastructure, and social infrastructure. This includes investments in affordable housing.

The Address

We will meet with municipal governments and leaders who are on the ground tackling these issues every day. In my riding, strong entities like Parkdale Community Legal Services and the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust are intimately familiar with the challenge of affordable housing. Their voices will be heard by our government.

[Translation]

The voices of opposition members will also be heard.

[English]

Our government is committed to a new era of non-partisanship and with a fresh crop of hundreds of newly elected members, including me, I believe we have a unique opportunity to make this happen. Parliament can be a more effective institution. So too can the committees that inform our work. Our government is committed to strengthening the committee process by ensuring standing committees are better resourced, have stronger chairs, and are, on the whole, less partisan.

As I have heard time and time again in my riding, the residents of Parkdale—High Park want their elected representative to put the needs of their community and, indeed, the needs of our country ahead of the needs of any political party. I am committed to doing just that.

The third theme that emerges from the throne speech is restoring Canada's leadership and international reputation. On election night, the Prime Minister said to the rest of the world on behalf of Canadians, "We are back". As evidence, I would point to a few examples from the throne speech.

Canada is back on the international stage as a nation that takes seriously the threat of climate change and the responsibility of western-developed nations to lead the fight to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Our government has already committed \$2.65 billion to assist developing nations in combatting climate change, and people not only in my riding of Parkdale—High Park but around the world have, once again, taken notice.

Canada is also back with a government whose policies are informed by our humanitarian and compassionate traditions. I say this in reference to our commitment to accept 25,000 Syrian refugees, a commitment welcomed by the caring residents of my riding, who also know and appreciate the terrific work being done in their community to settle newcomers by entities like Romero House and CultureLink.

This commitment is not large in terms of the overall number of Syrians displaced. We should all know that some four million Syrians have fled their homeland, but it is a large commitment in terms of its symbolic value. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has singled out Canada as a model for other western nations to follow in terms of responding to the largest single humanitarian crisis our planet has witnessed since the Second World War. Other nations are watching and learning best practices from Canada again about how to craft a compassionate refugee policy.

• (1730)

[Translation]

I am not objective when it comes to that issue.

[English]

I came to this country as a Ugandan-Asian refugee in 1972, fleeing the dictatorship of Idi Amin. I was a one-year-old baby at the time. I was accompanied by my four-year-old sister and my parents, who were in their late twenties. We benefited from the compassion of the government of that era and the generosity of Canadians who, from coast to coast to coast, opened up their hearts and their homes to 7,000 Ugandan-Asians like me simply because they cared and they believed it was the right thing to do.

Canada did not only offer up a new community to us, it also offered up to us new opportunities, opportunities to work for my parents, opportunities to study for my sister and I, and opportunities to one day give back.

I take great pride in standing before you, Mr. Speaker, as the newly appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, charged in part with the stewardship of another national refugee settlement project 43 years after my very own from Uganda.

I will take even more pride when the day comes, and I know it will come, when a Syrian-born refugee, welcomed into this country in 2015, one day takes her place in this esteemed chamber and addresses her maiden speech to your successor, Mr. Speaker.

The throne speech echoes the theme of Canada's restored leadership on the global stage in one further but vitally important way: our role as international leaders in the promotion of tolerance and diversity.

[Translation]

I am not only a refugee, but also a Muslim.

[English]

Again and again, we have heard the Prime Minister reiterate that in Canada we are strong, not in spite of our differences but because of our differences. This message took on particular resonance over the past several months, as anti-Islamic rhetoric increased, was legitimized and entered the mainstream. This crescendoed after the horrible attacks in Paris a few weeks ago, retaliatory acts occurred not only at mosques in Peterborough, Hindu temples in Kitchener, and against non-Muslim Canadian women wearing scarves pulled over their heads to simply protect them from the cold. It showed us that we were all victims of intolerance, non-Muslim and Muslim alike. More important, the response of our government in the face of that intolerance was to challenge it, to fight against efforts to pit Canadians against one another and reaffirm our collective commitment to the values of inclusion, tolerance and pluralism.

The reactions of Canadians to fight back against those acts of intolerance were manifest and they were noted by people around the planet. They caused bewilderment in other parts of the world. In countries that are continuing to struggle with ethnic tension, they wonder how Canada gets this great multicultural experiment right. We do not get it perfectly, but we do it far better than most other nations.

The Address

I believe that these incidents reveal two things: that intolerance unfortunately still exists in this country, but more important, the capacity and the will of Canadians to overcome such intolerance, through acts of caring and acts of community, is infinite. In my view, the highest calling of any government is to serve as a catalyst for such acts of community building. In community building we are actually doing nation building on the basis of values of tolerance, inclusion and diversity.

That is an endeavour that is not without its challenges, but I am confident that our government will rise to the occasion. Canadians, and indeed the world, are watching. We will not let them down.

Hon. Jason Kenney (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate you on your appointment and I congratulate the member on his election.

The member opposite emphasized refugee resettlement, particularly of Syrians, and commendably so. However, I noted that he did not mention at all the crisis of Iraqi refugees, which is bound up with that of Syrians, and neither has the government, for some peculiar reason.

Would the member care to comment on the fact that Canada has led the world in welcoming, through resettlement, some 23,500 Iraqi refugees, most of them through Syria since 2009, and that there continue to be millions of Iraqi refugees in the same countries as there are Syrian refugees? Why has the government abandoned Iraqi refugees? Why does it refuse to address their crisis? Why is it not discussing the Iraqis who have fled to Syria, then fled the Syrian civil war back to Iraq and then had to flee ISIS to the Kurdish region? I wonder if he would comment on the government's response to the Iraqi refugee crisis.

The member's leader has said that prioritizing groups that are particularly vulnerable to genocide is "disgusting". Is he not aware, as a member of the Ismaili Muslim community, that the Ismaili Muslims of Syria are facing particular vulnerability at the hands of Daesh, of al Nusra and other Salafist terrorist organizations? Does he not think it would be appropriate for us to seek to prioritize their protection and resettlement, given their particularly unique vulnerability?

• (1735)

Mr. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to address all facets of the hon. member's question. I would expect no less in a courtroom, and I will treat this like a courtroom.

I presume that the hon. member heard the minister today in question period. So, the first point I would emphasize is that the effort in Syria is not an exclusive effort. Our efforts to settle refugees and other asylum seekers continue apace and will be funded accordingly. This is not a monolithic or exclusive exercise.

The second point is that we acknowledge and appreciate the efforts that the previous government made to settle 23,000 Iraqi refugees. That was a terrific effort. We are trying to do more and do it better. That is the mandate we have been given by the Canadian people.

In respect to the third point, of course, as an Ismaili Muslim, I am aware of Ismaili Muslims being targeted in other parts of the world, including parts of the world affected by ISIS.

What I emphasize again and again, as I did on the campaign trail with one of the member's colleagues who was not fortunate enough to be elected to serve, is that we believe in identifying those who are vulnerable but do not believe in cherry-picking people based upon their religion. That means if people meet the definition of being a convention refugee, if they are vulnerable, if they have a well-founded fear of persecution, regardless of their religion, including whether that region includes Sunni Islam, they will be welcomed into this country.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech.

During the election campaign, many people in my riding of Jonquière were worried about whether the tax credit for contributions made to a labour-sponsored fund would be reinstated. Unfortunately, there was no mention of this in the throne speech.

The tax credit expires on December 30, but we do not have to pass a law in order for it to be reinstated. What is more, the government promised to reinstate it during the election campaign.

What does my colleague think about that? Does the government intend to reinstate the tax credit for contributions made to a labour-sponsored fund by December 30?

Mr. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Jonquière for her question and I congratulate her on her election.

[*English*]

In terms of the tax credit for workers and the deadline that is looming on December 30, I can indicate that we have mandate letters that have been provided with respect to all of the ministries. I have reviewed most of those mandate letters. I can endeavour to do so again and speak with the hon. member further.

However, my understanding is that we are endeavouring to ensure the employment prospects of as many Canadians as possible, including revisiting the labour market assessment process and the tax credits that relate thereto, to ensure that Canadians are getting back to work as quickly as possible, in light of the economic situation we are now facing and economic circumstances that, unfortunately, we inherited from the past government.

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the member for Saskatoon West.

I will start by sincerely thanking the great people of Kootenay—Columbia for giving me the honour of representing them in Canada's 42nd Parliament. It is a responsibility that I take very seriously, as I have devoted my life to public service. I would also like to congratulate the citizens of the Kootenays, from Elkford to Revelstoke and from Kaslo to Field, for their outstanding participation in the 2015 election. Almost 74% of eligible voters in my riding took that walk to the polls, which was among the highest turnout rates in Canada.

The Address

I am particularly proud of the number of first nations people and youth who were actively involved in the election. This is very good news for the future of reconciliation with our indigenous neighbours and for the future of democracy in the southeast corner of British Columbia.

Of course, I would like to thank my wife Audrey; and my children Shawn, Kellie, and Adrian; and my granddaughter Lalita. Their love and support and their sacrifices are what made this journey possible.

The citizens of the Rocky, Purcell, and Selkirk Mountains sent me to Ottawa with some very specific expectations that I intend to deliver on.

First is to work together with all parties to deliver on a better future for Kootenay—Columbia and Canada. My constituents, quite frankly, are tired of seeing Parliament as a place where partisan politics seem to take precedence over positive progress. Their desire, and mine, is to see the House of Commons as a place where good ideas are celebrated regardless of their origins. I was heartened, Mr. Speaker, to hear that your desire is also to see a better future for Parliament.

The second expectation is for me to hold the Liberal government accountable for its election promises and to make them even better. I will do that alongside my New Democrat colleagues by supporting the government when it is doing the right things for Canada. We demonstrated our willingness to co-operate last Friday when we stood and applauded the objectives of the Speech from the Throne related to electoral reform, to making Canada a leader in dealing with climate change, to immediately launching an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, and in welcoming Syrian refugees to Canada. These are all priorities for the citizens of Kootenay—Columbia.

However, my constituents have many other priorities they expect us to deliver on as well. I personally knocked on over a thousand doors during the 2015 election, and here are some of the things that I heard very clearly.

Families with young children want universal, affordable child care. We had a plan to give them that, and they want to know the Liberals' plan to help them get there.

Small businesses need and deserve a tax cut and a reduction in credit-card fees.

Too many seniors are living in poverty. This is unacceptable in a rich country like Canada, which these senior citizens helped to build. At minimum, they need an increase in the guaranteed income supplement.

Bill C-51 needs to be repealed, not just amended. Many of my constituents described Bill C-51 as the “anti-terrorist, fear-mongering bill”. They believe, as I do and many legal scholars, that this bill has the potential to go too far in impacting our rights and freedoms without adding any real benefits to our security.

The trans-Pacific trade partnership has the potential to hurt the dairy and cheese industry, particularly in the Creston area of my riding. We should never sign any trade deal that would negatively impact any aspect of agriculture in Canada. Food security should be a fundamental right protected by all levels of government.

Health care is a concern for all Canadians. I am optimistic and encouraged by the government's promise to negotiate a new health accord with the provinces and territories.

● (1740)

However, it remains to be seen if that accord will deal with long-standing issues related to the requirement for every Canadian to have a family doctor; reducing costs for prescription drugs; helping children and youth struggling with mental illness; tabling a bill of rights for people with disabilities; ensuring that seniors have the help they need at home, in long-term care facilities, in hospitals, and through palliative care.

My constituents also want to see a vibrant and well-funded CBC, as well as mail delivered to their homes by Canada Post.

Indeed, as is the case with many things in life, the devil is in the details. For example, leadership in climate change is a good thing, but it is meaningful only if accompanied by firm, enforceable, and timely targets. Implementing recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada is the right thing to do, but in the end, which recommendations and how they are implemented will be the true measure of the government's commitment to first nations.

It was great to have the Prime Minister stop by the orientation session for new members of Parliament back in November. As part of his address to us, he said that the role of the opposition is to make government better. I could not agree more, and as part of Canada's progressive opposition, that is exactly what we will do.

One of my disappointments with the Speech from the Throne is that it failed to make any mention of Canada's national parks. When I reviewed the mandate letter from the Prime Minister to the hon. Minister of Environment and Climate Change, I was heartened to read statements related to developing Canada's national parks and their programs and services, while limiting commercial development within them.

However, during the campaign, the Liberal government also promised to invest \$25 million each year to protect ecosystems and species at risk in parks and to manage and expand national wildlife areas and migratory bird sanctuaries. As well, it promised to reverse the Conservative government's cuts to Parks Canada and restore \$25 million to programs and services. I will be closely monitoring the Liberal government's budget to ensure that national parks, which are important to both our environment and economy, get the enhanced funding that they rightfully deserve.

We also need to ensure that there is a solid long-term plan to twin Highway 1 through the national parks in my riding, while ensuring the safety of both travellers and wildlife, and to see a new national park established in British Columbia's south Okanagan region, which is a long-standing initiative.

I will finish my maiden speech to Parliament with a story.

The Address

When I was going door to door during the campaign in Nelson, I met a delightful senior citizen who said she wanted to tell me a story but only if I agreed to share it with others. After hearing her story, I said that I would do just that.

When this senior was a child, her father was friends with Tommy Douglas, and she often played around his feet. Apparently, Mr. Douglas was of rather small stature. One day she was in a room with several adults, one of them a very tall man who was standing by Tommy Douglas. One of the other adults looked at the two of them and said, “Mr. Douglas, you sure are short”, to which Tommy Douglas replied, “The true height of a man is measured from the neck up”.

Of course, Mr. Douglas went on to be the father of Canada's universal health care system, of which we are all so proud.

Why am I telling this story? It is because while we, as a caucus, may be short in numbers, we are long on good ideas that will make our country stand even taller. I am committed to working with all members over the next four years to build a better Kootenay—Columbia and a better Canada.

● (1745)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate you on your election. I served on a committee under you and you were always very fair, which I think helped lead to your election.

Also, as the first chance I have, I want to thank my constituents. It was very heartening to me while going door to door when many thanked me for what I had done in the past. I take that very seriously and hope I can live up to the trust they have placed in me.

I also thank the Conservative, NDP, and Green parties, and the workers of every party who were soldiers of democracy.

Most of all, I thank my wife Melissa and my children, Dawson and Aurora, as they missed so much time with me.

I would like to thank the member for an excellent and very positive speech, particularly on national parks. I applaud what he said.

Just to remind people, the \$25 million in cuts in 2012 really hurt us. We are going to put that back and \$25 million more for ecosystems. In 2017, the 150th anniversary, the parks will be free for everyone. After that, they will be forever free for children, and the year after, free for one year for new Canadians, which I think is very exciting.

Finally, there is to be a huge increase in marine parks in Canada to help us catch up to the rest of the world and protect those ecosystems.

I hope the member is in support of all of those items.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Mr. Speaker, as I said, national parks are extremely important to both our economy and the environment.

I am very fortunate to have four national parks in my riding of Kootenay—Columbia. We need to make sure we are putting more attention and financing into it. They have really been hurt, quite

frankly, over the last 10 years, and in the last four years in particular. They deserve much better in the future.

● (1750)

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his excellent first speech in the House. We are so happy that he is here along with a robust team from British Columbia. He spoke to our priorities overall as a caucus.

The member brought up some key points in terms of an issue we are proud to stand very clearly on, Bill C-51. There are so many Canadians from coast to coast to coast who have expressed their opposition to this bill, who have expressed their concern about what this bill means in terms of civil liberties, in terms of privacy, and in terms of respect for first nations' rights.

Despite the severity of the issues that have been made known by many across the country, the government across did not refer to the changes it is looking at making and, frankly, did not refer to any of its plans with regard to Bill C-51 in the throne speech.

How important is it for Canadians to see leadership on this front, to see that their civil rights, their right to privacy, and that indigenous rights are protected? I would like to hear from my colleague on this front.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Mr. Speaker, one of the most important things I heard over and over again in my riding during the campaign was the need to repeal Bill C-51.

Quite frankly, I spoke with a number of long-time Liberals in my riding who were changing their vote this time around because of the Liberal support for at least the first version of Bill C-51. They wanted to see the bill repealed.

I know the Liberal government's position has been to change it, to amend it, but ultimately it needs to be repealed. That is the best way to protect the rights and freedoms of Canadians moving forward.

I have to trust the many people I heard from, both legal scholars and people who have worked in security, who said they did not think the bill would provide much additional security to Canadians while potentially impacting our rights and freedoms. It should be repealed.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the constituents of Saskatoon West for having put their faith in me to represent them and to ensure a strong voice for them in Parliament. It is a very high honour, and I am humbled by their support and faith in me to serve them to the best of my abilities over the coming four years.

I also wish to congratulate my colleagues in the House on their successful elections, and in particular extend a special congratulatory acknowledgement to those colleagues who, like me, are here in Parliament for the very first time. I want to thank my new colleagues from both sides of the House who have reached out to offer assistance and advice and a warm hand of friendship as we, new MPs, climb a very steep learning curve.

The Address

I also want to acknowledge and thank the House of Commons staff, the leadership in the Clerk's office, and especially those who staff the MP orientation centre. Open, generous, welcoming, and knowledgeable are the words that best describe my experience working with this dedicated group of public servants. I know I speak for all my colleagues, both new and returning, when I say we are very fortunate to work with such a dedicated and knowledgeable group of employees.

Like many in the House, I did not get elected on my own efforts. I worked hard of course, but I had the help of many people. If it were not for their efforts I would not be standing here today addressing the House.

I would like to make special note of my family; my partner Shelley, my daughters Annie and Vashti, my mom, my dad, my brother and sisters, all of whom contributed so much in so many ways so that I might have this opportunity to serve my community and my country.

The riding of Saskatoon West is a new urban riding. It is situated on Treaty 6 territory and the ancestral homelands of the Métis people. It is where I have lived, worked, and raised my family for over 30 years. It is a great community in many ways. It is vibrant, entrepreneurial, and diverse, with strong community leadership and people who care for one another and stand up against injustices, and many more attributes of what makes communities great.

Unfortunately, we also face many challenges and struggles. Many residents of Saskatoon West struggle because life is simply unaffordable. Saskatoon West has some of the poorest neighbourhoods in Saskatoon. We have health outcomes in some neighbourhoods that near those found in the third world. Many in my community did not see the benefits of the economic boom in Saskatchewan and many in my community have not recovered from the recession of 2008.

In my previous role as the CEO of the United Way, before becoming the MP for Saskatoon West, I saw first-hand the personal devastation of rising inequality in my neighbours, such as the impact of huge health disparities despite universal health care, including an increasing rate of HIV infection in stark contrast to lowering rates in other communities in Canada; unemployment rates for young people and aboriginal people three times the national average; one of the highest uses of food banks in Canada; more children living in poverty; a rising homelessness rate; and unaffordable housing for most, with working people with full-time jobs living at the Salvation Army because they cannot afford market housing.

Many of my neighbours in Saskatoon West wake up every day faced with making decisions between paying rent or buying food, between paying rent or buying medication.

My constituents did indeed vote for change. The change they wished to see was an open, transparent, and accountable government, a government that protected their rights and freedoms by repealing Bill C-51. They voted for one class of citizenship. They voted for keeping their mail home delivery and restoring it to those who have lost it. They voted for removing the barriers to entry into the middle class with affordable, accessible, high-quality child care

so that they could participate in the economy and attend to their education.

●(1755)

My constituents voted to make life more affordable. They voted for a national pharmacare program so that they could afford to pay their rent and for their medications to stay healthy and well. My constituents voted for an opportunity to be included, and to enjoy a good quality of life, a home, an education, and an income to cover the basics of everyday life.

As the CEO of United Way, I, along with other local leaders and volunteers, have sat around community tables, co-operating with governments at all levels for many years, to make things better in our community. However, more often than not, we were thwarted in our efforts as we sat helplessly and watched all levels of government pass the buck on important issues, claiming that it was not their jurisdiction and that it was some other level of government that should take the lead and step up.

To make real change happen, we have to lead. Every level of government can play a role and has a role to play in the important issues that Canadians are facing, such as housing, poverty, and good health care. One way to lead is by example, ensuring that we do what we can in our own jurisdictional backyard, so to speak, and to set the bar high for others to follow.

One of those areas is the importance of a federal minimum wage. No efforts to lead on reducing poverty or growing the middle class will be successful without ensuring that we do all that we can within our jurisdiction. That is why an important government strategy to grow the middle class is a \$15 federal minimum wage. A federal minimum wage will go a long way to ensuring that those 80,000 or more employed people working in federally regulated industries, such as transportation, telecommunications, and banking can afford the basics of life. It is the caring thing to do; it is the smart thing to do.

Entry into the middle class will be challenging for many in my constituency. Their entry into the middle class means removing barriers to getting and keeping employment and pursuing their education. One of the biggest barriers for my constituents is the lack of affordable and accessible child care. It is often the single biggest barrier for parents to securing employment or finishing their education. Affordable post-secondary education is one challenge. Even with more affordable education, many will be excluded because they cannot afford child care, and even if they can afford child care, they cannot find it; it is not there to be found.

To create more opportunities for young Canadians, especially those from low and middle-income families, means removing the barriers so that the opportunities can be accessed by everyone. That means a federal government that is willing to lead on not only creating new child care spaces in the short term, but making a commitment to all parents to finally, after 30 years, commit to universally accessible, affordable, and high-quality child care.

The Address

Communities across Canada have stepped up where governments have failed to provide the services needed for their communities to thrive, but there is only so much that communities can do on their own. They need governments to partner, to invest, and to help communities meet their challenges. Canadians know how to work together. I know that my constituents are looking forward, as I am, to a government that knows how to do that and do it well.

As a community leader in the non-profit sector for over 20 years, I know what it takes to work together. I know the hard work and the tenacity needed to work toward common goals. As the labour critic for the NDP, I look forward to working with the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, and my fellow critic in the official opposition, on these important issues to ensure that no one is left behind.

● (1800)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saskatoon West for her maiden speech in the House of Commons. It was compassionate and very well done.

[*English*]

My question is on one of the issues she mentioned, about trying to improve the care for people who are earning minimum wage by raising the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour.

I wonder if the hon. member would be willing to consider whether helping out the 1 in 1,000 workers who makes minimum wage at the federal level, in federally chartered corporations such as Air Canada, banks, and the federal government, would be enough to allow for the minimum wage to rise in other sectors and the rest of the economy for the 999 other minimum wage workers.

Ms. Sheri Benson: Mr. Speaker, I offer my congratulations to the member.

Currently, there is no federal minimum wage. That is the first issue that needs to be challenged.

The second issue is to implement a federal minimum wage that allows those people in those jobs to afford the basics in life. In Saskatoon the actual living wage is \$16.47 an hour. Many people who are living on minimum wage have more than one job. Although a minimum wage of \$15 an hour would be a place to start, as is the case in Alberta, we need to first implement a federal minimum wage.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague for the thought-provoking comments she made in her speech. I must say that my compassionate riding of Windsor—Tecumseh is driven by the issues of social justice as well. Whether questioning the integrity of a free trade agreement versus fair trade, challenging Bill C-51, addressing seniors' ability to retire in dignity, or helping lift children out of poverty, these are the things that compel all of us.

I ask the member what meaningful things she heard that resonated with her during the campaign, which the Liberal government can commit to now.

● (1805)

Ms. Sheri Benson: Mr. Speaker, what I heard over and over on the campaign trail in Saskatoon West was that life was not affordable. No matter where I was in the riding, the three things I heard with respect to a younger family related to child care, transportation, and housing, and with respect to seniors it was medication, housing, and—unfortunately, I have forgotten the third one.

My point is that those two groups need investment in order to lift them out of poverty. Many people have a long way to go to get out of poverty in Saskatoon West. We need to lower the retirement age back to 65 and to increase the guaranteed income supplement. Those are important measures to help lift many people out of poverty.

Also, the issue that was often discussed with people on doorsteps was with respect to corporations paying more of their fair share, because if they paid a little more we could end child poverty.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her excellent speech. Both questions from the NDP were with respect to social justice, which shows the commonalities we have on a lot of measures in the platform, such as the housing program, the social infrastructure to create thousands of daycare spaces, the Canada child credit to help raise 300,000 children out of poverty, the transportation subsidy to deal with the transportation issues she spoke of, increasing the old age supplement for seniors and indexing it, reducing the retirement age to 65, and increasing home care for seniors. Therefore, I think we are singing from the same songbook in a lot of areas of social justice, and I appreciate that.

Ms. Sheri Benson: Mr. Speaker, I would say to the hon. member that I do believe there are many places where we can come together. Certainly, I know that is possible in my community.

One particular area in which I would like to see the Liberal government finally follow through is a promise that was first laid out to my community 30 years ago: universal, accessible, affordable child care. It is not enough to just put extra money into families who are already unable to afford food and rent. We have some of the highest child care rates in the country, so the ability is just not there for many people in Saskatoon West to then pay for child care so that they can access work and training. Even if they were able to afford child care, it is just not there. It is such a barrier to young people either getting back to school or getting a job. It is critical to moving forward, making life affordable, and improving the quality of life for people. That is one place I would like to see us working better together in the future.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what a privilege it is to stand in our place in such a wonderful chamber here in the House of Commons to share with Canadians what we feel is important to us as we have heard from our constituents.

The Address

Let me start by giving my most sincere, heartfelt thanks to the constituents of Winnipeg North. It is such a privilege to represent one of the best, beautiful areas of Canada. Winnipeg North has many different industries, a great deal of diversity and is an area that I am very proud to call my home.

Also, as was referenced earlier, I would like to acknowledge the need for change. We saw that take place on October 19 overwhelmingly in every region of our country. We are the only political party that received support in every region of the country where Canadians witnessed and saw the need for change and took the actions necessary to put Canada in a much better light going forward.

Today we have a cabinet that is gender-equal in terms of the number of female and male ministers, which is a first. I have the privilege to serve as the parliamentary secretary, and I thank my leader for entrusting me with that particular responsibility.

I thought I would talk about something that is really important to all Canadians, no matter what part of the country they live in and that is the economy. It is something that we have articulated for a number of years. In fact, when the Prime Minister was first elected leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, he talked about the middle class in Canada and its importance. Two years before he became the leader of the Liberal Party, those two words were spoken relatively rarely in the House of Commons, but he took that on as an idea that needed to be talked about. He wanted to ensure that the House would address the issue of Canada's middle class.

The middle class is the driving force of our economy. If there is a healthy middle class, we can have a healthy economy. If we look at economies around the world, where there is a healthy maturing middle class, the economy is doing relatively well.

There are many aspects of the throne speech that people can have hope from when thinking about the future of our great nation. I would like to highlight a couple of them affecting the middle class. We talk about tax breaks. We are in essence giving a tax break to Canada's middle class. We are creating another tax that is going to be at the upper end of Canada's wealthiest, recognizing that they need to pay their fair share and that we need to get more money into the pockets of our middle class.

Another direct way we are doing that is through the Canada child benefit. We need to realize the benefits of that great program for Canada's middle class, but as has been talked about by many of my colleagues and many individuals who are apolitical, or third parties, they recognize that by increasing the Canada child benefit program, we will in essence not only be putting money into middle-class pockets, but also lifting children out of poverty. We think that is a great thing to do, something we have advocated for many years.

When I look at many of the things the NDP and Conservatives have in common but that show the Liberals to be different, there are a number of issues that come to mind. Number one is the balanced budget and the concept of a balanced budget.

• (1810)

My Conservative friends need a history reminder. The Conservative Party has never done well when it comes to balanced budgets. The previous government was a great failure when it came

to balanced budgets. The Conservatives need to be reminded that they inherited a multi-billion-dollar surplus from the eras of former prime minister Chrétien and former prime minister Paul Martin. Within a couple of years, the Conservatives turned it into a multi-billion-dollar deficit. It is important to recognize that they turned it into a deficit before the recession had taken place. Every year since then, the Conservative government has had a deficit, with the one exception being the last budget that it proposed.

However, we knew back then that it was a bogus balanced budget. There was no surplus. When I addressed the House on that issue, I indicated that we could not trust the Conservative books, which were in fact cooked. It was only a few weeks later, after the House had adjourned, that we found out through the Parliamentary Budget Officer that there was a billion-dollar deficit. I do not need to make up the truth. The truth speaks for itself.

In fairness to the last Conservative government, we need to look at previous Conservative government where we have found the same thing. Former prime minister Jean Chrétien inherited a deficit, and he turned it into a surplus.

Let me go to my colleagues and friends in the New Democratic Party, who are challenged on this issue. They are eager to tell people what they want to hear. NDP members said that they were going to have a balanced budget. That was an irresponsible statement coming from what the leader of the NDP calls a so-called progressive party. The New Democratic Party pledged in its campaign to have a balanced budget. Yet, I listened to the speeches, and every speech talked about spending money on this or that. Whatever happened to that party's pledge to Canadians, the very people they garnered their votes from? Whatever happened to that party's pledge to a balanced budget?

I would argue that right from the beginning, the leader of the Liberal Party, now Prime Minister of Canada, has been straightforward, transparent, and honest with Canadians. He clearly indicated that there would be a budget deficit this year.

We recognize that sometimes we need to look at what is happening in our economy. We do not want to run balanced budgets during economic times in which people are feeling challenged, unemployment is high and getting higher, and we are going into a recession. We want to be able to invest in Canadians and in our infrastructure, and by doing that we would be creating opportunities.

The Liberal Party is committed to doing that. People are going to see in different ways that this is a government that truly cares and recognizes the value of investing in Canadians. That will take place in the form of infrastructure. We are going to invest billions of dollars in building Canadian communities. From coast to coast to coast, people are going to see activity. We are going to focus our attention on what is important to Canadians. We recognize that infrastructure is absolutely critical, and now is the time for us to invest in infrastructure.

When I was in opposition, I questioned why the government did not recognize the value of investing in Canada's infrastructure, and in part we are paying the price of the former government's neglect in that area.

The Address

● (1815)

However, do not fear. The Liberal government will make it a priority and we will get the money flowing so those very important projects that needed to get done are, in fact, going to be started under a new infrastructure program that is going to be 10 times as effective as the former infrastructure program.

Free trade is another issue of discussion inside the chamber that I have recognized over the last number of years. I like the free trade debate because, again, it shows the differences among the three major political parties. On the one hand, there are the Conservatives. We all know that they will do anything necessary in order to achieve an agreement. It does not necessarily have to even be in Canada's best interest. We know that trade has actually not done that well under the Conservative government. Again, maybe it is a history lesson that they need to understand.

When the Conservatives inherited the reins of power, what did they have? They had a multi-billion-dollar trade surplus in Canada. It did not take them long to make that trade surplus evaporate.

In the last 50 months, we have seen trade deficits. They took a multi-billion-dollar trade surplus and turned it into a billion-plus-dollar trade deficit. We continue to be in deficit, even with the free trade agreements that the government brought in, which, for the most part, the Liberal Party of Canada supported, because Liberals recognize the value and importance of trade. Trade is good for Canada. We are a trading nation. If we do not invest in trade and look for opportunities, all of us lose out. It is absolutely critical. Not only today but in terms of our future economic growth, we need trade.

We heard that today in the answers from the minister responsible for trade, who is most capable and able. She articulated the importance of us getting this right, and that Canadians had to be engaged in this debate. I will remind the Conservatives once again that the Liberals understand the importance of that trade file and how trade equates to jobs. The billions lost through deficits in trade with the previous Conservative government has meant tens of thousands of jobs lost, and many of those jobs were manufacturing jobs, particularly in the province of Ontario. Ontario has been hit very hard by the former Conservative government.

In terms of the future, we feel good about the idea of where our markets can be with the potential that exists and I am very confident. We have seen that in the last four weeks with the number of world leaders with whom the Prime Minister met. I know, for example, the Minister of International Trade had the opportunity to visit the Philippines and other countries. There is a sense that, yes, we will get back on track and we will be able to inch toward a trade surplus. That is important because it means jobs, and jobs are something we should all be fighting for.

I do not want to leave out my colleagues in the New Democratic Party. They tend to believe that free trade agreements are bad things. They stand in their places time and time again, and I underline the word "time", to vote against free trade agreements. They talk about the Jordan agreement. I was here for the Jordan agreement and the one time there was a vote, it was a voice vote so they did not actually have to stand in their places. In fairness, I recognized one time when

they actually stood in their places and voted in favour of a trade agreement.

The reason I say that is I would hope the New Democrats would understand how important it is to give true value to how trade agreements can complement Canada's economy, advance us into the world of trade, see that as a positive thing, and start moving forward.

Another area is democratic reform. We made it very clear. We said that 2015 was the last time we would go with the first past the post system. The Conservatives are saying no, that we cannot do that. I am sorry. It was an election promise and it is something we will be working with.

● (1820)

The Conservatives do not recognize the need for electoral reform. They want to keep the same system. Even if Canadians do not want the same system, it does not matter to the Conservatives. They want to keep what they have.

Then we have the New Democrats. The New Democrats have already made up their minds. They say, "Yes, let's go and talk to the public. Let's consult", but in their minds it would be proportional representation. They have already made that statement.

It reminds me a lot of the issue of Senate reform. Being from western Canada, I can remember the Conservatives jumping up and down, yelling how they wanted Senate reform. Then when they finally got the reins of power, what did they do for Senate reform? Nothing. Not a thing.

In fact, the most significant Senate reform in the last eight years was when the leader of the Liberal Party of Canada indicated that senators could not be a part of the elected Liberal caucus. That is the most significant thing that took place with Senate reform. That is it. The Conservatives had absolutely nothing to do with it.

Now, the NDP, on the other hand, like to say that they want to reflect the wishes of Canadians. They are telling Canadians, "We don't care what you think. We already have our opinion. Our opinion is to abolish it, even though it would be virtually next to impossible to do". They need to realize that we would have to get unanimity from all of the different provinces to make that happen. Do members think that would stop the NDP from making that sort of commitment? No.

Again, we are attempting to respond to what Canadians are telling us. There is a need for change. We are going to invoke many changes in the Senate, changes that would not require constitutional change, changes that could be done internally. I would ask both the Conservatives and my New Democrat friends to see it in a more positive light and possibly contribute to that reform.

In this session, I trust that we are going to hear a lot about many other, different issues, ones that are important not only to my constituents but also in fact to all Canadians, such as an inquiry regarding murdered and missing women and girls, over 1,200 of them, many of them from Winnipeg North, who have gone missing or who have been murdered. This is something that is long overdue. I understand now that there is virtually unanimous support for that in the chamber. I understand that in the Conservative Party, members are recognizing the importance of such an inquiry.

The Address

We have a government that truly cares about something that is most significant to virtually all Canadians; that is, the issue of health care. We have a government now that wants to be able to work with provinces to try to come up with a new health care accord. The last time we had a health care accord was back in the Paul Martin era. The reason they have the funds they have today, those record-high funds, is that accord. Canada needs a new health care accord. That is something we are going to work toward getting.

I could talk about agriculture and issues such as the pork industry in the province of Manitoba and how hard we need to work to diversify many of our rural communities and to support our agricultural communities. I have had an opportunity to take many tours in rural communities and am a bit biased about the pork industry, in particular, but there is so much more. I can recall piles of wheat that we needed to get off to shore at the demise of the Canadian Wheat Board. The government was challenged, in terms of getting our wheat to market. We lost opportunities there.

There is so much that we could be doing, so much that we can be saying. I have not even had the chance to talk about the immigration file, whether it is the visiting visas or the processing times, and the Liberal Party's commitment to improve that by investing in our civil service. That means also showing respect for our civil service, something that the previous government was challenged to do.

Crime and safety issues have also come up, housing issues, social issues, and much more.

• (1825)

I see my time has expired. I look forward to members' questions, so that I may be able to provide more.

Hon. Jason Kenney (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague from Winnipeg North on his re-election. He should know that during the interim, between the two parliaments, we have still maintained the amplification system in the House. He has the latitude to modulate his volume. He does not have to yell, but I think he knows that.

The member spoke on a number of issues. He said that the previous government did nothing to advance Senate reform. The member knows that is not true. The member will know that the previous government invited, requested, asked all provinces to submit to popular Senate elections, and that the prime minister would appoint anybody popularly elected, as he did for the one province that chose to do so, Alberta, in appointing two elected senators.

That process was ultimately struck down by the Supreme Court of Canada, which said popular elections to the Senate violated the spirit of the British North America Act in its construction of the upper chamber. Would the member not agree with me that it would similarly be a violation of the spirit of our founding constitution to fundamentally change the electoral system of this chamber without popular consent?

The member asserted that the Conservative Party insists on supporting the status quo, the first past the post system. That is not true. The policy of the Conservative Party is that any fundamental change to the electoral system of Canada that changes the nature of this place and of our democracy ought first to receive the consent of

Canadians through a referendum. Would the member not support that consultation, as was undertaken by Liberal governments in British Columbia, Ontario, and Prince Edward Island?

• (1830)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, first of all, on the Senate comment by my colleague, we need to recognize that the former prime minister actually made a commitment in terms of Senate reform. He created a great deal of excitement, in particular in western Canada, that he was going to make significant gains on that file.

Contrary to what the member says, that senator was elected even before the past prime minister was elected as prime minister. I believe this past prime minister appointed 59 senators. There was no genuine move toward Senate reform. There was nothing in terms of dialogue that had taken place. There were no discussions. In fact, when Liberals had taken action a couple of years ago, the Conservatives mocked it. The opportunity is there. There are things that we can do to improve the Senate. I would hope that the Conservatives would approach it with more of an open mind.

In regard to his comments with respect to the Conservative Party's policy, I guess that is a nice fallback position. My understanding is that it is in favour of first past the post. I still believe that to this day. Now he wants to say we should have a national referendum on it. I need to remind the former minister that we just had a federal election, and there was resounding support for a political agenda that included changing the current system.

Canadians have voted on it already. There was overwhelming support, especially if we take into consideration the progressive vote because I understand the NDP also wanted to see that change.

It seems to me that Canadians have already spoken, but only one leader, the Prime Minister—

The Deputy Speaker: Order please. The hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while my hon. colleague from Calgary has already commented on the hon. member's confusion of volume with logic, I would like to turn this to a question of tone. I must say I am disappointed in the tone that permeated the entire speech of my colleague, at a time when his leader is apparently sending a message to Canadians that he wants a spirit of collegiality and co-operation where the opposition is respected. The member spent the entire time attacking both other parties in the House. I am a little disappointed in that.

The member raised questions of consistency in policy and honesty and transparency. I could talk about the confusing history of the relationship of deficits and the Liberals. In the 1990s, there was austerity imposed by the Paul Martin government, and the Liberals did not run deficits at all. I saw the Liberals criticize Conservatives year after year during the last Parliament for running deficits. Yet, apparently deficits are exactly what this country needs to stimulate our economy.

I could talk about trade, where the Liberals campaigned against NAFTA in the 1980s. They said that they would repeal it when they got into government, and did not. Now, of course, they claim that their position on trade has always been in favour of trade agreements.

The Address

Regarding infrastructure, one would think that the problem of infrastructure in this country began in 2006. Frankly, the infrastructure deficit in this country began decades ago, as the crumbling roads, bridges, and schools of this country were allowed to happen under Liberal governments as well.

However, my question is about proportionality. The NDP is not prescriptive about the need for electoral reform in a vacuum; it is because Canadians want this chamber to be proportional. They have seen false majority after false majority. When we say that Canadians want a proportional system in this House, where if the Green Party gets 4% of the vote they get 4% of the seats, etc., then that is what they want in this chamber.

I am going to ask this to the member directly. Does he or does he not agree with the principle of proportionality in this Parliament, so that Canadians' votes actually count?

• (1835)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, if I may, I will address the member's first comments. I have been a parliamentarian now for over 25 years, at both the provincial level and the national level. I can say that decorum in the place does not necessarily mean that members of Parliament cannot speak with passion, cannot share the thoughts that they have, point out issues of concern where previous governments have failed, or point out areas in which third parties in this current chamber have let people down. There is nothing wrong with doing that. That is part of our responsibility. It is not to sit back in government benches and listen to the opposition being critical. We can provide constructive criticism even of other political parties. That is the way of the politics that I have witnessed for many years.

What we would hope to see is a decorum that allows for opposition members to come forward with ideas of potential amendments to improve legislation, that we try to allow for, wherever we can, a wider participation by all members of the House. However, we should not in any way try to censor or tell members what they can or cannot say. That is freedom of speech, and if we cannot have that absolute freedom here, where can we have it? I will at times be somewhat boisterous in my tone; it is because I am very passionate.

In regard to proportionality of electoral reform, we should allow the system and the committee to do its work. The committee will be made up of representatives from all political parties, so we have an improved system, and at the same time fulfill a commitment that was given by the Prime Minister.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had a big long question, but I will make it short. The member talked about democratic reform and electoral reform. There was a huge number of items that we promised in that area. Would the member like to speak to something we did not talk about, for instance, moving prosecutions away from the Minister of Justice to being independent, or not using omnibus bills or prorogation in the improper sense?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, there is a wonderful opportunity for reforming our institutions. Whether it is at the electoral level when Canadians vote, or Senate reform, or making changes here in the House, there are many different procedures that, if modified, would allow for a more efficient use of time.

For example, we could calculate the number of hours just listening to bells over the years. We had close to a hundred times, or maybe just over, where there was time allocation. There are all sorts of democratic reforms that could take place in the chamber, in the other place, and electorally.

• (1840)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Before I give the floor to the hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska, I want to let him know that he will have about three minutes. He will have more time to finish his speech when the House resumes debate.

The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will share my time with a member who will be determined tomorrow morning, in light of the situation.

First of all, I want to congratulate you for your appointment as Deputy Speaker of the House, and I want to congratulate my colleague, the member for Halifax West on his election as Speaker of the House. I know that you will do an excellent job ensuring that the debates remain orderly and respectful. I assure you that you will have my full co-operation over the next four years.

I also want to congratulate all of the members of Parliament for gaining the trust of their constituents and for being elected in their respective ridings. I know that we will do very good work together over the next four years.

Since this is my first opportunity to rise in the House, I want to take a moment to acknowledge and, especially, to thank my constituents in Richmond—Arthabaska for putting their trust in me and for electing me as their new member of Parliament on October 19. I am very grateful to them and I will work very hard to fulfill my responsibilities as a parliamentarian and to represent them and my wonderful riding with dignity here in Parliament, in Ottawa.

I also want to thank my friends and all the volunteers who gave me their trust. Without their unconditional support, their hard work and their unwavering encouragement throughout the long election campaign, I definitely would not be here today with my colleagues.

My final thanks go out to those who are most important to me, those who share my personal and family life with the public, namely, my three children, Élizabeth, Magaly and Étienne, my amazing wife, Catherine, my parents, my extended family, and my in-laws. I want to say thank you to all of you today.

Although this is my first foray into federal politics, my six years as mayor of the city of Victoriaville, my 10 years as a manager in the field of education, and my involvement in many organizations for over 25 years have given me extensive experience working closely with federal stakeholders and have shown me the importance of the federal government in developing communities.

That was actually what motivated my political engagement at this level. I firmly believe that the scope of our efforts over the next four years will have a direct impact on the quality of life of all Canadians, in all of our respective constituencies.

I will focus all my energy, skill and experience on protecting their interests at all times. I will also ensure that the 40 municipalities that I represent receive first-class service from Government of Canada organizations. This will ensure their continued development and the survival of regional services, whether in urban or rural areas.

Unfortunately, and no one has pointed this out today, there is no mention of rural municipalities in the throne speech. This is particularly unfortunate in view of all the efforts by regional stakeholders to counter the migration to urban centres, especially of our youth, who are our successors and our future.

The Address

I will also ensure, together with the member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, who is our critic for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, that businesses that create jobs continue to receive support as they grow, because small and medium-sized businesses comprise 90% of all companies in Canada and 70% of labour.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska will have six minutes for his speech when the House resumes debate on this motion.

It being 6:45 p.m., the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:45 p.m.)

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