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(HANSARD)

Tuesday, November 29, 2016

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, November 29, 2016

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the 2016 fall reports of the Auditor General of Canada. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(g), these documents are deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

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[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to six petitions.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FINANCE

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two reports from committee to present today.

First, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Finance, in relation to Bill C-29, a second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2016 and other measures.

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House, with amendments.

Mr. Speaker, second, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Finance, in relation to Supplementary Estimates (B) 2016-17.

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report

of the Standing Committee on Status of Women, entitled "Supplementary Estimates (B) 2016-17".

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PETITIONS

ALGOMA CENTRAL RAILWAY

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am once again pleased to stand to table petitions, this time, from people from Desbarats, Echo Bay, Searchmont, Dundas, Barrie, Niagara Falls, and many others from Sault Ste. Marie.

The petition is with respect to the Algoma passenger train, which has not been operating for some time now. The economic impact on the communities affected is quite great and property owners are not able to access their properties. The passenger train service is necessary for first nations to access remote regions of their traditional territories.

The petitioners are asking the Minister of Transport to put the Algoma passenger train back in service, in order to ensure that the mission of Transport Canada to "serve the public interest through the promotion of a safe and secure, efficient and environmentally responsible transportation in Canada" is fulfilled.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to rise to speak up for people in the Sault Ste. Marie and Thessalon area who are very concerned about the shutting down of the Algoma Central Railway.

We have already seen, in the north, the loss of the *Northlander* passenger service that the provincial government said was over-subsidized at 86¢ a person; whereas, the province subsidizes urban transit at \$156 per person.

In losing train service in the north, we are isolating communities, particularly along the Algoma Central Railway, where there is no other way to access these communities.

The petitioners are calling on the government to take action and show its support that everyone in this country deserves adequate public transportation.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present petitions opposed to the expansion of the Kinder Morgan pipeline.

Government Orders

The petitioners note that the pipeline would change oil tanker traffic from once a week to once a day, sending unrefined oil through the Salish Sea, sensitive waters in an area where local jobs are highly dependent on a clean environment and no oil spills.

The petitioners cite also that Kinder Morgan excavating the new pipeline will create only 50 permanent full-time jobs and it may, in fact, build the pipeline using temporary foreign workers.

I recommend the petition to members of the House and urge the government, for the sake of coastal ecology and economy, to deny the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand at this time.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

CANADA PENSION PLAN

BILL C-26—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That in relation to Bill C-26, An Act to amend the Canada Pension Plan, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act and the Income Tax Act, not more than one further sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration of the report stage and one sitting day shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the said bill; and

That fifteen minutes before the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders on the day allotted to the consideration of the report stage and on the day allotted to the third reading stage of the said bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this Order, and in turn every question necessary for the disposal of the stage of the bill then under consideration shall be put forthwith and successively without further debate or amendment.

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period.

● (1010)

[*Translation*]

I invite hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise in their places so the Chair has some idea of the number of members who wish to participate in this question period.

[*English*]

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the third time in less than 10 days we are seeing the government shutting down the ability of members of Parliament to speak. Let us face it, that is what this is. This is not just about time allocation. It is not about the government saying it is going to allow a certain number of days and here are the days that are set out. This is in the

middle of the bill being processed through the House of Commons and the Liberals are shutting down debate.

We have seen over the last couple of days the massive admiration that the Prime Minister has for dictators; the warmth and the love and, in fact, the gratitude for what dictators do. We are now seeing dictatorship in action by the Liberals under the leadership of the Prime Minister. It is disgraceful. It is disappointing. We have had only 10 speakers, and just in our party alone there are 98 members who would want to speak to this.

Can the government tell us, but more importantly, tell Canadians, what is the benefit to Canadians of shutting down the ability of members of Parliament to speak? Is this just dictatorship in its finest form?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, time allocation is the only tool that exists for a government to advance legislation when a stalemate exists. We have a duty to move forward all legislation, including important financial legislation, to make sure we move forward on the agenda that we have for Canadians.

I would like to just respond to some numbers. Including today, we have had eight days of debate on Bill C-26 at second reading. On Bill C-26, this has allowed nearly 70 members of Parliament, including nearly 40 Conservatives, to participate in debate so far. This represents nearly one half of the Conservative caucus.

Our government is committed to helping Canadians to achieve their goal of a safe, secure, and dignified retirement. We know that Bill C-26 would move forward that agenda in a way that would make a difference for all Canadians across this country. We are moving forward in a way that allows us to do what we know is right for Canadians.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, my question is this: What is the hurry? We know that Bill C-26 is not going to have any benefit for anybody for 40 years. We know that it certainly will have a bad effect in terms of reducing GDP, killing jobs, and potentially hurting small businesses for the next 30 years. Understanding that it would do nothing to help Canadians today who are struggling in retirement and nothing good would come from it for at least 40 years, why is the government in such a hurry to take money out of the pockets of hard-working Canadians and small businesses?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Speaker, we recognize that it is important that we deal with issues that have a long-term impact on Canadians, that help Canadians to put themselves in a better situation for the future.

We made a promise to Canadians that we would move forward and do that. By working collaboratively with the nine provinces that are signatories to the Canada pension plan, we know that we are doing what we want to do for Canadians in a collaborative way. We are doing it not only in a way that would ensure an impact over the long term, but also in a way that is gradual and recognizes that we ensure Canadians understand the slow and gradual imposition of the savings that would be in place in order for them to have better retirements.

Government Orders

We know this is the right approach and it is time for us to move forward.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is the ninth time that the government brings in guillotine motions like time allocation. It is the third time in a week and a half that it has done this. So much for sunny ways.

The government is well aware of the problems with Bill C-26, a well-intentioned reform bill to fix the Canada pension plan. New Democrats have made many constructive comments, including the fact that this bill discriminates against women, primarily, who take time out to have children, and against people who have disabilities of various sorts.

How is this time allocation motion possibly consistent with the respectful procedures that the government promised in this place and that the Prime Minister was committed to addressing? How does this square with those promises?

•(1015)

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned, we made a commitment as a government to work collaboratively with all parties to ensure that Parliament works more efficiently. It is important that we try hard to come to a consensus on issues of importance and, in particular, how much time is required to debate issues that are important in the House of Commons.

Time allocation, as we know, is the only tool that exists for government to advance legislation when a stalemate exists. We have a duty to ensure that all legislation, including important financial legislation, is brought to a vote. We don't take these measures lightly. We remain committed to ensuring that members on all sides have sufficient and reasonable time to debate legislation in the House of Commons, but we also recognize our responsibility to ensure that we deliver on our commitments to Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, this is the ninth time the government wants to impose closure on parliamentary debates, which is really not okay. Nevertheless, I want to be a good sport. This bill does have the solitary merit of clearly defining the Liberals' vision as compared to that of the Conservatives. When faced with a looming issue, the Liberals choose the easy way out: they take more money out of people's pockets. The Conservatives would rather create tools that enable people to build up their savings.

The fact is that with this bill, people will have less money in their pockets, and job and wealth creators will have less money because these new changes will cost them nearly \$1,000 per employee. A Department of Finance study showed that this move will reduce private investment, employment, the gross domestic product, and savings.

Considering how bad this looks for the Canadian economy, how can the Minister of Finance table such a bill?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question. The facts are clear. The reality currently facing Canadians is that they will have a difficult retirement in the future. That is why we reached an agreement with the nine provinces that are signatories to the Canada pension plan to improve our retirement program in

Canada. We know that this will help ensure a better situation for Canadians in the future, and it will help make our economy stronger and more efficient. Those are the facts, because we did our research to make sure that this would help Canadians and boost our economy.

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is a government that told Canadians it could run on slogans, selfies, and Hallmark card political aphorisms. However, when it is questioned about the policies that favour the 1%, it shuts down debate.

On the issue of pension reform, the tool the government is using is to try to limit the ability of the opposition to look at the serious problems. As New Democrats, we are committed to pension reform because of the pension crisis facing people in this country. Yet we find out that the government has deliberately excluded young mothers, who are going to be penalized. We have a Prime Minister who walks around calling himself a feminist, when we have policies that target women who step out of the workforce and policies that target those who are suffering from disabilities.

We have asked the government to fix it. It blows us off and says that one of the important tools it has is shutting down debate. This is not credible. This is a breach of what the Prime Minister promised.

My hon. colleague can remain a friend of the 1%, or he can actually stand up and start to speak for people who trusted the government to do something a little more honest. It can actually be a government that is a feminist government and that is willing to fix the obvious problems in the bill, or it can just shut down debate and carry on with its Hallmark card aphorisms.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned, including today we have had eight days of debate on Bill C-26 at second reading. Again, this has allowed nearly 70 members of Parliament to participate in debate. This represents very significant percentages of both the Conservative members opposite and the New Democratic Party members opposite.

We have been very clear. The government is committed to improving retirement outcomes for Canadians, all Canadians. We are looking to introduce this measure because we know that it will improve the lives of Canadians in the future. It will be an improvement for all Canadians who are able to save in the Canada pension plan. We know that it will bring forth a better outcome in the future.

•(1020)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I am going to raise a larger concern. We went through ten years, and I know my friends on the Conservative benches may object to my reminding us, when we had a government that did many things the new government promised would not be repeated, including the use of time allocation repeatedly, but also in other areas of public policy.

The changes that were promised are not the changes we are seeing. It seems that 10 years of one style of policy gets us acclimatized to a certain amount of loss of democracy. I had hoped we were hitting the reset button and that we would not see the use of time allocation as frequently in this place.

Government Orders

Between 1914 and 1945, time allocation and shutting down debate was used seven times. While nine times in one year does not seem like a lot, when the previous government used it 100 times in one session of Parliament, the 41st Parliament, it is still against the essence of democracy in this place to shut down debate.

It is true, as the Minister of Finance says, that many parties have had a chance to weigh in on this debate. Members of Parliament in positions such as mine, in parties that are not recognized, those with fewer than 12 members, have not had the opportunity.

There are many questions to be asked about Bill C-26. The bigger question is whether the bar the new government set is to do better than the previous government or to do as well as it promised to do.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question. It is an important one.

We know that we have things we need to do on behalf of Canadians. We came into office with a promise to improve the lives of middle-class Canadians and to improve the lives of those people who want to get into the middle class.

We know that the legislation we are putting forward in Bill C-26 is very important for the long-term health of our country. We cannot move forward on the things we need to move forward on if we do not have a way to manage effectively what we can put forward to Canadians.

Time allocation is the only tool that exists for government to advance legislation when a stalemate exists. We have a duty to ensure that we move forward our legislation.

We have provided eight days of debate so far on this measure. It is completely disingenuous to claim that we have not provided sufficient time for debate on this measure. We believe that it is important for Canadians, and we are looking forward to having a better outcome for Canadians in the future as a result of this measure.

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have been in consultations across the nation with women entrepreneurs, young entrepreneurs, employees, and employers. What I found is that none of them are happy with the increase in CPP premiums.

The government says that it is good for seniors, but seniors now will not benefit from this new increase by even a cent. When I speak to seniors, they say that they do not even have a minister at the cabinet table fighting on their behalf. When I talk to seniors about how they are saving, they want the tax-free savings account. The current government has cut it down. Statistics show that it is the best way for seniors to save for a rainy day.

The job-killing CPP premium rate increase will kill jobs. Why is the minister killing jobs? Why is he doing so much damage to our seniors' savings?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Speaker, I believe that a number of points in that comment should be addressed.

First of all, we have done research on Canadians' actual situation and where they will find themselves in their future retirement. We know that by increasing the Canada pension plan through savings, we will be able to move from 25% to 33% of their earnings being

covered by those savings, making an important difference to them in the future. We also know that over the long term, what this will do is actually enhance our economic outcome. Importantly, we know that 75% of Canadians are in support of this measure, because they recognize the challenge they have saving enough for retirement.

Finally and importantly, this is one measure among many that we are moving forward with for seniors. We have improved the guaranteed income supplement, which is helping single seniors who are in the most vulnerable positions. We have also improved the situation for Canadians in the middle class by ensuring that they are able to get old age security at age 65. These measures together are making a real and important difference today for seniors and they will make an important difference tomorrow as well.

• (1025)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to start off by acknowledging the incredible work of my colleague from Hamilton Mountain in bringing forward the flaws in the bill.

My question for the Minister of Finance centres on the drop-out provisions that are missing from the bill. For several weeks now, my colleagues have raised this issue. They were met with non-answers from the government. We finally had the President of the Treasury Board acknowledge that the problem exists.

Why is the government waiting until the next meeting of provincial finance ministers to fix this? Why are we cutting off debate now? Why is the government not fixing these provisions right here and now? Could he not phone his colleagues in the provincial governments to fix those provisions now?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Speaker, we believe that it is very important that we move forward on improving retirement outcomes for Canadians. We negotiated with the provinces to come to an agreement that would help all Canadians find a better outcome in retirement. We will see that they will find themselves in a much better position with this agreement on the Canada pension plan, especially people who are not in pension programs. We have an agreement with the provinces that we are looking forward to moving forward with in December.

We recognize that the pension outcomes for Canadians, in particular for women and others, can always be improved. That is why we will continue to advocate, together with the provinces, on how we can do that in the future. We recognize that this is a continuing file, one that we have taken on in an important way, as the generations before us took it on to make a difference for Canadians today. It is one that we know will continue to be focused on in the years to come.

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, the finance committee has analyzed the bill, and it tells us that it is going to reduce private savings, disposable income, business investments, the GDP, and employment by over 100,000 people over a 10-year period. Why is the government doing the exact opposite of what it should be doing: increasing all those areas instead of decreasing them?

Government Orders

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Speaker, I am very happy to address this question. There were a number of points made. Let me start by saying that we did research to determine how we should best move forward on enhancing the Canada pension plan. We first and foremost did research about Canadians' actual situation today and what they are likely to see in the future. We understand that many, many Canadians are finding themselves in a situation where they will not have the ability to retire with adequate savings, adequate income, in the future. That is why we moved forward.

What we also saw was that, in fact, over the long term, this will help our economy. First, it will increase savings. That is clear. Second, over the long term, it will actually improve our economic outcome as Canadians see themselves in a more secure situation, as businesses are able to retain their employees for a longer period of time, and as we are able to have a functioning economy that makes good use of employees who are able to stay in the workforce so that they can be successful not only there but in retirement.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, for the life of me, I still cannot figure out, on this important legislation, why a feminist government would actually penalize women in the way it is doing. What is happening is that the government is actively taking out a provision that has been in existence since 1977 in support of women with respect to the drop-out provision. Why would the government do this? Is it the case that the minister went to the table with the provincial and territorial leaders and said that we will trade this provision for these other provisions? Is that what happened? How did it come to this, where you would actively take out a provision that mattered to women and to people with disabilities?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind the member that she is to address questions through the Chair, so I would suggest that members do not use the word "you".

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Chair, through you to the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Speaker, let me start by correcting a factual inaccuracy. We did not take out any drop-out provisions in the CPP. Under the core CPP, the drop-out provisions that have been in place remain in place. There has been no provision that changes in any way that core CPP.

What we have done with the enhanced CPP is recognize that those Canadians who are not on pension plans are in a situation where they need an enhanced Canada pension plan that will actually improve their outcomes over time. We have come to a negotiation with the provinces that provides for the largest possible increase, consistent with the amount we are willing to encourage people to save. That is what we have done. We have come to an agreement with the provinces on that approach. We believe it will make a very important difference for all Canadians, including women and including those who are now in a situation where they are challenged in retirement.

What we also recognize is that there will always be opportunities for continued improvement. Our job, in working together with the provinces, is to move forward on this agreement and then to consider other ways we can improve the Canada pension plan in the future to ensure that the retirement health of Canadians is always provisioned for.

● (1030)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, a few times now the Minister of Finance has said that the debate is at a stalemate. I do not know how it has been stalemated in any way. We have had eight days of debate. This is the ninth time the government has moved time allocation on a bill. The minister said that 70 members of Parliament have risen and spoken, among them about 40 Conservatives. However, I was looking forward to speaking on this bill and sharing my thoughts. I do not believe that debate equals a stalemate. That is a comment I want to make so the minister can take that back and think about it.

We have 337 members of Parliament who can rise and speak in this House. You, Madam Speaker, cannot do so while in the Chair seat.

I simply do not see what the government's rush is. This bill will have an impact over 40 years, and the government is trying to rush it through Parliament with only eight days of debate so far. What is the rush?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Speaker, let me first say that I am happy that the member opposite has had the opportunity to speak about this measure. While he is not asking anything directly about the actual bill we are trying to move forward, he is talking about how we are doing it, and I think it is worth responding.

First, as the member knows, we have looked toward making a real and important difference in retirement outcomes for Canadians. It is part of the platform we ran on and something we did a significant amount of work on with Canadians. It is also something we worked on with the provinces to get to an agreement with the nine provinces that are signatories to the Canada pension plan. That agreement came about in collaboration.

In the case of this House, we believe that with eight days of debate, and with 70 MPs having been able to speak on this, including almost 40 MPs from the Conservative caucus, representing almost half of its MPs, we have moved forward in a way that shows that we are listening and that we want to make sure we do the right thing and have the appropriate amount of debate in this House, consistent with this bill and the other important measures we need to move forward on behalf of Canadians.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very surprised that we want to cancel the debate on a flawed bill. The Liberals know that it is flawed.

I find it difficult to understand when the minister is saying that the Liberals did not take out any drop-out provisions. He is correct in saying that about the basic CPP, but I find it odd that the general drop-out provision was included in the enhancement, yet child-rearing and people with disabilities were omitted from the enhancement. Why is that?

Why do we want to rush a bill that we know is flawed? Why do we not get it fixed first? If he has to go back to the provincial ministers, then he should do so and bring it back so we can have a bill that is correct and fair for all Canadians.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Speaker, I know the member opposite has worked hard on the bill, and I appreciate his work. I know this is something he cares enormously about, as do we.

Government Orders

What we are trying to do with the enhanced CPP is to ensure that we have the biggest possible impact on Canadians. We are ensuring that Canadians who are not in pension plans, those Canadians in particular who are under-represented in defined benefit and defined contribution pension plans, have the appropriate opportunity to save through the Canada pension plan. That's a critically important part of this bill.

In negotiating with the provinces, we were looking at how we could have a positive impact on the broadest number of people, especially those not represented in pension plans, as is disproportionately the case for women. We have made improvements that will make a significant difference over time. These have been done in collaboration with the provinces.

We know as well that it is important to continue discussions on how we can further help those who are under-saving and who are finding themselves in a situation where they need more money for retirement. We have committed to doing that. We will do that in collaboration with the provinces in the years to come.

● (1035)

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, we in the official opposition are still waiting for the finance minister to explain his conversion on the road to higher taxes.

I think it is worthwhile as we face this closure vote to remember the words of his coauthor of *The Real Retirement*, Mr. Vettese, who said in the *Financial Post*, "Canadians are not facing retirement crisis, nor is such a crisis likely to arise".

In a different piece, it has been said:

Instead of expending political energy on debating CPP expansion in the misguided belief that many middle- and upper-income Canadians are not saving enough for retirement, the focus of public debate should be on how best to help financially vulnerable seniors.

I wonder if the minister could explain to us how he is squaring the circle here.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Speaker, in our efforts to make a long-term difference for Canadians, we need to think about the short term, the medium term, and the long term. That is exactly what we are doing with retirement issues.

The member opposite has pointed out that there are Canadian seniors who are now facing a difficult challenge. What we did in budget 2016 is recognize that. By increasing the guaranteed income supplement for single seniors by 10% and giving almost \$1,000 a year more to those single seniors, we are significantly reducing the number of vulnerable seniors right now.

By looking at the old age security system and recognizing that this security system helps Canadians who are really in the middle income area, and moving forward on the agreement to ensure they are able to get old age security at age 65, we are helping middle-class Canadians in the medium term.

Over the long term, we know that Canadians are not saving enough for retirement. We know that's particularly the case for Canadians who are not in pension plans.

What we are doing with the enhancement to the Canada pension plan is ensuring that through the savings they put in today, together

with savings their employers put in today, workers will be in a better situation in the years to come and there will be better retirement income for Canadians today, tomorrow, and in the future.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to recognize the outstanding work of my colleague from Hamilton Mountain on the pension issue.

Let me say how disappointed I am that the Liberals are using time allocation once again, for the ninth time, and on an issue as important as improving our pension plan.

It is a little ironic that the Minister of Finance is saying that he wants to improve the system and increase the number of recipients. The bill has so many flaws that now the Liberals are backpedalling. In 1977, women acquired the right to obtain an exclusion for the years they contribute to their families, for up to eight years. Now that right is being taken away. According to a formula on the Service Canada website, women who stay home to raise their children would get between \$800 and \$1,200 less per year with the system the Liberals want to bring in.

Is that what the Liberals call supporting women and working to improve the lives of women and the middle class? They are robbing Peter to pay Paul. It makes no sense.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Speaker, we know that in future years, many Canadians will face uncertainty in retirement. We know that we need to take measures now to improve the outcomes later. We also know that the situation is especially difficult for those people who do not have access to a workplace pension plan. They are the ones who need these improvements most. We helped them by enhancing the Canada pension plan. Thanks to this significant enhancement, we will end up with a system that helps people in the most difficult situations.

We know that it will be important to sit down with the provinces in the future to find a way to achieve our goal of providing a better outcome for all Canadians, especially women. That is what we want for the future.

● (1040)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith the question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

The vote is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Call in the members.

• (1120)

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

(Division No. 156)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baylis
Beech	Bennett
Bittle	Blair
Boissonnault	Bossio
Bratina	Breton
Brison	Caesar-Chavannes
Carr	Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Champagne	Chen
Cormier	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
DeCoursey	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Di Iorio
Dion	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyking
Eyolfson	Fergus
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Foote
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Freeland
Fry	Fuhr
Garneau	Gerretsen
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale
Gould	Graham
Hajdu	Hardie
Hehr	Housefather
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Kang
Khalid	Khera
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Lemieux	Leslie
Levitt	Lightbound
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)	McCallum
McCrimmon	McDonald
McGuinty	McKay
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
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Morneau	Morrissey
Murray	Nassif
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O'Regan	Ouellette
Paradis	Peterson

Petitpas Taylor	Philpott
Picard	Poissant
Qualtrough	Ratansi
Robillard	Rodriguez
Romanado	Rota
Rudd	Ruimy
Rusnak	Sahota
Saini	Sajjan
Samson	Sangha
Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Schulte
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sikand	Simms
Sohi	Sorbara
Spengemann	Tabbara
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Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

I wish to inform the House that because of the proceedings on the time allocation motion, government orders will be extended by 30 minutes.

REPORT STAGE

The House resumed from November 28 consideration of Bill C-26, An Act to amend the Canada Pension Plan, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act and the Income Tax Act, as reported (without amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Ms. Karina Gould (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am particularly pleased to speak to the enhancement of the Canada pension plan because, once again, the government is providing the middle class with a concrete solution to help it get ahead.

It is important to recognize that retirement levels have dropped in Canada in recent decades. In 1977, 43% of Canadians had a defined benefit pension plan. In 2012, only 27% of Canadians, or just over one-quarter, had this same type of pension plan.

If we look only at the private sector, that number drops to 11%, or just over one in 10 people. There is also another reality that we have to face: too few young Canadians are saving for their retirement, for all sorts of reasons. One in four families approaching retirement age, or 1.1 million families, might not be saving enough money to maintain their current lifestyle when they retire.

What is even more worrisome is the number of families without a workplace pension plan. One-third may not save enough for retirement.

The government cannot let Canadians live with such uncertainty. That is why we are taking action in concert with the provinces and territories. We must collectively ensure that all Canadians can retire with dignity.

Therefore, the issue is what the government, the provinces, and the territories have decided to do. We started with the fundamentals. We increased the amount of the pension benefit. When the new CPP goes into effect, the amount at retirement will represent one-third of pensionable earnings. At present, it represents one-quarter.

Take, for example, a mother who earns \$50,000 a year. When she retires, she will collect approximately \$16,000 every year under the new plan, instead of \$12,000. Then, the maximum level of pensionable earnings, that is the earnings used to calculate the final amount of the pension, will go up by 14% by 2025. This means that

the maximum annual CPP benefit, which is currently \$13,110, would go up to \$20,000 in today's dollars. Under the enhanced CPP, the maximum benefit will go up by almost 50%.

Another interesting thing about the Canada pension plan is that it is funded entirely by workers' contributions. For most Canadians, the contribution rate will go up by just 1%. In addition, employee contributions to the enhanced portion of the CPP will be tax deductible, while other CPP contributions will remain eligible for a tax credit.

There is a mechanism to compensate low-income workers for CPP contributions. They may be eligible for an enhanced working income tax benefit. Their retirement income will be higher, but their family's budget will not be affected by higher contributions.

The new plan will be phased in over seven years from 2019 to 2025. The government is giving workers and businesses time to prepare for the changes. Canadian families know that they can count on us to safeguard their quality of life and their future responsibly.

I should point out that the enhancement complements other vehicles already available to Canadians that enable them to pay less tax: registered pension plans or RPPs; registered retirement savings plans or RRSPs; pooled registered pension plans; and tax-free savings accounts.

I want to emphasize that the changes we are proposing today are not about ensuring the long-term survival of the Canada pension plan. According to the Chief Actuary of Canada, the plan is already safe for the next 75 years. The purpose of these changes is to encourage Canadians, especially young people and future generations of Canadians, to save more for retirement.

• (1125)

In closing, I want to summarize the main advantages of the enhanced CPP.

Once the enhanced CPP is fully implemented, the maximum benefit will have increased by nearly 50%.

The CPP provides secure and predictable benefits, which means that Canadians can worry less about exhausting their savings or having their savings affected by the vagaries of the market.

CPP benefits are fully indexed to the cost of living, which reduces the risk of inflation gradually eroding the purchasing power of retirement savings.

The enhanced CPP is adapted to the job market, because it helps close the gap resulting from the lower coverage offered by employer pension plans. In addition, it is portable, so to speak, and follows workers from one province to another, which promotes labour force mobility.

The CPP has millions of contributors, which is a crucial factor, because makes it possible for the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board to take advantage of economies of scale in order to generate healthy returns.

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Future generations of Canadians can rest assured. They can be assured that, when they retire, the Canada pension plan will still have enough money to pay benefits. This means that they can focus on what matters to them, such as spending time with their families or enjoying their pastimes. Above all else, there is one thing that illustrates the enhancements of the CPP: Canada is at its best when all the governments work together. Today, members have a historic opportunity to raise the bar for future generations of Canadians when they retire. That is why we must support this bill.

• (1130)

[*English*]

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for her passion about pensions and the importance they play in the lives of people.

What does the member think about the fact that people with disabilities who live on disability income and women who choose to leave the workforce to raise children will not be granted the CPP enhancement that all other workers will? How does the member feel about the fact that we will be voting on a bill that in essence is sexist?

Ms. Karina Gould: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her shared commitment to those people who need greater pension security. It is incredibly important to recognize that with this bill, we would be helping thousands, if not millions, of Canadians achieve greater retirement security.

I have knocked on doors in my riding of Burlington. In fact, this past weekend I knocked on the door of an individual who, although retired, was unable to maintain her quality of life with just CPP and OAS. She talked about how important it was to ensure we made these enhancements.

I want to make it clear that all Canadians who contribute to CPP will receive this enhancement. The base, as the minister mentioned, will maintain that dropout period. It is important that the minister will raise this issue with his provincial counterparts when he meets with them, so we can not only ensure that the enhancement goes through, but that we continue to improve and ensure that Canadians have access to retirement security.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am curious about the enhancement. Could the member explain why the general dropout provision was included in the enhancement, but the enhancement for child rearing and people with disabilities was omitted? What was the reason for that? Why would the minister have to go back to try to get this back in when he could have done it right away?

Ms. Karina Gould: Madam Speaker, I would like to focus on why I am really excited about the CPP enhancement. It is really important for me, as a young Canadian, that we encourage young Canadians to save. I have spoken to many of my peers across Burlington and across the country who have told me that they are worried about their retirement because they are not likely going to have access to defined contribution pension plans.

It is incredibly important that we make this enhancement for future generations so that they will have the retirement security they need as they age and move into retirement.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member talked about knocking on the door of a senior in her riding this past weekend. I wonder if she explained to that senior that she would not get any benefits from the CPP enhancement until 30 or 40 years down the road.

Has the government done any analytics of the economic impact of a CPP tax hike? Small business owners in my constituency of Foothills tell me that this will cost jobs. They are not going to be able to afford additional hires when a carbon tax and a CPP tax hike are added on. This will make it hard on employers to expand and grow.

Could my colleague tell me if there have been any studies or analyses done on the impact the CPP tax hike would have on jobs?

• (1135)

Ms. Karina Gould: Madam Speaker, of course research and analysis have been done.

The member's question gives me a great opportunity to mention that my mother is visiting today and is in the gallery. She is a small business owner—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The parliamentary secretary knows that she cannot identify anyone who may or may not be in the audience.

Ms. Karina Gould: Madam Speaker, my mother is a small business owner and she has made it clear to me that she understands this is not a tax but a pension contribution and that it is important for Canadians all across Canada to make sure they have good retirement security. Many small business owners in my community have said the same thing.

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I guess this is our last opportunity make the comments we want to make on this particular bill.

It is obvious, in listening to the government, that it is totally stone deaf to any of the suggestions that might be coming forward. However, that does not mean to say we should not keep trying. There is always a glimmer of hope that someone over there might be listening.

This particular bill, more than any other bill the government has brought forward, emphasizes the difference between Liberals and Conservatives. We have heard time and again from speakers on this side of the House that Liberals believe it is their job to ensure that they take care of people; and how they take care of people is by sticking their hand in their pockets, taking out more taxes, and building up a fund. Among the majority of people I talk to, young people, their first comment about the Canada pension plan is that they have doubts it will even be there when they need it.

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I try my best to assure them that the Canada pension plan does have an investment board that is investing their dollars, I believe, wisely. Certainly, though, there is a greater risk with this enhanced portion of the Canada pension plan, because finance officials told us at the finance committee meeting that the enhanced plan has something like a four times or five times higher risk than the current plan, because it is predicated on a certain return on investment. The current plan is primarily funded by employer and employee contributions.

We have to rely on a continued strong investment by the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board for this to be sustainable down the road. I am confident that board is the right investment tool, but we have all seen what has happened in the past, relative to the economic downturns. It needs to be acknowledged that this is a much higher risk plan than the current plan that exists today.

Getting back to the basic differential of Conservatives and Liberals, during the past 10 years a number of initiatives were taken by the Conservative Party when it was in government to help Canadians save for the future. However, they were to help Canadians not force Canadians. The Conservative government brought forward a proposal to double the amount of money that one could put into a tax-free savings account. What was one of the first initiatives of the new socialist Liberal government? It was to roll that back.

The government also talked about allowing Canadians to voluntarily contribute into a Canada pension plan enhancement. That, again, has been tossed by the wayside.

The other thing that the government is failing to realize—and in fact I would say it is being disingenuous to young people—is that we have a hard-working, young, entrepreneurial, millennial population in this country who understand they need to save. The government continues to kind of paint them all with the same brush, saying that somehow people are not saving.

Young people I know are investing in ways that can ensure that their future retirement funds will be there. They do not want the government taking money out of their pockets, and then the government, through the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board, running that high risk of investing their money.

The government is standing up, and I heard it again from the previous speaker, and saying that young people cannot be trusted to save for the future. I am quoting what I think I just heard from the previous speaker: the government cannot let Canadians live in uncertainty.

We live in uncertainty every day. Comments like that are disingenuous to Canadians, to young Canadians, and these members who make those statements, frankly, should be ashamed of themselves.

• (1140)

I want to get back to the basic difference between Conservative views of the way Canada operates and the Liberal view.

We have heard an awful lot about small business. That particular member who just spoke may very well have been talking to some different small businesses in the greater Toronto area, but the businesses that came before the finance committee from across this

country—whether it was the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, whether it was Canadian taxpayers, whether it was chambers of commerce, or whether it was small businesses as we travelled across the country listening to their concerns—are very concerned about this extra cost that is being added to their bottom line. That is not even taking into account such things as the carbon tax, which is going to be coming into effect right around the same time.

I know in the case of Alberta, we have a situation where the government is increasing the minimum wage to \$15 by 2018. It is this piling-on effect that government does not seem to take into account for small business. It will readily admit that small business is the creator of jobs in this country. If the government were imposing a carbon tax, imposing higher taxes for Canada pension plan, and at the same time, honouring the commitment it made in the election campaign to reduce small business tax, then maybe we could think about supporting some of these initiatives. However, it reneged on the promise to cut the small business tax, and now, it is layering on tax increases.

I think the government will pay the price down the road because small businesses are not going to create the jobs. Again, it is government thinking by the Liberals that, somehow, government creates jobs. That will eventually do the government in.

I would like to summarize what we have been through over the past period of time.

We have had a finance minister who has brought in a budget that did not even come close to his leader's election campaign promise of a small deficit of \$10 billion.

The Liberal election promise was also that within this mandate it would balance the budget. We have seen no signs of that.

In fact, my colleague who is the finance critic has asked the Minister of Finance at finance committee—I think it is up to 12 times now, including yesterday—when the budget will be balanced. The finance minister has no idea when the budget is going to be balanced. I think he is waiting for the next promise from the Prime Minister. There may be some help on the way. I wonder if we are not going to start to take some lessons from some foreign countries that were ruled by former dictators, because a lot of what I am seeing is the government starting to look like some of these foreign dictators, because we have not only these initiatives that are being pushed through relative to tax increases, but we also have a government that decides, if it cannot get its own way, to bring in closure. We have seen that again today. Is this the ninth or tenth time in a short sitting of the House of Commons that closure has been brought in?

We saw the Liberal members shutting down any debate at the finance committee. The NDP member for Hamilton Mountain attempted to get something on the table. He was unsuccessful because one of the members of the committee called for adjournment and, with the majority of the committee in favour, the committee adjourned. We had, I think, about 15 minutes to talk about this bill at committee stage. Now the government turns around and brings in closure.

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I think the government has to take a strong, hard look at itself and ask what kind of government it is offering to Canadians. It keeps talking about looking after Canadians' future.

I think one of the things it should be looking after is the ability for all of us, as representatives of our constituents, to have the opportunity to make these comments in this assembly and try to ensure that, if something is not happening that we believe is in the best of interest of Canadians, we have the opportunity to express ourselves. The current government is taking it away from every one of the members in this assembly.

I will not support this legislation.

• (1145)

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I commend my colleague for his impassioned speech. He spoke about our side of the House not trusting our youth to save. It is not a case of trusting them or not; it is a case of whether they have the ability to save, given the climate that exists today.

If you come to my rural riding in eastern Ontario and—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is probably best not to use the word “you” as opposed to just addressing the Chair. Thank you.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Madam Speaker, I apologize to my colleague.

When I travel around my riding, I meet so many seniors who under the present system are living in poverty because that system does not support them. Today, given the precarious nature of employment, given the high level of student debt, and the high cost of living, there is an inability for individuals to save because they do not have the opportunity to be able to. They are just trying to make ends meet.

For the member across, is it not better to help them protect their future by investing in that future rather than just leaving it to chance that things are going to improve and they are going to have the ability to save?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That question is through me, of course.

The hon. member for Calgary Signal Hill.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Madam Speaker, this is just typical Liberal speak, where we have to make sure we have everyone protected. I understand now why our Prime Minister likes some of the foreign leaders so much because we are moving toward that kind of a government.

I am 67 years old. I was fortunate enough to live in the generation that created the greatest wealth this country has ever seen. I have confidence in the generations that come behind us that they will do even better than we did. For the government to say that young people cannot or will not save for their future is disingenuous to our young millennials in this country today.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his comments and I think that they demonstrate that there is indeed no stalemate on the issue of debating the Canada pension plan enhancements, which has been portrayed today as a reason for time allocation. I was appalled to hear that at the committee level we apparently had only 15

minutes of debate about this. I am appalled. I know that the hon. member and I may not agree on the direction and the purpose of CPP, but I would like to hear about the issue. If we are going to discuss enhancements, was the member disconcerted that persons who are living on disability pensions until their regular pension kicks is a fairly regular situation? Was he at all concerned that people, especially women, who opted out of the workplace so that they could rear children for a period of time were left out and that this was not explored—

• (1150)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Calgary Signal Hill.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Madam Speaker, I share the member's concerns about the government putting the boots to debate because that is exactly what did happen at the committee stage and it is happening here in the House as well.

The position of the Conservative Party in the official opposition is simply this. We do not agree with the bill and so we are not supporting any clause within it. That is our position because we believe there are better ways for people to save other than the government sticking its hand into the pockets of taxpayers and small business employers.

Ms. Karina Gould (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's speech and I appreciate that many millennials like to save. They want to, but I wonder what my hon. colleague would say to my peers who are between the ages of 25 and 35 today, who are making between \$35,000 and \$40,000 a year and just do not have that extra income to put away, and are worried because they do not have stable employment, they do not have a pension, and this is great way for them to make sure that they will have some retirement security moving forward.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Madam Speaker, no one knows about young people who are unemployed more than us as representatives of the city of Calgary, so I am not going to take any advice from someone from the Liberal side who has every opportunity to help some of these young people who are not employed, to create jobs in this country by doing some things that we have mentioned such as cutting the small business tax. If Liberals cut the small business tax as they promised in the election campaign, then businesses would create jobs, not the government and thereby people would be working and saving for their own future.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before we resume debate, I know there was some question about how I had pick the speakers. I want to remind the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, in case he was not in the House when this occurred, this is an extract from *Debates* of November 3, 2016. The Deputy Speaker at the time said:

As Chair occupants, we recognize that the time for questions and comments is often the most valuable time for an exchange between members. In accordance with the procedures and practices, we will do our best to ensure that time is generally afforded to the members of the parties who are not associated with the member who has just spoken but not to the exclusion of that party....

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That is the way we will do it. We will also be attentive to members who are particularly present during the day and paying attention to the debate to ensure that as many members as possible can participate....

It goes on. I just want to indicate that if there are a lot of people rising from the party that has not been making the speech, those people are being recognized first. If no one is getting up, we will of course recognize members from the party that has just made the speech.

If the member is not in agreement with that, I will certainly take that to the Deputy Speaker and the Speaker of the House.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Surrey Centre.

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the goal of a stronger Canada pension plan is truly a high priority that is shared by Canadians from coast to coast to coast, with 75% in favour of a stronger public pension plan. By making this priority a reality, we have the opportunity to demonstrate what Canadian federalism can accomplish when governments work together openly and constructively.

Helping Canadians achieve their goal of a safe, secure, and dignified retirement is a key part of the Government of Canada's plan to help the middle class and those working hard to join it. As part of this plan, the Government of Canada is committed to working with all provinces and territories to enhance the CPP to ensure that future generations of Canadians can count on a strong public pension plan in their retirement years. This is precisely what we are doing by enhancing the plan.

We know that middle-class Canadians are working harder than ever before, and many are worried that they will not have set aside enough money for their retirement. The Department of Finance has examined whether families nearing retirement are adequately prepared. About one in four Canadian families approaching retirement, or 1.1 million families, are at risk of not saving enough to maintain their current standard of living, and the risk is highest for middle-class and middle-income families. Families without workplace pension plans are at an even greater risk of under-saving for retirement. In fact, one-third of these families are at risk.

We are aware of the need to help Canadians save more. Saving more will mean that they are more confident about their future and about their ability to secure a dignified retirement.

There is a particular concern regarding younger Canadians who tend to have higher debt than in previous generations and who, in most cases, will live longer than in previous generations. They face the challenge of securing adequate retirement savings at a time when fewer expect to work in jobs that will include a workplace pension plan. Further, a prolonged period of low interest rates could mean that young workers will face lower returns on their retirement savings, which means that they may need to save even more than in the past.

I am proud to be able to say that we are delivering on our commitment to help Canadians save more for retirement. Working in close collaboration and towards a common purpose with governments across Canada, we reached a historic agreement that would give Canadians a more generous public pension to help them retire with dignity.

The challenge that governments faced in crafting an enhanced CPP was that the current plan was not accumulating benefits quickly enough to meet the future needs of Canadians in a world where workplace pension coverage continues to decline. The enhancement that the Canadian governments have agreed to does two things to address this.

First, it would boost the share of annual earnings received during retirement from one-quarter to one-third. For example, an individual making \$50,000 a year in today's dollars over his or her working life would receive about \$16,000 per year in retirement, instead of roughly \$12,000 a year today.

Second, the enhancements would increase by 14%, which is the maximum income range covered by the CPP. This means that, once fully in place, the enhanced CPP would increase the maximum CPP retirement benefit by about 50%. In other words, the current maximum of \$13,110 would, in today's dollar terms, increase by nearly \$7,000 under the enhanced CPP, bringing the maximum benefit up to almost \$20,000. The legislation also includes enrichments to CPP disability and survivor benefits.

For most Canadians, these increased benefits would come from just a 1% increase in their contribution rates. We are also making sure to give individuals and their employers plenty of time to adjust to the modest increase, making sure that it is small and gradual, and it would start in 2019.

Our plan is also fiscally sound. The chief actuary released a report in late October that confirmed that the contribution and benefit levels proposed under the CPP enhancement, agreed by Canada's governments on June 20, would be sustainable for the long term, ensuring that Canadian workers could count on an even stronger, secure CPP for years to come.

● (1155)

What does Bill C-26 mean for Canadians? First and foremost, enhancing the CPP means there will be more money from the CPP waiting for Canadians when they retire. This means they will be able to focus on the things that matter, like spending time with their families, rather than worrying about how to make ends meet. It will mean a reduction in the share of families at risk of not saving enough for retirement, as well as a reduction in the degree to which Canadians are under-saving.

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The Department of Finance has estimated that by supporting and ensuring royal assent of Bill C-26, parliamentarians would have the opportunity to reduce the share of families at risk of not having adequate retirement savings by one-quarter, from 24% to 18%, when taking into account income from the three pillars of the retirement income system and savings from other financial and non-financial assets. Therefore, the enhanced CPP builds on the core existing CPP benefits. It does so in a smart, carefully targeted, and effective way that reflects the extensive research that governments brought to the table in crafting this enhancement for the benefit of working Canadians. Taken together, it is a comprehensive package that will increase CPP benefits while striking an appropriate balance between short-term economic considerations and long-term gain.

I would encourage hon. members to support the timely passage of Bill C-26 through the House to help the government increase the confidence of Canadians in their future.

• (1200)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the one problem I am having is justifying the fact that even the finance department that the Liberal government looks to for advice is indicating that there will be a reduction in employment of 0.04% to 0.07%, or about 1,000 jobs per year over the next 10 years, for a loss of 10,000 jobs in total to the economy.

When we speak to our constituents, we often hear owners of small businesses say this tax will certainly have a negative impact on their ability to expand, with no opportunity to hire more people, and that in some cases it will lead to layoffs.

Could my colleague comment on the immediate negative impact this measure would have on jobs in Canada?

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, it will have the opposite effect. Small businesses are the ones with the least ability to provide adequate pension or retirement programs and plans for their employees. It is exactly for those type of employees that this new enhancement will be of the most benefit and provide the most security, because it is the small employers who are not necessarily able to provide company retirement pension plans. Therefore, it is even more paramount that we adequately secure the retirement of employees who are working in small businesses. This enhancement will come at a very low cost and help small businesses secure employment for their employees, secure retirement for them, and provide a benefit that exceeds what they were offering before. I think it is a better inducement for them to retain their employees, and I do not think there will be an adverse effect on their employment abilities.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the issue of reforming the CPP is very important for this country. The New Democrats are committed to doing whatever it takes to get a good process in place.

Our concern is with respect to the government's declaring a stalemate with respect to our asking questions about the real and clear problems in this bill. There is a danger of government slipping very quickly into arrogance when it comes up with a bill that has problems, rather than the government working with the opposition.

I am talking about the dropout provisions that particularly target young women who step out of the workforce to have children, or

persons with disabilities. Young women suffer time and again in the workplace because they are the ones who step out to have children. In the 1977 changes to CPP under the then Liberal government of Pierre Trudeau, we had provisions that identified the need to make sure that women would not be affected when they stepped out of the workforce. However, the current government has decided to exclude these provisions.

Therefore, I am asking my hon. colleague this. Why is the government shutting down debate on such an important provision that we can fix if we work collectively?

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, there has been very rigorous and thorough debate on this bill. I believe there have been well over 70 or 75 speeches on this bill on both sides of the House. It has been rigorously debated and thoroughly fleshed out. It is also important sometimes for the government to move forward with its agenda. It would be in the best interests of the House to get on with a vote.

I have heard a lot of debate in the House on this bill and a lot of concerns from the opposition and members of the New Democratic Party have been very valid, but the case has been made and it is time for a vote, appropriately timed, as debate may end shortly.

• (1205)

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned after closure has been imposed on debate that the member can recommend that we accept this bill as written when it would discriminate against women raising children and people with disabilities. How can he support such a bill that would cause an injustice in the future?

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, it is a very tough situation and a lot of the concerns have merit, but when an agreement is reached, with the buy-in of all the provinces, we have to look at the whole picture. Perhaps this may come up again. I agree that the issue of people with disabilities and women raising children is valid, but the overall concept of this enhancement would make Canadians much better off.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to Bill C-26 today. However, I find it unfortunate that our speaking time has been cut short. I became involved in politics to represent the constituents of Jonquière. I took on this role to uphold everyone's democratic rights. Whether we agree with the government or not, we are here to ask questions on behalf of Canadians in order to determine where our society is going.

First of all, I would like to thank my colleague from Hamilton Mountain for his excellent work on Bill C-26. He worked very hard, especially in committee, to raise the issues that I will discuss in my speech.

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This bill would amend the Canada Pension Plan Act to incorporate the recent agreement reached between the provinces to enhance CPP benefits. While a better outcome was possible, since the full effect of the changes will not be felt for another 49 years, our young Canadians will benefit. Unless something changes along the way, when my young boys reach retirement age they will benefit from the changes we are debating in the House. I have to say that, as a mother, I find it a bit funny to say that. My boys will get older and benefit from this measure.

We must now see immediate action to help those seniors and Canadians on the cusp of retirement who will not benefit from these changes. The government must build on the momentum of this agreement and take steps to improve long-term retirement security for today's workers. It is all well and good to have changes that will come into effect in 49 years, but there is no denying that many seniors who are about to retire or who are now retired are grappling with financial insecurity. Unfortunately, they do not have enough income to live on, in other words to pay rent or eat properly. Still today in my riding, some seniors cannot afford a decent retirement home when the time comes to move into one.

Retirement insecurity is reaching a crisis level in Canada, as many Canadians do not have adequate savings to maintain their lifestyle upon retirement. A large part of this problem is fuelled by the erosion of workplace pension plans. Six in ten working Canadians have no private pension plan.

The NDP supports the bill, even though we feel that it does not quite meet Canadians' expectations regarding CPP reform. New Democrats, along with many in the labour movement and groups working for the rights of seniors and retirees, have long advocated that benefits be increased from replacing 25% of a worker's pre-retirement income to 50% of pre-retirement income. However, this legislation has offered up a very modest increase, from 25% to 33% of pre-retirement income.

Although we do like to see an increase, we feel that the amount is wholly inadequate, especially in terms of ensuring that our seniors do not have to live in poverty and can retire with the dignity and quality of life they deserve.

While many would be happy to finally see some changes to the plan and some increases in benefits, there are many who will be very unhappy. Those are the people who will see very little or no benefit from the changes presented in this bill. The government needs to leverage the energy generated by this agreement and do what it takes to improve long-term retirement security for today's workers. It must respond to Quebec's concerns about the impact of this enhancement on low-income workers.

The problem for today's seniors is that these pillars are falling behind in terms of enabling seniors to maintain an adequate standard of living. Dramatic increases in the costs of things like electricity and housing are causing great strain on seniors' fixed incomes.

• (1210)

Failing to take action now will have a great social cost, forcing many seniors into poverty. The number of seniors forced to use food banks will rise dramatically.

We talk about young moms a lot in the House. I want to talk about my best friend, Nathalie. Since I was elected, we have not spent as much time together as we used to because of my new responsibilities, but my friend Nathalie has been on my mind since Bill C-26 was introduced. She is a young mom who, together with her husband, decided to raise her children, to be there for them and to stay home with them, but also to work on her own personal growth by doing other things, such as volunteering with her local farm women's group.

I really admire this young woman because she is caring for her children and making a good life for them. She and her husband made some tough choices. She stays home, which means less income for the family, but the two of them feel it is very important to provide a good quality of life to their two young daughters.

However, I am disappointed by a major flaw in the bill. I fail to understand why the government simply will not help mothers like my friend Nathalie by immediately making the necessary changes. It would be so easy for us to do and it would help these mothers when they retire. Why do we penalize young mothers who decide, together with their spouse, to stay home to raise their children? We are talking about our future generation.

It is great that child care services are available to women like me who have a career. That is wonderful. However, it is not right to penalize women who stay at home to help their children become the adults of tomorrow because a bill fails to meet their needs. That is unacceptable. We must immediately rectify this as part of the new improvements.

It is easy to change a bill. We would just have to change a subclause, two or three lines maybe. Why is the government so bent on penalizing young women? I cannot stand by that.

The Canada pension plan is being improved and will benefit future generations, as I said, including my children, but not for another 49 years. I talked about our seniors earlier and I am quite concerned about what will happen to them now.

My parents are retired. They worked their entire lives to make a decent living in order to be able to pay for their house and groceries and to help me with my children. In fact, my parents look after my children when I am here in the House and am working on behalf of all Canadians. I am proud to be here for them and to do this work every day. However, when I meet with people from my riding of Jonquière and see the inequalities among them, I start asking myself serious questions. We have to find ways to take action now.

The NDP is recommending further increases to the GIS and the OAS, a national pharmacare program, and programs to enhance home care and palliative care.

Government Orders

We have much more work to do to ensure that workers can retire with adequate incomes and access to the services they need to have a good quality of life. The NDP will continue to work with our labour allies and others to improve the lives of Canadian seniors and retirees.

I will end my speech there. I hope that the government will listen, especially to women, like my friend Nathalie, and our seniors. I am thinking of Ms. Tremblay who devoted her entire life to looking after her granddaughter, a person with reduced mobility who needed very special care. We must consider these people because they, too, will need us in retirement. It is our responsibility and our duty as parliamentarians. It is also the government's duty.

• (1215)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is listening to Canadians, whether it is to increase the guaranteed income supplement, reduce the age of retirement from 67 to 65, or the bill before us today. The bill was achieved because of the co-operation and strong national leadership. Governments of all political stripes, even the New Democratic government in Alberta, signed on, recognizing the value of the legislation.

The change that the member is requesting is not as easy as she seems to imply, and the NDP knows that. The Minister of Finance has clearly indicated that he will bring this topic forward at the next discussion among his cohorts at the provincial level.

My question for the member is with respect to the issue of trying to get the bill passed. Would the member not recognize that if it were up to the official opposition, the Conservative Party, the bill would never pass? Does she believe we should succumb to what the Conservatives want on this bill?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

We agree on one part of the bill. However, I am wondering why the government did not introduce a comprehensive bill that includes women, mothers who decide to stay at home to raise their children. That is a full-time job. When they retire, they will not be able to collect the new enhanced benefits. Why are they being penalized?

Before introducing a bill, the government could have assessed the overall situation. My colleague from Hamilton has already proposed amendments and he made suggestions in committee. Why not make these changes now instead of later? We have a job to do. I choose to believe that, before introducing bills or amendments, the government takes every step possible to ensure that they are fully in line with the needs of our families.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for my colleague.

I am troubled by the government's decision to limit this debate. There are clearly a number of problems with the bill, particularly with regard to the fact that people with disabilities and young women are being excluded from the enhancement. This could have a significant impact, particularly for women who depend on the drop-

out provision when they leave the labour force to raise their children. I find that odd since the Prime Minister claims that his is a feminist government.

My question is simple. How can a government that claims to be feminist move forward with a bill that undermines the retirement of young women in Canada?

Ms. Karine Trudel: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

That was 2015. This is 2016, and the government calls itself feminist. We have had to set the record straight on that a number of times in the House.

The new enhanced benefit in Bill C-26 will not help young women.

The same applies on the labour front. So much has been done in pursuit of pay equity, but the bill will not take effect for another 18 months. Pay equity is more than 40 years overdue.

How can the government call itself feminist? "Feminist" is a great little word, but the government has to walk the talk. I think that Bill C-26 makes it clear the government is not really feminist.

• (1220)

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up on my colleague's question.

The Liberals call themselves feminists, but they also say they are putting young people first and talk about how important it is to listen to them and meet their needs.

My husband is currently at home. What will happen when he is old enough to collect retirement benefits? He has been at home for two years. He will not be allowed to exclude those two years from his pension calculation. The Liberal bill is further jeopardizing the future of young people.

Ms. Karine Trudel: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Her remarks are interesting. What I forgot to mention is that more and more young fathers are playing an active role. I want to emphasize this, because it is becoming increasingly common, which is great.

Bill C-26 does not encourage young parents, whether the father or mother, to stay home. The bill ignores fathers and mothers who choose to stay home to raise their children. In those cases, the enhanced benefits will not be calculated, which I think is appalling. This does nothing to help our young people create a better future for themselves and make good decisions regardless of their financial situation in order to give their children a good upbringing. How people help their children and the values they want to instill remain their choice.

[*English*]

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour and privilege to speak to Bill C-26, which I agree is one of the most important bills of this government, not just for the people of my generation but also for the next generation.

Government Orders

There are 11 million working Canadians without a workplace pension plan. As well, if we talk to people in the food banks today, they will report that a lot of working families are availing the help of the food banks.

When we combine the fact that 11 million working Canadians are without a workplace pension plan and a lot of working families are going to food banks for help, we know that when these families retire, they will retire in poverty.

We already have a lot of issues with the growing number of seniors. Just to give one example, in eastern Ontario, 2.5% of the patients account for close to 35% of the total hospital expenses. In this 2.5% of patients, close to 50% of them are seniors. The issues related to seniors are already costing us a lot. We have to take adequate steps so the seniors of the future years are well covered.

This bill, an act to amend Canada pension plan, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act, and the Income Tax Act, as I mentioned earlier, is the most important thing. Let us summarize what the bill would do.

The bill proposes to amend the Canada pension plan to increase the amount of the retirement pension as well as survivors and disability pensions and the post-retirement benefit, subject to the amount of additional contributions made and the number of years for which those contributions are made; increase the maximum level of pensionable earnings by 14% as of 2025; provide for the making of additional contributions beginning in 2019; provide for the creation of additional Canada pension plan accounts and the accounting of funds in relation to it; and, finally, include the additional contributions and increased benefits in the financial review provisions of the act, and authorize the Governor in Council to make regulations in relation to those provisions.

I know this on its own cannot operate and deliver the results, so there are other related acts that need to be amended. Therefore, part 2 of the bill seeks amendments to the Income Tax Act to increase the working income tax benefit and to provide a deduction for additional employee contributions.

The first part of the act also proposes to amend addition Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act to provide for the transfer of funds between the Investment Board and the additional Canada pension plan account, and to provide for the interpretation of financial statements in relation to amounts managed by the Investment Board in relation to the additional contributions and increased benefits.

As I mentioned earlier, middle-class Canadians are working harder than ever, but many are worried they will not have enough money for their retirement. A lot of working Canadians have no workplace pension plan. Each year, fewer and fewer Canadians have workplace pension plans on which to fall back. For this reason, we made a commitment to Canadians to strengthen the Canada pension plan to help them achieve their goal of a strong, secure and stable retirement.

Earlier this year, Canada's Minister of Finance released a historic agreement to make meaningful changes to the CPP, an example of federalism at its best.

• (1225)

The more than one quarter of Canadian families nearing retirement, about 1.1 million families, who are facing a drop in their standard of living will be able to retire in dignity as a result of this enhancement. This deal will boost how much Canadians will get from their pensions, from one quarter of their earnings now to nearly one third, which in my opinion is quite significant and is a necessary change we need to address.

To make sure these changes are affordable, we will phase them in slowly over seven years, from 2019 to 2025, so the impact is small and gradual. Every Canadian deserves a secure and dignified retirement after a lifetime of hard work. Through this announcement, we have taken a powerful step to help make that happen.

There are certain facilities that are available to plan for retirement. One is the RRSP account, which is available to every Canadian. We note that there is a huge gap. A lot of Canadians are eligible to make contributions to those accounts but are unable to make contributions because of the cost of living.

One of the ideas a friend from the opposite side of the House pointed to is financial literacy. While I agree that financial literacy is an important component in achieving this result, we also need reasonable, tangible ways and means to make this possible.

To conclude, I repeat, there are 11 million working Canadians without a workplace pension plan. A lot of food banks are seeing working Canadians. Keeping that in mind, I think we should all support Bill C-26.

• (1230)

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one thing I did not hear the member talk about was jobs.

He talked about the middle class and said that “middle-class Canadians are working harder than ever”. He also talked about workplace pension plans to fall back on not being there as much as they should be. However, the government's policy is to cancel jobs. With its policies on energy, it has destroyed my area in southeast Saskatchewan by ruining good-paying, middle-class jobs that had sustainable pension plans. They are being wiped out because of the policies of the government.

How does the government sit there and talk about putting in a CPP program that will not support these people, because they have no jobs?

Mr. Chandra Arya: Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member opposite brought up the issue of jobs. We are making historic investments in infrastructure in this country. All the investments we make will go toward creating new quality jobs.

Government Orders

Here is a fact. There is something on the job front taking place. Many Canadians have to manage with not just one job but more than one job simultaneously. This is going to continue in the future. We have to take steps today so that when young and middle-age Canadians retire, they will have an adequate pension to retire on.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to make one point and then ask one question. I think it is important that much of the discussion from the government, when we are talking about pension benefits, relates to the maximum pension benefits people will get. However, only about 10% of the folks who actually receive CPP get the maximum benefit. Generally, the statistics are that almost three times as many men as women get access to those maximum benefits.

Knowing that fact, was the member not dismayed to hear that women who leave the workforce to raise children and those living on disability incomes are not going to receive the maximum benefit, as we originally thought, as they were excluded from the bill?

Mr. Chandra Arya: Mr. Speaker, I recognize that the bill can always be improved, and I hope that the finance minister, in his next meeting with his provincial counterparts, will look into some of the shortcomings of the bill and that they will be addressed in the future.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member knows that according to McKinsey & Company, 83% of Canadian households are on track to maintain their current living standards in retirement. Statistics Canada says that the share of Canadian seniors living on low incomes, which I think is called the LICO, has gone from 29% in 1970 to 3.7% today. In fact, not just seniors but regular Canadians are doing a great job of saving by themselves. They do not need big government intervention to tell them how to save.

What will happen, though, with this CPP increase, this tax on payrolls, is savings substitution. The saving that would have happened in the private sector will be moved over to the public sector and controlled by the government.

What does the member have to say about savings substitution, the phenomenon in economics whereby instead of saving by themselves, people expect the government to do it for them?

Mr. Chandra Arya: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member forgot the number of problems faced by seniors today. The hon. member seems to indicate that everything is so good that we do not need this bill. I have to completely disagree with him.

Today, in Ottawa alone, there are 10,000 people on the waiting list for affordable housing. We understand that a lot of seniors today face problems in maintaining their day-to-day living. Seniors of tomorrow, as I mentioned, will have a much bigger problem.

•(1235)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak to Bill C-26, a bill to enhance the Canada pension plan.

I want to start by lamenting, as I did this morning, time allocation, which is bringing this debate to a premature end. I think this is one of those times, particularly with the degree of controversy about the drop-out provisions in the bill and how they will unequally impact

women in this country, when we really should have more time for debate and more time to ensure that we have all the facts.

I want to take a moment to say that if there is anything sadder than watching Liberals fall short of their promises, it is the Conservatives jumping on them for doing about one-tenth of what the Conservatives did when they had power. The use of time allocation was constant in the 41st Parliament.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I know that many who are currently heckling me were not here in the 41st Parliament, but I can assure them that we had no time to turn around before there was yet another time allocation motion. The Conservatives broke through all historical records. However, this does not excuse the Liberals for doing the same thing.

I would urge members on both sides of the House to consider what we really want in terms of parliamentary decorum and in terms of being able to address bills and get them through the House in an expeditious way while also ensuring that we do not trample on the rights of each of us here as members of Parliament to do the work we were elected to do, which is to study the legislation, provide suggestions, work together, and produce what the people of Canada want. They want parliamentarians who see the big picture and are prepared to put their heads together to come up with better legislation by taking the time that is needed.

Time allocation is in no one's interest here. I very much regret that the current government has brought it in now, for the ninth time. Again, for those who live in glass houses, I will remind them that it was 100 times that time allocation was brought in during the 41st Parliament.

I urge the Liberals in this place to consider what the threshold is against which they strive to achieve their goals. I would urge them not to think that their goal is to be better on any issue—the environment, climate, the treatment of veterans, criminal justice, Bill C-51, parliamentary decorum, the use of time allocation—than what Prime Minister Harper did. I want to set a really ambitious goal for them: Do better than what Prime Minister Mulroney did.

Obviously, I did not agree with everything done by the Progressive Conservative majority back in the 1980s, but I think if members go back and look at the use of time allocation, the number of whipped votes, and the treatment of issues and use that as a benchmark, they will find that they have to set their sights a good deal higher than trying to do better than the prime minister in the 41st Parliament.

Turning to the specifics of Bill C-26, I wish it did include—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Elizabeth May: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, but I am having trouble speaking through the noise.

Government Orders

I wish that Bill C-26 dealt with another pension issue. There is an omission, and I hope that the Minister of Finance will get back to it in the spring budget. It is an egregious situation that affects a minority of pensioners for sure, but they are the very people we should do the most to honour. These are people receiving pensions who, through the Superannuation Act, are deprived of spousal benefits if they are veterans, retired service persons, retired RCMP members, and other retired categories of public servants and have remarried over the age of 60. They are deprived of spousal benefits on their death.

This is a terrible injustice to a lot of constituents in my community of Saanich—Gulf Islands. I know that a lot of other members of Parliament are aware of this. It is due to the most anachronistic of all pension rules. It goes back to the Boer War. It was called the “gold-digger” clause.

I do not mind saying that I am 62. I do not feel that I am so far along with one foot in the grave that the gold-digger clause makes sense. The gold-digger clause in the Boer War was that if a soldier came back from the Boer War and remarried over the age of 60, the only possible reason anyone would have married one of these soldiers would have been to get their hands on their benefits when they passed away.

Times have changed. Very healthy, vigorous adults who have a lot of life left get married over the age of 60. I have one such serviceman in my riding who received the highest medals of honour, including the Legion of Honour from the French government, for his service in the Second World War. He is now over 90, and every day I see him, he reminds me to please do something about this terrible injustice. He does not want to leave his wife destitute. Therefore, I flag that again for the Minister of Finance.

● (1240)

Overall, the Green Party supports the bill. We support the fact that it is expanding the most reliable and consistent way in which we can ensure that seniors in Canada have adequate savings for retirement. The Canada pension plan is the most reliable and the most sustainable of what is available.

RRSPs, for example, are a good program. I know many of us will pay into it, but the registered retirement savings plan appeals primarily to those Canadians who already have discretionary income to put into an RRSP. That taxable benefit to higher wage earners costs the tax system quite a lot of money. If we look at it as a public policy question, we see it is not clear that the RRSPs make sense.

The Canada pension plan makes abundant sense, and we know right now that two-thirds of Canadians no longer have any workplace pension. Workplace pensions are disappearing. More and more Canadians have inadequate savings for retirement, so the workplace pension plans are shrinking at the same time as we have what is sometimes called the grey tsunami. We know we have a demographic with many more people about to enter retirement.

By the way, I commend the government for returning the retirement age to 65; that is commendable. However, we do need to enhance CPP benefits. There is no question that overall the bill is going in the right direction. We know that right now the median value of retirement assets for Canadians between age 55 and 64, with

no accrued employer pension benefit, is under \$4,000. We know we need to augment the CPP. Only one in five Canadians have adequately saved for their retirement.

It is all well and good for some members of this place to say that Canadians should plan ahead and it is their responsibility to figure out how to save for their retirement. This is a very small cost of a public program, with the cost split between the employer and the employee, to make sure that people have adequate savings for retirement. The reason people do not put aside money for retirement is generally that they lack disposable income because the other costs of daily life eclipse their ability to set aside money for retirement.

I urge my friends on the other side of the House to embrace expansion of CPP. I agree with the analysis of the Canadian Association of Retired Persons. It does really good work on public policy and commends the bill as well.

That brings me to the point where I wish we had time in this place and I wish the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development could have provided, at committee, by accepting amendments, a fix to what looked initially like an oversight, and that is the dropout provisions for disability and child rearing to ensure gender parity. Both ministers have said that they can fix this problem by renegotiating terms with the provinces. I wish they had fixed it while they had the chance at committee. They still have the opportunity to fix it, if they are willing to accept amendments when we get through this process. However, at this point there has been no sign of a willingness to accept amendments, and we are left hoping for public pressure to continue what both ministers say they are willing to do by changing the terminology in the negotiated agreements with the provinces.

It is very hard to understand how this oversight has not been fixed already. The conclusion that my friends in the NDP have reached appears an inescapable conclusion. On the evidence we have before us, it appears that the bill will disadvantage women for no apparent reason other than an oversight. I did have a brief moment to discuss this with the Minister of Finance earlier this morning, and his position is that to do what the NDP asks now would result in a transfer of wealth from poorer women to wealthier women because of the way the calculation works. Unfortunately, I do not have the full facts on this. I had a 30-second conversation with the Minister of Finance, which is what happens when there is time allocation and inadequate time for debate.

I am left with the dreadful conclusion that, with the chance to bring in a really strong bill that would have no negatives attached to it, which is what Bill C-26 was when I first read it, it needs to be fixed. The NDP spotted this problem. I commend the NDP for spotting it. With that, I will close.

Government Orders

•(1245)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the words from the leader of the Green Party. She mentioned that the NDP has spotted a problem. There are issues that the Minister of Finance has clearly indicated that he intends to raise going forward. The bill we have before us is a bill that has been negotiated among the different provinces and the national government. Both she and I sat in opposition for many years, watching the Conservatives virtually ignore a very important file to Canadians; that is, an increase to CPP.

The question I have for the member now is this—and I know she is very knowledgeable about the rules and process and so forth of the House. When we have an official opposition that is in complete opposition to a particular bill, and its intention is to kill the bill, would she not agree that sometimes it is necessary to use time allocation as a tool; that if we forfeit that tool and do not use it, ultimately, the official opposition will be able to talk indefinitely, thereby potentially even killing the bill? Would she not, at the very least, acknowledge that, at times, there is a need to use the tool known as time allocation?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I am in a position where I believe it is the role of the House leaders for all the main recognized parties, the Conservatives, the Liberals, the New Democrats. I think time allocation, when used in this place, is a signal of failure of the basic mechanisms of this place. I do not think it should ever be used, with all due respect to my friend the parliamentary secretary.

If we cannot get bills through the House in the normal process—and I do not see great delays in this process on this bill. We have only had eight days, and the government says, “Look, we’ve had eight days”. To the average Canadian and to me, as someone who is trying to stay on top of all legislation in this place—and I know I have been very preoccupied with having the honour of serving on the Special Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reform, but it is not possible to be at committee. I read the bill. I thought I understood it. The NDP spotted this problem, which I think is a real problem. To find time to fix that would be preferable rather than to bring in time allocation.

This example comes more easily from the U.S., so I do not insult anyone here. The Republicans decided in Obama’s first administration, “Whatever he wants, we say ‘no’”. That is not good governance. That is hyper-partisanship.

I hope we never come to that place, in this House.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to put forward a couple of points for her consideration. In order to help current low-income seniors, there are many much more direct mechanisms that put money back into their pockets. I think we did some of them—tax reductions for seniors and expansion of the OAS—and more could be done along those lines. Those kinds of reforms would actually give money back to seniors. They would not involve taking more money away from them for government to control them. I think she knows that we favour a model that emphasizes giving money back to people, and private savings.

One of the biggest advantages, as I see it, to encouraging private savings is that they create a mechanism for people to invest in interim projects. Someone could put money aside, use that money for an education, maybe to buy a home, and then realize the value of that, subsequently; whereas, if there is a government-controlled plan, the money is taken away and is put in a separate fund from which that individual cannot draw, or use at all for interim projects, until retirement.

On that basis, would she not consider that there are more effective alternatives to helping people save for interim projects, as well as for retirement, than just going with this sort of government control, all to a government pot kind of approach that is being put forward in this bill?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I do agree with my friend the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan that there are other ways to more directly help low-income seniors, but that does not escape the fact that the CPP is long overdue for enhancement. We really do need to recognize that.

The parliamentary budget officer, a number of years ago, reviewed it—I think it was in 2011—and found that our CPP planning is one of the most sustainable and durable programs for retirement savings. Expanding it makes sense. At the same time, there could be much more done for low-income seniors. There is no question about it.

I commend one of the things the Harper Conservatives did, which was income splitting on pension benefits. That was a real benefit to many seniors. However, we really need to have more of that top-up for low-income seniors who are in poverty. That could be boosted right away. At the same time, I do support Bill C-26.

•(1250)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today and over the past few days, we have heard the same as we have heard in previous debates on this legislation. The fundamental difference is that ideologies in the chamber become more and more evident every day.

Differences in opinion are good and, in fact, are foundational to our Westminster style of Parliament. However, what we are seeing from the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party is a trend that is deeply troubling. Whether it is the Liberals in government or as individually elected members of Parliament, they still think that they know better than their constituents and all ordinary Canadians. Conservatives believe that Canadians know what is best for them. For the Liberals and NDP to imply that they know better than ordinary Canadians is an insult. Canadians are in the best position to make their financial decisions, and those include decisions related to their retirement.

We saw this difference in perspective most clearly recently when the Liberals clawed back the tax-free savings account contribution limit. The TFSA is a phenomenal vehicle for personal savings. For retirement, it could be used to make a lump-sum mortgage payment, maybe do an urgent home repair, or maybe even finally take that long-awaited vacation, but the important detail is that it is completely tax free.

Government Orders

We have all heard the saying that Liberals have never seen a tax they do not like and the NDP has never seen one it does not want to hike, but if the government thinks it can increase payroll taxes on Canadians because it has decided to blow through its election promise of a supposedly small deficit, which has now grown to over \$30 billion, it can expect strong opposition from the Conservative Party and many other Canadians.

The Liberal government has spent much of its time patting itself on the back for its openness and transparency, but let me share what Canadians actually believe about the CPP and what this legislation would change. Liberals have been slow to correct these misconceptions. So much for transparency.

Forty per cent of Canadians actually think the government pays into their portion of CPP, and nearly three-quarters of Canadians do not realize that current retirees would not benefit from the proposed expansion. In fact, nearly one-quarter of current retirees wrongly believe that they will see larger CPP benefits as a result of the proposed expansion. Most Canadians are not aware that it would take up to 40 years of increased premiums in order for workers to see the full impact of these increases to their CPP benefits. I would like to know what efforts the government is making in addressing these misunderstandings. Will it be open and transparent and point out upfront that it will take 40 years for the additional CPP benefits to be realized?

As a former small business owner, I know the real effects that these CPP premium increases would have on small and medium-sized businesses in Canada. In committee two weeks ago, Ms. Monique Moreau, director of national affairs for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, shared a compelling statement as it relates to the impact on small businesses.

Representing more than 109,000 small and medium-sized businesses, the CFIB is worried about the negative impacts on these businesses. She shared that its monthly poll on small business confidence dropped in September and October, now sitting at 57.7%, as opposed to the 70% where they would like to see it. She said:

Small business owners don't have money hiding under the mattress waiting for government tax hikes. If CPP/QPP is increased, even if it results in higher future benefits, two-thirds of business owners indicated they would feel pressure to freeze or cut salaries, while nearly half would be forced to reduce investments in their businesses. This impact comes at a time when the government is trying to encourage innovation, investment in business, and job creation in small firms.

The results of these changes in CPP premiums might not be as visible in business operations with just a few employees, but if we start to look at businesses with 15 or maybe 20 employees, the costs that these changes would impose could be crippling, causing layoffs, wage freezes, or even closure of businesses.

Ms. Moreau went on to say:

...if employed Canadians had extra money to save for retirement, they would first invest in RRSPs and TFSA's over other savings vehicles such as the CPP/QPP. Small business employers also favour such saving vehicles if they have the opportunity to contribute toward the retirement savings of their employees.

If the government is trying to help Canadians save more for retirement, only 18% of Canadians are choosing mandatory CPP increases. There is a variety of other options available, including reducing taxes, creating new incentives for savings, and allowing employees to voluntarily contribute to their own CPP/QPP. Putting pressure on financial institutions to lower their management fees for retirement savings vehicles is also an important consideration.

● (1255)

It is clear that not only are Canadians for the most part unaware of the changes the government would make to CPP, but those who are aware are misunderstanding the impact of these changes. For those who do understand, the large majority seem to drastically oppose these changes in favour of other measures.

Aaron Wudrick, federal director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, also shared his concerns at committee, noting, as I have, that it is a classic case of government believing that it, rather than Canadians, knows what is best for Canadians. Aaron touched on a very important point in his opening remarks. He said:

It is also important to stress here that, when we are discussing income security for seniors, income support is often conflated with income replacement. CPP, of course, is a program where the yield you receive depends on what you pay in. Enhancing it, therefore, does nothing for people who are not paying very much into it in the first place. It does not give people extra money. It simply shifts the money from the current day into the future.

This is very troubling. We know that household incomes are stagnant and that in many sectors wages are frozen or shrinking. What Canadians do not need is another tax that shrinks their take-home pay. This would have effects on spending and investing habits, and would ultimately hurt our already fragile economy.

Furthermore, it is true that since CPP is geared to income these changes would not help lower-income Canadians. A paper released by the C.D. Howe Institute shows that the Liberals' plan for CPP would not benefit low-income workers. They would see their premiums go up but their net increase in retirement benefits would remain low since higher CPP payments would be offset by clawbacks in GIS benefits. These changes would also not help Canadians who are facing rising unemployment. In fact, it seems like the changes being made today would make life harder for those who are trying to enter their field of work. The Department of Finance analysis shows that the Liberal government's plan to increase CPP would hurt job creation and the economy as a whole. Quoting directly from its information, these changes would reduce employment by 0.04% to 0.07%. That is 1,050 fewer jobs every year, which means, over a 10-year period, 10,000 Canadian jobs that would not be created, as a result of this CPP increase. This is from the Department of Finance.

Do the Liberals really believe that the changes they propose, which would have no benefits today or in the near future and would have minimal benefits for Canadians retiring 40 years from now, are really worth the job losses today and decreased investments for jobs for tomorrow?

Government Orders

In closing, it is worth noting once again that the Liberal Government of Canada does not know what is best for Canadians and that the Liberal government should provide Canadians with all of the choices they deserve in making their own retirement decisions. The government needs to immediately return the annual contribution limit to the tax-free savings account and promote its use through advertising and educational programs. This is a fantastic savings mechanism that does not lock in people's savings that might be needed in case of an emergency, unlike CPP contributions, which they cannot access as needed.

For the benefit of the survival and success of small and medium-sized businesses, I urge my colleagues to reject Bill C-26.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my friend across the way failed to mention the way that this government is looking out for all Canadians, specifically middle-class Canadians in the early years of their life, those working hard today who are looking toward their retirement in the future, as well as seniors who deserve the respect and financial security that they have earned over a lifetime. He failed to mention the Canada child benefit, which not only is lifting hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty in this country but is helping families. In Atlantic Canada alone, it will inject \$600 million into the economy over the next two years. He failed to mention our return to the qualifying age of 65 as when old age security can be sought for people in retirement, and the top-up of the guaranteed income supplement for the lowest-income single seniors.

Why would the member not mention investment in the early years, investment in the late years, and investment in the CPP for hard-working Canadians so that they can enjoy retirement well into the future?

•(1300)

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity this summer to visit New Brunswick and different parts of Atlantic Canada. People in those areas are also concerned about this proposed CPP increase. I spoke to a lady who is the accountant for a number of small and medium-sized businesses and she said unequivocally that increasing CPP premiums from 9.9% to 11.9% would have a drastic negative impact.

I would love to applaud all of the positive initiatives that my colleague suggested but it is hard to do that when I realize that they will come at the expense of my children and grandchildren. They will be paying \$10-billion interest more per year than what is being paid today simply because of this unbelievable supposedly small but rather explosive \$30-billion deficit. If we were not borrowing to finance some of these things I might be able to applaud the government, but under the current circumstances this is not the direction to be going in.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague represents a riding in Ontario and I represent a riding in Alberta. As this discussion has been shaping up over the last few years one of the data points was the ORPP, the provincial precursor to this program. There was a lot of concern among small businesses in Ontario, and we heard it even in Alberta, about what the impact of the ORPP would be and now what the impact of this proposed expanded CPP would be. A lot of data was collected from small businesses that showed what a devastating

impact the new payroll tax had in Ontario and now would have across the country with the federal government essentially applying different areas of the Kathleen Wynne plan to all parts of the country.

Could my colleague tell us a bit more about the impact that these expanded payroll taxes would have on small businesses in his riding and across the country? Maybe he could to some extent draw on the experience of the ORPP and what that means in general for job creators and ordinary working people across this great country.,

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, there is no question that when the Ontario government proposed its enhanced retirement plan specifically for Ontario there was a large push-back. The government heard loud and clear that this was not the way to go. Many small businesses indicated then, as they have now, that this was not the way to go. In a recent news release from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, many small businesses indicated that this was not the way to go, that two-thirds of small businesses would have to freeze or cut salaries, and over one-third say they would have to reduce hours or jobs in response to these increases. That would not change whether it was the ORPP, the Ontario retirement plan, or the CPP.

The troubling part about this question relating to Ontario is that many times in the House over the last few days the Liberals have indicated that they have the approval of all provinces on this. Of course they are going to get approval, and if it is going to be imported anyway, if we are going to do an Ontario one, it is better to have one that is right across the nation. Small and medium-sized businesses in Ontario have spoken clearly: this is going to be devastating for investment in jobs of the future.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to join this debate since this is actually the last time we will be able to have this debate on Bill C-26 in this House.

I want to start with something I used in the last session, a Yiddish proverb. "With money in your pocket, you are wise, and you are handsome, and you sing well too." I am sure the Minister of Finance has a great singing voice. However, this proverb speaks to how money is best left in the pockets of Canadians, of the people who actually earned it through hard work, having a job, either working for themselves or fulfilling someone else's need.

What the government has done today by shutting down debate after a mere eight days does a great disservice both to the discussions so far on this bill and the interventions other members have made. This debate on the Canada pension plan is important. It is with respect to a proposed law that will amend that which will impact Canadians for many generations. Therefore, having 20 days, 25 days, or 30 more days of debate is absolutely worth having on something that will have an impact on future generations 40 years down the line.

Government Orders

I also think it is shameful that the Minister of Finance called this debate a stalemate so far. It is a commentary by a minister of the Crown on the work that we do on behalf of our constituents here to loyally oppose the government's agenda, to bring new ideas, and to raise points for future consideration and possibly for amendments that the government could bring to its own bill, either at committee or second reading, wherever it chooses to do that. Therefore, debate in this House is not a stalemate; it is an enriching process of what I will call crowdsourcing of new ideas. We are the crowd sent here by our constituents to speak to ideas and to offer them up to the government. Therefore, it is not a stalemate, and I very much think the government should realize we are not here as an audience, we are not here to spectate while it passes legislation. Her Majesty the Queen has given us the constitutional authority to loyally oppose, and that is what we will continue to do. Therefore, I very much look forward to the Minister of Finance not using such terminology.

I also want to point out that it was an internal finance document from his own department that said that this bill, the expansion of the CPP, will be a drag on the economy until 2030, and that it will suppress employment growth until 2035. I come from a province where we have a jobs crisis. The Speaker knows this. I had asked for an emergency debate last week on this because 122,000 energy workers are out of work. However, there are very many people who are under-employed, people who have been furloughed. Normally, they have a job, but they are just not being paid, and they are not being captured by the unemployment figures. When people are not working and not earning an income they are not paying into CPP, so it really does not matter. None of this will help any of the people if they do not have a job in Alberta right now because we have a jobs crisis.

There is also an open question that remains unanswered on the administration costs of layering on this new CPP program on top of the old CPP. It is not clear how much that will cost in the long term, over the next 40 years, and how much its management and administration will eat up the savings of Canadians.

Jack Mintz is a very well-respected tax specialist, a former professor, and a former head of the School of Public Policy at the University of Calgary. He wrote a piece entitled, "What the TFSA limit increase really means for future governments". Although that was on TFSAs, he had a lot of great points on savings, and the behaviour and psychology behind saving as well. He brought up the fact that what many future governments will be looking at is a tax rate with a low-interest environment and 100% on inflation-adjusted returns. What we will find is that the tax rate will have a huge impact on the savings themselves, how we save, and what is deducted off our savings, so there is an open question there on people's incomes, how they save, and what they will see on their tax returns. They will get nothing from the CPP on it there.

He went on to say that a one-size-fits-all rule is of little help and that for a lot of Canadians, the need for a comfortable retirement depends entirely on individual circumstances and preferences. That is an important consideration too. Not everyone retires in the same way or with the same model. Not everyone chooses to simply stop working entirely. There are a great many people who choose at 65, 70, 75, or even earlier if they take early retirement, to work part time, and to maybe volunteer in their community or at their faith-based

institution, at a church or at a temple. They may also choose to change career paths later and choose the concept of retirement around 65 years of age to choose a new career they would like to pursue. Therefore, not everyone chooses to simply stop working.

A point I have brought up in previous debate here, and a question I asked one of the members of the Liberal government caucus, is this concept of savings substitution. There is a study by the Fraser Institute that shows that forcing Canadians to save more, using the government's concept of "more", would lead to a decrease in private voluntary savings with little or no increase in overall savings.

• (1305)

Savings substitution is a real danger to both the government's plan, but in general also to our economy and to people's independence from government.

People should be allowed to choose how they retire. They should also be allowed to choose how they save and what type of investment vehicle they want to use. A lot of people have chosen to save in real estate, and real estate has provided the best returns over the last two generations to those who have chosen to go down that path.

One of the very first things my wife and I did was to purchase a condo, because we knew that would get us onto the property ladder. It allows people to save. They put aside money because they are trying to pay off mortgage interest and trying to put money away toward the principal. It is a mechanism that allows them to choose saving, but to choose it in the way they want to do it.

When the previous Conservative government introduced TFSAs, then doubled the maximum amount people could put away, it was a way of showing Canadians they could choose another model to save on their own, one that is tax free. We should stop taxing the savings of Canadians and forcing them to put more toward this layered CPP on top of another CPP. The administration fees for this are another form of taxation. We send money to Ottawa, to the government departments for some work to be done. That is a form of taxation. That is what our taxes go toward.

Building equity in housing has consistently been the best thing for saving, for youth especially. By buying a property they are getting onto that saving ladder.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the rate of return. The annual rate of return, reported by the CPP Investment Board, is actually quite low, and the younger one is, the worse off one is. For those who nominally put money into the CPP because they were forced to do so back in the 1960s and 1970s, they will get the best rate of return. I look at the pages in this chamber. They will have the worst rate of return. My generation and their generation will be worse off because the rate of return is so low, sometimes falling below 2%. That is because of record low interest rates, which are really driving this low rate of return. Also, administration fees cannot help but be higher.

Government Orders

No one cries for a job that is never created. No one cries for an investment return that never happens. What we always talk about here is the give and take, this job here or that job there, the taxation of incomes on one side and how government chooses to spend it, versus the individual who chooses to spend it in a certain way.

What the government is doing with the CPP increase is substituting for the person's choice on how they will save. That substitution will have worse results at the end of the day, especially for the next generation, because the rate of return will be so low. If someone chooses to invest in a property or in investments where they could earn a higher rate of return than the government is able to achieve, why can a Canadian not make that choice? Sure, the government will say it is one size fits all, that we are guaranteed a return. The higher the risk the higher the return. Canadians can choose to take a higher risk. With risk, of course, can come disappointment. They could lose their investment. Their retirement may not be as certain as they thought it would be, and they may have to adjust their goals and plans. That is why everyone should be doing financial planning for themselves. We should be encouraging people to not be dependent on the government.

The Fraser Institute noted this as one of the five myths of the Canada pension plan. Myth number 4 was “The CPP produces excellent returns for individual contributors”. They are thin margins.

There are a great many seniors who are better off today than they were pre-2006. They are better off thanks to the previous Conservative government's work to try to ensure they had a solid retirement. Lots of reports have shown this. Statistics Canada has said that the share of Canadian seniors living on low income has dropped from 29% in the 1970s to 3.7% today, which is among the lowest in the world.

The Human Resources Institute of Alberta is responsible for HR professionals in the province. It has said that consistently, across the board, only about half of all organizations offer employment pension plans and group RSPs with employer-matching plans. That means half of all employees in the province of Alberta may lose the opportunity to continue investing in their employee pension plan or group RSP, because they do not have the money to invest in it and see that matching funding by their employer. They simply will not take advantage of it.

I oppose the bill, and I encourage all members to oppose it as well.

• (1310)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed that the Conservatives have decided to vote against this important piece of legislation, but not necessarily surprised. Their record on voting when it comes to seniors is not positive. The former Conservative government increased the age of retirement from 65 to 67. Our government reversed that and brought it back to 65. The Conservative Party voted against the increase in the guaranteed income supplement for some of the poorest seniors, the most vulnerable seniors in our country. Today, when we think about the future, when we talk about what is going to be taking place years from now and making sure there will be a decent rate of retirement, once again we have the Conservatives saying no.

The Conservative Party has really lost touch with what Canadians are thinking. Why is the Conservative Party, from the member's perspective, so far out of touch with the reality of what Canadians really and truly want to see? Canadians want to see good, fundamentally strong pension programs. Political parties from every region of the country have got on board with this, except the Conservative Party of Canada here in Ottawa. Why?

• (1315)

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, I am sure it will not surprise the House, but I am happy to disappoint that member by voting against this bill.

Let me set the record straight. To answer the preamble about what the previous Conservative government did, it introduced pension income splitting for seniors; twice it increased the age credit; it increased the GIS benefit for recipients who chose to work; it doubled the pension income credit to \$2,000; it took 380,000 seniors off the tax rolls altogether; it increased the age limit for RRSPs to RRIF conversions from 71 to 69; it established October 1 as the first national seniors day; and actually, unlike the Liberal government, we had a minister of the crown looking after seniors' issues, which the government has not done.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is gratifying to hear that the Human Resources Institute of Alberta has continued its great work after the election.

I want to ask the member if he could comment a little more in response to some of the arguments we are hearing from the other side. It is almost as if the Liberals are always begging the question, saying repeatedly that the CPP is overdue for expansion, as if it were obvious that we needed to take more money out of people's pockets and have it controlled by the government.

In reality, we have not heard substantive arguments why this is better done by the state than individuals. If it is a matter of individuals not having the resources themselves, and many of these arguments deal with current seniors who are not even touched by the plans, then we can deal with this via tax cuts, expansion of the OAS, and other more direct measures.

What is wrong with giving individuals control over their own retirement? We have not heard arguments against that. I wonder if the member could even speculate why the government is simply asserting that an expansion of the CPP is overdue without explaining why Liberals think government should have the control instead of individuals.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, the member is always well-informed when asking questions and in his interventions in the House.

In a previous life, I was a policy adviser. Pensions was one of the files I worked on for the then Alberta minister of finance, the hon. Ted Morton. It was one of the files I really liked working on, as well as the securities file.

Government Orders

At the time, I remember those conversations around the table, during federal-provincial-territorial meetings of the ministers, staff, and civil servants who were there. It was not a given back then that the best thing to do was to introduce another big government solution to saving.

I have brought up the point of savings substitution repeatedly, and I have asked it of many Liberal government caucus members. What do they think will happen? There have been studies done by the Fraser Institute that show, directly, that there will be a huge impact on private savings. What will happen is that all of the money a person was going to save privately through whatever vehicle they chose, either property, real estate, the stock market, or an employer pension plan, will be reduced or eliminated and substituted by the government plan.

What I think the government wants to do, though, is in the long term to try to use that money for perhaps an infrastructure bank, to somehow invest it on Canadians' behalf, and probably with very questionable rates of return. The rate of return is really where the savings come from. I just do not think the government is able to do a better job than Canadians at investing their own money.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thank you for this opportunity. It is a great honour to speak to initiatives that are very close to a lot of our hearts. I know it is close to mine. We are talking about the proposed changes in Bill C-26.

I think it should be noted again that these changes will not take full effect until 40 years have passed and will take money out of the paycheques of hardworking Canadians and put thousands of jobs at risk.

It needs to be re-stated that these changes will not provide relief to our seniors. If we want to give relief to our seniors we could start with the high cost of electricity in the province of Ontario and the failed policies that have resulted in those things. Those are the real issues that are causing poverty among our seniors today.

We are going in a little different direction. I have not heard this said yet, so I will talk about someone else the bill will hurt. We know it will hurt employers. Employers are the ones that do the hiring. They are the ones who make those higher CPP payments. It will hurt employees, because they will not longer be employed. They will not get those job opportunities. The one group of people who will really hurt the worst is the poor. I have not heard that discussed by the opposite side, and surprisingly by the other party on the left.

What about the poor? The poor are the ones who need jobs. We talk so much about how we need to help the poor today, but if we want to help a poor man or a poor woman, give them a job. This particular legislation puts a death knell to that.

We have a good organization in my riding of Chatham-Kent—Leamington, the Chatham-Kent Workforce Planning Board. We had a meeting with them. They are involved in job creation and are doing their part. We heard some encouraging statistics, because the rate of unemployment is dropping in Chatham-Kent—Leamington.

In a former life I had a business. I was a car dealer. I got to work for who I think is probably the smartest guy I have ever met in the car business. He is an actuary. He was a graduate of the University of

Toronto. He used to tell me that it is all in the numbers and that I should check the numbers. Subsequently, I have kind of been a number miner.

When I looked at the Chatham-Kent workforce statistics, they showed first of all that we had the large employers and the small and medium-sized businesses. There were some really discouraging statistics. First, we have only two employers who employ over 500 people in the riding of Chatham-Kent—Leamington. The other group is shrinking too.

However, we all know who does the hiring. It is small business. There was a group of businesses with zero to 100 employees. Which group was the largest? Let me just clarify this so members can understand my question. Of that group of businesses that employ from zero to 100 people, which segment was the largest hiring group? I have asked this question of a number of people and we get some varying answers. Some went as low as three employees. Do members know what it is? It is the segment with zero employees.

I was shocked when I saw those numbers, but I am not that shocked when I see legislation like this, because an employer will hire someone when he does a good job. If an individual is a finishing carpenter and the demand is such that the business is getting more work and it makes sense to hire another employee, then they have a whole lot more managing to do, but they will pay that employee what he is worth.

● (1320)

Oftentimes, those people who are at the entry level do not have that value yet. Members can check the statistics for themselves. It is shocking to see that more and more people are doing it on their own. They are not going out and hiring. Who does that affect? It affects the poor, the disenfranchised, the ones we often call the generational poor. It is generational poverty.

My wife and I love parades. When we go down King Street and get into the east end in our home town of Chatham, we get the marginalized people. These people oftentimes do not have the privileges we have. Life is a bit tougher. A lot of them do not have jobs or have not had jobs for a long time. It is those people who will be affected. It is those people who will not be hired. The sad thing is that this continues on generationally.

If the cost of hiring an employee was such that it made sense for that carpenter, plumber, electrician, or whoever to hire, they would. The economy is growing, but the problem is that we put these restrictions on people and we do not realize who it is hurting.

We hear so much in the House about the middle class. I am part of the middle class too. However, we should be talking about the poor. The poor do not necessarily vote for me. However, we should be talking about those people. They are the people who have no voice. Those are the people who look for jobs and cannot find them, or just give up. If we talked about those people, if we have a heart for the people who do not necessarily have a chance, I think we would be talking about something else when it comes to CPP.

Government Orders

I have an idea. Let us have a universal pension plan. I have talked about this with a number of people. We have universal health care. Imagine talking to our neighbours or other people in our home towns who need knee replacements. However, because they do not have a universal pension plan, it will be two years until they can get their knee fixed. However, for us, it would be two weeks. We do the same thing in our pensions. If we really wanted to make change and affect the economy, we should talk about a universal pension plan.

Years ago I had the privilege of working on the finance committee and I got to know a man by the name of Bill Tufts. He is involved in an organization called Fair Pensions for All. Bill and I talked about what would happen if we took all the CPP, OAS, GIS contributions and all of the government's contributions to pension plans, threw it in a big pot, and divided it among all the people who were retired. Every woman and man in our country would get \$24,000 when they retired. There is a real solution. If we really wanted to help the poor, if we really wanted to make some changes, there is a universal pension plan right there.

I know that might be a pipe dream, but I am concerned that this legislation would further exacerbate the hiring abilities of employers today. Although that is tough and although it is going to make it rough on employers, it is especially going to make it rough on the poor.

I fear that for the coming generation, more and more it will be impossible for us to hire those who need the jobs, those who will move from their poor status to a higher status, to the middle class, the one we all talk about so much in the House.

I hope members on the other side, because ultimately this will go vote, will consider the damage this will do to our economy, the damage it will do to that group, and ask their government to make the changes and not let the bill before us pass.

• (1325)

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague that the poor voted heavily for me. I would like to ask him about the child benefit to help the poor, to enhance their lives, and to help them join the middle class.

Regarding senior citizens, he talked about electricity. I would also like to remind him that electricity is a provincial issue. As a member of Parliament, nothing makes me prouder than the government helping senior citizens. They have worked hard all of their lives and deserve to live out the remainder of their lives with decency and dignity.

• (1330)

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member says that the poor voted, and that could be.

I mentioned electricity because I remember, after the election, the two leaders dancing on the stage in glee. I am talking about the leader in the province of Ontario who implemented this. If the Prime Minister has any influence, I would ask him to beg the premier to stop this madness.

The other thing I want to add, talking about the poor, is that the government has a habit, which is getting worse and worse, of borrowing money. This is money that the poor will pay for in years to come, and it is going to get a whole lot worse. Therefore, the

member should not talk to me about how the government has helped the poor. What the Liberals are doing, in essence, is giving them a death notice.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Earlier he mentioned a \$24,000 universal benefit that everyone should get. As I was on my way to the House of Commons this morning, commentators were saying on the radio that according to a CIBC study, anyone who earns less than \$25,000 a year is considered to be living below the poverty line. Right now in Canada, one in five jobs is part-time. That is not a choice; it is because there are not enough full-time jobs.

My colleague mentioned \$24,000 for retirement. How will that do any more to help our retired seniors, when that amount is considered to be below the poverty line?

[*English*]

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Mr. Speaker, I am really puzzled by the question. We are talking about \$24,000 for every woman and man. This is just a suggestion, but I am showing there is a real possibility. That is compared to \$12,000. Let us not forget that this legislation will not come into effect for about 40 years. If we really want to do something, this is the direction we should be going. We could provide relief and help the poor in a real and positive way.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary for Sport and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

He spoke a lot about jobs, job creation, and creating jobs for the middle class and the less fortunate. This morning, I had the opportunity to announce historic investments in mills that continue to provide jobs and create new ones. Our plans include innovating so that we can create jobs for the less fortunate, who will be able to receive a pension in the future.

I would like to ask my colleague what he thinks about the historic investments our government is making today to create jobs for the middle class and the less fortunate.

[*English*]

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Mr. Speaker, respectfully, I will ask a question in response. What jobs? We have not seen any jobs. It has been a year. We have seen massive spending by the government, \$30 billion, and it continues to grow. I am waiting for the jobs. I am waiting for the announcements in my riding. The former government was very active in that respect.

With respect, I am not hearing any announcements. I do not see that money being spent. I certainly do not see the result of whatever is happening in jobs.

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and a privilege to rise to speak in support of Bill C-26, an act to amend the Canada Pension Plan, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act and the Income Tax Act.

Government Orders

Let me outline the purpose of the bill.

It would, among other things, increase the amount of the retirement pension, as well as the survivor's and disability pensions and the post-retirement benefit, subject to the amount of additional contributions made and the number of years over which those contributions were made. It would increase the maximum level of pensionable earnings by 14% as of 2025. It would provide for the making of additional contributions, beginning in 2019. It would provide for the creation of the additional Canada pension plan account and the accounting of funds in relation to it. It would include the additional contributions and increased benefits in the financial review provisions of the act and authorize the Governor in Council to make regulations in relation to those provisions.

For the benefit of the House, let me provide a number of reasons why the government has put Bill C-26 forward.

We are concerned about the long-term retirement security for those Canadians who have worked hard all of their lives and expect, rightfully, that they will enjoy security in their retirement years.

The fact is that middle-class Canadians are working harder than ever, but many are worried that they will not have put away enough money for their retirement. Fewer and fewer Canadians have workplace pensions based on defined benefits or defined contribution plans to fall back on. To help those Canadians achieve their goal of a safe, secure, and dignified retirement, in the face of these challenges, the Government of Canada is committed to working with the provinces to strengthen the CPP.

Co-operative efforts as joint stewards of the program led to Canada's Minister of Finance reaching a historic agreement, in principle, on June 20 to enhance the CPP. All of my colleagues on this side of the House were very proud of that accomplishment.

What would this agreement mean in principle for Canadians?

Once it is fully in place, the CPP enhancement will increase the maximum CPP retirement by about 50%. Right now, the current maximum is just a little over \$13,000, which is not enough by most living standards across the country. In today's dollar terms, the enhanced CPP would represent an increase of nearly \$7,000 to a maximum benefit of nearly \$20,000. Enhanced benefits will accumulate gradually as individuals pay into the enhanced CPP.

Young Canadians, and this is a group about which I know all members of the House are concerned, just entering the workforce would see the largest increase in benefits.

To fund these enhanced benefits, annual CPP contributions would increase modestly over seven years, starting in 2019. For example, an individual with earnings of about \$54,000 or \$55,000 would contribute about an additional \$6 a month in 2019, an amount that should be manageable for most hard-working Canadians. By the end of the seven year phase-in period, contributions for that same individual earning that same income amount would be about an additional \$43 per month.

To ensure that eligible low-income workers are not financially burdened as a result of the extra contributions, the Government of Canada would enhance the working income tax benefit, an existing

benefit that is designed to keep people in the workforce and encourage others to join it.

Enhancing the CPP will significantly reduce the share of families at risk of not saving enough for retirement and a degree of under-saving.

• (1335)

The CPP will always be there for Canadians because it helps to fill the gap for those who do not have a workplace pension plan, and it is portable across jobs and provinces.

Canada's retirement income system provides a balance of mixed public pensions and voluntary savings opportunities to enable Canadians to save for their retirement. The retirement income system is based on three pillars.

The first is the old age security program, which was altered under the last administration in an attempt to extend the age of eligibility to receive the full benefit and appreciation of that plan to age 67. Again, I am very proud to say that among the first measures this government took was to rescind that extension and restore the old age security program eligibility age to 65, something that was met with great support in my riding and, I dare say, right across this country.

The CPP and Quebec pension plan is the second pillar. They provide a basic level of earnings replacement for workers. They are financed by contributions from workers, employers, and self-employed individuals.

The third pillar is a voluntary tax-assisted private savings opportunity. Some examples include registered pension plans; pooled registered pension plans; registered retirement savings plans, commonly known as RRSPs; and tax-free savings accounts. Individuals and their employers may contribute to these savings vehicles on a voluntary basis.

In addition to saving through the retirement income system, Canadians may also choose to draw upon other financial and non-financial assets for retirement income. These include, for example, financial assets held outside of tax-assisted registered plans, housing equity, and small business equity.

Let me say a few more words about the current Canada pension plan. The CPP is a contributory public pension plan that provides a basic level of earnings replacement. With these revisions, as I have said before, we would see modest increases gradually over the course of a number of years at a pace that most hard-working Canadians would be able to absorb.

Let me say a few more words about why it is that we are enhancing the CPP. As we have looked closely at the situation of Canadians as they approach their retirement, we understand that middle-class Canadians are working harder and harder. The Department of Finance has examined whether families nearing retirement are adequately prepared for retirement, based on household income and wealth data from the 2012 Survey of Financial Security. Families are considered to be at risk of under-saving for retirement if their projected after-tax income at retirement does not replace at least 60% of their pre-retirement after-tax family income.

Government Orders

Although Canada's retirement income system has served many Canadians well, the Department of Finance has estimated that almost 24% of families nearing retirement age are at risk of not having adequate income in retirement to maintain their standard of living. This suggests that roughly 1.1 million families approaching retirement age will not have enough money to maintain their standard of living when they retire; hence the enhancements.

I will just take my last few moments to indicate to the House that recently the Minister of Finance had the occasion to come to my riding of Eglinton—Lawrence to meet with my constituents to speak personally about this historic achievement. What was most distinguishing about this visit was that we visited with constituents who are on either side of the age continuum. We visited first with seniors to speak about enhancements to the old age security program and to the GIS program. Then we went to visit with high school students at Lawrence Park Collegiate Institute.

• (1340)

It is truly for them where the focus of this program lies, which is the future, to provide retirement security not only for present day seniors but also for hard-working young Canadians, and I am proud to say that by passing Bill C-26 we will have accomplished that goal. I urge all of my colleagues to support it.

• (1345)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague talked about enhancing the retirement benefits for seniors, but for them to actually have retirement benefits they have to have a job to contribute into CPP or their retirement plan. The Department of Finance, to which the government is listening for advice, or should be listening, indicates very clearly in its analysis of the bill that it would reduce employment by 0.04% to 0.07%. That is 1,050 jobs per year over 10 years, 10,000-plus jobs lost. How can these people who do not have a job ever hope to retire with a meaningful pension if they have never been able to pay into one?

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague works hard on behalf of his constituents and brings informed debate to the House. Let me say unequivocally that this government is a government that believes in creating jobs. We believe in creating jobs by supporting Canadians with tax cuts for nine million Canadians. It was an unfortunate and regrettable occasion when my friends across the aisle did not support us in our first measure. We wanted to provide tax relief. My friends across the way often talk about how providing tax relief creates jobs. That was the first thing that we did—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Raised taxes on small businesses—

Mr. Marco Mendicino: We did not, as a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker. I see my hon. colleagues are getting excited. It is perhaps because they agree with all of what I am saying.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to draw my colleague's attention to the glaring oversight that is present in the bill, and I am sure he is already aware of it: the fact that the bill does not include the drop-out provisions for child rearing and for disabilities. When we first brought this up, we got non-answers from the government, and then finally we had an acknowledgement from the President of the Treasury Board that there indeed was a problem.

With such a glaring oversight in the bill, why is his government shutting down debate on the bill, and why are they ramming it through before we have had the chance to properly fix the bill?

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, we are not shutting down debate on the bill. As a matter of fact, there are 55 sitting days between September and December. We have allocated a substantial amount of that time for debate on the bill. We have heard from more than 70 members on the opposition side. We continue to listen for new arguments, which we have yet to hear, but I am quite proud to say that we have had a robust debate. We will continue to have a robust debate, and I look forward to the contributions from the opposition as to how we can continue to enhance long-term retirement security; and it begins by supporting Bill C-26.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is amazing that such a nice guy could say such ridiculous things. He knows that the Liberals have increased virtually every single tax there is for businesses. I want to ask a simple question about this. He says it is about the present, but he knows that this will not impact present seniors. He says it is about the future, but he knows and businesses are telling us that this would reduce long-term GDP, reduce the health of the economy.

If he wants to help people save for retirement, why not empower them through the tax reductions and savings vehicles that we proposed, which would create jobs and help people save for their retirement, rather than what he is proposing, which would kill jobs and, I would argue, certainly not help people save for retirement and, in any event, make it harder for them to do so on their own without government control.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of bipartisanship, I agree with the part about my being a rather nice colleague. I have to disagree with everything else my colleague said, and he knows why.

That is because this government did pass a tax cut for nine million Canadians. We created a Canada child benefit, which will benefit nine out of 10 Canadian families. We have an innovation strategy, which will create jobs for youth. We have implemented retirement security, which will benefit seniors today and benefit young Canadians tomorrow. I am proud of all of the work this government is doing, and we will continue to do so. I look forward to the day that my hon. colleague sees the light and starts to support some of the measures on this side of the House.

• (1350)

[Translation]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to participate in this debate as the representative of Timmins—James Bay. This discussion on improving the retirement system is very important for our country. Canada is obviously facing a crisis with regard to financial insecurity in retirement because many Canadians have not saved enough to maintain their lifestyle in retirement.

Government Orders

The NDP is prepared to work with the government to enhance the plan, but I am troubled by the government's decision to limit debate because there are clearly a number of problems with this bill. I am particularly concerned about the fact that young women and people with disabilities will be excluded from the enhancements in this bill. This could have a major impact, particularly for women who depend on the drop-out provision to be able to raise their children and who currently receive much lower CPP benefits on average.

I remember that in 1977, prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau promised that young women would be included in the CPP reform of the day. However, the new Prime Minister forgot that promise. This is not how a feminist government should behave. The NDP will work to change this situation and stand up for the interests of young workers, particularly young female workers.

[English]

My grandfather, Charlie Angus, never had a pension. He died on the shop floor of the Hollinger mine. He was 68 years old. In those days, people worked until they died. My grandmother lived upstairs in our little house. There were three generations of us living in that small house. I remember her saying, when she received her Canada pension cheque every month, "The NDP fought for me to get this".

At that time, of course, the Canada pension was limited. Seniors tended to live with their families. At that time we had a growing, robust private pension plan that was starting to really change the quality of life for Canadians. My father was 42 years old when he finally joined the middle class. He saved all of his money so that when he died my mother, who was a secretary, would be able to live a good quality of life. She is able to live a good quality of life because of their savings and their pensions.

Our younger generation does not have that same stability. Younger workers tell me about the triumvirate of insecurity that is facing them now. They are coming out of school \$60,000 and \$70,000 in debt without the possibility of paying it off even at today's interest rate. They talk to me about housing, especially in urban areas, and the incredibly high prices they have to pay while trying to pay off their student debt. Then of course, there is the rising precarious nature of work, with more and more people working on contract.

My Conservative colleagues are always talking about letting people choose how they want to save their money. They talk about RRSPs and everything else. That is great if people have money. Conservatives look after their friends, so they tend not to understand what it is like. If contract workers put a bit of money aside and then find themselves in between jobs, they have to eat into those savings. A good friend of mine says people in Toronto are one bike accident away from poverty because they are living in the perpetual cycle of contract work.

As a nation we have to find a way to start changing this situation. I am certainly pleased to see that the government is willing to address the fact that CPP has not kept up and that the vast majority of people are not even getting the maximum contributions. Even if they did get the maximum contributions, it is not enough to live on.

I am concerned about the exclusion of the dropout provisions in this legislation, which would leave out, in particular, young women and people with disabilities. In 1977, then prime minister Trudeau,

the elder, when his government was reforming CPP, talked about the importance of making sure to protect the interests of women who stepped outside the workforce to raise children. Young women are already enormously at disadvantage in work. Men tend to get promoted, because it is known that women will take time out in childbearing years.

● (1355)

It affects her overall income. We need to protect their pension contributions, especially as more and more women, at that age, are living alone. They need that support. We are seeing that 30% of women are now living in poverty. It is increasing year by year. Yet, only 4.5% of women are able even to get the maximum CPP payment, and only 18% of men get it.

This is a system that should work, but is clearly not working. What does that mean? I see people in my riding affected by this. I recently spoke to a man who is 68 years old and is going back to work underground in a hard rock mine because he does not have enough for him and his wife to live on.

We need to look at dealing with this. I am concerned that the government has chosen to ignore the issue of the dropout provisions. This is something we can fix in the House. I am very disturbed that the government has shut down debate on this.

To hear the finance minister tell us he is somehow at a stalemate in the House is shocking. It shows a dismissive arrogance. I suppose that maybe at a certain point, members of Parliament are going to have to pay \$1,500 and go to the CEO of Shaw or Rogers or some other company to meet with the finance minister one on one to share our concerns.

It is during debate in the House that ordinary people get to talk to the finance minister. For him to say there is a stalemate on this issue is absurd. New Democrats, particularly my wonderful colleague, the member for Hamilton Mountain, have brought forward ideas on how we can fix this. Leaving young women behind is not a feminist action by a Prime Minister who claims to be a feminist.

We see a government that believes it can run on slogans, selfies, and Hallmark card political aphorisms, but within the House we have to be able to find ways to work together to address problems. This is not about a weakness in the government. For any government that brings forward legislation, there will be problems. The role of the House of Commons is to suggest how we can fix these.

Fixing these dropout provisions for people with disabilities and young mothers is a way of making this a more progressive response. Is it enough? No, it is certainly not enough. The pension crisis and the pension insecurity in this country is a very serious issue. We have to start dealing with issues at the ground level of student debt. We have to deal with issues of social housing. We have to deal with issues of the clawbacks to the guaranteed income supplement for senior citizens. We have to talk about the number of people who cannot pay for their dental work.

However, that is an ongoing conversation we can have. What we need to talk about right now is the CPP, which is clearly insufficient to meet the needs of 2016 and the next generation of workers. We also need to say that, yes, this does something right, but it is also doing something very wrong.

It is penalizing young women who will be stepping out of the workforce to have children. When the government does that, it will be putting in place a systemic injustice for young mothers who, when they grow to retirement age in coming years, will have suffered more in terms of their earnings. If we look at it now, we can see the trajectory with 30% of women retiring in poverty today. We should be trying to diminish that level of poverty, not augmenting it when it is a clear problem that can be fixed.

I am worried about my colleagues on the other side getting very dismissive about debate, getting a little arrogant—

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

My apologies to the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay. We are not done yet. We still have another minute and a half. It is way too noisy in the House.

Order, order. It is way too noisy in the House. We still have a minute and a half left for the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay. I appreciate that we are just before members' statements and question period, but there is just way too much noise. I could barely hear the hon. member. The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay does have the floor. He has a minute and a half left. We will go to him now.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I have enormous respect for you. I was worried that my hon. colleagues were not listening just as I was getting to the real point.

The real point today has been fascinating. I have seen my hon. Conservative colleagues invoking the poor. We know the Conservatives are in trouble when they start to say how much they love the poor. I am seeing my hon. colleagues on the Liberal side saying they are feminists while they are leaving young mothers behind.

We can certainly do better than this. We need to work together to fix a flawed bill so we can go back to Canadians and say that in the House we can actually make positive change for the better.

The government is shutting down debate and saying it is somehow at a stalemate just because people are exposing some of the bogus lines its members are coming up with. The government's argument is not credible. It is certainly not how we need to move forward in 2016.

As always, Mr. Speaker, you have my greatest respect.

Statements by Members

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[Translation]

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the holidays can be an expensive time between gifts, travelling, parties, and trips for those fortunate enough to do that. It adds up quickly and so does the level of stress for the majority of Quebeckers who live paycheque to paycheque and have an average household debt of \$80,000. However, with Bill C-29, the government is giving a gift to the banks instead of the public.

As the holidays approach, as everyone is preparing to stretch their budgets, the federal government is opening the door to all sorts of hidden fees without giving us the chance to defend ourselves. That is Bill C-29 in a nutshell.

By allowing the banks to get around Quebec's Consumer Protection Act, the Liberals are proving they are still beholden to the banks, despite their claims of working for the middle class. Merry Christmas, Bay Street.

* * *

[English]

GOVERNOR GENERAL'S HISTORY AWARDS

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise in the House of Commons to congratulate the winners of the 2016 Governor General's History Awards, which were awarded this past Monday, November 28, at Rideau Hall. The awards celebrate the exemplary work of teachers, writers, filmmakers, scholars, students, volunteers, and community groups who promote and popularize Canadian history by making our country's past relevant, engaging, empowering, and accessible.

[Translation]

On Wednesday, His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnson will present the 2016 Governor General's Literary Awards at Rideau Hall. This year is the 80th anniversary of this prestigious awards program, which is administered by the Canada Council for the Arts. These awards celebrate remarkable literature, that which has the power to question, explain, and transform our life experiences.

I wish to congratulate the 14 winners of this year's awards. They represent excellence in Canadian literature in both official languages. We are grateful for your contribution to a dynamic and creative Canada.

* * *

[English]

BRENDA ALBERTS

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to commemorate a long-time Fort Langley resident, businesswoman, champion of local artists, and super volunteer, the late Brenda Alberts.

Statements by Members

We lost Brenda far too soon last summer at the age of only 66. She was kind, dynamic, and passionate about her community. Fort Langley was not just her home and her business; Fort Langley was in her heart. Brenda owned and operated the Birthplace of B.C. Gallery in Fort Langley. She volunteered for Rotary, Relay for Life, the Langley Christmas Bureau, the Langley Hospice Society, and many others. She re-established the annual November 11th Remembrance Day service at the Fort Langley cenotaph, which now draws thousands of people every year.

The Township of Langley renamed 96th Avenue in Fort Langley Brenda Alberts Way. This major road goes right to the heart of Fort Langley, a fitting recognition.

We thank Brenda's husband Kurt and her family for sharing Brenda with us. We love and miss her, too.

* * *

[Translation]

LAVAL NEWSPAPER

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise today to congratulate *Courrier Laval*, a local newspaper that is celebrating its 70th anniversary. On November 11, I met with many of its employees to congratulate and thank them for their decades of service to the people of Laval.

Since the end of the Second World War, *Courrier Laval* has published stories about local, national, and international events. Today, this local newspaper that reports on political, economic, and social issues is delivered to 140,000 households in Laval, in addition to having a major online presence thanks to a website that is accessible to everyone.

I would like to congratulate you on your 70th anniversary, and I hope that we will celebrate many more.

* * *

[English]

PARKWOOD INSTITUTE

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have recently had the opportunity to visit the veterans care program at Parkwood Institute in London, Ontario. In addition to providing excellent care for more than 130 in-patient veterans, Parkwood Institute is home to one of Canada's original operational stress injury clinics. Clinicians in the OSI clinic receive more than 4,000 out-patient visits from veterans, military personnel, and RCMP officers each year. Their care providers treat a wide range of mental health issues, including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and substance abuse, with positive outcomes for veterans. Its treatment focus includes support for both the individual veteran and the family.

Parkwood Institute is known across the country as a leader in mental health treatment and research for both veterans and the general population. It is currently leading the nation's first zero suicide initiative.

I want to congratulate it for all its work and for the care it provides for military and RCMP veterans and their families.

• (1405)

[Translation]

2016 GREY CUP

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today the 104th Grey Cup victory parade took place in Ottawa to celebrate the Redblacks' win against the Calgary Stampeders on the weekend. The last time a winning football club celebrated in the streets of Ottawa was in 1976, when Ottawa won the 64th Grey Cup. Although we did not know which team would take home the cup that year, we knew that a "rough riders" team would win.

[English]

Strangely, the Ottawa Rough Riders faced the Saskatchewan Roughriders. Yes, both teams had roughly the same name.

We are proud of our sports teams. We saw today at the parade, with the presence of many fans, that they occupy a great place in our lives and bring us great emotion.

Congratulations to the Redblacks for their victory. Congratulations to all the teams.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while children are busy writing to Santa, rural Canadians have been given the big "bah, humbug" by the current Liberal government regarding the infrastructure items on their wish lists.

Big Lakes County in my riding wants new potable water facilities. Residents in La Crete want an all-season bridge across the Peace River. For Westlock, Whitecourt, Barrhead, and many other rural communities across Canada, aging infrastructure is jolly no more, and they are wishing for a visit from the ghosts of Christmas past, when governments cared. Under the Grinch's new infrastructure scheme, funding is only gifted to projects worth \$100 million.

This holiday season, these rural communities will be left with an empty stocking, and on top of that, the Liberals will not even leave Canada with a lump of coal, because they are phasing that out too.

Rural Canadians are not on St. Nick's naughty list. Will the Liberals offer them some peace and goodwill? Merry Christmas.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I stood with the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness as he announced enhancements to the security infrastructure program, which offers essential support to communities at risk of hate-motivated crimes. Recent offences involving the homes of faith leaders, places of worship, and other incidents in public serve as a stark reminder that we cannot take for granted our hard fought for fundamental freedoms.

This matter hits close to home in my riding of Eglinton—Lawrence, as I am sure it does everywhere in Canada, where we have a diversity of faiths and communities, all of whom have a right to worship peacefully without fear for their safety.

[Translation]

Our government will continue to ensure that security infrastructure programs are established so that all Canadians can practice their faith freely and in safety.

[English]

As the minister said, “There is no social licence for hate, not in this country”. Freedom, diversity, and inclusion are at the heart of our way of life, and we will protect these values.

* * *

NORTH BAY YMCA PEACE MEDAL RECIPIENT

Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to say that Jim Marmino is a dedicated fundraiser is an understatement. As he puts it, he aspires to inspire before he expires.

[Translation]

Jim is a retired high school history teacher who is passionate about boxing and education.

[English]

His charitable work benefits a long list of organizations, such as the Alzheimer Society, the CNIB, the North Bay Symphony Orchestra, the local Italian Canadian Club, and the Special Olympics.

[Translation]

He is also involved in efforts to build hospices in North Bay that will provide medical care to the terminally ill.

[English]

On November 21, the North Bay YMCA presented Jim with its Peace Medal for his commitment to the values of participation, empathy, advocacy, community, and empowerment. I would like to thank Jim for everything he does to make our community a better place.

* * *

•(1410)

MEFLOQUINE

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since the 1990s, Canadian troops deployed to countries prone to malaria have received the drug mefloquine. Over the last 20 years, heart-wrenching stories by *The Fifth Estate*, *W5*, newspapers, and

Statements by Members

magazines have given numerous accounts of lives changed forever by this drug.

The International Mefloquine Veterans Alliance was formed as the devastating effects and mounting suicide numbers were felt worldwide. Yet 25 years later, our troops suffering the effects of this drug are still crying out for help.

Recently the veterans affairs committee heard from Somalia and Afghanistan veterans. Since then, many more have come forward. Families who have lost loved ones, veterans, soldiers, and civilians are revealing the hardship of living with the permanent scars of mefloquine use. Three weeks ago, a suicide was averted in New Brunswick when a veteran saw a story on mefloquine toxicity, reached out to one of the witnesses, and realized that he was not alone and there was hope.

The veterans' stories are coming from all over Canada from so many of our ridings and communities. We need to face this issue and right the wrong for veterans, serving members, and Canadian civilians harmed by mefloquine.

* * *

MONTREAL IMPACT

Mr. David Lametti (LaSalle—Émard—Verdun, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Wednesday evening will mark a red-letter day in Canadian soccer history.

[Translation]

The Montreal Impact, led by Didier Drogba, Ignacio Piatti, and Laurent Ciman, will take on Toronto FC in the MLS championship semifinal.

[English]

If anyone had told me 40 years ago, as an Italian Canadian kid playing local soccer, that 60,000 people would have attended the first match in Olympic Stadium, I would have said, “Impossible”. Yet that is precisely what happened last week when the Impact won 3-2. More than 30,000 people are expected for the match at BMO Field in Toronto tomorrow evening.

[Translation]

Soccer is the sport of the future for Canada. It is a unifying force in Canada's diverse cultural landscape, and the Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver clubs are on a mission to train the next generation of players.

I congratulate Toronto FC, the Montreal Impact, and the Saputo family. Go Impact.

Statements by Members

[English]

GOVERNOR GENERAL'S LITERARY AWARD

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize Steven Heighton, a resident of my riding of Kingston and the Islands, who recently won the Governor General's Literary Award for his fifth poetry collection, *The Waking Comes Late*.

This award brings valuable and much-deserved recognition from his peers and readers across the country. Mr. Heighton's fiction and poetry have been translated into 10 languages, and the accolades are too numerous to list in the time I have today.

Steven Heighton's *The Waking Comes Late* has been described as "a journey deepening as we read. He locates the complexities of the personal in a wide range of social issues, while playing masterfully with language, form and tone.... A mature work: smart, moving, inventive, original".

Please join with me today in congratulating Mr. Heighton on this achievement.

* * *

[Translation]

GUY DROUIN

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we were surprised and saddened to hear of the death of a great builder who was on the verge of making his lifelong dream a reality. Guy Drouin passed away four days before the grand opening of his new concept, Bora Park.

A visionary businessman, he built an empire. He transformed a toboggan hill in Valcartier into a major resort known all across the country. Next, he built Calypso in Ontario. To cap his trifecta, he bankrolled and laid the groundwork for Bora Park, an indoor water park and four-star hotel.

This is a great loss to the business community. He put his municipality, my riding, Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, and the greater Quebec City region on the map. We will remember him as a discreet leader and a bold, determined, and visionary entrepreneur.

My colleagues and I wish to express our most sincere condolences to his family, and especially to his three sons, Mathieu, Simon, and Jérôme. He wanted them to follow in his footsteps, and I am glad that they will.

Goodbye, Guy.

* * *

[English]

HOLODOMOR

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, beginning on November 26 and continuing this week, the Ukrainian community, along with many Canadians, is commemorating the millions of victims of the 1932-33 Holodomor genocide and the forced starvation of millions of Ukrainians by Stalin's dictatorship.

I encourage all members to join me today in visiting the Holodomor National Awareness Tour mobile classroom, at the foot

of East Block, for an interactive education on the genocide, and/or they can attend the special commemoration this evening at 8:00 p.m. in Centre Block, Room 256-S.

Please join me in giving a heartfelt thanks to my uncle, Denny Dzerowicz, and Bohdan Onyschuk for their leadership and vision in creating the mobile classroom with the aim of increasing Holodomor awareness across Canada.

I thank them and the Ukrainian Canadian Congress for ensuring that the sacrifice of those who died will never be forgotten and for reminding us that we each play a role not only in fighting hate and discrimination anywhere in the world but in promoting the values of freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

Vichnaya Pamyat.

* * *

●(1415)

2016 U.S. ELECTION

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the U.S. election has cast a dark shadow across North America. Donald Trump ran a campaign based on hate, blame, misogyny, and xenophobia. He threatened the forcible deportation of millions and has mused about a national registry for Muslims.

In Canada, we are not immune, because we have seen a rise in hate attacks against synagogues and mosques.

Just last week, I spoke with a number of people in the Muslim community. There is a deep worry that these forces of division will drive deeper wedges into our national fabric. However, they also told me that they are hopeful, because in difficult times, they see what people are made of.

Canadians will rise above the politics of fear, division, and paranoia, just as I know many of our American cousins will rise to the better angels of their natures. How do we do this? It is about getting active in our community. It is about standing up. It is about speaking out. It is about telling our neighbours that we have their backs, because the politics of community will beat the politics of fear any day.

* * *

[Translation]

THOMAS MCQUEEN

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise here today. When a CF-18 plane crashed yesterday near Cold Lake, Canada lost a hero, Captain Thomas McQueen of 401 Tactical Fighter Squadron, a hero who was taken too soon, after 10 years of service defending Canada.

[English]

Our thoughts and prayers are with Captain McQueen's family.

Captain McQueen's energy and dedication made him a leader among his peers. Until the very end, he was dedicated to the defence of Canada.

[*Translation*]

He excelled during Operation Impact, the fight against ISIS. We are forever indebted to him for his commitment.

All the kind words in the world can never replace what Thomas McQueen meant to his partner and fiancée. Please know that Canadians share your sorrow and pain. We are all in shock, for yesterday Canada lost one of her sons.

* * *

[*English*]

WATERLOO REGION

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Waterloo region is Canada's tenth largest population centre and one of Canada's fastest growing areas. It is renowned as a centre of innovation, entrepreneurship, post-secondary education, high tech, and both advanced and traditional manufacturing.

Today on Parliament Hill, we welcome the region's municipal leaders, Waterloo's regional chair, Ken Seiling; Kitchener's mayor, Berry Vrbanovic; Waterloo's mayor, Dave Jaworsky; the Township of Woolwich's mayor, Sandy Shantz; Cambridge councillor, Mike Mann, and chief administrative officer, Mike Murray.

Earlier today, they met with the Prime Minister and Governor General.

Our visitors and their senior staff will be meeting with ministers and parliamentary secretaries. We ask members to join us in wishing them a productive day of advocacy for Waterloo Region.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*English*]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is getting close to approving pipelines—northern gateway, Enbridge Line 3, and perhaps Kinder Morgan. Now if these pipelines are built, they could create more than 65,000 jobs across this country.

If he wants to, if he has the political will, the Prime Minister could help thousands of Canadians get back to work, but he needs to understand that approval is just the beginning. It is not the end. He must approve them and then he must champion these projects through to the end.

Once he says yes, will the Prime Minister do what it takes to get these projects built?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have always said, we understand that we cannot build a strong economy without protecting the environment at the same time. The previous government failed to do that, and that is why it was unable to get our resources to market.

Oral Questions

We know that putting forward strong environmental protections while we create good jobs and get our resources to market is the only way to move forward as a country, and that is exactly what we are committed to doing.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the dictatorship of Fidel Castro, thousands of Cubans were imprisoned, impoverished, and even executed. Our Canadian values of free speech, free thought, and assembly were curtailed and even banned.

That is why so many Canadians were astonished that on their behalf, the Prime Minister described Fidel Castro as a remarkable leader.

When the Prime Minister praised Castro, one of the world's worst dictators, what was he thinking?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the friendship and connection between the Canadian people and the Cuban people has long been established and has marked our history on both sides of the border.

The fact is, Canadians well know that whenever I am anywhere on the world stage, I bring up human rights and I talk about their importance for Canadians, as I did a week and a half ago when I was in Cuba.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. leader.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Except in Cuba, Mr. Speaker.

[*Translation*]

Under Fidel Castro's dictatorship, thousands of Cubans were imprisoned and executed. Values we hold dear, such as freedom of expression, were limited or suppressed altogether. That is why so many Canadians were surprised when the Prime Minister called Fidel Castro a remarkable leader on their behalf.

When the Prime Minister issued his statement eulogizing one of the world's worst dictators, what was he thinking?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Cubans and Canadians have enjoyed a remarkable, decades-long friendship. The fact is, Canadians are well aware that whenever I am anywhere on the world stage, I bring up human rights and I talk about how important they are to all of us, to all Canadians. I did just that a week and a half ago when I was in Cuba.

* * *

[*English*]

ETHICS

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's point man on marijuana legalization was the star of the cash for access fundraiser attended by marijuana lobbyists. This is clearly against the Prime Minister's ethical guidelines.

Oral Questions

We do know that one of these lobbyists said she gets emails all the time from the Liberals asking her to come to these fundraisers.

How many times has the Liberal Party used the government's marijuana point person to raise cash from marijuana lobbyists for the Liberal Party of Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that Canadians be reassured that we have, at the federal level, some of the strongest rules around election financing, not just in the country, but indeed around the world.

The fact is, the Liberal Party is always following all the rules and the values that Canadians expect in terms of openness, transparency, and accountability, and we will continue to uphold the trust of Canadians.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the last time he was in the House, I asked the Prime Minister about his own cash for access event, events with Chinese billionaires and members of the Communist Party.

He answered by talking about the government business he conducts at these events on behalf of Canada, saying that he is looking for investment. He himself confirmed that he mixes government business and party politics, and this is clearly wrong.

Will he finally do the right thing and stop violating his own ethical guidelines?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): The fact is, Mr. Speaker, we can be confident as Canadians that we have an extraordinarily strong system for electoral financing. Canadians can be reassured about the level of accountability and openness, and indeed that limits on electoral financing are in place for very good reasons, and that the Liberal Party always follows those principles.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the Prime Minister's cash for access private dinners was held last May. With 35 people at \$1,500 a pop, that would mean \$50,000 into the Liberal coffers.

One of the people present, Thomas Liu, had a billion dollar canola deal on the line. A few weeks after the Prime Minister's private dinner, the government made a deal with China and Mr. Liu got what he wanted.

I have a simple question for the Prime Minister. What did he discuss with Mr. Liu at that dinner?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government is very proud that we stood up for western canola farmers and got access to the Chinese market. The fact is, thousands of farmers across western Canada were worried about the fact that China had made it much more difficult for them to sell their canola to China. That is exactly what we worked on with the Chinese government, and we secured the access that Canadian farmers needed so desperately.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1425)

The Speaker: Order, please. I ask members, including the member for Brantford—Brant, to restrain themselves during question period.

The hon. member for Outremont has the floor.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Liu is not a western canola farmer, Mr. Speaker.

[*Translation*]

The Prime Minister himself regularly participates in fundraising activities that give people privileged access to him and his ministers.

The parliamentary secretary responsible for legalizing marijuana also participated in an event that gave privileged access to marijuana industry representatives and lobbyists. The Liberals have strict rules but weak ethics.

Does the Prime Minister really not understand that they are breaking his own rules?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, despite all of the political games going on in the House, the fact is that Canadians can be assured that our electoral financing system is extremely robust. We have one of the strictest systems in the country and the continent. We are going to continue to act in an open and transparent manner so that Canadians can trust in their system of government and their government.

* * *

[*English*]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was crystal clear during the campaign that if the Liberals formed government, the review of Kinder Morgan would have to be “redone”. This was seen as a departure from the Harper approach, and I am sure the message won the Liberals quite a bit of support in B.C. and across the country.

Let us say that someone convinces us they will stand firm in order to get our support, but once they have our support, they reverse their position. Would the Prime Minister not call that a betrayal?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been very clear over the past number of years that one of the fundamental responsibilities of any Canadian prime minister is to get our resources to market, but to do that in a responsible, sustainable way that respects both science and indigenous communities.

One side of the House wants us to approve everything and ignore indigenous communities and environmental responsibilities. The other side of the House does not care about the jobs or the economic growth that comes with getting our resources to market. We are the party in the House that understands that, and that is why Canadians gave us their confidence in the last election.

Oral Questions

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am sure it is because that Goldilocks approach is just right that he has MPs taking down their websites on Kinder Morgan as we speak.

[*Translation*]

During the election campaign, the Prime Minister promised to put an end to Stephen Harper's approach to energy project development, but now that he is in office, he is using the exact same process for approving the exact same pipeline projects.

Does the Prime Minister not feel ashamed of himself for betraying the trust of British Columbians and Canadians by applying the same rules as Stephen Harper?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have shown that we understand that what is good for the environment and what is good for the economy are not mutually exclusive. A responsible government needs to look after both. That is what the other two parties in the House do not understand. They still think that we need to choose one or the other. Our government and Canadians understand that we need to create economic opportunities, economic growth, and jobs while protecting the environment. That is exactly what we are doing. The previous government could not do it, but that is what we are doing.

* * *

[*English*]

ETHICS

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we learned today that the cash for access scandal extends to pot lobbyists. The parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Justice, the very man the Prime Minister put in charge of coming up with new pot laws, attended a Liberal party fundraiser in Toronto this spring where he posed for photos with the Cannabis Friendly Business Association. When will the Liberals admit that they have a hazy notion of their own fundraising guidelines? When will they clear the air and admit they are breaking all of their own rules?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member knows very well that when it comes to the rules around fundraising, in Canada we have some of the strictest. Even the Chief Electoral Officer has stated that Canada's political financing laws are the most advanced and constrained and transparent in the world. It is important that the member recognize that when it comes to fundraising this party follows the rules, and Canadians can be assured of that.

• (1430)

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are awaiting the imminent report of the task force on legalizing pot. It is now clear that the Liberal Party has taken money from the marijuana lobby, from big weed, at another cash for access event.

In *The Globe and Mail* today, a Ms. Roach from the Cannabis Friendly Business Association said that she gets emails all the time from Liberals asking her to come to fundraisers, and that the Liberals, "took our money happily without question". When will the Liberals admit that all their claims about following all the rules have gone up in smoke?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the member does not want to hear from me, perhaps I should once again quote the Chief Electoral Officer, who stated that Canada's political financing laws are the most advanced, the most constrained, and transparent in the world. In regard to ticketed fundraising events, he confirmed that every party in every campaign does them.

When it comes to access to the government, this government has unprecedented levels of access. We will continue to engage with Canadians. We will continue to respond to the very real challenges that they are facing.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning we learned that the head honcho for marijuana legalization, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, appointed by the Prime Minister himself, took part in Liberal Party fundraising events attended by lawyers and marijuana lobbyists as he was preparing the bill on legalizing marijuana. Once a Liberal, always a Liberal.

When will the people across the way follow the Prime Minister's own ethics rules? Are they trying to tell us that lobbyists are running this government?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows full well, the rules governing fundraising are among the strictest in the country and our party follows the rules.

The Chief Electoral Officer said that political financing laws in Canada are the most advanced and constrained and transparent in the world. He confirmed that every party and every campaign holds fundraising events that have admission fees.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us now talk about the Prime Minister, his friends, and ethics rules.

As recently as this past summer, the CFO listed on the Liberal Party's website was the most influential man in the cannabis industry in addition to being a shareholder in the biggest cannabis company in Canada. There is never smoke without fire. I should say there is never smoke without pot.

Am I the only one to see this blatant conflict of interest? When will the Prime Minister follow his own rules?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the rules governing fundraising are among the strictest in the country and our party follows the rules.

Oral Questions

We have held unprecedented public consultations in order to address the real challenges that Canadians face. We will continue to work with Canadians.

[*English*]

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it seems like Cheech and Chong are stuck in *Groundhog Day* with these answers.

Abi Roach of the Cannabis Friendly Business Association told the media, “They took our money happily without question”, and that “no one vetted [me]”. She also said, “I would rather to speak to a politician one-on-one in an office than have to pay.”

I guess everyone got the memo that if one wants to talk to the current Liberal government one has to pay up. It sounds like cash for access to me.

When will the Prime Minister put an end to these unsavoury hash for—I mean, cash for access events?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise in this House to remind all members that this government committed to working with Canadians. This government has taken an unprecedented level of consultations when it comes to responding to the very real challenges that Canadians are facing.

When it comes to fundraising rules, the member knows very well that we have some of the most strict rules across the country. Even the Chief Electoral Officer has stated that they are some of the most strict around the world.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are just trying to weed out the truth here. The Cannabis Friendly Business Association paid the entrance fee and got their 10 minutes of face time with the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Justice.

Abi Roach said, “There was lot of people from the cannabis industry as well who were vying for his attention, more from the licensed producers”.

Licensed producers? Did the Liberals take money from unlicensed producers as well? Does the Prime Minister actually believe in his own open and accountable government document, or did the paper it was written on go up in smoke?

●(1435)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians elected a government that is here working hard to respond to the very real challenges that they are facing.

I am actually pleased to stand in this House today when we have representatives from the Waterloo region here. This government committed to working better with provinces, territories, and municipalities, so that we can respond to Canadians, so that we can help grow the economy, and so that we can sustain the environment. We know that if we work together more collaboratively, we can make that happen.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a Manitoba judge decided that requiring residential school survivors to show a perpetrator's sexual intent was “fundamentally inconsistent” with past cases involving sexual assault.

Instead of applauding this decision, this Minister of Justice is appealing it. The Liberals are arguing these survivors of sexual assault must prove the intent of their abusers in order to get compensation. This is despicable.

Will the minister do the right thing and immediately drop this appeal?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is committed to ensuring justice for all the victims of this dark chapter in our history, and that all those entitled to compensation receive it.

We believe the court's decision goes beyond its jurisdiction by unilaterally changing the settlement agreement, which was agreed to by all parties. This could greatly impact the independent assessment process, and the government is therefore appealing the decision.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is a sad day because I have to rise once again to remind the government that reconciliation is more than just words. By appealing, the minister is sending survivors of horrendous residential schools the message that they do not have the same right to justice as every other citizen. That is nothing short of appalling. What happened to the promise to build a new relationship?

I will repeat my question: will the Minister of Justice drop the appeal?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is committed to justice for all victims of this dark chapter in our history and to ensuring that everyone who is eligible for compensation receives it. Our position is that the court overstepped its jurisdiction when it ruled to unilaterally change the settlement agreement adopted by all parties. Given the significant impact the decision could have on the independent assessment process, the government decided to—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Chilliwack—Hope.

* * *

[*English*]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, the Prime Minister has a choice, and that choice is clear: approve pipelines and champion projects so that our economy can create good well-paying jobs, or continue to play politics with the lives of Canada's unemployed energy workers.

If built, these safe and modern pipelines would create tens of thousands of family-supporting jobs that would help pay the mortgage and put food on the table.

Oral Questions

Will the Prime Minister approve these job-creating pipelines today, and do everything in his power to ensure that they actually get built?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House understand that energy workers and the natural resource sector represent about 20% of Canada's economy. We know how important they have been, and how important they continue to be.

The member also knows that on January 27, the government announced a set of principles that would govern those projects that were currently under review. At that time, we made commitments, and we established principles and timelines. We have respected the principles and we will respect the timelines.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's oil and gas sector contributes billions of dollars toward our health care, education, and social programs and creates hundreds of thousands of well-paying jobs. All of the pipelines we are talking about today were approved months ago by the independent regulator who deemed them to be safe for the environment. These safe and modern pipelines are necessary to help get middle-class Canadians back to work. It is time that the Prime Minister stopped playing politics with the livelihood of energy workers. Will he finally stand up for them, approve these pipelines, and ensure they get built?

• (1440)

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government understands very well the importance of the energy sector to the Canadian economy. We also understand that there are many families in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Newfoundland and Labrador who have suffered as a result of low commodity prices. We understand firmly that if projects are to be built, the process has to be seen as credible and the environment and the economy must be developed together.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today energy workers across Canada and their families are desperately waiting to hear the decision that the government is going to make on northern gateway and Line 3. As the minister talks about these decisions and the more the Liberals consult, these severance packages and EI benefits are being exhausted. These energy workers are relying on food banks and many are losing their homes.

Today, will the Prime Minister show some leadership. Will he stand up for the Canadian economy and stand up for Canadian jobs and do everything he can to ensure these nation-building projects get built?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand the importance of the energy sector and we also understand the fairness of saying to proponents that there would be timelines that would be respected and a set of principles that would govern these reviews. From the very moment that we announced those principles and the very moment that we announced the timelines, we have been fair and direct with the people of Canada.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians need more than understanding and actions speak louder than words. Approving a project is one thing, but getting it built is another. Canadians want jobs. Unemployed energy workers and their families are hurting. Their livelihoods and futures are at risk and they

just want to get back to work. Canada's energy workers benefit the standard of living in all communities and they produce the most environmentally and socially responsible oil and gas in the world.

Will the minister remove roadblocks, end delays, and ensure these pipelines actually get built?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the way in which the previous government went about the business of having these pipelines approved and built did not work. They did not work because the Federal Court of Appeal quashed a project because of insufficient consultation with indigenous communities. The record will show that during the course of the tenure of the Harper government there was not one kilometre of pipeline built to the oceans. We had a choice. The choice was to follow a path that did not work or to try another one. We chose to—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly.

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[*Translation*]

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, now we know why the government said that no journalists were currently under surveillance. Yesterday we learned that CSIS did spy on journalists in the past, and we have every reason to believe it is still happening.

The troubling revelations about the surveillance of journalists, the surveillance of indigenous activists, and CSIS's illegal storage of data show a disturbing trend that the government can no longer ignore.

Will the minister finally take these revelations seriously and launch a public inquiry into freedom of the press?

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, freedom of the press is a fundamental Canadian value enshrined in the charter. Yesterday at committee, CSIS officials confirmed exactly what the Prime Minister and the commissioner of the RCMP and the CSIS director have said. The recent police activity in Quebec, probing journalists for their sources, is not happening at the federal level. We have undertaken to review all of the safeguards in place and we are completely open to receiving representation from journalists and lawyers about what needs to be done to strengthen the law.

*Oral Questions***FOREIGN INVESTMENT**

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Anbang Insurance Group, a massive foreign conglomerate, is trying to buy a B.C.-based long-term care provider. Unconfirmed estimates place the value of this takeover at over \$1 billion and there is much more that we do not know. The company's ownership structure is murky. It has tried to hide its identity in previous transactions and most importantly, we do not know how these critical health services will be affected. Will the government commit to a fully transparent review to determine how this foreign takeover will impact Canadians and share those details with the House?

• (1445)

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, this particular file is under review under the Investment Canada Act. With regard to the Investment Canada Act, these are done on a case-by-case basis. Overall, our objective is very clear. We are going to do what is the net benefit for Canada. We are going to make sure we advance our national interest. When we make a decision, we will make that public.

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STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, we are reminded that gender-based violence is far too common in Canada. We are also reminded of the importance that shelters can play in the lives of women experiencing violence.

Could the Minister of Status of Women please inform the House what the government is doing to ensure women have a safe place to turn?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that when women and girls are facing violence, they deserve a safe place to turn. That is why we are investing nearly \$90 million to build or renovate over 3,000 spaces over the next two years. It is why I announced last week \$1 million in funding for the Canadian Network of Women's Shelters & Transition Houses to collect better data and provide better services. It is also why we are currently building a federal strategy to end gender-based violence.

Our government is working to ensure that women and girls can reach their full potential.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Royal Canadian Air Force commander General Hood confirmed yesterday that the Liberals unilaterally changed the number of jets the air force needed. When asked why, he said, "I'm not privy to the decisions behind the policy change".

On a decision of this magnitude, why is the Minister of National Defence not consulting the commander of the air force? Why is the minister playing politics with our military?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should not take the words out of context.

Our NORAD and NATO obligations have not changed. The only thing that has changed is that our government is not willing to risk manage our commitments. We are going to make sure that we have all of the necessary capabilities, all of the necessary aircraft to be able to fill all of these obligations. This is the only thing that has changed. It was the policy of the previous government to risk manage those obligations.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals did not consult with the air force. They made this decision entirely in isolation, and this was politically driven by the PMO. They put a lifetime gag order on over 230 federal employees to cover up this political interference.

Will the minister confirm that General Hood was pushed to the sidelines, while the minister forced his politically driven decision on our air force?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the only thing that has changed right now is that we are going to make sure our Canadian Armed Forces have the right tools to fulfill all of the work. A lot of work has been done. Our obligation to NORAD and NATO, and any unforeseen circumstance is extremely important.

We are not going to be asking our air force to risk manage our obligations. We are going to make sure we have all the right tools, and that is what we are going to be providing.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we learned yesterday, not a month ago, of the source of the capability gap that is affecting the Royal Canadian Air Force. General Hood confirmed that it was the Liberal government that created the deficit. The Liberals increased the number of jets that the Royal Canadian Air Force must have available at all times.

Thus, it is not a matter of national security, but rather a political decision meant to justify the Liberals' desire to purchase the outdated Super Hornet immediately.

Can the minister tell us when and why the requirements changed?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us make it very clear in terms of math here. We have a NORAD obligation that has not changed from the previous government to now. We have a NATO obligation as well. When we combine the two, right now we do not have enough operational aircraft to meet both commitments simultaneously, let alone any unforeseen things.

Oral Questions

This is the policy that has changed, that we will not risk manage this gap. We are going to make sure we have enough aircraft to do this. That is what our announcement was about last week.

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[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the duties of the Minister of Public Services and Procurement is to ensure, first, that government contracts are financially viable; second, that they are in line with the priorities and interests of the federation; and third, that they are executed with broad benefits to Canadians and our businesses.

We are currently missing important salient details to be able to properly judge the contract to purchase the F-35 fighter jets.

Can the minister now confirm the price of each individual jet?

• (1450)

[English]

Hon. Judy Foote (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have committed, as we said we would do, to an open and transparent competition. We are looking to get the best plane we can get for the men and women in uniform. That is exactly what we are going to do. We are not going to prejudge the outcome of an open and transparent competition. We are going to work with all suppliers, and all aircraft that meet the requirements will be able to compete.

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SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last Friday, the U.S. Lumber Coalition filed a petition triggering what could be the start of yet another softwood lumber war, and this is before Trump is even sworn in. The last time around, unfair duties and a bad deal led to the closure of hundreds of Canadian mills and the loss of thousands of good paying jobs.

Day after day the minister refuses to lay out a plan.

When will the government stand up for Canadian workers? When will it ensure Canadians do not bear the brunt of another softwood lumber war?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was the previous Conservative government that allowed the old softwood lumber agreement to expire and did nothing to launch new negotiations.

Canada is prepared for any situation. I want to assure Canadians that we will vigorously defend the interests of Canadian workers and producers. International courts have invariably ruled in our favour in the past, and we are confident they will do so again.

I will at the same time continue negotiations with Ambassador Froman in Geneva over the weekend. We are seeking a good deal for Canada, not just any deal.

[Translation]

TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is hard to believe that safety is a priority for the Minister of Transport.

This morning, the Auditor General noted in his report that the minister cut the budget for vehicle testing by 59%, reduced funding for regional teams that collect data on collisions, and refused to require industry to have a new anchoring system that would keep children safe.

Will the minister stop making cuts and stop playing with Canadians' safety?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question.

In fact, in budget 2016, we announced an additional \$5.4 million for assessing the safety of Canadian automobiles. The budget also included \$7.3 million for regulating new vehicles that will be available shortly, automated vehicles. The Senate just introduced a bill to enhance the safety of our cars. We are working hard.

* * *

[English]

CBC/RADIO-CANADA

Hon. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2001, one-quarter of the CBC's funding was from advertising. However, this has fallen in recent years as advertisers are abandoning CBC programs. Today it seems only around 15% of revenues come from advertisers. Taxpayers are now being asked to make this failure into a virtue.

What is the solution? Another one-third of a billion dollars per year from the poor beleaguered taxpayer and a guaranteed annual increase in the CBC subsidy forever.

Does the government agree with the CBC president that its business model is "profoundly and irrevocably broken?"

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we just reinvested \$675 million in the CBC. We also decided to launch important public consultations on how to support Canadian content in a digital age.

What we heard in these public consultations was that Canadians loved the CBC. Thirty thousand people participated in these public consultations. Hundreds of people submitted ideas and reports. I understand the CBC submitted its own report. We will be studying all submissions and we will—

The Speaker: The hon. member for York—Simcoe.

Oral Questions

Hon. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Apparently, Mr. Speaker, all that money is not working. Canadians look for high-quality Canadian content from the CBC, but fewer are watching. In 2001, the CBC drew almost 10% of the prime time audience. Today, that number is close to 6% as viewers tune out.

No wonder ad revenue is in free fall. The CBC has a solution. Taxpayers can be conscripted to replace ad revenue. After all, when Liberal spending is out of control, what is one-third of a billion dollars between friends?

Do the Liberals really plan on rewarding falling viewership by giving the CBC even more taxpayer money?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand that the media and the entertainment sectors are facing important challenges because of technological changes that are affecting how people consume information and entertainment. That was why we decided to look into the entire federal policy tool kit to adapt it to the digital age. Our entire federal policy tool kit does not take into consideration the Internet and the Broadcasting Act. All different levels within Heritage Canada were developed under the Mulroney era.

• (1455)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during the many consultations held by the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CBC/Radio Canada asked the government to provide an additional \$400 million and to depoliticize its funding by indexing it to inflation

I imagine that the minister will grant all the corporation's requests because, as she herself said, "That's easy: Radio-Canada".

Is this government going to play Santa Claus for its friends and unfairly spend another \$400 million of taxpayers' money?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have often said, we announced during the election campaign that we would be investing \$675 million in CBC/Radio-Canada and that is what we did. Why? Because we wanted to make up for the Conservative cuts of the past 10 years, and because Canadians believe in a strong public broadcaster. That said, I also initiated important public consultations in which 30,000 people participated. Therefore, in 2017, I will present a new plan revising our approach to the media—

The Speaker: The member for Mississauga—Lakeshore.

* * *

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that middle-class Canadians work hard and pay their fair share of taxes, but some wealthy taxpayers are hiding their income in tax havens.

The government promised to do something about those who use sophisticated schemes to hide their money off shore to avoid paying taxes.

Can the Minister of National Revenue tell the House about the government's strategy to identify and locate these individuals and take action against them?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Mississauga—Lakeshore for his important question.

Our government is more committed than ever to combatting tax evasion because we understand that all Canadians need to pay their fair share of taxes.

The \$444-million investment has made it possible to implement a jurisdiction-based approach. We are examining four jurisdictions per year. We started with the Isle of Man. We are now working on Guernsey. We are looking at transactions of over \$7 billion. That is just the beginning. Other jurisdictions will follow.

* * *

[*English*]

TAXATION

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, winter is here and the Liberal government is leaving Canadian seniors out in the cold with that mandatory carbon tax.

A carbon tax will increase the price of everything: housing, hydro bills, gas bills, food bills, clothing, transportation, and the list goes on and on. The fact is that many seniors are on fixed incomes and well over half a million are low income.

Why is the Prime Minister forcing Canadian seniors to choose between heating their homes or buying essential things like food and medicine?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity my colleague has generously given me to remind the House just how much of a priority the well-being of seniors is to our government.

As the member knows, in March, we announced a substantial \$1,000 increase in the guaranteed income supplement to lift 13,000 seniors out of poverty. We also lowered the age of eligibility for old age security back down to 65, which will prevent 100,000 seniors from experiencing extreme poverty because of the former government's unfortunate lack of sensitivity.

* * *

[*English*]

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadian small business owners pay among the highest fees in the world for credit card transactions. The government appears to understand this is a problem, as one of its own MPs tabled a bill to reinforce the government's power to regulate these fees. However, the debate on the bill has been delayed for the fourth time.

Oral Questions

After the government chose to break its promise to reduce small business taxes, small business owners deserve answers. Why are the Liberals avoiding debate on their own bill? Is it because the government has no intention of acting on these exorbitant fees?

● (1500)

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we remain consumed with the idea that we want to improve the economy of Canada, which will help Canadians across the country and help small businesses.

We are taking multiple measures to improve our economy. We do recognize that as we look at individual measures, measures like what businesses and consumers pay for their credit card fees, we have to come up with ways that work.

The previous government put in place an agreement with the credit card companies that we have reviewed. It appears to be working. We are continuing consultations to see if it can be improved further.

* * *

MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, London, Ontario, has been an important centre for manufacturing in Canada for decades. Despite serious challenges that have been faced by the sector since 2008, I believe strongly that there is still a bright future in store for manufacturing in London.

Would the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development be able to update the House on what the government is doing to create well-paying, good-quality manufacturing jobs in London and in Canada?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the member for London North Centre for his very thoughtful question and his advocacy in that region.

As he mentioned, Canada's manufacturing sector is a cornerstone of our economy. In London and other communities across the country, we are making significant investments and creating conditions for growth.

Just to put that in perspective, most recently we invested \$15 million in Hanwha in London, Ontario. This is to really help with advanced manufacturing, to double capacity, and to create 85 new jobs. These are the kinds of investments we are making to grow the economy and create jobs in London and across the country.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals talk a good game about the importance of nation-to-nation consultation, but they are failing.

Bill S-3 has been criticized by National Chief Bellegarde, the Native Women's Association, and the Quebec Native Women Inc. The litigant said that the first time he knew about the bill was when he was called to committee to testify. Further, the Indigenous Bar Association says it is riddled with technical flaws.

When will the minister end her paternalistic Ottawa-knows-best approach and consult with those who are directly affected?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has been working with indigenous groups to eliminate the known sex-based inequities in indigenous registration to respond to the Descheneaux ruling.

On October 25, we introduced the legislation to address the injustices by eliminating known sex-based inequities. I apologize for my department not speaking directly with Mr. Descheneaux. I have spoken with Mr. Descheneaux now, and we will move forward on this bill, and 35,000 people will get their rights back by getting this bill through—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Rivière-du-Nord.

* * *

[Translation]

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in Quebec, the law is clear. A bank cannot charge a client fees unless their amount is specified in the contract. That is what consumer protection is all about. If banks charge excessive additional fees for credit cards, transaction fees for cheques, or exchange rate fees, people in Quebec have remedies available to them.

The Liberals just decided that this is too much to ask of banks and will waive their requirement to respect people.

Really, how can the Liberals justify such a thing?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we want to ensure that Canadian consumers are protected across the country. We did not change any rules. Our rule is that consumer protection should be consistent across the country. That is still the case with Canadian rules.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will now read a motion that the Quebec National Assembly has just unanimously passed:

That the National Assembly reiterate the importance of preserving the strong consumer protection regime enacted in the Quebec Consumer Protection Act;

That the National Assembly call on the federal government to remove the provisions of Bill C-29...that would render inapplicable the provisions of the Quebec Consumer Protection Act that govern the relationship between banks and their clients.

Will the minister of high finance listen to the National Assembly of Quebec and amend the bill?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we want to be very clear. It is very important that we have rules to protect Canadian consumers. That is why we introduced the regulations without any changes. The rules are clear. Under our rules, Canadian consumers will be protected all across the country.

Government Orders

● (1505)

[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of someone familiar: the Honourable Gerry Byrne, Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: I would also like to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the recipients of the 2016 Governor General's Literary Awards: Bill Waiser, Catherine Ego, Colleen Murphy, Dominique Fortier, Jon-Erik Lappano, Kellen Hatanaka, Lazer Lederhendler, Madeleine Thien, Martine Leavitt, Roger Girard, Roland Viau, Stéphanie Lapointe, Steven Heighton.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA PENSION PLAN

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-26, an act to amend the Canada Pension Plan, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act and the Income Tax Act, as reported (without amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in this House today to speak about Bill C-26. Obviously, there are philosophical differences that the government has with the official opposition. As always, I try to add something to the debate; hopefully, something that stimulates a better understanding of both sides. This place is Parliament. We are here to discuss various points of view and, at the end, there will be a logical conclusion; one that obviously serves the country. Democracy is a great thing, but it is important that people are heard.

I would like to suggest, before I get to the actual business at hand, that the government has quite a big job ahead of it, particularly as many of its policies are going to require economic growth.

As Canadians, we know we are getting older. We are living longer. Obviously, things like pension reform are always important. It is something the previous government tried to do, albeit by different means—and I will be looping back to that in just a moment.

First, I would like to again go back to the point that, if there were a stronger economy, many of the concerns we have heard from small business owners with respect to adding more payroll taxes might have been alleviated.

As we all know, it is tougher and tougher to run a business when the economy is not producing well. Of course, all of us here would like to see more jobs in our ridings. We want to see people being able to provide for their families. However, that is not always the case, particularly if the economy is stagnating.

We have seen Mr. Poloz, the governor of the Bank of Canada, downgrade his expectations for Canada's growth, on behalf of the Bank of Canada.

I think it is important that we just acknowledge that as being a fact because, as the PBO has said, the job reports are not coming in as strong as we would like, and neither is the economy.

If we are going to ask people to pay more, whether it is into a system 40 years from now or into the coffers of the government today, we always have to remember that there is only one taxpayer. If people are struggling to pay their mortgages, if people are struggling to get into the market, and if people are struggling to pay their bills and suddenly they have less money at the end of the day, they will not give to charities. They will not put money aside for savings for their children as easily because there just is not the money there.

Whether we are talking about carbon taxes, whether we are talking about CPP increases, whether we are talking about perhaps—and I have heard in the pre-budget consultations at the finance committee that some members are thinking of a sugary drinks tax or perhaps some other taxes that we have not yet thought of—at the end of the day, there is only one taxpayer, and we always have to keep in mind the ability to pay for it.

We heard from the Macdonald-Laurier Institute during the study of Bill C-26 at committee, from an economist named Mr. Philip Cross. Mr. Cross simply pointed out what we know to be true: that while there are some concerns that certain segments of our society are not saving enough—and that is usually higher earners who are just choosing not to save, and then there is also a number of, usually, single female seniors who, because they did not participate in the labour market and have lived long enough to get to a point where now they do not have things like Canada pension plan because they did not contribute as much—those measures are not there for them.

As we have seen in the previous budget the government put forward, there was some allocation to that. In fact, in the previous election, many of us on the Conservative side ran on a pledge that we should introduce a tax credit specifically for single or widowed seniors. That was all, again, to make that targeted toward those people who are greatest in need.

Mr. Cross said that these things can be addressed through targeted programs and they can be addressed through other voluntary means. There is not a savings crisis now or predicted in the future in Canada, which is something we should be proud of.

We have a multi-pillar system. Conservatives believe, unlike the NDP and the Liberals, that there should be greater choice.

Again, we have heard time and time again from the Liberal side that the Conservatives do not care about pensions or pensioners, which is not true. We just believe that people should be able to voluntarily put their money into an account that would be there to support them, and it should be of their choosing. It should not be by a forced government program.

Government Orders

• (1510)

Again, I would go back to those many seniors who visited me. They and their spouses contributed the maximum amount to the CPP but their spouses died early, so now they, the surviving spouse, are not able to access the money they expected would be available to them, that they had socked away through the CPP system, because they are already receiving the maximum CPP allowed for an individual. These individuals get no survivor or spousal benefit. If, instead of putting that money in a government-mandated system, that same couple had put it in a tax-free savings account or an RRSP that eventually became a RRIF, and one partner were to die, the other one would have immediate access to that capital. We would all expect that.

The Macdonald-Laurier Institute said we should really be calling the argument what it is. There is an ideological agenda by the government. Just remember, “ideological” is not a dirty word but it is something that we need to acknowledge. We need to acknowledge it when we see the world presented in a certain way to come up with a certain solution. The Ontario Liberals ran on a pledge to create their own Ontario retirement pension plan that would be enormously costly and not in fact complement the federal CPP but would increase costs, with fewer benefits for people. The Ontario Liberals and the federal Liberals said they would fix it by going to the other provinces and basically eschewing any other efforts.

Mr. Speaker, I know you do not hail from Ontario, but I would remind you that it is important to notice the following. When we talked about pooled registered pension plans as a means for having voluntary portable pensions that anyone could take anywhere and employers could voluntarily put money towards if they wanted to participate, Ontario, unlike British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, did not go ahead with those. I would encourage the Province of Ontario that, despite this piece of legislation going through, there is still more to be done and that pooled registered pension plans were something that all finance ministers across this great country agreed to. That does not happen often.

I just want to take a minute to step back and talk about young people. We had witnesses at committee who said they understood that most seniors would not benefit from this bill. We are thinking about future generations, and that is an important consideration. But we see that young people are now going on to higher education with higher bills and graduating with higher bills. They are being asked to pay those student loans back while trying to get a job. This is a very difficult time. Now they are being told they should get used to precarious work. The reason work is precarious is that employers do not have confidence.

The Liberals have to understand that when they tell people they will be adding a carbon tax and payroll taxes, those taxes make it less attractive for people who want to hire, especially if they hear that the government and the Bank of Canada say they are downgrading the Government of Canada's economic outlook. This again makes it more difficult for businesses to hire young people. Then the Liberals are telling young people that even if they can pay their student loans, even if they can squirrel some money aside, they are going to have less take-home money that could help them buy a home. Of course, the new rules by the department of finance for mortgage qualification make owning a home very difficult.

To sum up everything I have said, the government is in a real pickle on this one, simply because it wants to have an agenda in which it is doing a lot of things that are probably well-intentioned, but in an environment that does not sustain them. At the end of the day, we are asking more of that one taxpayer, and remember there is only one taxpayer, to put up more than he or she is able to bear. If we do that, we risk what I have mentioned. It is the reason I oppose this measure at this time.

• (1515)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague and I sit together on the finance committee. In a time when defined benefit pension plans are going away and retirement savings are so important for Canadians and many generations to come, when the CPP is portable, fully indexed, stable, and secure and our government has reached this historic agreement with the provinces, why would the hon. member's colleagues and his party not join with us in celebrating this agreement and working together to ensure that this agreement comes to fruition, which it will, so our children would have good, dignified retirement security to look forward to?

• (1520)

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I do agree that anytime we can get all the provinces and territories to agree, it should be celebrated. Actually, I should not say “all the provinces and territories”, because Quebec obviously has its own system.

Again, I would go back to the point that the government is ramping up the CPP, which means that higher costs will be passed on to employers at a time when they have less to give.

If the government had a crystal ball, it might know that no one saw the economic and financial crisis of 2007-08. What happens if there is another recession, and this measure kicks in and causes even greater harm?

We are raising legitimate concerns. I do appreciate the member's contributions on the finance committee. However, we do have concerns about the government going ahead with a plan when there is so much uncertainty, and sending the wrong signal.

Again I go back to the point that the government should be focused on growth. Unfortunately, it is focused on redistribution.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my Conservative colleague whose definition of CPP, like that of many of his colleagues, seems to differ from ours. He seems to be saying that it is a tax, while we believe it is an investment, as do experts and many others.

When we pay 5% on our purchases at Canadian Tire, that is money that we will never get back. However, the money deducted from our pay for Canada pension plan contributions still belongs to us. That money does not disappear. It belongs to the taxpayers who invested in the plan and they will get it back when they retire.

Government Orders

Can my colleague clarify the Conservative position? Does he really believe it is a tax, or does he believe it is an investment that allows taxpayers to have a pension when they retire?

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I go back to my comment about ideological filters.

Obviously, the NDP seem to be much more open to using government-imposed measures. Basically, the CPP mandates that people have to contribute to it. Let us not forget that employers have to pay that tax as part of the compulsive nature of this bill.

People may get money back in the future for future consumption. I am not necessarily saying that is a bad thing. However, I do think we should explore other voluntarily methods prior to this.

We did have an agreement on pooled registered pension plans, which would have been portable and have offered employers, if they were in a position to do so, the chance to be pay more on a voluntary basis.

Those are the things I would like to see a little more of, and I would like to see a little less government intervention in this area of Canadians' lives.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague mentioned one of the gaps in this current CPP plan, in which elderly women whose husbands have died cannot take advantage of it. That would have been so easy to fix. After all, the husbands paid in \$1,100 that entire time. Why not give that benefit to the spouse? Could the member comment on that?

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, the surprising thing is that I have had many constituents contacting me on that very issue. They and their spouse had maxed out their contribution rates to the CPP, then one of them died prematurely, and suddenly the spouse was without that income stream.

Many Canadians would be surprised to know that if they are at the maximum, which I think is around \$1,100, they cannot have a survivor benefit. All of them were men. I am not sure why that was. When I tried to see if there were a way for us to deal with that, the previous government said it would try to help through a tax credit. It was something we ran on in the election, and perhaps the government might see it as worthy of endorsement at some point.

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise again to speak to Bill C-26 and the proposed changes to the CPP, as this is not only a very important issue to me personally, but also to my constituents and the very many business owners I have consulted across our country.

The government has failed to recognize the negative impacts this change would have on our economy. The CPP tax hike will take money from the paycheques of hard-working Canadians, put thousands of jobs at risk, and do nothing to help the seniors who need it.

Let me explain what is happening with regard to Bill C-26. The Liberals are encouraging misconceptions that these changes would help our seniors, our youth, and our businesses. This could not be further from the truth. I have heard from small business owners across Canada who have stated that changes to the CPP will mean

that they will hire fewer people. They will opt to spread the workload across the current number of employees to offset the increased cost of payroll. When I hear from our job creators and community builders that further increases to payroll costs will mean they will hire fewer workers, it means we must listen. Our economy cannot afford to lose more jobs.

I met with young entrepreneurs in the summer soon after the proposed changes were announced. Already these young leaders saw what the payroll tax would do to their own incomes and employee paycheques. Our young people are struggling to pay off school debt and make ends meet. Reducing the amount of money they are receiving today will only magnify this problem.

We absolutely need to encourage our young people to invest, but let us equip them with long-lasting tools and knowledge that will empower them to save through many different means.

As I mentioned in one of the questions I asked in the House, a study by the Fraser Institute from May 2016 projected the real rate of return for CPP investors to be only 2.1%. It states, "Canadian workers retiring after 2036...can expect a real rate of return of 2.1 percent from the CPP". This means that the majority of our workforce contributing to the CPP is only making a real rate of return that is barely above inflation. To make matters worse, when they withdraw those CPP funds, they once again will have to pay income tax on them.

Finally, I would like to talk about Canadian seniors. My colleagues know that our seniors are very important to me. As the minister of seniors in the former government, I spent five years working with organizations, health care workers, and hearing from seniors themselves on actions the government needed to take to assist them.

One of the primary ways seniors have chosen to save and the option many have found most helpful is the tax-free savings account. Unfortunately, it has now become very clear that the Liberal government did not consult our seniors when they chose to scale back the TFSA. Now the Liberals claim to be assisting our seniors when the reality is that the proposed changes to the CPP will not provide a single cent to our current seniors.

● (1525)

One common argument for these changes is that they will assist some of our seniors in poverty. These changes will do nothing to reduce seniors' poverty.

In June, a writer of the *Financial Post* stated:

Whatever the reason might be to expand the CPP, it is not to eliminate poverty. The poverty rate among seniors is now as close to zero as we can get.

The writer goes on to explain that fewer than 5% of seniors who fall under the poverty line are those who either are not eligible for old age security or who have not applied for the guaranteed income supplement.

Government Orders

It is exactly for these reasons that when I was the minister for seniors in the Conservative government, I empowered the cities to look after homeless seniors and help them apply for OAS and GIS and to administer the funds for them so that these seniors would have food on their plates and roofs above their heads. With the Liberal government, this good policy has gone.

We know that the CPP is not a means to solve poverty, and we know that TFSAs help our seniors save. Why is the government choosing to do the exact opposite of what our seniors need?

Canada's retirement system is based on three pillars: first, the CPP; then the OAS or GIS; and finally, tax-assisted savings. It is important that each of these pillars is put to Canadians. When we place too much emphasis on one, the system becomes unbalanced and does not effectively serve those who need it.

Canadians are good at saving their money for retirement. McKinsey & Company state that 83% of Canadian households are on track for retirement savings, and the C.D. Howe Institute reports that savings rates have nearly doubled since 1990. What seniors need now is protection from financial abuse, an enhancement of their financial literacy, and the ability to live within their means. What they do not need is a carbon tax, which will increase their cost of living, including heating their homes, buying groceries, and meeting other basic needs.

Let me complete this debate with what I have heard from women entrepreneurs from coast to coast to coast. They want their significant others to be able to share the rewards of their hard work when they retire. A CPP increase will not help them do that. Putting their money into sound investments will.

Young people in Vancouver hope to save enough money to buy their first home. Taking home less money will never enable them to do that.

In summary, the proposed CPP will provide none of the solutions the Liberals claim it will. Instead, our job creators will be forced to hire fewer workers. Our young people will have a harder time paying down debt, and our seniors will continue to be left out of the equation.

I know that members on this side of the House will continue to fight for our job creators and evidence-based policy. I cannot say the same for the members opposite, and I will vote against Bill C-26.

• (1530)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I believe that the Conservative Party has lost touch with Canadians in terms of what Canadians expect Parliament to do. They value our pension programs, whether it is the OAS or the GIS.

Today we are talking about the Canada pension plan. When the member across the way decides to be critical of the government on this initiative, she should be aware that this is an agreement we have with all the provinces and territories of all political stripes. It is only the Conservative Party in Ottawa that thinks it is a bad thing.

Why does the member believe that her party is so offside with what Canadians and all other political entities want?

Hon. Alice Wong: Madam Speaker, what we are doing is not embracing something that is harmful to our economy, harmful to our seniors, and harmful to our young people.

When a policy is drafted, it is not only for the benefit of that specific party but for the benefit of all Canadians. The Liberals have not consulted all the business owners who will be paying into it. They have not considered all the young people who will be paying into it and yet not reaping from it. They have not spoken to seniors, who have told us that this is not exactly what they need.

• (1535)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Madam Speaker, indeed, what we are talking about today is extremely important. We meet with seniors in our riding offices all the time. They tell us how hard it is to make ends meet on CPP alone. Sadly, those who get CPP only are living in poverty.

The most recent figures show that 30% of single senior women live in poverty. That is totally unacceptable. Unfortunately, it is often women who end up in this situation.

I want to ask my hon. colleague whether she thinks we should be doing something to improve the situation for our seniors who are living in poverty. We cannot stand idly by. We must do something. What does my colleague propose? The Liberal government proposed measures that are weak and flawed, but does my hon. colleague propose that we do nothing at all?

[*English*]

Hon. Alice Wong: Madam Speaker, this is exactly what I said in my speech. We need to help those seniors who are in poverty. One reason is that some have not even applied. Second, they are not able to administer their own funds. That is why I empowered the cities to look for these seniors, including women who are in great need and are on the poverty line.

Unfortunately, the current government does not even have a minister who can speak on behalf of the women, on behalf of the seniors, who really need the help. That is exactly why we are fighting against Bill C-26, which would not help those women at all.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a lot of respect for my colleague's opinion in this area, because she was the minister of seniors previously and is now the critic for small business.

I am interested in understanding what impact she sees Bill C-26 having on small business.

Hon. Alice Wong: Madam Speaker, what small businesses would not like to see right now is a payroll tax hike. There are other taxes the Liberals promised to reduce, like the small business tax, but they did not follow up on their promise. Small businesses are having a tough time paying more taxes, and there is now yet another one.

Government Orders

These job creators are not being given the opportunity to reinvest. We are not giving them opportunities to hire more people. These are our job creators. Bill C-26 simply does not help small business people at all.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, who has just given a very good demonstration and a very good speech on what motivates the official opposition to oppose Bill C-26.

During the previous speech, our government colleague from Winnipeg North said that the Conservatives were, to use his words, “out of touch” with Bill C-26.

We are indeed out of touch because Bill C-26 is totally out of touch with seniors and the people it is supposedly designed to help. In fact, it will be 40 years before Bill C-26 produces any results. The results will not come right away.

The government is in such a hurry to pass a bill that will have an impact 40 years from now that we have once again been presented today with a time allocation motion. In tabling yet another time allocation motion to get its legislative agenda through, the government is demonstrating its incompetence. It is also demonstrating a real lack of respect for parliamentary procedure and, ultimately, for Canadians. The government continues to try to prevent members from participating in the proceedings of the House of Commons and from representing their constituents in this place.

It was well put, was it not? Those were the words of the member for Winnipeg North. He said them when he was in the opposition and the government tabled time allocation motions. This member talks a good deal in the House, so much so that he seems to forget what he said in the previous parliament. Today, what used to be good for Peter is no longer good for Paul. That is what it looks like.

Regardless of what was said by the member for Winnipeg North, we must remember that this government was elected on a loud and clear affirmation that it would be a different government. It is succeeding, because it will probably become the government that has reneged the most on its promises in the entire history of the Parliament of Canada. That is where this Liberal government is headed.

First of all, this government will impose a Liberal tax on carbon, which is going to be very expensive, in addition to costing thousands of jobs in companies of every sector. Despite having committed to reducing corporate income taxes from 10.5% to 9%, this government does not seem the want to act on or keep that promise—not in the slightest.

The government had promised just a small deficit of \$10 billion, as if \$10 billion could be a small deficit. It was already a very big deficit, and we are now being told that it will not be a very big deficit of \$10 billion, but rather an enormous deficit of \$30 billion. What is more, the finance minister is unable to tell us when we will get back to a balanced budget.

With Bill C-26, not only has the government enticed seniors with visions of their pension plan being enhanced now, but it has also made them believe that it has their own good at heart. Their own

good and their own property, which the Liberals have gone after so they can administer it themselves. The government is giving them nothing right now, since it will be 40 years before the system works.

In a document released by his office entitled “Open and Accountable Government”, the Prime Minister himself has laid down certain ethical rules and rules on gaining access to ministers in order to represent any views. This is known as preferential access, and this government is very clear on this matter: there must be no preferential access, or presumption of preferential access, to ministers.

Unfortunately, what we have seen from the start is that the Prime Minister himself is breaking his own rules. I understand that seniors unfortunately do not have the money required to go and meet the members of this government in order to present their views, for it seems that is the way to get responses and results. That is the new Liberal tax, the tax on meetings with ministers. That is what one might call this new policy, this new method of getting what one wants from the government.

● (1540)

Let us return to Bill C-26. Seniors were promised that the Canada pension plan would be enhanced. That promise has been kept, but we have to read between the lines, as we have to do every time the government presents us with something. The reality is that this measure will take full effect not in two, five, 10 or 20 years, but rather in 40 years. In 40 years, I will be 90 years old. Life being what it is, many of my colleagues will no longer be here, like most of the seniors who are expecting an increase to their pension plan.

In the 2016 fall economic statement, the government laid out “a plan for middle class progress”. In that program, we read about Maya, an example of a Canada pension plan success story. To reach people more effectively, the government decided to use concrete examples. According to this document, Maya is a young graphic designer who is working hard to establish herself in her field. She earns \$55,000 a year, and thanks to the CPP enhancement announced in Bill C-26, in about 40 years, when she retires, Maya could receive \$17,500 per year.

In other words, since Maya will have benefited from an increased Canada pension plan and she will have been told not to save, because the CPP would do that for her, once she has worked all her life and contributed to our economy, she will receive \$17,500 per year. Maya is a success story in the eyes of the Liberal government, but in fact she is an example of Liberal failure.

What Maya is being told is that the government will manage her retirement savings for her and enhance the pension plan, and thanks to the government, instead of earning \$55,000 a year when she retires, she will earn \$17,500 a year. They say that will afford her a decent living and that this is an example of a Liberal success story. On the contrary, it is a failure caused by their desire to manage every aspect of people's lives.

Government Orders

Consequently, when we see the term “success story” in the government’s fall economic statement 2016, that is to be taken with a grain of salt. If people follow Maya’s example, in 40 years young hard-working middle-class Canadians are going to have difficulty making ends meet, because they will have put their entire fate in the hands of the government, even though it is common knowledge that no one is in a better position than we ourselves to manage our own money.

Bill C-26 also wants to increase workers’ current contributions to the Canada pension plan. At present, that plan takes 9.9% of our income, and this bill will increase that rate to 11.9%. In clear terms, that means that the average worker is going to pay up to \$1,000 more every year. That means an additional expense of \$1,000 per employee for every small business.

Despite all that, a study by the government’s own finance department shows that these increases would have harmful impacts on all economic vectors and not just on one small component. It predicts a drop in employment, gross domestic product, private investment, disposable income, and above all, personal savings, of which I have spoken from the beginning.

Those, then, are the consequences of Bill C-26. In addition to taking \$1,000 more from people’s pockets and imposing on business people an additional burden of \$1,000 per employee, this bill is going to affect the economy, job creation and savings. Finally, it is going to compromise wealth creation in Canada. That is what we are denouncing.

• (1545)

I could talk about the government’s position on plenty of other things, but I must conclude by saying that we are going to object to Bill C-26.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was very much intrigued by the member making reference to the days when I was in opposition. I can assure the member, when I was in opposition one of the things I talked about was how important time allocation was as a tool in order to get government agenda moving forward. I even acknowledged that while I was in opposition, I must say.

I am sure he would concede that the Conservative Party here in the House of Commons has made the decision that it wants to stop this bill. It is going to be voting against the bill. It does not think it is a good idea, even though the vast majority of Canadians, all the different provincial governments, and even the New Democrats and the Green Party are all saying yes, that this is a bill we should be voting in favour of.

The Conservatives, who have lost touch with Canadians, I must say, have decided to oppose this legislation. They are prepared to talk and talk if they believe it will kill the bill.

Does the member not agree that the Conservative Party has made a poor decision to vote against this, because it seems to be the only entity in the land that has seen fit to do so?

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, when the hon. member says official opposition MPs talk too much despite being the member who has uttered the most words in this place since we were elected to this 42nd Parliament, that leaves an odd taste in my mouth. The member for Winnipeg North himself has said that the government’s use of time allocation illustrates its contempt for the democratic process, in all cases—no ifs, ands or buts. Those are his own words.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to ask my colleague a question like I did this morning on Twitter, where he said the same thing. He said, “Ninth time allocation motion. How shameful.” Actually, he used the term “gag order”, but whatever term was used, he still criticized this ninth time allocation motion by saying it was shameful and that the government lacked transparency.

I therefore reminded him that, in the past, his own government imposed over 100 time allocation motions. I asked him if he thought the current government would break that record, and his answer seemed to imply that the Liberals were well on their way to doing so. In any case, at the current rate, this government will not beat the previous government’s record.

Can my colleague explain to the House why the Conservatives are now criticizing the use of time allocation motions when the previous Conservative government used time allocation over 100 times?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I would urge my hon. colleague, for whom I have a great deal of respect, to reread my tweet, because all I said was, “Ninth gag order by the Liberal government in less than a year. So much for the promised transparency”.

Did I say it was shameful? Did I say anything other than, “So much for transparency”? No, I did not. Members wishing to quote somebody in the House should make sure to quote them properly.

The point I am making is that the government was elected on a promise to do things differently; yet, it jumped at the first opportunity to silence the opposition with a time allocation motion.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d’Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his eloquent speech. Earlier, he talked about a young woman who would collect \$17,000 in 40 years. That is pretty much peanuts.

Can he explain why the government is in such a hurry to pass this budget?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, the enhanced plan will benefit people in 40 years, but they will be taxed now. This government wants to take taxpayers’ money now and not give them anything back for 40 years.

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[English]

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak somewhat in support of Bill C-26, though New Democrats have some serious concerns and amendments that we would like to once again raise. It is unfortunate that this debate is happening within the framework of the government once again invoking time allocation, which is shutting down debate. New Democrats have identified a serious error in this legislation. We wish the Liberals had acted on our suggestions to amend and that we had more time to discuss why they are reluctant. However, I will start with the positive.

Bill C-26 incorporates the recent agreement reached with the provinces to enhance Canada pension plan benefits. It is a very important step in improving retirement security for young Canadians and we congratulate everybody, especially our friends in the labour movement who worked very long and hard to lay the groundwork for this agreement. This is a success.

When fully implemented, the new CPP expansion would replace 33% of pre-retirement income. That is up from the current 25%. This action is needed. Retirement security is reaching crisis levels. Many Canadians do not have adequate financial security to maintain their lifestyles upon retirement, and this is particularly fuelled by the erosion of workplace pension plans, to the point that six in 10 working Canadians have no workplace pensions.

New Democrats have fought consistently for increases to the CPP, old age security, and the guaranteed income supplement. This bill would benefit a whole new generation of workers entering the workforce, but more is needed. This bill does little to alleviate the retirement income crisis of those now approaching retirement and the full effect of the changes would not be felt for 49 years.

Much more needs to be done right now to help lift seniors out of poverty and to help them live with the dignity they deserve. There are high housing costs, high drug costs, the clawback of the guaranteed income supplement, and the indexing of pensions. New Democrats want the Liberal government to keep its promise to introduce a new seniors price index, to make sure that old age security and the guaranteed income supplement keep up with rising costs and, in particular, to recognize that single elderly women are particularly living in poverty in this country, which is shameful.

Here is the big mistake in this bill. Bill C-26 does not contain the child-rearing dropout provisions that exist in the current CPP, so that parents, mostly women, are not penalized for time taken out of the workforce to raise children. The Liberal bill also fails to replicate a similar existing dropout provision for people who receive CPP disability benefits.

This is how the CPP already works in this regard. The benefits that people receive are based on an average of earnings from the time people are 18 until they retire. To accommodate periods where people may have low or zero incomes, the plan now allows for the lowest eight years of earnings to be dropped from the calculation, and that exemption is referred to as a dropout. That rule applies to everyone. Everyone who now qualifies for that will continue to. They should be assured that nothing will change for people already in this category.

Right now, on top of this basic exemption, there are two other specific dropouts. One is for disability, so that people receiving disability benefits are allowed to drop up to eight years out of their calculations. The other dropout is for child rearing, where people can drop up to eight years, while they were bringing up their children and their income was reduced or zero, from the calculations of their benefits. However, in the new plan that we are debating today, these dropouts would simply apply to the calculation related to base benefits, not to the calculations of the additional or enhanced benefits.

The original dropout provision for child rearing was introduced with much fanfare in 1977 by the government of Pierre Trudeau. The Liberal government of the day included this line in its 1977 throne speech:

You will be asked to consider amendments to the Canada Pension Plan which would further recognize the value of the contribution made to the family and society by both marriage partners, in the event that one remains at home to raise children while their partner works outside the home....

My friend, Iris Taylor, from Nanaimo described this. She said, “My sister Diane Wiebe along with her husband Art, raised three wonderful, hard-working, well-educated taxpayers. Diane was a stay-at-home mom until the youngest left home. Neither parents had jobs with pensions, so when they retired they solely lived on savings, CPP, and OAS. In fact, both worked part-time to cover living expenses until their passing at 70 years. My sister was always appreciative of CPP factoring in her years at home with children into her CPP pension payment.”

● (1555)

The effect of losing this could be significant, especially for women who are overwhelmingly the ones who applied for the child rearing dropout and presently receive a much lower average CPP benefit. The NDP ask was that the government restore it for the new CPP enhancements and that it do it now. We have debated every day in the House, asking the government if it would work with us to get this fixed. My colleague from Hamilton Mountain basically laid out all the groundwork at committee. All the Liberals needed to do was pick it up and run with it, but they chose not to.

In the House, we invited the government to amend its own bill. At committee, the New Democrats moved two motions to include the dropout provisions for women and those living with disabilities. However, the Liberals were not reasonable in looking at our amendments and ruled them out of order. When we tried to make a motion to have the committee recommend to the House that the provisions be put into the bill, the Liberals moved to adjourn debate. They kind of cut and run. It was very strange.

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In case the Liberals might try to cite cost as a factor in their decision to omit the dropout provisions from the new enhanced benefits, our very preliminary calculations show that the cost would be very low. Using available information, it looks like the dropouts might cost each employee and each employer 0.2% of a worker's average salary. That is a very cheap price to pay to provide such an important and significant benefit.

On the other hand, looking at the calculations on Service Canada's website, the failure to fix this program could cost parents significantly. A mother who spent six years raising children would get between \$800 to \$1,200 less each year than she would otherwise.

Again, we have time allocation on the bill so we are not able to debate this fully. Again, this is inconsistent with previous Liberal positions. Here is what the Minister of Transport was quoted in *Hansard* in 2012 as saying:

Slowly but surely, Canadians are beginning...to question what the government meant when it promised...to be open, transparent and, most of all, accountable. I believe Canadians are beginning to feel that there is a contradiction between what has been promised and what is actually being done by the government.

This is déjà vu. That was the Liberals talking about the Conservatives, but now this is just how the Liberals are acting. It is very disappointing.

Hammering home again how important this program has been for Canadian women, June Ross from Nanaimo wrote to me and said, "The credit for my child rearing years was seven years. That credit helped my pension to increase. In my view, the child rearing credit should have also been applicable to the old age pension as well. The woman who did not work outside the home and therefore was eligible for only the old age pension is punished yet again. As you are no doubt aware...we women have lesser pensions than our male counterparts because our work outside the home had very little value placed on it. Our hourly wages were very low...therefore, our pensions are much lower".

Again, the Prime Minister likes to call himself a feminist, but when we point out that the Liberals' legislation is penalizing young women workers who would qualify for this in the future, they suddenly have nothing to say. The Liberal government should immediately agree to our proposal and live up to its feminist rhetoric. It should amend the bill so future generations of stay-at-home mothers and the disabled are not penalized. Please do the right thing, amend your bill and I will vote in support of it.

• (1600)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member to address the comments to the Chair and to avoid "you" or "your", so it would be the government.

Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am a bit surprised. I thought the NDP was going to vote in favour of the bill. If that is not the case, it would be unfortunate.

I think the member has forgotten, or has chosen not to raise the issue, the importance of working with our provinces. I sat in

opposition for many years, waiting for the Harper government to do something on the CPP. For the first time in many years, we now have a government that is demonstrating leadership. It brought all the provinces together and an agreement was achieved. Then we brought forward the legislation.

I understood the NDP was going to support it. There is an idea that there are some changes that would ultimately improve the bill, but it requires the provinces to come onside. I believe the Minister of Finance indicated that we would be raising this issue with the provincial ministers at the next meeting.

Would the member acknowledge that many different stakeholders have looked forward to this change for many years? Does she not believe it is worthwhile supporting the bill?

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Madam Speaker, I, along with the New Democrats, intend to support the bill. It is important for the country. We have pushed for it much longer than the Liberals have.

My whole presentation is around us trying to work together to correct a flawed bill. We cannot believe that the government intends to leave out disabled workers and stay-at-home mothers in the future. This is why it is extremely discouraging not to talk this through and amend the bill now. Why would the government, when it has taken all this time, want to put forward a flawed bill?

The Liberals should be showing leadership with the provinces and territories. I certainly did not see any media that suggested our provincial and territorial leaders did not want to extend these benefits to stay-at-home mothers and the disabled. Again, the government has shut down debate, so we cannot discuss it.

I will quote the parliamentary secretary in 2015 on time allocation. He said:

The government, by once again relying on a time allocation motion to get its agenda passed, speaks of incompetence. It speaks of a genuine lack of respect for parliamentary procedure and ultimately for Canadians.

I agree with him.

• (1605)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I agree that it is a flawed bill. The amendment on the dropout clause being adopted is one idea. I presented an idea a few minutes ago on how we could immediately address the issues for elderly widows by ensuring that when their spouses were deceased, they would get the CPP benefit. Would the member support an amendment like that?

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Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Madam Speaker, I did not hear the details of my colleague's proposal, but we absolutely have an epidemic of poverty among elderly women in our country. There are a number of ways to get at that, and I have named some of them in my speech. Certainly, advocacy organizations, whether around basic annual income, and a little more money in the pockets of seniors would address food insecurity and help with the cost of prescription drugs.

We would like to see the government take leadership on a multitude of fronts. If we make elderly women better off, then we would save money in health care and all kinds of places. It is the right thing to do.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague's speech was excellent. She pointed out that too many seniors are still living in poverty, unfortunately.

Only 4.5% of the women who collect Canada pension plan benefits receive the maximum benefit, whereas 18% of the men do. That is why measures like those we have today to improve women's quality of life are essential.

Why are the Liberals rejecting our amendments?

[*English*]

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Madam Speaker, there were a lot of places where the difference in the New Democrat platform and the Liberal platform were unrecognizable. We were certainly pulling in the same direction. We had hope for our constructive proposals for amendment. Our initial belief was that the Liberals must have left these pieces out in error. We have tried to be as constructive as we can. We want the Liberals to fix these losses. If they did, it would certainly be better for women of the future.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this bill, and I am especially happy to have this opportunity to rise in the House knowing that many members will not have a chance to express themselves because of the government's decision to once again limit the time for debate.

Apparently we will have to do like Chinese billionaires and shell out \$1,500 to buy time with Liberal ministers to get them to listen to our concerns. That is really too bad, but that is what it has come to.

I would like to start with something we know to be true. People often say that Canadians are not financially prepared for retirement and could end up living in misery because they do not have enough money. They do not have enough cash in the kitty to fund the retirement they want, a retirement they can really enjoy that does not include frequenting soup kitchens.

This is a serious problem, one we need to tackle at its source. If Canadians are not investing enough for their retirement, perhaps it is because they do not have the means to do so. Although salaries have gone up over the past few decades and interest rates are currently very low, the situation is not perfect for Canadians. That is because such a large portion of their income is taken away by the various levels of government in the form of sales tax, premiums, permits,

licences, and income tax. There is no shortage of words to describe how the government picks the pockets of the middle class.

If we want Canadians to be able to plan for their retirement, we need to give them the means to do so. I know this is hard for the members over there to understand. This means giving Canadians greater flexibility so they do not have to hand so much over to all levels of government, until they have almost nothing left to plan for their golden years.

The government loves being generous with other people's money. I would remind members that it is generous with taxpayers' money, including corporate taxpayers. Despite the Liberals' shameful \$25-billion deficit, which has not created any wealth, they are not putting any tax dollars into this plan.

However, this will come at a cost to the Canadian economy. This is a glorified tax on businesses and Canadians. The Liberal government unilaterally decided what Canadians will do with an even bigger part of their salary. Our deficit experts are introducing yet another payroll tax.

Instead of working to create wealth, they are undermining it. In many cases, these costs mean the difference between profitability and hardship. Every business, big or small, will be affected by this measure.

I know what I am talking about. I am a businessman and have been a business owner for 21 years. I know all about costs and obstacles to hiring. The more governments drive up the costs, the less appetite there is for hiring. It is as simple as that.

That amount can be significant for large companies with several hundred employees. Production costs for the same output will go up by \$100,000, \$200,000, \$300,000 or more overnight, and we haven't even talked about the carbon tax the Liberals are going to tack on. The future is not bright for our businesses. It is going to take a lot more than a Care Bear stare to grow our economy.

The finance minister's officials confirm our fears about the changes in Bill C-26: the proposed increased contributions will have an adverse effect on job creation. For a government that said it would base its decisions on science, facts, and sound advice from the public service, it is sad to see the Liberals act in this way. They are listening more to Kathleen Wynne than to experts on this. It seems that the Butts and Telfords of this world have more pull than finance department experts.

I have some examples. According to officials at the Department of Finance, the measures proposed in Bill C-26 will have an adverse effect on job creation.

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Over 10 years, the drop in job creation will be between 0.04% and 0.07%. These are jobs lost, not created. There will also be a drop in GDP of between 0.03% and 0.06%. A drop in GDP is not synonymous with job creation. There may also be a drop in corporate investment of between 0.03% and 0.06%. When companies invest less, there are fewer jobs for Canadians. There will also be a decrease in disposable income of between 0.03% and 0.06%. Canadians with less money in their pockets means less money to keep our economy going. There will be a 7% drop in long-term private savings. Once again, this measure is supposed to encourage saving for one's old age. However, it will accomplish the exact opposite. People will have less money.

• (1610)

The government is gambling that by increasing taxes it can solve everything. The Liberal government is reverting to its old habits: it thinks that it should not let Canadians manage their own money because they will buy beer and chips instead of investing in their future.

On this side of the House, we believe that Canadians are smart enough to invest in their retirement if we give them the means to do so by cutting taxes. If they do not invest, it is because they do not have the means. If we give them the means, they will invest.

The Fraser Institute reports that a one percentage point increase in the CPP contribution rate reduces private savings by 0.9%. The Liberals' measures only shift the problem rather than resolving it. It is worrisome that 70% of small business owners do not agree that the proposed increase is a modest one and that it will have a limited impact on their businesses. SMEs are Canada's main employers. Could the government listen to them?

The decision to increase contributions was made without consulting Canadians. It would be interesting to consult those who are going to pay for this decision: the public and the employers.

In short, to resolve the problem, the government is proposing to take money away from Canadians who already do not have enough to make ends meet.

I would like to read a quote by Hendrik Brakel, the senior director of economic, financial, and tax policy at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. On May 31, 2016, he said:

Here at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, we're worried a big tax increase is headed for the middle class like an elbow to the chest...

This comes at the worst possible time—an economy reeling from weak commodity prices and slower consumer spending will be lucky to eke out growth of 1.5% next year. It's difficult to stimulate the economy while pulling money out of the pockets of Canadians.

These people need the government to give them a break, not foist another tax on them.

• (1615)

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I have a question for him about the usefulness of public pension plans.

According to most of what the Conservatives say, they seem to neither appreciate nor promote a robust public pension plan. I would

like my colleague to acknowledge the fact that there may be consequences when there is no public pension plan, as the Conservatives seem to be proposing, or when the plan is weak.

In fact, with a weak public pension plan, not everyone saves or puts money aside for retirement. Who will look after those seniors living in poverty? The government.

Poverty greatly affects the health care system. Again, the government is the one that supports people living in poverty at the end of their lives.

Can my colleague acknowledge that, in any case, if there is no public pension plan, it is the government that will see to the quality of life of our seniors? Consequently, it is better to put money into a robust public pension plan that will make retirement possible, without the government interfering too much in the lives of pensioners.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question from my colleague, the youngest member of the House of Commons, who will have the opportunity to benefit from the money that will be invested in the program today. In 40 years, he will still be young. We, however, will be very old.

The question concerns the philosophy of the Conservatives compared with that of the NDP or the Liberal government. It is a fact that we do not have the same philosophy or the same way of seeing things. Listen, we have introduced programs, such as the TFSA, for example, and ways for people to save. Our philosophy is this: leave the money in taxpayers' pockets so they can invest it themselves.

My response to my colleague is that we prefer to allow people to manage their own investments. We want to give them the means to make investments; we do not want to tax citizens and businesses thousands of dollars for 40 years, in addition to slowing the economy and job growth. It all comes down to mathematics. As we see it, Liberal mathematics do not work.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I remind the hon. member that all questions and responses must be directed through the Chair.

The hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle has the floor.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, but I would like to follow up on a question from my colleague from Sherbrooke.

I would simply like to know if the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles believes that the CPP, like all government programs, has to exist, or if he would rather they were abolished entirely.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

As a Conservative, I am not necessarily in favour of doing away with all of the existing programs. Some of the programs that are in place are effective. They are good programs. We even increased the guaranteed income supplement for seniors at the time, before the government changed.

Government Orders

That is not the issue. The issue is that there has to be a balance. The problem right now is that there is no balance. The Liberals are imposing an additional tax on employees and employers for a program that will not produce results for 40 years. It is a matter of balance. What is more, the government needs to know what investments to make and when.

[*English*]

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, my observation is that, during the 10 years that the Conservative Party was in power, income disparity grew and the pension gap really rose, so there were a couple of mechanisms that the Conservatives brought forward: the tax-free savings account, and the pooled retirement pension plans.

I would be interested to know the member's observations on how successful those were, because what I have heard is that they were mostly taken up by middle- and high-income people and not the low-income Canadians we are trying to protect.

• (1620)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, as Conservatives, we were fortunate to form the government for 10 years. Maybe one day the NDP will form the government, but the Conservatives and the Liberals are the ones who have been in office until now. That is what is happening now, and that is what will happen in the future.

The Conservative government's measures were effective. We balanced the budget, and we left as much money as possible in Canadians' pockets. That is the most important thing for us.

[*English*]

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-26, which would have consequences for all people and communities across Canada with very real costs that would not deliver the promised benefits, and at a time when job losses are escalating with not one single net new full-time job created in Canada during the past year under the Liberals. Government must work with entrepreneurs, job creators, and employers and not against them.

The Liberals often claim to be committed to public consultations, so their failure to listen to Canadians about this bad plan is rich. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business recently confirmed that 83% of employed Canadians do not support this payroll tax hike, and more than 80% agree that they want the government to consult them on it. However, the Liberals are pushing it through, banking on Canadians believing the Liberal spin and misinformation.

According to the same CFIB study, 40% of Canadians think the government pays for part of the CPP, and 70% of Canadians believe current seniors would benefit, which is how the Liberals are selling it; but of course, both notions are completely false.

It is galling that the Liberals are exploiting the anxieties of young Canadians about their futures, the urgency of people nearing retirement who are worried about financial security in the next stage of their lives, and the challenges faced by retirees who are struggling now to make ends meet on fixed incomes, by selling this punitive increase as the responsible and shared value of helping

people save for retirement and implying that it would help retirees now, while pretending there will be no negative or damaging consequences.

Both employees and employers would bear the cost of this hike that would take more away from job creators, harming their ability to grow their businesses and invest in their employees. As it would force small businesses to reduce staff or pay, in order to stay afloat, or increase prices for their products or services if they can, it is employees and customers, all of us, who truly pay for it.

The Liberals should walk their talk on fact-based decision-making. Many experts and extensive studies conclude that expanding the forced retirement pension plans on small business owners would likely result in a decrease in private sector investment, a decrease of labour force, and an increase in inflation. These are important warnings that government should heed, because in Canada small businesses comprise 97.9% of all privately owned businesses and employ 70% of Canadians working in the private sector.

In Lakeland, the people and businesses are struggling. Job losses are escalating, even though entrepreneurs are doing their best to keep going. The damage from the downturn and bad government policies is rippling through all sectors and across Alberta. This payroll tax hike would just make things worse and add costs for employers at an already enormously challenging time.

Small business owners across Lakeland oppose this expansion, because it is yet another tax hike. Whether it is an increase in employment insurance premiums, a carbon tax, or the proposed CPP hike, families and businesses in Lakeland cannot afford the Liberals' agenda.

The owner of a Vegreville window and glass company explained to me that not only would this be bad for the employee and the employer, but it would reduce our economy. Businesses cannot raise prices; the only way is to lower input costs, which is limited to the employee. Tough choices would have to be made, as every input cost is increasing: electricity, insurance, base product costs, which cannot be decreased. It would lead to fewer workers and fewer hours. Negative effects on our economy would be far reaching, as raising prices does not and will not work. Government would harm businesses and workers with this move.

It is clear that this plan would lead to wage freezes, reduced benefits, or even layoffs. Job creators in Lakeland are cautioning exactly what others all across Canada are telling the Liberals. This hike would hurt their ability to invest in and to expand their businesses, to hire and to compensate their employees, and to start new ventures. These consequences would ricochet through the whole economy.

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A co-op grocery store in Vegreville might have to increase membership fees. A bookstore owner in Lloydminster might have to lay off a hard-working employee, and a student in Edmonton might not get that pay raise at work, needed to pay for school.

Each one of these situations has profoundly different impacts on communities. That membership fee increase at the co-op might be the last straw for a single mother, forcing her to choose between necessities for her family. That former bookstore employee, who volunteered with the Girl Guides of Canada, teaching kids important life skills and values, would have to participate less in order to look for more work. The student in Edmonton might have to take a second job, taking more time away from her studies, hampering her academic performance, and limiting her potential. This combined with a job-killing and price-hiking carbon tax would devastate communities even more.

• (1625)

What does this mean for average Canadian families and why should they be concerned? Studies show that some households will pay up to \$2,200 more per year as a result of this hike. That is enough to take a course and upgrade credentials for work on the rigs, or to transition into something else, a season of minor hockey, or a once-in-a-lifetime bucket list vacation for two. All for what?

The consequences for businesses will not help seniors now, contrary to what the Liberals have been telling everyone. It will take 40 years for the CPP expansion to even provide marginal benefits, if the program even still exists. Businesses and families will be paying the price for this made-in-Ottawa disaster the whole time. I would understand of course if it helped seniors today but that simply is not the case. Canada's demographic transition is under way and the timing of this change will hurt both businesses now at the very worst time and will not even benefit baby boomers.

Reducing red tape and cutting taxes would help those who create the majority of Canada's middle-class jobs. If Canada is to maintain its competitive edge, increase productivity, and spur innovation, legislators must constantly strive to improve the conditions for doing business, not make them worse. This means understanding how government policies affect everything job creators, contractors, and entrepreneurs do. Increasing Canada's international competitiveness is also vital to the success of small businesses and their hard-working employees.

Our philosophy as Conservatives is that Canadians' money belongs to them and not to the government. Reducing and lowering taxes equals more jobs because the more than one million small businesses from across the country are unable to continue to expand, invest, and employ.

So far the Liberal philosophy of borrow, tax, and spend is failing. Earlier this month Canadians received the shocking news that during October, 23,000 jobs were lost. That is one job every two minutes. Canadians expect and deserve more from the government. The previous low-tax plan was stimulating growth, jobs, and savings, and not on the backs of future generations.

There are other measures the Liberals could have taken to help Canadians save for their retirement. They could increase RRSP contribution limits. RRSPs have been successful at allowing

Canadians to save for retirement and prove that when we work with the private sector instead of against it, goals like secure retirements can be achieved.

The second is the tax-free savings account. If the government wants to encourage Canadians to save, why on earth would the Liberals reduce the amount they can contribute to the most versatile savings and investment tool? The flexibility of a TFSA recognizes that Canadians have different savings needs and can plan for their futures. We are not a one-size-fits-all country and a one-size-fits-all solution will not work.

The "Ottawa knows best" approach is failing. Despite what the Liberals think, Canadians are smart enough to make their own decisions when it comes to retirement savings and what solutions work best for them.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, after listening to the speech by my colleague from Lakeland there is a question that I feel I need to ask. In my opinion, the government has an obligation toward its citizens, toward the short term and for the long term to ensure the well-being of the population going forward.

I am wondering if the member for Lakeland believes the government has an obligation directly to its citizens and if so, what exactly that obligation is.

• (1630)

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Madam Speaker, so far the government is making things worse for the people who create jobs, who start businesses, and who allow Canadians to support themselves and their families. At the very least when the government is making a change like this, it should consult Canadians and it should consult the people who would be impacted the most.

What is alarming about the government pushing through this change is that even Finance Canada's own analysis shows that higher CPP premiums would hurt the economy. My colleague went through some of this earlier. Studies show that this would reduce employment, with more than 10,000 fewer jobs per year for 10 years. It would reduce GDP, reduce business investment, reduce disposable income, and reduce private savings. Experts and institutes from all over the country are coming out against this reform.

The member can talk about the government's responsibility to its citizens but on this change, it is clear that the government is failing.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to follow up on the question from my colleague from Laurentides—Labelle.

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The Conservatives' philosophy seems to be to have no public pension plan. Very well, we accept that vision insofar as it is their choice to give Canadians every voluntary opportunity to save money for their future and their retirement.

That being said, it is a fact that in many cases people find themselves in a situation of extreme poverty when they retire. The government then has to step in, unless my colleague thinks, on the contrary, that the government should not step in to meet the needs of Canadian citizens and instead should leave them on the street. That may be her position, to leave them out on the street and do nothing to help them.

However, if she thinks that we have to help our fellow citizens who are living in poverty, does she believe that, in any case, it is the ultimately the government that will have to pay for certain poverty-related expenses in our country?

[English]

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Madam Speaker, here is what Charles Lammam and Hugh MacIntyre said:

Instead of expending political energy on debating CPP expansion in the misguided belief that many middle- and upper-income Canadians are not saving enough for retirement, the focus of public debate should be on how best to help financially vulnerable seniors.

That is what the focus of this debate should be. However, today we are debating the CPP hike that the Liberal government is ramming through; it is stifling debate, and has not consulted on it with Canadians.

All of us in the House should actually listen to Canadians and what they have to say about it.

We already talked earlier about the fact that Canadians want to know more about this program and that the Liberals are banking on their misinformation and their spin to sell this bad plan to Canadians. Seventy per cent of employed Canadians oppose a CPP expansion if it means a wage freeze. Over one-third of employed Canadians say the proposed increases are unaffordable. Fewer than 20% of Canadians say they would opt to put more of their savings into the CPP.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would just point out that in the retirement savings universe there are many choices. There are RRSPs, tax-free savings accounts, and so on, so we preserve choice at all times.

Would the hon. member not agree that the middle-class tax cut and the child benefit free up money for families to invest in RRSPs if they would like, or other vehicles?

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Madam Speaker, on this side of the House, we believe in maximizing the choices and opportunities for Canadians to save and to provide for themselves, their families, their futures, and their communities. What is clear is over the last year under the Liberals' failed plan is that the roadblocks and the policies of the Liberal government are crushing the middle class and dismantling the economy. We know that in fact because not one new full-time job has been created in Canada, and that is the worst possible situation for Canadians who want to provide for themselves and their futures.

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Canada pension plan is the bedrock of our public retirement income system in Canada. Millions of Canadians rely on it today, and many millions more will rely on it in the future. It is one government program that touches virtually every Canadian.

It is our duty, as parliamentarians, to ensure that the CPP is not just in place for future generations, but also to ensure that it is strengthened so that all Canadians can retire with dignity. After a lifetime of hard work, Canadian families deserve to retire comfortably.

We know that the CPP is an integral part of many people's retirement plan. With fewer and fewer Canadians having a workplace pension to fall back on, its importance is only growing. Our government recognizes the importance of the CPP. That is why we have made a commitment to strengthen and enhance the plan. My hon. colleague, the Minister of Finance, worked incredibly hard with his provincial counterparts to reach a historic agreement to make important and meaningful changes to CPP. As a result, more than one-quarter of Canadian families nearing retirement, about 1.1 million more families, will be able to retire with dignity.

Every week, in my constituency office in Cambridge, my staff see seniors who are struggling to make ends meet. We try our hardest to ensure that they are receiving every benefit they are entitled to; but the fact of the matter is CPP needs to be enhanced. I know how much an expanded CPP would mean to the people of my riding. I can think of thousands of retirees who rely on CPP to fund their retirement and to stay productive members of our society.

I want to take a moment to talk through several key provisions of the bill and speak directly about how I would anticipate those changes enhancing and benefiting the lives of my constituents in Cambridge and, frankly, of constituents across this entire country. I think it goes without saying that CPP needs to be enhanced, in that it needs to see an increase in the amount of retirement pension that Canadians receive. With Bill C-26, however, the enhancements would go further than that. Canadians can expect to see increases to the survivors and disability pension provisions, as well. As our population ages, those survivor benefits ensure that a lifetime of paying into CPP still has benefits even after the death of a spouse.

The increase in Bill C-26 would ensure that the maximum level of pensionable earnings is increased by 14% by 2025. That level of support would be unprecedented in Canada, and it would arrive just as many more Canadians are retiring.

I know that these provisions come with additional costs, but they also come with additional spinoff benefits that would reach deep into our economy. In this case, the benefits would far outweigh the costs. As retirees are unable to participate fully in our economy and many withdraw more and more because of lack of retirement savings, those individuals are not full participants in everything Canada has to offer. This has some very direct issues; for example, not being able to afford things like food and medications. Those concerns are heartbreaking and well-documented, and one of the reasons there is currently a strong push for national pharmacare and increased support for food banks and other emergency social service providers. We see these cases in my office in Cambridge every single week.

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However, not having enough retirement savings also causes many seniors to withdraw in many other ways, as well.

I can think of many seniors in my riding who choose to participate in fewer events, to go out less, and to stay in more because of lack of funds. These have several direct and negative effects. We know that seniors and retirees live better and longer lives when they socialize more and when they remain active. For many seniors, this means having the financial ability to go out, drive, and participate in events. Even if these events are low-cost, which many events for seniors are, it is critical that we create a society where they are financially able to continue participating for as long as they are able.

● (1635)

That activity or social time saves health care costs, mental health costs, and housing costs. More importantly, it allows for aging with dignity.

Since the Second World War, the number of company-provided pensions has fallen at a significant rate. This is due to a number of contributing factors, each of which is worth exploring but none of which is likely to be reduced in the short term. StatsCan says that in the 1970s about half of all men had defined benefit pension plans. Now, in 2016 we are at about half that number. That is a significant decline, but is even more significant when we consider the very large population bubble that we call the baby boom. When we consider the rates of company-provided pensions for younger people today who are not part of the baby boom generation, the rates are significantly lower.

I have used men as an example because the work dynamics were significantly different in the 1970s. Women have historically had fewer workplace pension plans and never crossed even the 50% threshold. We know this is causing an impending crisis, one this government is taking steps to fix. Enhancing CPP would allow the young people of today, those who are least likely to have a workplace-provided defined benefits plan, to see a significant increase in their retirement incomes.

It is also worth noting that this new plan would have no major infrastructure costs because the CPP infrastructure is already in place. This means that the new system would be much easier to put in motion, be more easily adopted by Canadians, and would fit within our existing policy structures. All of these reasons would make it cheaper, easier, and better to implement than many other ways to enhance post-retirement income for Canadians. I applaud the government for working to achieve increased CPP benefits.

We currently have more seniors than kids in Canada. I want to take a moment to go back to considering what happens when retirees and seniors withdraw from the system. The benefits and issues are not only in terms of mental health and health care, but also in terms of their significant impact on our economy. The longer a senior is able to participate fully, he or she is able to contribute to the economic robustness of our society. The longer seniors are able to participate fully, the more likely they are to volunteer and remain an economic force in our society. Obviously, solving these long-term demographic trends is not the duty of the CPP solely, but I believe it is the right place to start. It says that we are taking this seriously and are working toward solutions.

I have mentioned in the past that prior to my working in this wonderful profession that we find ourselves in, the people of Cambridge knew me from the YMCA. Prior to working for the YMCA, almost all my involvement was working with youth. The YMCA offers a number of programs for seniors. It is interesting because the span of the demographic that we call seniors can be as wide as 30 years. If we take that same age range and put it at the beginning of life, we are talking about infant, toddler, preschooler, school-aged child, teenager, young adult, and adult all within that same 30 years. We have to be thinking outside the box when it comes to seniors. They are living longer, but they are living differently as well. This approach that we have reached with the provinces is an amazing first step.

I will leave it with one final thought. No matter what the House decides on the CPP, and I am asking everyone to carefully consider supporting the plan laid out in Bill C-26, we will still have a long way to go toward ensuring that all members of our society are prepared for retirement.

● (1640)

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened intently to and want to thank the member for his work as the chair of our human resources committee. He is a compassionate person, and I appreciate his bringing up the issue of seniors.

It is interesting that he talked about the YMCA. In the *Vancouver Sun* yesterday, there was an article about seniors. It talked about 69-year old John Young, a former business instructor with the YMCA. He was homeless after having slept on a couch in a friend's one-bedroom apartment for the past three years trying to make ends meet with a \$1,600-a-month pension. He used to be able to teach people how to start a business, and now he finds himself homeless.

Approximately 20% of seniors in British Columbia are living on a low or fixed income and having a very difficult time living. Increasing the GIS helps a bit for some in need, but it does not solve the problem.

Would the member care to comment on John Young and his predicament and how changing the age of eligibility for the OAS to 65 does not help. How can we help John and other seniors?

● (1645)

Mr. Bryan May: Madam Speaker, through you I would like to thank the member for his continued support and passion for seniors. He definitely keeps them front of mind at our human resources committee, which I am thankful he is a member of.

I agree 100% that there are so many more things that we need to do. I do not think we have suggested that Bill C-26 or increasing the GIS will solve everything. However, they are pieces that will help move the needle in the right direction.

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The hon. member knows that we are working diligently in the human resources committee on a study of poverty. He has ensured that seniors have been a key factor in that study. I look forward to continuing to work with the member on that study, and hopefully coming up with some ideas so that the individual he spoke of does not have to rely on all of these services and can live with dignity.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

A number of my colleagues and I have detected a major error in the bill. When parents have a child with a disability or an illness, the current pension plan allows for dropping certain years of their contribution to the pension plan from the calculation of the amount they will be paid under the Canada pension plan. However, this does not appear in the bill before us, although it does exist at the present time.

I would like to know when my colleague plans to fix this situation. Clearly it has not been resolved in committee or in the House.

When does the government plan to correct this flagrant error in the new pension plan that it is now proposing in the House?

[*English*]

Mr. Bryan May: Madam Speaker, I apologize to the member, as I will be responding in English. My French is just not there yet. However, I am working on it. I am taking lessons, and hopefully I will be able to respond in French in the future.

I understand the question. I have heard the question many times. We have to recognize that this is a historic agreement. The fact that this has been done in the House in essentially our first year in government is a testament. Is it perfect? No, I do not believe it is perfect. However, I also believe that we will be sitting down with the provinces to work out some of these key issues. As I said in my speech, this is a start, not an end.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, Canadian Heritage; the hon. member for Lakeland, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, that is very kind.

[*English*]

Pensions are important, and I am always reminded that we must prepare for the future. There were stories told in my family about indigenous people out hunting the buffalo on the prairie with the buffalo jumps. After the kill was done, the men and women would work together with the children to collect the meat and tan the hides. There was hours and hours of work to prepare for the coming winter. The children were asked to look for fuel and would toss over the buffalo dung to dry to get ready for the winter.

I am also reminded of the western view on this, where the grasshopper and ant have to prepare for the future. One enjoys himself and the other does not.

Therefore, when I was considering this problem on the finance committee, I often thought of it as something about preparing for the future, but it is also related to the idea of poverty, which is a huge problem in our society.

In March 2015, Statistics Canada showed that Canadian household savings was at a five-year low of 3.6%. To give a frame of reference, in 1982, the savings rate of Canadian households was 19.9%. Therefore, we are just not saving enough. We know that we should. We know about these stories. We hear these stories in our homes and we teach them to our children, yet it seems that we do not take the time to actually do it ourselves when it comes time to think of our long-term, 40-year futures and how we are going to retire.

Members might ask what my interest is in this. Well, obviously, I am a citizen and am always interested in the future. I am also on the finance committee with some fabulous colleagues. We have been studying this issue for over a month, preparing, listening to witnesses, considering testimony, and even studying the bill itself.

An hon. member: A whole month.

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette: Yes, Madam Speaker, a whole month.

I am also interested in this because of my mother. My mother did not lead a very easy life. She grew up in great poverty. She also had some mental illness. We grew up in poverty with her. However, she never had a company pension plan. She never really worked in some of those jobs that one needs, and she was seemingly always poor. When she died at 58 years old, she was looking forward to being 65 years old, the day she would get her Canada pension plan. She would get the guaranteed income supplement and old age security, and she would break out of the poverty barrier in this country. However, she never managed to get there, which is unfortunate. I always have her in mind when I think about the future, because I know there are many other Canadians who face similar issues.

I have enjoyed the process of studying this bill and the process of “making sausage” for the House, but the CPP is simply not a tax. I have heard my colleagues on the opposite side categorize this as a tax, but it is not. It is a form of savings for the future.

In committee, I had the opportunity to ask the opposition what our nation would be like if we did not have the Canada pension plan. What would our country be like if Canadians could not look forward to a day when they could have a form of savings to rely on when they were retired? Well, we would have 44% of all seniors in this country living in poverty, because that is what we had in 1950 before the Canada pension plan came into effect. I have heard the arguments made by witnesses and by the opposition on why we should not do this, but those are the same arguments that were made in the 1950s on why we should not have the Canada pension plan. I have had the opportunity to read *Hansard* from that period.

Today, we have some of the lowest rates ever of seniors poverty in our country, and for that I am very grateful, but we can always do better. How does Canada compare to other nations in the world? How do we compare to OECD countries?

I looked at pension contribution rates around the world and at a report that was put out by the OECD in 2013. In fact, Canada has some of the lowest contribution rates in the world. Our contribution rates for our Canada pension plan is 9.9% currently and it is going up to 11.9%.

• (1650)

If we look at Austria, in 2012 it was 22.8%. In Estonia it is 22.8%. In France it is 16.7%. Even the United States had a contribution rate in 2012 of 10.4%. Therefore, I do not believe we are losing our competitive advantage by investing in our future. In fact, we are still very competitive with the United States.

The only country we have a really large trading partnership with that does not have a pension plan is, in fact, Mexico. It had no contribution rate in this 2013 report. I asked the opposition in committee if we actually want to be like Mexico. Do we want the same form of protection for our workers and fellow citizens that they have in Mexico? I think we all know the answer to that. We are very happy to be living in Canada. We are very blessed.

I believe that it is important for us to be saving for the future. It is one principle that I think people, whether young or old, can get behind. There is actually an old proverb: look to the future but believe in the present. Have foresight and look to the future. It is also in the Bible, where Joseph and the Pharaoh saved during the good years for the seven lean years. It is something that is taught to all of us, and I hope we always remember it.

In committee, I heard testimony from lobbyists, representing some very important companies, who presented flawed data. For instance, one survey they presented to the committee said that Canadians prefer using the tax-free savings account and registered retirement savings plans over having a larger Canada pension plan. The options offered in the survey were the tax-free savings account, the registered retirement savings plan, personal savings, other investments, CPP, and voluntary retirement savings plans, but there was no option of a defined company retirement pension plan, an RPP, a benefit pension plan provided by an employer. It is unfortunate that it is not offered to employees in this country. I am sure we already know what the response would be. Most employees would like to have a company pension plan, but unfortunately, they have been declining.

A Statistics Canada survey shows that from 1977 to 2013, total RPP coverage went from 35% to 24%. It is declining. Fewer and fewer people have access to company pension plans, and that is unfortunate. If private companies are unwilling to take up that slack, it falls to us to make sure we provide for the most vulnerable in the future.

In committee, the third opposition party has been talking about the issue of women. The Liberals have raised this issue as well in committee. In fact, my esteemed colleague from Pickering put forward a motion calling on the finance minister to speak to the other ministers of finance across Canada to raise the issue of equity in

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pensions for women. This is a long-term process. This pension plan will be in effect in eight years, so we have time to prepare for the future. We have time to make sure we get this right.

We also need to take the time to work with the provinces, our provincial partners, because they are our partners. We cannot unilaterally say that we are going to change this by ourselves or that it is only for us to decide. That is not how our government works. We work in consultation and through discussion. Though it may take a little longer, at the end of the day, there is more buy-in and it is more positive for more people.

I think of the young pages in the House. I think of young people. This pension plan will not benefit me, because in 40 years, I am going to be well into my eighties, but it will benefit the pages. They will see the full benefit of this Canada pension plan. That is truly thinking for the future, thinking for seven generations, thinking long term. That is what we need most in the House, not short-term political gain but a long-term vision for our nation.

• (1655)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member talked about a vision for the long term. We know from the study by McKinsey & Company that the problem we are trying to fix is the 17% of Canadians who cannot afford to retire. We know who those people are. We know that they are elderly widows and people who are lower income, including some of the people we have talked about today, such as single mothers, disabled folks, etc.

We know who the people are. We know what the problem is. Why did the government choose to ignore doing something for those people to fix their problem today, which the Liberals could have done, when they only have a three-year mandate, instead of implementing something that Finance Canada says is going to be bad for 30 years and will not have a benefit for 40 years?

• (1700)

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette: Madam Speaker, at committee, I do not believe the finance department said it would be bad for 30 years. We have to look not at the CPP by itself. We have to consider all the measures the government is taking. One of the very first measures of this government was including *une bonification*, or looking to increase the guaranteed income supplement and old age security for the seniors most in need.

This impacts a lot of women and a lot of men as well. It is no longer going to be always about dividing men and women. It is going to be about poverty in the future. It is going to be about those who have education and the ability to profit from the system we have created. We have to make sure that all of us have the ability to profit from that situation.

We have taken a long-term approach but also an approach that looks at all sorts of instruments to improve the level of poverty for all Canadians.

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[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is clear that the situation of our seniors living in poverty has to be improved. Such poverty is absolutely unacceptable. People talk to me about this often in my constituency. It is totally revolting to see how seniors manage to survive on the little they have.

One of the important things that the NDP has proposed is the importance of retaining the child-rearing dropout provision and the dropout provision for persons with disabilities.

Why did the Liberal government not agree to keep these two dropout provisions, which allow seniors to have a better pension and help lift women from poverty, among other things? Unfortunately, it is often female seniors who find themselves living in poverty.

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette: Madam Speaker, the Standing Committee on Finance addressed this issue. A Liberal motion called on the Minister of Finance to take a much closer look at these issues with finance ministers across the country and work with them. We had an opportunity to really enhance the plan, so we had to take steps right away. Everyone was in agreement, so why wait for someone to object? We had to strike while the iron was hot, so we did. That does not mean we are done striking. It means we are ready to press on and make sure the people who need protection get it.

We want to make sure that women who raise children get this protection because they are the ones who need it most, not women who earn \$200,000 or more because they probably already have that kind of protection. We cannot transfer money from the poor to the rich. We have to make sure that everyone has the same advantage. That means we want everyone to be on a level playing field.

[English]

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House to talk about the amendments the government is planning to make to the CPP. I call upon all my colleagues to consider all the debates we have heard on this issue over the last many days.

One of the things that strikes me the most in this debate is that we are failing to recognize the achievement of reaching an agreement with all nine provinces that have opted into the CPP. It is rare in Canada that we have provincial-federal agreement on an issue as broad and comprehensive as this in a way that has brought everyone together. This is one example of co-operative federalism that works.

Even my own province of Quebec has agreed to look at these changes and to incorporate them as best it can into the QPP. For me, this agreement, by itself, the nature of the Government of Canada talking to the provinces, is a success story.

What I have heard an awful lot of is that it is either this or that. I have heard people talk about this taking away people's obligations and their opportunities to save for themselves. I have heard from the other side the importance of government acting on behalf of people and protecting them.

In my view, we need to have a balance. People need to take responsibility for themselves. I agree that people should be contributing to RRSPs, and people should be contributing to TFSAs. I have been lucky enough to do that, but I also know that there are

other people in the country who have not been lucky enough to be able to do that. Whether because of family obligations or the fact that their salary gives them just enough to survive on week to week, they have not been able to save for retirement. Does that mean they have no such responsibility? No, I do not agree with that. Everyone has a responsibility.

However, at the same time, all parties in the House have agreed that the Canada pension plan deserves to exist. If we agree that it deserves to exist, because we need to have a balance to protect people to a certain extent in retirement, we obviously then agree that at certain times in history, the Canada pension plan needs to be updated. I think the real debate I am hearing is whether this is one of those times that the Canada pension plan needs to be updated.

Some of the statistics I have looked at show that, on balance, among all the G20 countries, Canadian households seem to have the highest debt. The Canada pension plan covers a smaller percentage of retirement income than similar pension plans in other countries, including our neighbours, the United States.

The wage ceiling of the pension plan, at \$54,900, is well below what the wage ceiling is in comparable pension plans. When I was the mayor of Cote St. Luc, for example, we noticed that the wage ceiling for our pension plan was one of the lowest on the island. We were at exactly the \$54,000 level. We increased that to \$82,000, because we recognized that since we had not adjusted the wage ceiling for decades, we were no longer allowing people to provide for themselves in retirement.

The increase from approximately one-quarter of one's earnings to one-third is a valuable improvement. I believe that there are facts in hand to justify the increase to the CPP at this time.

I want to tackle one issue I have heard as well in this debate. One of the things I have heard that is very interesting has been the argument that this is a payroll tax on employers and that it will inordinately impact small businesses. I do not see this as a payroll tax, because in the end, the amount employers are asked to give is going to the employees for their pensions. In a sense, it is saying that the employers are compelled to give the employees a salary increase, to some extent, because they are contributing more to the employees to protect them in old age, but I do not believe that it is actually a tax.

For the many years I was involved in private business, which was my entire career until I was elected to the House, my company never once looked at our obligations under the CPP to determine whether we would hire employees in Canada versus other countries. What we looked at was how easy it was to terminate an employee and the average cost of engaging an employee in this jurisdiction versus others, all things taken into consideration.

● (1705)

Canada was usually, if not always, a good choice based on the fact that we had relatively flexible regimes in place. I do not think this is going to change the idea of whether a Canadian employer is going to engage an employee.

Government Orders

I do think this will help a certain group of people in retirement. I agree with all that has been said. This is not a measure that will help current poor seniors. The increase to the GIS certainly will do that as will other measures the government has put in place. However, this regime change is for a long-term benefit. This will help those people in their 20s, 30s, and 40s today, not people who are today in their 70s, 80s, already retired, or on the verge of retirement.

A government needs to take into account comprehensive solutions to problems. This is simply one of them. However, if we do not act, and I will not invoke biblical references like my colleague from Winnipeg, when we can, we will face the same problem with the Canada pension plan years from now, when an increasing number of people will be entering retirement and falling into poverty because they have not adequately been able to save for their retirement.

As such, this change to the Canada pension plan is a good change.

I agree with my colleagues in the NDP that certain proposed amendments would be very important to look at going forward. I do not think the intent was to harm people who were outside of the workplace. I appreciate that my colleagues on the finance committee are working to encourage the minister. I know he has already announced his intention to work with the provinces to further change the CPP.

When we have an agreement on 90% of the points, I do not think a deal should fall because we then have disagreement on 10%. Let us get the 90% done, and then let us come back to the 10% afterward.

I support these measures. They are good changes to the CPP. I encourage all my colleagues to consider this philosophically. If we support the CPP and we agree that at certain times amendments should be made to the CPP, why not support the long-term benefits we are giving to the future generations by changing the CPP?

•(1710)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech in the House on Bill C-26.

Does he think that the government has a duty to ensure that our seniors, most of whom worked hard and paid taxes all their lives, have a well-deserved retirement and can live with dignity at the end of their career, once they are retired? As a government, we must not let our seniors live in poverty.

Does my colleague think that a strong, solid public pension plan will in fact ensure a good standard of living for our seniors once they are done working and are ready to just enjoy life after many years of hard work?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Sherbrooke for his question.

Yes, absolutely, an enhanced pension plan will help give our seniors a secure future. It is important to note that the government has already improved the guaranteed income supplement by 10% this year. In other words, poor seniors will have almost \$1,000 more in their pockets. However, we need to do more.

As my colleague said, and as I said in my speech, the changes to the Canada pension plan will help future generations. We need to think of those generations when we make changes today.

[*English*]

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in my riding of Saint John—Rothesay, people who come into my constituency office are very happy and proud that our government has the foresight to make changes to the Canada pension plan, adjustments that will help people save and will protect retirement savings in the future.

I am surprised that all the party opposite can offer is the tax-free savings account, and that this is a vehicle for savings for seniors. I challenge the party opposite to go to a priority neighbourhood and ask seniors how many of them are saving for the future through a tax-free savings account. The answer is really none.

The party opposite's answer was to actually double the tax-free savings account, double something that only 6.7% of Canadians actually maximized, which is mind-boggling to me.

People in my riding are very happy with the upcoming amendments to the CPP. What response is the member getting from constituents in his riding?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, from what I am hearing, most residents in my riding, whatever their income level, are pleased with the proposed changes to the CPP. I note, however, that many residents in my riding are also happy with the TFSA. I personally make use of it. It is a good vehicle.

The question that was raised was whether the TFSA needed to be doubled. I agree that at this point it did not need to be doubled because only 6.7% of Canadians were maximizing their use of it. However, that does not mean I do not also agree that the TFSA is a good vehicle and that people do have an obligation themselves to save for retirement.

•(1715)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Madam Speaker, I again thank my colleague.

I agree with what the member said about the tax-free savings accounts. It was certainly absurd to increase the contribution limit, given the numbers the hon. member just mentioned.

However, the Conservatives seem to think that this is a tax. Does my colleague see it that way as well? It is more of an ideological question, like the one I asked my colleague earlier.

I believe this is not a tax, but a retirement savings investment by the employer and the employee. This money does not disappear into government coffers, like a sales tax does, for example. We get this money back at retirement. This is an investment, not a tax like the GST.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, I totally agree with my colleague from Sherbrooke. This is not a tax.

Government Orders

As I said in my speech, I see the employer's contribution as a sort of raise for the employee, since that money will go to the employee and not the Government of Canada.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am extremely pleased to rise today to speak to our bill on the Canada pension plan.

[*English*]

I am from Nova Scotia and represent the riding of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, which surrounds the two cities of Halifax and Dartmouth.

This is federalism at its best. I am shocked that the Conservatives are not on board with this important initiative. That was the problem with the last government. Over the last 10 years, there was no co-operation, no partnership, no collaboration of any kind between the provinces and the federal government.

I remember the former prime minister showing up in Newfoundland or in B.C. on a number of occasions, not even advising the premiers of those provinces that he was going to make an announcement. It was unbelievable.

This initiative is a clear indication of how strong our government is in working in collaboration with the provinces and territories. This was not an easy thing to do. This took a lot of hard-working individuals doing what was right for Canadians.

This is not a tax. This is an investment in Canadians. We should be proud of the fact that we are taking important steps toward ensuring that Canadians will be able to retire in dignity.

Let me talk about our youth. We have had experiences and opportunities that they will never have. Most people in here, including myself, have workplace pensions. Today, many businesses do not offer workplace pensions.

When I was young, a pension did not mean much to me because retirement was too far away. However, five or 10 years ago I started to think about whether I had invested enough money and would I have a pension that would allow me to do the things I would like to do when I retired. Young people today may not have the same opportunities. Over the last 10 years, the gap has continued to expand. Instead of pension funds increasing in value, they will probably be worth a lot less when our youth retire. That is even more important.

The United States has predicted a possible shortfall in its social welfare program if it does not invest. We are saying that we need to ensure that Canadians can retire in dignity. We need to ensure that our youth are able to put more money aside. This is an investment in their pension fund, which is extremely important.

This is not an investment where people need to put in everything in year one. This is a seven year process. Canadians will invest in the CPP gradually. What is the end product going to be? People on CPP today receive approximately \$13,110 a year, and that amount depends on the salary they have received while working. With this new plan, they would receive approximately \$20,000. That is close to a 50% increase, which is very impressive when we look at how it is going to be structured.

As my colleague said earlier, Quebec, which is not be a part of this plan, is looking at implementing some of the pieces of this government's plan, or possibly implementing it all at the end of the day. That is extremely positive.

● (1720)

Let me talk about the OAS. The former government said that Canadians are living longer, so it would not give them their pension at 65. It did not matter if they planned to retire then. No, they would have to work until they were 67; it would not give them their old age pension at 65. This government committed to returning to the retirement age of 65. We did that shortly after forming government, which shows how we were able to move quickly on our commitment.

Let us talk about CCB, the child care benefit. Throughout the campaign, that was the main issue I was hearing about, and I covered approximately 22,000 houses. Young families were out there struggling and needing support so they could provide for their families. That is an extremely important issue, and I was impressed because I asked young couples about the cost for young kids, whether they were struggling, and how we could help. They said that what we were proposing was exactly what they needed. It was to increase the child care benefit by an enormous amount and it would be tax free. That is what is important, tax free. That means they would not be taxed on the extra money they would receive from the government to help them as a family. That was a key point for young families.

The other piece that we have to keep in mind is seniors. When we talk about seniors, we brought forward also the 10% increase, which brings almost \$1,000 to low-income seniors and single seniors. It is a multiple approach to ensure that we are helping the middle class. That is what it is all about, helping the middle class.

I could spend hours talking about infrastructure, which is one major strategy that will ensure job creation. We need to renovate, we need to improve what is out there, and we need to build, and the infrastructure investments are pieces. It is not just happening in one area. This is an investment that is taking place across Canada, in all parts, in all provinces.

When we put these pieces together, it becomes more and more obvious that we are a government that cares about its people. We are a government that cares about the middle class, youth, and seniors. We are a government that made commitments, and we are delivering on those commitments. I am extremely happy to support the government's CPP initiative.

● (1725)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Madam Speaker, as I have already said, every year we meet seniors who tell us that the pension plan is not very generous and that it must be enhanced. Therefore, the government's desire to enhance the CPP is good news.

Government Orders

However, the Liberal government has made some mistakes with its approach. One of them is not stressing the importance of keeping the dropout provisions. We currently have dropout provisions that ensure that years spent outside the labour market raising children do not count in the calculations. There are also dropout provisions for people with disabilities, who can no longer earn income when they are unable to work.

Why did my hon. colleague not support these requests? Why did he not work with his team so that we could keep these two dropout provisions, which are extremely important when trying to keep women, seniors and people with disabilities out of poverty?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

This agreement was put together by the provinces, the territories and our government. It is not perfect. However, our minister has already indicated that he intends to raise this issue with the provinces and the territories at their next meeting, which is coming up. Our intention is to support Canadians in every way possible.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech, even though he spent half of it talking about other things. I have a hard time understanding why the Liberals think it is so urgent to pass Bill C-26.

They are saying that it is so urgent that we pass Bill C-26, that they had to move a time allocation motion. That is what the government did this morning. I did not support it. Nevertheless, there have been three or four Liberals who have spoken on the subject.

If Bill C-26 is so urgent, why do Liberal members keep rising to speak to it? I would like to know the reason for this double-talk.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

It is important to remember that we want to tell Canadians about the CPP enhancement and how it will help them. It is our responsibility to speak and move things forward so that we can implement these measures. Our government made promises, and we must work to pass this bill. That is what we are doing.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech. I would like him to elaborate on how Bill C-26 will help Canadians.

• (1730)

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Obviously, this is an investment. Canadians will benefit from it for years to come. It is one of many extremely important social initiatives that our government has put in place to help Canadians. It is another part of our government's plan to ensure success in this area.

[*English*]

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an absolute pleasure for me to be addressing the House on this issue of Bill C-26 on behalf of the residents of Davenport.

I love meeting with the residents of Davenport. I have, over the last few months and since I was elected, constantly met with them. The groups of people I most enjoy are seniors. They are not shy about letting me know what they are thinking, what they are worried about, whether for themselves or for their families. They always joke with me. They often say to me, "When is the Prime Minister of Canada going to give me a raise?" They talk to me about the increasing cost of prescription drugs. They talk to me about the increasing cost of everyday life. They also tell me that they are worried about their children. I also have spoken to many of the middle-class Canadians who work in my riding, and they tell me that their pension and saving for their pension is one of the things that most worry them.

That is where I am going to start, by just reminding us all of some of the facts.

We know that middle-class Canadians are working harder than ever and that many are worried that they will not have enough set aside for retirement. I have heard that time and again right across my riding, and I am sure that is a message that is heard right across this country in every riding. We know there has been extensive analysis conducted by our finance department and by provincial governments, and they have found that around one-quarter of families nearing retirement—some 1.1 million families—face a drop in their standard of living when they retire. This is absolutely something worrisome. We also know that, according to Statistics Canada, in 2014 only 37.9% of employees had a pension plan and that number was trending down.

We know from the Broadbent Institute, which put out a report earlier this year, that 47% of those aged between 55 and 64 have no accrued employer pension benefits, and the vast majority are retiring with inadequate savings for retirement. We also know from that same report that just 15% to 20% of middle-income Canadians retiring without an employer pension plan have saved anywhere near enough for their retirement. Therefore, we know that there is a huge worry. We see the statistics. We know that Canadians currently are not saving enough for their retirement, and we know that action needs to be taken.

There was a commitment from the Liberal Party in the last election that we were going to improve the Canada pension plan, and indeed that is what we are proposing. I am very proud that our Minister of Finance met with his provincial counterparts earlier this year, and in June came up with a way to enhance our Canada pension plan. I just want to say that it is not easy to be dealing with all the provinces. I note that the Ontario government had its own pension plan enhancement that it was planning to put into place. I know there were a number of other provinces that were further down the line in terms of what they wanted to do. I know this was a huge effort on the part of our Minister of Finance. It was a huge coming to the table by all parties, all finance ministers from all provinces right across the country. I just want to say that it was wonderful leadership and a wonderful show of co-operation right across this country to actually enhance the Canada pension plan and to really be thinking about the future of all Canadians in every province.

Government Orders

Next, I will take this opportunity to say what the enhancement of the Canada pension plan means and what changes are being proposed. I am going to be heavily using information from a wonderful CBC news article that I happened to be reading, because it makes it so easy to understand and I want to make sure I am explaining it in a way that makes it easy for people in my riding of Davenport and all Canadians to understand what we are proposing.

The first thing is that there would be an increase in premiums. The increase would be for both the worker and the employer. Under the proposed enhanced plan, the CPP would replace fully one-third of a person's pre-retirement income, up from the current 25% replacement rate, up to a maximum amount of earnings that would also rise quite a bit.

● (1735)

Currently, a worker and an employer contribute 4.9% of the worker's income to the plan. The proposed change would increase it by one percentage point. So, it would go up to 5.95%. It will be phased in over five years, beginning in 2019. By the time the higher premium is fully in place in 2024, a worker earning around \$50,000 a year on average would pay roughly about \$25 a month more in premiums, or almost \$300 a year.

That is just an idea of what is going to happen to our premiums. There would also be a bit of an increase on the employer's side. We are working to try to better save for our future retirement.

What happens to benefits? How will Canadians benefit from this increase? What does this actually mean?

In plain terms, a middle-income Canadian entering the workforce and now earning around \$50,000 a year would in the future receive a pension of around \$16,000 a year in retirement, instead of what they would currently be receiving, which is around \$12,000. That is according to Finance Canada.

I should note, though, that younger workers will be contributing at the higher rate for a longer period of time, the 5.95% I was talking about, but it is an investment in their future, as my colleagues have been saying, and they also stand to gain the most when they eventually reach retirement age.

I know that constituents in my riding of Davenport will be very sad that the current CPP enhancements will not be positively impacting them, but we do have a number of different programs we are putting into place that will benefit them, moving forward.

There is one other thing I wanted to mention because I thought it was an interesting fact. There was some concern by a number of people that the increase in the CPP premiums would impact lower-income Canadians. As a result, the Minister of Finance and his provincial counterparts have agreed to an expansion of the existing refundable tax credit known as the working income tax benefit, to offset any higher premiums. The maximum payout for this program is currently \$1,800 for a family earning less than \$28,000 a year.

We want to make sure that we are protecting lower-income Canadians and so have been very thoughtful in trying to make sure that not only will this benefit future generations, including helping middle-class Canadians and youth to invest in their future and their

retirements, but will also include protections for those on the lower end of the salary scale in Canada.

There has been a lot of concern about the impact on small business. I have a lot of those small businesses in my riding. I know they were very happy to hear that it would be implemented over five years. I think they appreciate that there would be enough time for them to be plan, organize, and arrange for the future. So while I believe there will be an impact, I think overall it would be beneficial to our businesses, to our workers, to our economy overall, and to Canadians in general.

In conclusion, I encourage everyone in the House to vote in favour of supporting Bill C-26. It would benefit youth, it would benefit families, and it would ensure that future generations would be more secure in their retirement.

● (1740)

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I just heard what the member opposite said and would like to correct her in many ways.

I have been consulting entrepreneurs across the nation. I have been consulting seniors in my own riding and across this nation. I have been speaking and listening to seniors for at least five to six years. This is not what they are telling us.

There is a misconception or misinformation. The Liberal government is trying to say it is good for seniors. No, not a single senior would benefit from the CPP hike.

Then there are the young people. I have talked to and listened to young workers. They do not want this because, after 40 years, they want their own money so they can decide where to put it for the best investment.

The Liberals are not doing anything good for seniors, they are not doing anything for the youth, and they are killing jobs.

My question is, how can you treat our small business people like that?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will remind the member to address the Chair and not use the word "you". It will save a lot of headaches.

The hon. member for Davenport.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, while seniors may not immediately benefit from this enhanced CPP, I will say that when I talk to seniors, they care about their grandkids, their children, and the future of their families. They love to hear about the Canada child benefit and that we are enhancing the Canada pension plan for their kids. They want their kids to be secure in their future retirements. It gives them great comfort to know that. Therefore, I know they see this as very positive.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened very carefully to the member for Davenport, whom I think made very persuasive arguments for this bill. She also said something very important in her response to the member for Richmond Centre, which I think is true, that seniors do care very much about the future of their families and that this is about guaranteeing security for everyone going forward.

Government Orders

That said, why have the Liberals been so tone deaf to the mistake in this bill to penalize women who drop out of the workforce to provide child care, or people with disabilities? How can we move forward with this without making sure that those provisions, which were in the original CPP, are maintained in this expansion?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, in general, the changes to the CPP would be beneficial to all Canadians, women and men.

If there are additional enhancements that need to be made, I know there are ongoing discussions between the Minister of Finance and his provincial counterparts. I do not think this is going to be the last of any supports or changes that might be made to our pension system. I am sure we will continue to fill in any perceived gaps and make enhancements as we move forward.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have asked this question of other Liberal members before and I do not know if I have had an answer to it, so I will ask the member as well.

She spoke specifically about youth. One of the advantages of private savings over public savings is that it allows people to invest, spend that money on interim projects, and then leverage those investments for the future. For example, I could I put money aside now, then use it for post-secondary education, and realize the value of that for a home or small business. The disadvantage of government-controlled savings is that people cannot invest in interim projects. Their money is taken away from them and held by the government until they retire.

Is that not one of the many obvious disadvantages, especially for youth who are trying to save for more than just their retirements but also many other, different things along the way? Is that not a disadvantage of the government's approach? Would we not be better off creating private savings vehicles that Conservatives have advocated as an alternative to this expansion?

• (1745)

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, it is important to have a balance of different approaches that would help youth save for their future. It is good for them to have private vehicles to invest in for their retirement, but it is also extraordinarily beneficial and absolutely necessary for government to help youth, middle-aged Canadians, and older Canadians to save for their retirements.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 5:45 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the report stage of the bill now before the House.

[*Translation*]

Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on Motion No. 1. A vote on this motion also applies to Motions Nos. 2 to 69. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Call in the members.

• (1825)

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

(*Division No. 157*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultarif
Albrecht
Ambrose
Arnold
Bergen
Bezan
Brassard
Calkins
Chong
Clement
Deltell
Dreeschen
Falk
Finley
Genuis
Godin
Harder
Kelly
Kitchen
Lake
Liepert
Lukiwski
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Motz
Nicholson
O'Toole
Poilievre
Rayes
Rempel
Saroya
Schmale
Shipley
Sorenson
Strahl
Sweet
Trost
Van Loan
Wagantall
Warkentin
Waugh
Wong
Zimmer — 85

Albas
Allison
Anderson
Barlow
Berthold
Boucher
Brown
Carrie
Clarke
Cooper
Diotte
Egliniski
Fast
Gallant
Gladu
Gourde
Jeneroux
Kent
Kmiec
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Lobb
MacKenzie
McColeman
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Nater
Nuttall
Paul-Hus
Raitt
Reid
Ritz
Scheer
Shields
Sopuck
Stanton
Stubbs
Tilson
Van Kesteren
Viersen
Warawa
Watts
Webber
Yurdiga

NAYS

Members

Aldag
Alleslev
Anandasangaree

Alghabra
Amos
Angus

Government Orders

Arseneault
Ashton
Ayoub
Bagnell
Baylis
Bennett
Bittle
Blair
Boissonnault
Boutin-Sweet
Breton
Brosseau
Cannings
Carr
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Choquette
Cormier
Cuzner
Damoff
DeCoursey
Dhillon
Dion
Drouin
Dubourg
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseau
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyking
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fry
Garneau
Gerretsen
Goodale
Graham
Hardie
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Johns
Joly
Jordan
Julian
Khalid
Kwan
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Leslie
Lighthound
Long
Ludwig
MacGregor
Malcolmson
Masse (Windsor West)
Mathysen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Monsef
Moore
Morrissey
Murray
Nassif
O'Connell
Oliver
Ouellette
Peterson
Philpott
Poissant
Qualtrough
Rankin
Robillard

Arya
Aubin
Badawey
Bains
Beech
Benson
Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Bossio
Bratina
Brisson
Caesar-Chavannes
Caron
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chen
Christopherson
Cullen
Dabrusin
Davies
Dhaliwal
Di Iorio
Donnelly
Dubé
Duguid
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Easter
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson
Fillmore
Fisher
Foote
Fraser (West Nova)
Freeland
Fuhr
Garrison
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Hardcastle
Hehr
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Jolibois
Jones
Jowhari
Kang
Khera
Lametti
Lapointe
Laverdière
Lebouthillier
Lemieux
Levitt
Lockhart
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)
McCallum
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Morneau
Mulcair
Nantel
Nault
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Petitpas Taylor
Picard
Quach
Ramsey
Ratansi
Rodriguez

Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Saini
Samson
Sansoucy
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sorbara
Stetski
Tan
Tootoo
Trudel
Vandenbeld
Virani
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Young

Rota
Ruimy
Saganash
Sajjan
Sangha
Sarai
Schieffe
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sohi
Spengemann
Tabbara
Tassi
Trudeau
Vandal
Vaughan
Weir
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Zahid— 216

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 1 defeated. I therefore declare Motions Nos. 2 to 69 defeated.

[English]

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.) moved that, the bill be concurred in.

The Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

● (1830)

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

(Division No. 158)

YEAS

Members

Aldag
Alleslev
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Ayoub
Bagnell
Baylis
Bennett
Bittle
Blair
Boissonnault
Boutin-Sweet

Alghabra
Amos
Angus
Arya
Aubin
Badawey
Bains
Beech
Benson
Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Bossio
Bratina

Government Orders

Breton	Brison	Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand
Brosseau	Caesar-Chavannes	Simms	Sohi
Cannings	Caron	Sorbara	Spengemann
Carr	Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Stetski	Tabbara
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger	Tan	Tassi
Champagne	Chen	Tootoo	Trudeau
Choquette	Christopherson	Trudel	Vandal
Cormier	Cullen	Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Cuzner	Dabrusin	Virani	Weir
Damoff	Davies	Whalen	Wilkinson
DeCoursey	Dhaliwal	Wilson-Raybould	Wrzesnewszky
Dhillon	Di Iorio	Young	Zahid — 216
Dion	Donnelly		
Drouin	Dubé		
Dubourg	Duguid		
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)		
Dusseault	Duvall		
Dzerowicz	Easter		
Ehsassi	El-Khoury		
Ellis	Erskine-Smith		
Eyking	Eyolfson	Aboutaif	Albas
Fergus	Fillmore	Albrecht	Allison
Finnigan	Fisher	Ambrose	Anderson
Fonseca	Foote	Arnold	Barlow
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)	Bergen	Berthold
Fraser (Central Nova)	Freeland	Bezan	Boucher
Fry	Fuhr	Brassard	Brown
Garneau	Garrison	Calkins	Carrie
Gerretsen	Goldsmith-Jones	Chong	Clarke
Goodale	Gould	Clement	Cooper
Graham	Hardcastle	Deltell	Diotte
Hardie	Hehr	Dreeshen	Eglinski
Holland	Housefather	Falk	Fast
Hughes	Hussen	Finley	Gallant
Hutchings	Iacono	Genius	Gladu
Johns	Jolibois	Godin	Gourde
Joly	Jones	Harder	Jeneroux
Jordan	Jowhari	Kelly	Kent
Julian	Kang	Kitchen	Kmicc
Khalid	Khera	Lake	Lauson (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Kwan	Lametti	Liepert	Lobb
Lamoureux	Lapointe	Lukiwski	MacKenzie
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	Laverdière	McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Lefebvre	Lemieux	Motz	Nater
Leslie	Levitt	Nicholson	Nuttall
Lightbound	Lockhart	O'Toole	Paul-Hus
Long	Longfield	Poilievre	Raitt
Ludwig	MacAulay (Cardigan)	Raves	Reid
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Rempel	Ritz
Malcolmson	Maloney	Saroya	Scheer
Masse (Windsor West)	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	Schmale	Shields
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)	Shipley	Sopuck
May (Saanic—Gulf Islands)	McCallum	Sorenson	Stanton
McCrimmon	McDonald	Strahl	Stubbs
McGuinty	McKay	Sweet	Tilson
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	Trost	Van Kesteren
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès	Van Loan	Viersen
Medicino	Mihychuk	Wagantall	Warawa
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)		Warkentin	Watts
Monsef		Waugh	Webber
Moore	Morneau	Wong	Yurdiga
Morrissey	Mulcair	Zimmer — 85	
Murray	Nantel		
Nassif	Nault		
O'Connell	Oliphant		
Oliver	O'Regan		
Ouellette	Paradis		
Peterson	Petitpas Taylor		
Philpott	Picard		
Poissant	Quach		
Qualtrough	Ramsey		
Rankin	Ratansi		
Robillard	Rodriguez		
Romanado	Rota		
Rudd	Ruimy		
Rusnak	Saganash		
Saini	Sajjan		
Samson	Sangha		
Sansoucy	Sarai		
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke		
Schulte	Serré		
Sgro	Shanahan		
Sheehan	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)		

NAYS

Members

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being 6:35 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

• (1835)

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC) moved that Bill S-217, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (detention in custody), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to rise this evening to sponsor Bill S-217, known as Wynn's law, named in honour of the late Constable David Wynn, who was shot and killed in the line of duty.

On January 17, 2015, in the early morning hours, Constable Wynn and Auxiliary Constable Derek Bond were undertaking a routine inspection of licence plates outside a casino in St. Albert. In the course of undertaking that inspection of licence plates, they discovered a licence plate that was connected to an individual for whom there was an arrest warrant. As a result, Constable Wynn and Auxiliary Constable Bond proceeded into the casino to arrest the individual. Upon entering the casino to apprehend the individual, shots were fired at Auxiliary Constable Bond, who was shot, and tragically, Constable David Wynn was shot and killed.

Any time a police officer is murdered in the line of duty, it is not only a tragedy; it is an outrage. However, what makes the murder of Constable Wynn that much worse is that it was completely preventable. Constable Wynn's killer was out on bail at the time. He was out on bail notwithstanding the fact that he had more than 50 prior criminal convictions, including convictions for weapons offences and multiple violent offences. On top of 50 prior criminal convictions, he had at least 38 outstanding charges, and to top it off, he had numerous failures to appear in court. Yet, there he was, out on the streets in our community of St. Albert unbeknownst to the public.

The murder of Constable Wynn prompted the RCMP commissioner to ask how it was that someone with the criminal history of Constable Wynn's killer could walk among us. The reason someone like Constable Wynn's killer could walk among us, and was walking among us, was that the criminal history that he had was not disclosed at the bail application hearing; not the 50 prior criminal convictions, not the at least 38 outstanding charges, not the multiple failures to appear, not anything. One of the reasons why the criminal history of Constable Wynn's killer was not disclosed is that section 518 of the Criminal Code provides that it is discretionary for a prosecutor to disclose the criminal history of someone seeking bail. Bill S-217 seeks to close this glaring loophole in the Criminal Code by requiring prosecutors to lead evidence of the criminal history of an accused, including prior convictions, outstanding charges, and failures to appear.

There is no doubt in my mind, and there is no doubt in the mind of Shelly MacInnis-Wynn, the widow of the late Constable David Wynn, that had Wynn's law been the law at the time that Constable Wynn was murdered, Constable Wynn's killer would have been kept behind bars where he belonged and Constable Wynn would be alive today.

• (1840)

At this time I would like to talk a bit about what Bill S-217 would do and what it would not do.

Bill S-217 would not impose any new undue burden on prosecutors. It would not impose any new undue burden on law enforcement. It would not in any way take away or interfere with the discretion of a magistrate or a judge to determine the question of bail based upon all of the facts and circumstances in each individual case. Bill S-217 would ensure that all information that is relevant and material at a bail application hearing would be brought forward to the attention of the judge or justice of the peace, so that the judge or justice of the peace could make a proper determination on the question of bail, something that clearly did not happen in the case of Constable Wynn's killer.

It is absolutely inconceivable that a bail application could be determined without having information on an accused's criminal history, without having information about the fact that the accused seeking bail has numerous outstanding charges and numerous failures to appear. Yet that is precisely the situation we face today with it being discretionary to lead such evidence under the Criminal Code. That is precisely what Bill S-217 seeks to fix.

I would like to acknowledge a few individuals. First of all, I want to acknowledge Senator Bob Runciman for his hard work and leadership in drafting Bill S-217 and for shepherding it through the Senate with the unanimous support of the Senate legal and constitutional affairs committee and the overwhelming support of the Senate.

I would also like to acknowledge my predecessor, Brent Rathgeber, for his leadership in introducing a similar bill in the last Parliament following the murder of Constable David Wynn.

Most importantly, I would like to acknowledge and thank Shelley MacInnis-Wynn for her determination and her courage in lending support to Bill S-217, including appearing before the Senate legal and constitutional affairs committee, where she gave very powerful evidence.

This is, to put it simply, a common sense piece of legislation. It should be a no-brainer. That is why Bill S-217 passed the Senate legal and constitutional affairs committee unanimously. It is why the Senate passed the bill by an overwhelming majority. It is why the bill has received the endorsement of key stakeholders, including the Mounted Police Professional Association of Canada and the Canadian Centre for Abuse Awareness. It is why rank and file law enforcement officers have given their support to this legislation, dozens of whom have written to me to lend their support. The former minister of justice and attorney general for the Province of Alberta, who was the minister of justice at the time that Constable Wynn was murdered, has indicated to me that he supports this legislation.

Private Members' Business

• (1845)

Bill S-217 is important legislation. It is much-needed legislation. It would close a glaring loophole in the Criminal Code, a loophole that resulted in the death of Constable Wynn, a loophole that resulted in Shelly MacInnis-Wynn becoming a widow, a loophole that has caused Constable Wynn's three boys, Nathan, Matthew, and Alexander, to grow up without their father, a loophole that has taken away a tremendous RCMP officer and a dedicated volunteer in the St. Albert community.

As I close, I would like to read into the record some of the very powerful testimony of Shelly MacInnis-Wynn as she testified before the Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, testimony that Senator Runciman said, after more than 35 years of holding public office, was perhaps the most powerful testimony he had ever heard. Ms. MacInnis-Wynn stated:

In those four seconds, a constable was taken away from his community, a husband was taken away from his wife, a father was taken away from his three sons, and a son and a brother was taken away from his mother and sisters—in four seconds. Every day I wake up wishing that I could take those four seconds back, but I can't. There is nothing I can do to change that. Every day I have to live my life alone, not have Dave by my side enjoying the moments we were supposed to have together as a family and as a husband and wife. Every day his children have to experience new things and new milestones without their dad.... They don't have any more chances to make new memories.... Changing this one simple word could save a lifetime of happiness for somebody else, and that somebody else could have easily been you. Dave was the unfortunate one that happened to be there that night, but it could easily have been anybody else.

What happened to Constable Wynn should not have happened, but we cannot roll back time. What we can do, what we must do, and I would submit what we are duty bound to do as members of Parliament, is do our very best to ensure that what happened to Constable Wynn and the pain that Constable Wynn's family will endure forever are never experienced by another Canadian and never experienced by another Canadian family ever again.

The best way to help make that a reality is to pass Bill S-217, Wynn's law. In the name of and in honour of Constable David Wynn, I implore members of the House to join the Senate, to do what is right, and to pass Bill S-217. Let us get it done.

• (1850)

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, that was a very powerful and moving speech, the calibre of which we have come to expect in this place from the member for St. Albert—Edmonton.

I also wish to add my voice to his in conveying our thoughts, sympathies, and condolences to Shelly MacInnis-Wynn and her family on the loss of a husband and father.

My question for the hon. member relates to the testimony at the Senate legal affairs committee by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, who expressed a concern that imposing an evidentiary burden on crowns at bail hearings to prove prior convictions and failures to appear, administration of justice offences, would create a burden that could result in delays, in the seeking of adjournments, which would almost certainly negatively impact victims and the system in general. I would ask for the member's comments with respect to that testimony.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, I would note first that while the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police did raise that concern, it is also important to note that the association expressed support for the legislation in principle.

With respect to the question of delay, I would submit that between pulling up the criminal record of an accused and CPIC, which deals with outstanding charges, that information is readily available. In fact, that information is literally a keystroke away.

In many courthouses across Canada, there is an opportunity to log on to a computer there, and if it is not available in a courthouse, it is a matter of a prosecutor picking up the phone and calling the local police detachment.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Madam Speaker, as a former police officer who has recently retired, I can confirm that evidence of a person's criminal record is easily available within minutes of seeking it. It is current and easily obtainable and would not create any burden.

As a matter of fact, the practice of crown prosecutors having access to that was a requirement of the police service I was part of. We would provide that information to them on a daily basis, on every accused we presented. That evidence was really there.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, I would reiterate that this is information that is readily available. It is something that is done as a matter of course in almost every bail application hearing. Unfortunately, there is still a loophole in the Criminal Code. All the bill seeks to do is close that loophole.

The fact is that in the case of Constable Wynn, it cost him his life. We must ensure that no more lives are lost as a result of this loophole.

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise to speak at second reading debate on Bill S-217, an act to amend the Criminal Code, detention in custody.

The Senate public bill was introduced in response to the tragic events in Alberta in 2015. I want to again express my deepest sympathies to the family of Constable Wynn and to expressly thank Shelly Wynn, David Wynn's wife, for her testimony before the Senate committee. The pain to the officer's family, RCMP colleagues, and the St. Albert community and beyond is immeasurable.

I also want to indicate at the outset that I support the objective of the proposed bill. Decision-makers in the bail process need all relevant information to make timely and appropriate decisions as to who should be released on bail. Ensuring this is not a simple task. It requires up-to-date information management systems and fully trained prosecutors, police, and justices.

Unfortunately, I am not of the view that the bill before us today meets its objective. I am concerned that the Senate public bill would create policy and legal implications that could result in a bail system that would not function properly for anyone.

Private Members' Business

The Criminal Code provides the framework for determining whether an accused is released or detained prior to trial. After an arrest, police may decide to release the accused with or without conditions. If not released by police, the accused is brought before a justice for a bail hearing. In some cases, the crown will consent to the release of the accused on certain conditions. However, in other cases, the justice will decide to detain the accused or release him or her, often after imposing conditions, such as a curfew or an obligation to report to police. These important decisions about pre-trial release are made daily in countless courtrooms across Canada.

When making any amendment to the bail provisions, it is important to note that the bail process varies widely from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Some jurisdictions, such as New Brunswick, use only judges to make release decisions. Other jurisdictions, such as Ontario, heavily rely on justices of the peace in their bail courts.

There are also significant differences in who attends the bail hearing. Alberta, for example, where this tragedy occurred, is the only jurisdiction in which police officers assume the role of prosecutor at most first-appearance bail hearings. I understand that this practice occurs to a much lesser degree in parts of Saskatchewan and British Columbia. It was, in fact, a police officer who consented to the release of Mr. Rehn, the offender who ultimately killed Constable Wynn.

In response to this tragedy, the Alberta government has conducted a full review and continues to examine the role of police officers in bail hearings. The amendments proposed in Bill S-217 were not recommended in the Alberta report, nor have they been raised by the provinces and territories, which have been extensively reviewing the bail process.

The bill before us, Bill S-217, proposes two amendments to the Criminal Code bail provisions.

Clause 1 proposes expanding the grounds on which the courts rely to determine who should be detained prior to trial. Currently, under the Criminal Code, there are three general grounds under which bail can be denied: first, if the accused is a flight risk, meaning the accused may not show up for court; second, for public safety reasons; and third, to maintain confidence in the administration of justice.

Bill S-217 would expand the third ground to specifically include consideration of an accused's criminal record and outstanding charges.

If we ask anyone working on the front lines in our criminal courts, they will tell you that the criminal record and outstanding charges are key considerations in almost every case and at almost every stage of the bail process. From the moment someone is stopped by police, right up to considerations on bail pending appeal, the record of the accused is assessed. These factors are automatic considerations under the first ground for detention, that detention is necessary to ensure that the accused attends court, and also under the second ground, that detention is necessary to ensure that the public is protected.

Injecting consideration of the accused's record specifically into the third ground for detention, as suggested in Bill S-217, creates

uncertainty for the multiple other bail provisions that do not specifically reference the criminal record.

• (1855)

The Supreme Court of Canada, in the 2015 case of the Queen v. St-Cloud, has recently considered and clarified the constitutionality of these grounds of detention.

This bill would open the provision to new judicial scrutiny and interpretation after the Supreme Court has just settled it. Clause 2 of the bill proposes to remove crown discretion from section 518 and require crowns to lead evidence to prove the fact of prior convictions, outstanding charges, failures to appear, or offences against the administration of justice at bail hearings.

Currently, under section 518(1)(c), the crown is given broad discretion as to what evidence can be led at bail hearings, as well as how evidence is presented to the court. Bail proceedings that are high volume and conducted on short notice require this flexibility.

By mandating crowns to provide specific evidence and raising the evidentiary burden with the words "to prove the fact", Bill S-217 may unnecessarily complicate and lengthen the bail process; crowns may require adjournments to formalize evidence; and hearings could take longer. No one in the criminal justice system, including victims, would benefit from excessive delay and the staying of criminal charges.

Similar concerns about the proposed amendments creating delay and resource issues were raised by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police when they testified before the Senate committee on this bill. These concerns would most likely also be echoed by prosecutors and defence counsel, the front-line workers in our justice system.

Legislative changes, such as those suggested, require fulsome consideration of these important perspectives. As part of her mandate to review the criminal justice system and, more specifically, the bail process, the Minister of Justice is working with stakeholders, including her provincial and territorial counterparts, to make this critical component work effectively so that all Canadians, including our first responders, are appropriately protected.

Private Members' Business

Our government is also working to enhance the efficiency of the bail system. No one wants to see serious criminal charges stayed because of unreasonable delay, which is what can happen if bail decisions are not made in an effective, timely way.

It is a complex issue that has no one single answer and involves all actors in the criminal justice system.

While I think that the Senate public bill's proposed amendments are well-intentioned, they are not the solution to this complicated issue. Rather, they would import delay and confusion and would likely have unintended legal and operational consequences for the bail process.

I want to be clear. Bail is a critical stage in the criminal justice process. As this tragedy in St. Albert demonstrates, decisions made at bail can have far-reaching, devastating consequences.

While I appreciate its objective, the government does not support the bill. Effecting meaningful change would require a comprehensive response that considers stakeholders' perspectives and fully assesses the legal and policy implications for the bail process.

• (1900)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am happy to explain the position I shared with my NDP caucus colleagues as public safety critic, although “happy” is not the right word considering the sensitive and tragic nature of this bill.

[*English*]

Let me just thank the member for St. Albert—Edmonton for sponsoring the bill in the House.

Before I go any further, I think the most important thing that needs to be said on this matter is that all of us in this House, and certainly I speak on behalf of the NDP caucus, offer our thoughts and prayers to the Wynn family in the tragedy of the murder of this police officer who died in the line of duty defending us. That is certainly a sacrifice that we all recognize and is important to be mindful of when we debate the bill.

I also want to say, while I will share some of the concerns we have with the bill, and some are similar to the government's concerns, we will nonetheless support it at second reading. We feel that the intent is important enough and good enough that we need to at least hear from experts in committee and have that debate and discussion and get a chance to go through some of the issues that we do see in the bill.

It is important, given the tragedy that led to the presentation of this bill, both in this Parliament and by my colleague's predecessor in the last Parliament, that we give it a fulsome debate through the committee process. That is where we are at on that particular point right now.

• (1905)

[*Translation*]

I would like to take a moment to talk about each of the changes this bill makes. Although this is unusual for me, I am going to take the time to read them, because I think it is important to really understand them.

First, the bill adds two grounds to justify detention in custody when the justice of the peace is considering the judicial interim release of an offender. The two grounds are as follows: that the offender failed to appear in court when required to do so in the past; and that the offender has been previously convicted of a criminal offence or has been charged with and is awaiting trial for another offence.

The other aspect of the bill has to do with the authority and responsibilities of the crown. At present, the crown has the discretionary power to provide any evidence it considers legitimate in the case. However, the changes brought about by this bill require the crown to lead evidence as part of the bail application hearing proceedings.

We are talking here about establishing that the accused has previously been convicted of a criminal offence or has been charged with and is awaiting trial for another criminal offence. We are talking about proving that the accused has previously committed an offence under section 145, including escape, being at large without excuse, failure to attend court, or failure to comply with a condition. The circumstances of the alleged offence, particularly the probability of conviction of the accused, must be proven, and finally, it must also be proven that the accused has failed to appear in court when required to do so.

The parliamentary secretary mentioned that obtaining the necessary information could be challenging. My colleague from St. Albert—Edmonton seems to think that such information is readily available, and it would be nice if that were the case. Unfortunately, that is not what the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police told the committee.

David Truax, Superintendent at the Ontario Provincial Police and member of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, told the Senate committee that he supported the bill, but he also had concerns about the burden to send information being placed on the judicial system and police forces, given that some jurisdictions may find it heavier to bear than others. However, we must also consider the various provincial jurisdictions, from one province to another, because the documentation currently available in CPIC is clearly inadequate.

When we look at this mechanism, we have to ask ourselves: are we jeopardizing public safety by creating a situation where the burden on the judicial system might lead to the adjournment of proceedings and result in the release of an accused who, even before such a bill was passed, would have been detained? Are we not in a way undermining the bill's very objectives? That is a question we have to ask ourselves, something we would like to get into further in committee.

*Private Members' Business**[English]*

The other point, and it is a key point when it comes to judicial proceedings and our criminal justice system, is the challenge we have of the over-representation of populations in Canada. We know that it is a very serious issue, one that we discuss regularly at the public safety committee. The issue is the over-representation of aboriginal people in our federal penitentiaries.

The reason I raise that point is because it was a point raised by Senator Sinclair during the debate on this bill. He said that he was concerned that while this bill would certainly be some common sense legislation, when we look at the tragedy around the murder of Constable Wynn, we have to ask ourselves whether this bill would lead to more nefarious effects and impacts on less dangerous offenders who should not necessarily be kept in custody.

Is this going to lead to the continuing issue of the over-representation of certain populations, in particular the aboriginal population, in Canada? It is certainly something that we have to ask ourselves, and is a point that we hope to raise at committee to get a better understanding of the impact.

● (1910)

[Translation]

An important question comes to mind when trying to better understand this impact. It is easy to come to the conclusion that this bill could have prevented the tragedy that occurred in the case of Constable Wynn. Our great challenge is to make political decisions based on the facts and data available. In this specific case, this bill could be an easy solution, but generally speaking, things get complicated given the dearth of statistical information on detention in custody and crimes committed by people who are not subject to detention in custody.

I have an interesting example. I read a U.S. report that can nevertheless inform this debate.

[English]

The title is, "Assessing Pretrial Risk without a Defendant Interview".

[Translation]

The report was published by the Laura and John Arnold Foundation. I would like to read an excerpt from this report that I find particularly interesting.

[English]

It says, "Although the use of pretrial risk assessments has increased in recent years, the proportion of jurisdictions", in this case in the United States, "employing these instruments remains low, and is estimated to be no more than 10%." This is in part because they are costly and time-consuming.

[Translation]

Once again, this is an American example, but it does apply to Canada. When we read this report, we see that the challenge is to be able to measure the crime rate or the crimes committed by accused persons who are released after such proceedings. Again, I do not have the answer. It is a question that we are asking and that we would like to have answered in committee.

[English]

The tragedy of Constable Wynn, I can only imagine. I do not yet have kids. I want to have kids one day. It is heartbreaking and mind-boggling to imagine what it must be like for the late constable's family to go through these circumstances and to think they could be avoidable.

Given the possibility these could be avoidable, we feel it is important that we at least do our due diligence and support the bill at second reading, bring it to committee, and study it with the caveat that we do have some concerns. Some of them I raised in my speech, and others the parliamentary secretary raised. We need to ask those questions and make sure that when we finish this legislative process, we will know that we did not let an opportunity to avoid that kind of tragedy go by without proper study.

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my honour to rise in the House to speak to Bill S-217, an act to amend the Criminal Code (detention in custody). The bill would make it mandatory for prosecutors to provide all of the facts concerning previous criminal convictions, current charges, and failures to appear in court. Under existing legislation, prosecutors are not compelled to divulge such evidence.

Members heard the story of my colleague about the concerns that arose when 42-year-old RCMP Constable David Wynn was murdered by a career criminal in St. Albert, Alberta, in January 2015. Constable Wynn struggled to survive for four days before succumbing to death in an Edmonton hospital, leaving behind his wife and three sons to try and make sense of the senseless.

The criminal's career history spanned two decades, with over 100 offences dating back to 1994. It should be noted that the criminal had failed to appear in court after three separate warrants were issued for his arrest in 2014. How is it that a man who has been convicted of everything from breaking and entering, theft, evading police, dangerous arrest, assault, escape from custody to holding a homeowner at gun point while forcing him to empty out his bank account is not in custody?

The bill would serve to prevent high-risk offenders from committing further criminal acts while awaiting trial. It would require prosecutors to show that the accused had been previously convicted of a criminal offence or had already been charged and was awaiting trial for another criminal offence.

In addition, the Crown would also be required to provide evidence that an accused had failed on one or more occasions to appear in court when required to do so, as well as show the circumstances of the alleged offence or offences. This would fall under a statutory requirement to advance the evidence, obligating the Crown to do so. The principle of detention pre-trial would already be established so a habeas corpus concern would be unlikely. The bill would focus on detaining high-risk offenders while pending trial.

The Conservatives have always put Canadians and their safety first, while upholding the rights of victims and their families. Bill S-217 would ensure the safeguarding of those rights.

Private Members' Business

In 2014, the former Conservative government made history and enacted the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights, which for the first time ever saw the rights of victims established into law at the federal level. This bill is a complement to the Canadians Victims Bill of Rights.

I would like to touch on a case that shook the community of Fort Erie in my riding of Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie. It is the story of an 81-year old retired businessman and friend of mine, Blake Nicholls, who was murdered by a career criminal with 50 prior convictions, including arson, armed robbery and theft. In fact, this individual was wanted in another jurisdiction for allegedly attacking his then girlfriend with a hammer.

The man attacked my friend Mr. Nicholls with a hammer out of misdirected revenge. He became enraged after he discovered that Blake Nicholls had warned a neighbour woman to steer clear of him. He then attacked Nicholls with a hammer, striking him 16 times. The criminal then ransacked the home of Mr. Nicholls as he lay dead on the living room floor. He showed no remorse. Nor did he demonstrate even a modicum of repentance. Blake Nicholls had merely attempted to be a good and caring neighbour, as he had been during his entire life. His three children and six grandchildren are left not only mourning his loss but must also live with the lifelong trauma in knowing that their loved one's life was cut short in such a brutal and inhumane way.

Had this bill been law, perhaps Constable Wynn and Blake Nicholls would still be with us today. As parliamentarians, we have a solemn duty to make and enact laws that will protect Canadians. The justification for detention in custody was evident in both these cases, yet these career criminals, who shared 150 convictions between them, were not incarcerated but were free to continue their respective business of criminality.

• (1915)

If previous convictions are disclosed at bail hearings, it would give judges and justices of the peace the tools they need to help keep our streets and neighbourhoods safe. It should also be noted that the legislation would not make huge changes to the Criminal Code. It would assist the judiciary in our country to make sound decisions based on complete evidence and would in no way infringe upon judicial discretion to grant bail.

The legislation puts victims first. The Conservative Party has always put victims first and has the full support of Constable Wynn's widow, Shelley Wynn. In fact, it was Mrs. Wynn who helped initiate the legislation. The bill is consistent with the previous government's passing of the Canadian Bill of Rights.

Canadians expect that we will fulfill our duty as legislators to ensure the laws of our country fully protect citizens. The Wynn family and the Nicholls family are counting on it. It is the obligation of the House to support this legislation.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to join the debate on Bill S-217, an act to amend the Criminal Code, detention in custody. I will be supporting it.

We are talking about an incident that happened in St. Albert, Alberta. This news story was talked about in my constituency. It was talked about in Calgary. From one city to another, we never want to

see police officers die in the line of duty when they are serving their community. To me it is common sense. This amendment would have saved David Wynn's life. It would have indeed also avoided the injury to the other officer, the auxiliary constable involved. The rap sheet of Mr. Rehn, who was the assailant in this situation, should have been cause enough for him to have been denied bail. It should be much harder for habitual criminals to make bail.

Again, like Senator Runciman and my colleague from St. Albert—Edmonton have said, the key of this bill is in clause 2, in which it states the “prosecutor shall” instead of “may”. This will make a huge difference during bail hearings and ensure that we avoid a repeat of what Constable Wynn's family had to go through. No family should ever have to go through that.

On this, I have a Yiddish proverb I would like to use, “When scholars vie, wisdom mounts”. I do not feel this debate has risen to that level of scholarship yet, after hearing the contributions made by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and the reasons why the government would not be supporting the bill.

This is a case where a constable was shot and killed in the line of duty. Auxiliary Constable Derek Bond was shot and injured. Let us not forget these were two people who were serving their community, where one was killed and one who was injured and had to go through much hospital care in order to return to work.

Shawn Rehn was the individual involved in this. I went through the reports that were written on this by the Alberta government. In his charge history between 1994 and 2014, he had been charged with 206 offences. The charges that topped the list were 103 property offences, 13 violent offences, 24 weapons offences, 46 compliance and breach offences, six driving offences, seven drug offences, and seven offences against administration of justice. His conviction history again is pretty spectacular for a career criminal: 66 offences where he was found guilty, including three offences against administration of justice, 41 property offences, and the list goes on. He had 27 outstanding offences that he was charged on when he made bail, set at \$4,500 bail at the time. That basically should have made it impossible for him to be out in the community. He was wanted on outstanding warrants for his arrest as well, and he still made bail.

The amendments proposed in Bill S-217, as have been considered and passed by the Senate and brought to the House, would indeed avoid this situation in the future.

The shooting also prompted many questions about provincial bail procedures because the hearing was conducted without a Crown lawyer representing the prosecution, which is quite common in the province of Alberta. It is a standard practice there.

We heard mention of certain Alberta studies and recommendations made by different provinces. I look specifically to Alberta and what we do, because this bill would have a major effect on how Alberta would carry out the administration of justice.

Private Members' Business

The report on Shawn Rehn is called “A review of the involvement of the Alberta Crown Prosecution Service” by Kimberly Armstrong, deputy attorney general and acting deputy minister, Alberta justice, and solicitor general for the province. That report did not deal with federal matters because that was not the focus area. The focus was on what the province could control. Therefore, they strictly dealt with recommendations for provincial administration of the judicial system.

We set the Criminal Code in the chamber. It is passed by the Senate and approved by the Governor General. We set Criminal Code provisions and the provinces administer justice.

Page 14 of that same report deals with the recommendations and they are all provincial in nature. The report itself states on page one, “This review is limited to the involvement” the Alberta Crown Prosecution Service “had with [Mr.] Rehn, and does not consider his involvement with any other agency or party within the criminal justice system”. This should be painfully obvious to the government that this was a report. It cannot refer to this report and say that it did not recommend changes to section 515 or section 518 of the Criminal Code. The author of the report was not looking at that. The report was not looking to offer Criminal Code provision amendments to the federal government or to any of the political parties. What it was focusing on was strictly speaking to what could actually be done to prevent this type of incident, this tragedy, from ever happening again.

I want to thank the member for St. Albert—Edmonton for what he has contributed to the debate and for introducing this in the House.

● (1920)

I do not want to go over the same points that the member did and the points that he brought up about what Senator Runciman has said.

Clause 2 of the bill is the key. This is what will change “may” to “shall”. That single change would have saved Constable Wynn's life. It would have avoided the injuries to Auxiliary Constable Derek Bond. The whole incident could have been avoided and Mr. Rehn would have been right where he belonged, in jail. He did not belong in the community. He did not belong in St. Albert. He did not belong in a casino parking lot. He belonged in jail.

Bill S-217 would ensure that it is not an option any more whether or not to tell the justice about the accused's criminal record during a bail hearing. I have heard members talk about their concerns with respect to the administration of justice and how there might be complications with doing this, that it might slow down the bail hearing process.

I am not a member of the bar. I am not a lawyer, and I say that proudly and thankfully. I do know the administration of technological systems for a professional association. I was the registrar for the human resources profession in the province of Alberta, which had 6,000 members. We would conduct disciplinary hearings and investigations at times. These are not done by lawyers by any stretch of the imagination. They are hearings and investigations done by HR professionals into the actions of our members. At the time it was a CHRP designation.

Like the member for St. Albert—Edmonton said, whatever concern may exist about the delays on bail hearings ignores the fact

that this information is readily available in information systems. My colleague from Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, a former police officer, mentioned how easy it is to gain access to this information with a keystroke. The issue is not whether the information is accessible so much as whether they have the means to do it and whether they can do it and how fast they can get to it. Having a computer available in the courtroom makes it pretty simple. The issue is technology. Access is not an issue under criminal law. It is just an issue of technology.

I do not really like the argument being made by the government that this might slow things down, that it might complicate things, so therefore we should not do it. I would say we update our systems and update the way we administer the judicial system to ensure that we can fulfill the requirements of the Criminal Code. If we are going to change the Criminal Code to ensure that these types of incidents do not happen again and that individuals like Constable Wynn do not lose their life in the line of duty because a person who should not have been out in the community and should not have been granted bail is out, then why not invest in more technology?

The Alberta government has admitted it would cost more money. There is a cost associated with this. A few million dollars, it said, would have to be spent for the remand centres to ensure that they can update their systems. Is that not money well spent though to avoid losing a police officer in the line of duty and the heartache caused to the family? I believe so. With the amount of money that this place spends on a weekly basis, with the \$30 billion of spending that we are doing here, and the \$10-billion deficit spending the Alberta provincial government is doing, a few million dollars spent to ensure the remand centres have the technological systems, have the computer systems updated and available for bail hearings, seems to me like a small price to pay.

Another report I want to mention is the “Alberta Bail Review: Endorsing a Call for Change”, February 29, 2016 by Nancy Irving. It is quite a thick report, nearly half an inch thick, that provides an in-depth overview of the bail system in Alberta. It goes from A to Z and covers a lot of ground. Thirty-one recommendations are made in the report that touch upon solely provincial areas of responsibility. To my New Democratic colleague who mentioned that statistics and numbers would be really helpful here, they are provided in this report. An overview is done for 2014-15 on the number of bail hearings in the province and how they were actually done.

That same report said the vast majority of first appearances at the bail stage are conducted by justices of the peace at two centralized hearing offices with police representing the crown. It goes on to state that their focus was section 524 of the Criminal Code, which governs the revocation of bail for people who are alleged to have violated the terms of their release. It was not looking at sections 515 and 518, which is the focus of the Senate bill, Bill S-217. They were strictly looking at how they were going to administer the Criminal Code provisions that exist as they are.

We have an opportunity here to change those provisions, to indicate to the provinces that they need to change how they administer their judicial systems in order to ensure that we can avoid an incident like Constable Wynn's, that we do not lose more officers in the line of duty.

Wren's final court appearance raised questions about the completeness and accuracy of the information available to those who preside and present at bail hearings in Alberta. The 31 recommendations in the report deal with just that and the Alberta government is working on implementing them.

I will be supporting the bill. It is an excellent bill. I invite all members to do the same.

● (1930)

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to contribute to the debate on Bill S-217. I know my colleague from St. Albert—Edmonton has done very good work on this Senate bill, and I thank him for that. I was happy to second this legislation.

His efforts are reflective of the expectations of his community. They have seen how the justice system can fail, and they have witnessed the deadly consequences.

This proposed legislation aims to correct a hole in our criminal justice system. In fact, most Canadians are completely astonished that the bill even needs to be brought forward.

The bill was drafted in response to the January 15, 2015, murder of RCMP Constable David Wynn and the wounding of Auxiliary Constable Derek Bond in Edmonton. By any reasonable assessment, the killer in this case should not have been free on the street at the time of the killing. His rap sheet was unbelievable, yet he freely roamed the streets.

The killer had faced hundreds of charges as an adult, and his criminal record had dozens of convictions. He had been convicted for violent offences. He routinely failed to attend court when required. He had served a number of jail terms, including two stints in a federal penitentiary. That is not all. At the time of Constable Wynn's death, the killer was facing 29 charges and was under two firearms and weapons bans. How the hell was this man on the street? The killer was arrested—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I remind the member to use parliamentary language in the House.

Mr. Len Webber: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was not aware that “hell” was an unparliamentary word to use. I can think of other things I would like to say even worse than that, but how the heck was this man on the streets?

The killer was arrested several months earlier on a number of charges, including possession of a prohibited weapon. There was also a warrant for his arrest for charges from the previous year when he had failed to attend court. Instead, he was out on bail, a paltry bail at that, a measly \$4,500. How could this be? How was he not detained in custody on any of the existing grounds already within the law to ensure his attendance in court, to protect public safety, and to maintain confidence in this justice system.

Routine Proceedings

Sadly, hindsight is 20/20. The court never heard anything about his lengthy criminal record, his complete disrespect in the past for the courts, his failure to appear, his ignoring of court orders, and the like.

Now here we are today, wishing to correct this Criminal Code, and we are astonished that the Liberal government will not.

Section 515 of the Criminal Code lays out the rules regarding what is known as bail in Canada. Formally it is known as judicial interim release. Subsection 515(10) lists the reasons justifying why the accused should remain in custody. It also addresses issues around the need to ensure the accused's attendance in court, to protect public safety, and to maintain confidence in the administration of justice.

When judges are faced with determining whether an accused should be kept in jail or not, we would think that they would take into consideration whether the accused has failed to appear in court on a previous occasion. Can the accused be trusted? Is the accused facing, but not yet convicted on, other charges at the same time? It is hard to imagine, but the current law does not require that the judge in the case be made aware of these types of things. It is unbelievable.

Clause 1 of the bill would amend this. Its goal is the maintaining of confidence in the administration of justice, specifically—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I apologize to the hon. member for interrupting.

However, it is now 7:35 p.m., and the time provided for consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

The member will have five minutes and 10 seconds left in his speech the next time this matter is before the House.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1935)

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 97.1(2) a motion to concur in the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights (recommendation not to proceed further with Bill C-242, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (inflicting torture)), presented on Monday, October 17, 2016, is deemed moved.

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wish to speak to the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights in relation to proposed Bill C-242, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (inflicting torture).

Routine Proceedings

Bill C-242 proposes the enactment of a new criminal offence of non-state or private torture. Let me begin by commending the member from London North Centre for raising the important issue of non-state torture before the House of Commons.

I recognize that Bill C-242 seeks to address a particularly horrific subset of criminal conduct, which is worthy of our attention as parliamentarians. That being said, the committee has recommended that the House not proceed further with the bill. The committee's fifth report was presented to the House on October 17, 2016.

I agree with the decision not to proceed further with this bill. Let me provide some more details on why I believe that this was the appropriate decision to make. Private member's bill, Bill C-242 proposes to create a crime of inflicting torture for the purpose of coercing or intimidating any person, with a maximum punishment of life imprisonment. It would define torture to mean "any act or omission by which severe and prolonged pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally and repeatedly inflicted on a person." In addition, "severe and prolonged mental pain or suffering" is defined to mean suffering "a mental injury leading to a visibly evident and significant change in intellectual capability."

The key point about this proposed offence was that it applied to anyone who committed torture, not just to officials of the state. The committee's report concludes that this approach may be redundant. This conclusion reflects the reality that there are already several offences in the Criminal Code that address inflicting serious harm on a person. For example, there is the offence of assault causing bodily harm in section 267 of the Criminal Code, with a maximum punishment of 10 years imprisonment. There is also the offence of aggravated assault in section 268 where a person wounds, maims, disfigures, or endangers the life of the victim. The maximum punishment is 14 years imprisonment.

There is the offence of sexual assault causing bodily harm in section 272 that has a maximum punishment of 14 years imprisonment. Finally, there is the offence of aggravated sexual assault in section 273, which addresses the situation where someone who commits a sexual assault wounds, maims, disfigures or endangers the life of the victim. The maximum punishment for this offence is life imprisonment.

As a result, cases of private torture can already be prosecuted under the Criminal Code under various assault provisions. An offence of private torture, as Bill C-242 proposes, appears not to be necessary. The standing committee's report also concluded judges already have the authority under section 718.2 of the Criminal Code to consider torturous conduct.

Section 718.2 is the sentencing provision in the code that sets out various aggravating factors that a judge must consider when determining the appropriate sentence for an accused person who has been found guilty of a crime. In particular, it is an aggravating factor whenever the victim of abuse is the offender's spouse or common-law partner. It is also an aggravating factor where there is evidence that the offence has had a significant impact on the victim. This will be particularly relevant where a victim has endured ongoing and horrific abuse.

Most importantly, section 718.2 instructs judges to consider "any relevant aggravating or mitigating circumstances relating to the offence or the offender." Given such broad and comprehensive language, I have absolutely no doubt that the type of conduct addressed by Bill C-242 is already met with severe punishment. The approach to sentencing established in section 718.2 is critical, because it preserves judicial discretion to consider all the facts before them. Rather than creating a new offence to address every scenario, the code allows each unique set of facts to be accounted for at sentencing, and this is exactly what judges do in practice.

In addition to the redundancy with existing Criminal Code provisions, Bill C-242 also overlaps with another offence, namely, the existing offence of torture found in section 269.1 of the code. Although potential overlap is not always a problem, in this case it does appear to be.

● (1940)

Section 269.1 sets out a definition of torture that incorporates the internationally agreed upon definition of torture found in the torture convention. That definition contemplates torture committed by an official or committed by another person at the instigation of, with the consent of, or with the acquiescence of such an official. Thus, it does not capture torture committed by private citizens. The definition proposed in Bill C-242 is substantially different. It is both broader and narrower than the existing Criminal Code definition.

Torture is defined in subsection 269.1(2) of the code to mean any act or omission by which "severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person" for various purposes, such as obtaining information from a person. Under this definition, in contrast to Bill C-242, there is no need for the pain or suffering to be prolonged or repeatedly inflicted or that the mental suffering lead to a visibly evident and significant change in intellectual capability.

In addition, section 269.1 of the Criminal Code has a maximum penalty of 14 years in prison, compared to the maximum penalty of life imprisonment proposed by Bill C-242. In creating the offence of torture in section 269.1, Parliament gave that section exclusive jurisdiction to address torture. Unfortunately, it does not appear that the proposed offence would complement Parliament's original intent. Such discrepancies with the existing definition of torture, as well as the existing penalty, may in fact undercut the established law set out in the Criminal Code.

Routine Proceedings

Finally, there are a number of practical challenges with the bill that were raised at committee. For instance, the definition of torture proposes to introduce new and uncertain language into the code, including the words “change in intellectual capability”. There is an open question as to whether PTSD or similar disorders would qualify under this definition, and it would likely take years of litigation to sort that out. It is also worth noting that none of the amended definitions proposed at committee appeared to adequately address the ambiguities raised by experts.

The introduction of uncertainty and inconsistency into the Criminal Code can result in a loss of confidence in the administration of justice. It is, therefore, our duty as parliamentarians to carefully consider all the implications of any proposed amendment.

The horrific forms of violence contemplated by Bill C-242 have no place in our society. That is why the concerns raised in this bill will be part of the discussion as the Minister of Justice undertakes a comprehensive review of the criminal justice system.

I wish to thank the members of the justice committee for their diligent work in reviewing this private member's bill.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise this evening to speak to the report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights with respect to Bill C-242, introduced by the hon. member for London North Centre. Bill C-242 seeks to establish a Criminal Code offence for torture in the non-state realm. Presently, the only Criminal Code offence for torture lies in section 269.1 of the Criminal Code, which deals with state torture.

At this time I would like to thank the hon. member for London North Centre for his hard work and his efforts to bring awareness to the important issue of non-state torture and for trying to do something about it by bringing forward Bill C-242.

At second reading debate, I spoke in favour of Bill C-242. I did so notwithstanding the fact that the evidence was clear from a review of the law that there is no clear gap in prosecuting and convicting individuals involved in torture offences. Those offences that cover torture include, among other things, aggravated assault, aggravated sexual assault, forcible confinement, kidnapping, and so on. Nonetheless, I supported Bill C-242 because I believed it was well-intentioned and because I take seriously the issue of torture.

In that regard, I believed it certainly merited moving to the next stage in the legislative process, namely to committee for further study and review. That study and review did take place by the justice committee, of which I am a member. Upon participating in that review, I now concur with the report of the justice committee, which is to not recommend that Bill C-242 move forward. It is not because the bill is not well-intentioned. I certainly acknowledge the fact that there is symbolic value to calling a torturer what a torturer is, and that is a “torturer”, but good intentions and symbolism do not always make good law.

In this case, I respectfully believe that Bill C-242 would not make good law. While my time is limited and I do not have sufficient time to go through all of the issues with the bill, I would like to highlight a couple of issues with the bill.

One of the issues with Bill C-242 is that it could complicate the prosecution of cases involving torture and could lead to inconsistent sentences for similar crimes. Take aggravated assault, for example. Under the Criminal Code, aggravated assault is defined as an offence involving wounding, maiming, disfiguring, or endangering the life of another human being.

There are all sorts of circumstances involving acts of torture that could easily fit into one or more of the categories of wounding, maiming, disfiguring, or endangering the life of another human being. Under the Criminal Code, the maximum penalty for aggravated assault is 14 years. Under Bill C-242, the maximum penalty for the proposed torture offence would be life imprisonment. Therefore, if Bill C-242 were passed, it could mean that someone who, for example, severely maimed an individual could be convicted of aggravated assault and sentenced to 14 years behind bars, whereas someone who committed a similar offence could be convicted under the torture offence and receive a sentence of life in prison.

● (1945)

That is just one example of an instance where it could be more difficult for the prosecutor to prosecute a case and where the outcome of similar cases could result in different sentences.

Additionally, there is inconsistency between the life sentence under Bill C-242 and the maximum 14-year sentence under section 269.1 of the Criminal Code, which deals with state torture. It therefore raises the possibility that if, for example, a police officer or member of the Canadian Armed Forces engaged in a crime involving torture, the prosecutor would be faced with the position of electing to proceed under the new offence under Bill C-242 or the existing offence under section 269.1 of the Criminal Code. If the prosecutor wanted to have the maximum sentence, he or she would likely proceed under the new section of Bill C-242.

The difficulty with that, if the prosecutor proceeded under the new offence rather than section 269.1 of the Criminal Code, is that it could then be argued that Canada would not be fulfilling its international obligations under the United Nations Convention Against Torture, which calls upon Canada to hold state officials accountable under international law codified by section 269.1 of the Criminal Code, and not the new section under Bill C-242.

The member for London North Centre had suggested at committee that perhaps the sentence be reduced from life down to 14 years. While that would marginally address issues of inconsistencies in sentencing for similar cases and similar crimes, it would not take away the complexities in prosecuting cases involving torture that would be created as a result of Bill C-242.

If one looks, for example, at aggravated assault, it is necessary when trying to establish intent that the crown prove that the accused intended to commit an assault. Under Bill C-242, it would not only be necessary to establish intent with respect to the torturous act, but it would also be necessary to establish intent in terms of the infliction of pain on the victim. Not only would it be necessary to establish that intent to inflict pain, and necessary to establish there was an intent to intimidate or coerce an individual, it would also be necessary to establish that the individual who had pain inflicted upon them suffered severe and prolonged pain.

Routine Proceedings

On top of that, it would be necessary to establish not only that a torturous act was committed against an individual, but that the torturous act was committed repeatedly. Unfortunately, “repeatedly” is not defined under Bill C-242, and therefore would be subject to judicial interpretation, thereby creating uncertainty.

In closing, I will simply say that, while Bill C-242 was well-intentioned, it would create uncertainty in the Criminal Code. It would create further complexity in the prosecution of cases involving torture. It would raise legal and interpretative problems for the courts, and it arguably could undercut Canada’s international obligations under the United Nations Convention Against Torture.

It is for these reasons that I regretfully must stand in opposition to Bill C-242.

● (1950)

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this motion today.

First, I want to thank the member for London North Centre for his work on Bill C-242. He chose a very serious and important area of the Criminal Code for his private member’s bill, and I want to thank him for giving our justice committee and the House an opportunity to debate what he proposed.

Bill C-242 would have created a new offence in the Criminal Code to apply the term “torture” to heinous acts of violence that are currently prosecuted under a range of sections, from aggravated assault, to forcible confinement, to uttering threats, and so on.

The member suggested, and some witnesses agreed, that it is important for victims, as they are processing their trauma and moving forward, that society accurately label what has occurred; in other words, that we call it “torture” and not “assault”.

Although the committee did not receive any evidence on this particular point, I personally think it is important and—as I will explain in a moment—it should not be lost from this discussion. The voices of victims should be included in conversations about the criminal justice system.

At the justice committee, a number of practical concerns were raised about the bill.

First, it was the clear recommendation of the Department of Justice that if a new and more severe assault offence were to be created, it should not be called “torture” alone. To be clear, its advice was not that such acts do not constitute torture, as we commonly understand it; nor was it opposed to labels such as “torturous assault”, which members from the NDP proposed as solutions. Rather, its concern was with using only the word “torture” and, thus, creating two offences called “torture”.

It was suggested that to do this could undermine international agreements and norms against state torture, because it may encourage states with poor human rights records to create new or weaker variations of their laws to prevent officials from carrying out torture.

As I said, we considered this advice from the department and proposed that the new offence be called “torturous assault” so as to

avoid the risks it identified, while still capturing the severity and brutality of the conduct.

Second, the committee heard from a number of legal experts who argued that the bill could not criminalize any conduct that is not already criminal in Canada. In other words, the acts that would give rise to prosecution under the new offence would already give rise to prosecution under a number of existing offences: assault, sexual assault, kidnapping, forcible confinement, uttering threats, and others.

Again, to be clear. The bill would have changed the term that is applied and could, in some cases, also have increased the maximum punishment possible, but it would not make illegal any activity that is somehow currently legal.

It was because of these concerns—the practical risks raised by the Department of Justice and the question of necessity raised by legal experts—that the committee decided to not proceed with consideration of the bill at that time.

However, at that time, we raised some concerns about some language that was used in the discussion of the motion. I think it is very important to repeat here what we raised then. It was suggested by some members that Bill C-242 was wholly redundant. We, in the NDP, disagree with that characterization. The concerns that expert witnesses raised at committee were heard. They supported the decision to not proceed with the bill. However, they did not support the claim that Bill C-242 is redundant.

Let me explain.

First, existing assault provisions do not require that the offender intend to cause pain and suffering. They only require that the assault is intentional and that the offender was reckless as to its consequences.

Therefore, creating a new and more severe offence that captures the deliberate infliction of pain and suffering would be a meaningful change to the Criminal Code. It would be harder to prove, of course, but it would also more accurately capture the brutal acts that occur in these cases.

Second, the argument about the importance of naming acts that was made by the member for London North Centre, and by some witnesses at this committee, should not be rejected. That is why we tried to salvage the bill by proposing “torturous assault” as a compromise.

Unfortunately, the justice committee did not hear the evidence on what effect the name of an offence has on the recovery of the victim.

● (1955)

However, we can certainly see how victims and their families struggle to understand how a bar fight and days of sadistic abuse both fall under the label of assault.

Therefore, I urge the government to consider these two points in its review of the Criminal Code. First is whether a new and more serious assault offence should be created to capture the deliberate infliction of pain and suffering. Second is whether such an offence could be given a name such as “torturous assault” that would more accurately capture the brutality of the crime. When the government conducts that study, I would urge it to hear directly from victims and their families, as well as experts.

We worked hard with all parties to resolve the concerns about the bill. I know that all parties supported the intention of the bill. Again, I thank the member for London—North Centre for his work.

While those concerns could not be resolved this time, I think it would be a grave mistake to abandon the bill permanently or declare it redundant. It contains some new and important ideas that should and must be considered by the government during its promised review of the Criminal Code.

• (2000)

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as the chair of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, I want to say a couple of words on our fifth report and its recommendation to the House not to proceed further with Bill C-242.

I also want to thank my colleague, the member for London—North Centre, for bringing forward an idea that I think all parties had agreed had merit. I also want to thank the members of the committee who came to a unanimous conclusion after working together and listening to all of the testimony on the bill. There were no ideas that we did not discuss at committee, and all parties were involved.

I also want to thank the witnesses who appeared before our committee. We heard about true acts of torture. We heard about people who really suffered beyond anything any of us could ever imagine. To those people who were able to come forward and tell their stories, or those who came forward to tell stories on their behalf, I do want to thank them. Their work was not in vain. Their ideas were not lost.

While I believe the bill could have been amended to take into account certain things, I do not think the committee at all bought the idea that we could not have a second act of torture that was private, because there already was a public act of torture under section 269.1. We could easily have amended the name to call it a “torturous assault” or a “torturous act” and we would have all been fine with that, should there have been other justification for proceeding with the bill. We could have amended the idea that the punishment was life, as opposed to 14 years, as it is for public acts of torture, making it 14 years as well to be consistent with public acts of torture. Clearly, we would not want government sanctioned acts to carry a lower penalty than private acts.

However, the real reason we did not proceed was that all members of the committee were convinced that the criteria to prove this charge were so difficult that no prosecutor would ever use the charge, except as a duplicate or additional charge, because it was easier to prove existing offences in the Criminal Code that would have carried the same 14-year penalty. As a result, the committee determined that we should not further proceed, but we did agree to send a letter to the

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Minister of Justice, asking her to consider torturous acts in a private capacity, or torturous assault, as an aggravating factor for sentencing.

I am hoping that in its overall review of the Criminal Code, the government does consider and proceed with that recommendation of the committee.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*Translation*]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Madam Speaker, on September 30, 2016, I asked the Minister of Canadian Heritage when concrete measures to support news media would be put in place.

I asked that question two months ago now, and we still do not know what the Liberal government plans to do to provide meaningful support to help news media with the digital shift. Of course, the minister is conducting consultations across Canada. However, as is too often the case, nothing is certain, nothing is clear, and nothing is concrete.

What is worth noting is that, in the meantime, faced with the growing popularity of new media and digital platforms and without the benefit of any support, mainstream media are experiencing a sharp decline. All this government does is stumble around. When will it finally take real action?

I would remind the House that, in 2012, a first wave of cuts totalling \$110 million led to major lay-offs, particularly at Radio Canada International, whose budget was cut by \$10 million—an 85% cut given that its total budget was only \$12.5 million to begin with.

In my riding, Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, *Le Courrier de Saint-Hyacinthe* has been in print since 1853. It is the oldest French newspaper in America and a member of the Coalition pour la pérennité de la presse d'information au Québec, which advocates on behalf of print newspapers. Most major newspapers in Quebec and Canada have agreed to ask for concrete programs to help them transition to the digital platform.

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This Quebec print media coalition is asking the federal government to act. They want meaningful financial assistance, transitional support, financial support to help them gradually transition to digital without having to choose between bankruptcy and cutting thousands of jobs just to survive. They are acutely aware of the challenges that the digital shift poses every day, but they are also grappling with lower ad revenues.

During one of her consultations, the minister had this to say about print media:

I realize that major changes are affecting various media and the entire entertainment industry. As I have said many times, everything is on the table. I am ready to talk about the levers available to the federal government to support and promote those industries.

I wonder what they are waiting for. When will they do something to help?

The coalition asked, among other things, for a program or a tax credit to cover some of the print media's investment in digital content. It also asked that the Copyright Act be updated, since the web giants and content aggregators are taking content from print media without paying for it or, sometimes, using it by simply rewording it.

It also called for support in producing original Canadian content through tax credits to cover some of the salaries or expenses related to information production. To date, there has been no solid commitment from the federal government.

I will simply repeat my question: will the Liberal government help print media as soon as possible?

● (2005)

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government recognizes the important role that newspapers such as *Le Courrier de Saint-Hyacinthe* play in Canadians' lives.

Canadian newspapers generate more than \$4.1 billion in revenues and employ more than 30,000 people in Canada. Newspapers play an important civic role because they link Canadians to their community, their country, and the world. They are a cornerstone of our democracy.

This matter is important to us and we are concerned about the same issues that were raised by my hon. colleague across the way.

[*English*]

Our government recognizes the important role that newspapers like the *Le Courrier de Saint-Hyacinthe* play in ensuring that Canadians have access to quality, reliable Canadian editorial content. That is why there are programs in place to assist them.

The Canada periodical fund, for example, provides support to Canadian print magazines, non-daily newspapers, and digital periodicals. This year, the CPF provided over \$16 million to 369 paid non-daily newspapers, including *Le Courrier de Saint-Hyacinthe*.

[*Translation*]

That being said, the world is changing. Digital technology is changing the way Canadians produce and consume content. They

read the news on social media and on their smart phones. The quality of available content is unprecedented, as are the opportunities to connect Canadians with each other and with others around the world.

Many Canadian newspapers are proposing innovative strategies to capitalize on the digital age's potential. For example, *La Presse+* now has more subscribers than the print edition of *La Presse* has ever had, even at the height of its popularity. *La Liberté* in Manitoba and *Le Franco* in Alberta have also adopted innovative approaches.

● (2010)

[*English*]

We acknowledge that the newspaper industry is experiencing challenges in this age of digital transition. That is why the Department of Canadian Heritage supported the development of a digital platform to help Quebec weekly newspapers migrate from print to online, and now *La Presse+* has more subscribers online than it did in print editions in the past.

Recognizing the challenges posted by this new environment, the Minister of Canadian Heritage launched consultations on Canadian content in a digital world. More than 30,000 Canadians and stakeholders participated in our consultations, both online and in person. They engaged directly on issues like supporting the creation and export of Canadian content in this age. They shared their stories about their experiences. They shared innovative solutions on the challenges the industry faces today.

When I was at the final consultation in Edmonton, there were representatives of weekly newspapers, newspapers in la Francophonie, newspapers from across the province, asking questions and putting creative solutions on the table to ensure their survival. I would like to underline the work that the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage has done in this work on local media studies.

[*Translation*]

I would also like to thank the members of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, who worked to ensure the survival of these newspapers, because their presence in the community is a reflection of that community, and that is very important for democracy and for every community's vitality of every community.

[*English*]

Together, these initiatives will provide a holistic perspective to continue to ensure Canadians have access to diverse Canadian news and information. As the minister has indicated in the House even today, we will be examining all of the testimonials, all of the submissions from 30,000 participants, and we will have recommendations and solutions on this very important question in 2017, Canada's 150th celebration of Confederation.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to hear that the government recognizes that the print media is an integral part of our democracy and that a newspaper like *Le courrier de Saint-Hyacinthe* is important to a region such as ours.

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As Canadians' representatives, it is our duty to guarantee their access to information. It seems to me that it is also our duty to ensure that these media outlets survive the digital shift—small, regional operations more so than major national organizations.

Once again, the Liberals have done a lot of consulting. The time has come, however, to take prompt action. We must very quickly find solutions to deal with the digital shift. I believe that is clear. The results of the various consultations are clear. Print media needs a real financial solution if it is to deal with the challenges of the digital era.

I will ask once more: can the federal government commit today to providing financial support to the print media that need it?

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Speaker, the cultural sector is central to Canada's creative economy. It represents \$54.6 billion of Canada's economy and more than 630,000 jobs. While it does pose significant challenges, the digital environment provides new opportunities for our creators and cultural entrepreneurs.

[English]

This is why our government consulted Canadians, including stakeholders from the news media industry. The aim of these consultations is to understand issues surrounding the creation, discoverability, and export of Canadian content in a digital world, and engage with Canadians about their experiences and ideas.

This initiative, along with the work of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage and the findings of the Public Policy Forum, will inform our policy thinking going forward.

[Translation]

I have read *Le courrier de Saint-Hyacinthe*. I would like to thank my colleague for her comments.

We are very close to making an announcement on this very important issue.

• (2015)

[English]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am proud to rise here again to advocate for the people in and around Vegreville, Alberta. It is especially important that I speak on their behalf, because the employees of the case processing centre in Vegreville have been told that they are not allowed to talk publicly or on social media, so I want to share some of their voices.

On November 22, a department email to all employees said that they owe a duty of loyalty to their employer. I believe that the government also has a responsibility to its employees, and it is failing.

In emails and on social media, my constituents have demanded that the minister show a business case, because they highly doubt that the cost of operations for a case processing centre are less in Edmonton. I agree. The minister must prove that there is actually a solid business case for closing the immigration centre in Vegreville. Just saying that there is a business case does not prove that it exists. The department and the minister have patronized and dismissed my constituents.

On October 27, at a meeting with employees, the assistant deputy minister even said, "Come on now, it's not the end of the world". However, as one constituent put it, "When we looked at our options, our world slowly began to crumble".

The minister says that all current employees will be given the opportunity to relocate to Edmonton, but that is not true. The closure could cause about 200 homes to go on the market in a town where 100 homes are already for sale. The people of my riding are writing to the minister saying that they cannot afford to sell their homes in Vegreville for next to nothing. Houses and rent in Edmonton are way more expensive, of course.

Commuting from Vegreville to Edmonton will require two to four hours of driving every day, and it will add costs for many families. One employee said, "I have estimated it will cost me an additional \$500 per month to drive, and an additional \$91 per month for an LRT pass. Currently I take home approximately \$2600 per month, and after the additional expenses, my take-home pay will be approximately \$2,000". This grandmother will be forced to commute three hours a day, effectively destroying the lifestyle she treasures in Vegreville.

The minister is listening to officials who do not get what they are doing to families and to the whole area. A four-year-old wrote about his mother's potential new commute. He said, "When she gets home it would be time for me to get ready for bed and I wouldn't even get to play with her".

A well-known up-and-coming Olympic athlete wrote, "If the CPC office moves to Edmonton, it will be impossible for me to commute four hours a day, care for my son, and train".

The truth is that all employees don't actually have options, because, as one wrote, "Relocating isn't an option. You cannot relocate a farm". My constituents are rural people. They love their rural way of life, and the case processing centre gives them stable income and employment.

As another wrote, "If I were to choose to commute, it would leave my children unattended, as their father toils for 12 to 16 hours a day on the farm. The time spent away from family would mean no time for volunteering, quality family time, or homework help".

This is a needless attack on people and communities. Many Vegreville residents left to get an education and chose to move back, because they love their small town.

A mother wrote, "To work at CPC Vegreville, so close to home, has enabled me to be a mother and a wife and contribute to my family's financial well-being. It's not right that a woman has to choose between a career and her family".

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The minister claims that the closure is simply moving 280 jobs from Vegreville to Edmonton, but it would impact 250 spouses' jobs, 350 school-aged children, and dozens of businesses. It is kicking a small Alberta town when it is already down.

My question for the minister is this. Will he immediately reverse this unfounded edict and save the jobs and futures of these rural Albertans?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague across the aisle for her important advocacy on this issue on behalf of her constituents in Vegreville.

To respond to the increased demand in various business lines, and to expand the operations of the IRCC, the department has made the difficult but necessary decision to relocate the Vegreville case processing centre to Edmonton. Canadians expect any government, including this government, to make responsible decisions on government spending that will ensure that taxpayers' dollars are spent on quality services that address current challenges and future needs.

The member opposite has raised the issue of whether there is a business case. My comments are indeed directed at addressing that very concern. In fact, the Minister of Immigration has stated that the department intends to expand its operations in Alberta in the coming years, creating in aggregate more jobs for Albertans. That is my first point.

With 42% of the current staff at Vegreville reaching retirement age in the next five years, the move to Edmonton will make it easier to recruit and retain qualified bilingual employees to meet the growing current and future needs. To date, the recruitment efforts to replace staff have been unsuccessful. This was the case even under the former government. Needless to say, the inability to recruit new staff, combined with the reduction in the workforce due to retirement, is a serious challenge. With fewer employees, service to clients will certainly be impacted. That, again, buttresses the business case.

Between October 2015 and September 2016, 17% of the staff in Vegreville left the workforce. As the member opposite well knows, the letter she received from the Minister of Immigration on November 17 stipulated that there were ongoing tenant issues at the current location in Vegreville, with almost 200 service calls made since 2013 to fix the heating, cooling, sanitary, and plumbing issues, again during the tenure of the previous government.

● (2020)

[Translation]

Once again, these are issues that the previous government was unable to resolve. This move will save taxpayers money because the new office will be located on premises owned by the Government of Canada.

[English]

Although the move from Vegreville to Edmonton makes business sense based on current and future needs, the member needs to understand that it was not a decision made without great consideration of the impact it would have on employees, as well as her constituents in the community of Vegreville. Employees were

advised well in advance of this relocation, and efforts are under way to ensure that the impacts on staff are minimized.

I have great concern for the issues the member has outlined with respect to families. We are concerned and sensitive to the needs and problems that families are facing with the challenges they are undergoing in every facet of our economy, particularly in Vegreville, in the member's constituency. The management of IRCC will continue to work closely with staff throughout this transition period.

The positions in the relocated office will have the same work descriptions they have now, and so the current indeterminate employees will be able to retain their jobs. Business will continue as usual throughout the transition.

As I have said, Canadians expect their government to manage taxpayer dollars well, even if that means making difficult decisions, and this is the decision that we had to take.

I would also note that the Minister of Immigration has reached out to the member for Lakeland to meet with respect to Vegreville and to address her concerns and questions. The minister's office has yet to hear from the member.

We will continue to show leadership and continue to deliver for Albertans.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Madam Speaker, the minister has claimed that everyone working at the case processing centre in Vegreville will have a job in Edmonton. I look forward to holding him to account on that. However, of course, officials have confirmed that the relocation provisions will only apply to less than half of the current employees. Farm families cannot relocate, and commuting takes three hours, which would cost employees on average \$600 a month. Removing these jobs from Vegreville is like cutting 55,000 jobs in Edmonton or 279,000 jobs in the minister's home town of Toronto.

In fact, despite these claims, department officials have confirmed that there was no cost study. The fact is, there was no economic impact assessment and there was no consultation.

The minister said this edict would improve efficiency, but his own officials have praised the processing centre at Vegreville, saying it is an innovative and model office that often exceeds targets.

The minister has repeated that there is a sound business case for this. When will the employees and the people of Vegreville be able to see that business case?

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, we appreciate the efforts and advocacy by the member opposite. However, fiscal prudence and sound management of Canadian public finances is something that the party of the member opposite stands for. It is something that this government is working towards and is trying to implement with this decision. We are expected to make responsible decisions on government spending involving taxpayer dollars and to ensure that those taxpayer dollars are spent on quality services that address current challenges and future needs.

Adjournment Proceedings

The facts supplied by the member opposite are speculative. Actually, the facts are that 42% of the current staff are reaching retirement age in the next five years. Between October 2015 and September 2016, 17% of the staff in Vegreville left the workforce. This is not speculative, but accurate. There have also been 200 tenant service calls to fix the heating, cooling, sanitary, and plumbing issues in the building since 2013. These are issues that the former government chose not to address, but that we will be addressing.

●(2025)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 8:24 p.m.)

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