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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, November 30, 2016

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, November 30, 2016

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1405)

[English]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Edmonton Centre.

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

OIL PIPELINES

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the government said yes to two new oil pipelines. Oddly enough, that was right before a reception on the Hill organized by pipeline lobbyists. The champagne must have been flowing after that announcement.

The Prime Minister says that these two pipelines will help us fight climate change. How can he say that expanding oil sands development is part of the transition to green energy? How can he say that this is for his children and future generations? How can he say that by polluting more, we will pollute less? His jaw-droppingly flawed logic is making us look bad to the rest of the world.

Climate change will not spare environmentally responsible nations, so all of Canada's international allies will pay for this country's irresponsibility.

Once again, Canada is making it clear that Quebec's future in terms of energy, the economy, and diplomacy depends on its independence.

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[English]

RURAL COMMUNITIES

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a member from a rural Nova Scotia riding, I commend the government for its focus on rural communities. From investments in water to sewers, ice rinks, arts, broadband Internet, and immigration, this government understands that rural communities matter.

However, it is very disappointing that in recent months, officials at the Department of National Defence in Halifax and RCMP officials in Halifax have proposed closing facilities in my rural riding and moving their resources to Halifax. It is my hope that the government's leadership will send a clear message to every department and every official that all departments and agencies should support rural Canada and maintain their rural presence.

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[Translation]

LAVAL UNIVERSITY FOOTBALL TEAM

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at the Vanier Cup last Saturday, the Rouge et Or shone like gold. In a very hard-fought game, the Laval University football team came out on top by a score of 31-26.

Under the skilful leadership of Constantin, Ethier, Fortier, Brennan, and Bertrand, the Rouge et Or student athletes overcame adversity and rallied past the determined Dinos to capture their ninth Vanier Cup, a national record.

In true Laval style, all our athletes gave 100% to contribute to the victory. From the starting lineup to the substitute players, everyone played a part. No wonder their motto is “strength, work and pride”. No one individual is more important than the team.

I salute Hugo Richard, the quarterback and player of the game, for his incredible performance, Cédric Lussier-Roy, the top defensive player, and Raphaël Robidoux-Bouchard for blocking a key punt at the end of the game.

Go Laval go!

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[English]

FAMOUS PEOPLE PLAYERS

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I honour the great work of the Famous People Players in my riding of Etobicoke—Lakeshore. Famous People Players' glow-in-the-dark Dine & Dream Theatre has been entertaining audiences around the world, across Asia, in the U.S., on TV, and in my riding since 1974.

Statements by Members

On top of its artistic excellence and use of black-light puppetry, what makes Famous People Players even more spectacular is that this non-profit organization employs people with physical and intellectual disabilities. With duties in dining room management, arts administration, and theatrical and visual arts performance, these actors and artists keep the theatre alive.

I would like to congratulate Diane Dupuy, who founded the theatre over 42 years ago, and her 100-year-old mother, Mary Thornton, who have been instrumental in the success of the FPP. I also commend their supporters, including luminaries such as Liberace, who discovered them, Lorne Greene, Paul Newman, and most recently, Scotiabank. This is definitely a place “where special happens”.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, about a year ago, the Prime Minister was still a candidate, and he came to my community and made promises. British Columbians took him at his word that he would create new environmental assessments and a new relationship with first nations. Yesterday he and his government broke those promises. They broke that trust.

They broke trust with the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, whose territories will now be criss-crossed by seven times as many large oil tankers.

They broke trust with every British Columbian when he promised a world-class spill response. Instead, we now see what a single leaking tug can do to devastate an entire community, and now they would drive a supertanker through the Salish Sea every day, a seven-fold increase in traffic.

My community will not gamble with its coastline and its economy. My community remembers what it was promised by the government. The Prime Minister may have walked away from his commitments, but the people of Victoria will stand together to fight for a clean and sustainable future for us all.

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• (1410)

SUDBURY VOLUNTEER

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Hockey Canada is the governing body for grassroots hockey throughout the country. It oversees programs from entry-level competition to the world championships and the Olympic winter games.

Recently, Hockey Canada held its annual meeting and re-elected Sudbury's very own Joe Drago as chair. Joe is a life member of the Canadian Junior Hockey League, a recipient of the Sudbury Community Builders Award, and a leading member of the Greater Sudbury Sports Hall of Fame, but Joe's contribution to our community goes well beyond hockey.

He's been a member of the board of our local hospital and hospital foundation for nearly 30 years, a member of the Salvation Army advisory board, of the Alzheimer Society, and of the House of Kin, an organization that provides housing to out-of-town families travelling to Sudbury for cancer treatment.

I thank Joe for his hard work in support of our favourite sport and for everything he does. Joe makes Sudbury proud.

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RYAN HAMMERER

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to honour and pay tribute to the life and service of Surrey firefighter Ryan Hammerer. On November 21, Ryan was on his way to work when he was in a motor vehicle accident that tragically took his life. He was just 44 years old.

Since 2001, Ryan has been a dedicated and invaluable member of the Surrey Fire Service, serving our community for the last 15 years. His colleagues knew him as a deeply caring person and a dedicated member of the fire service and his community. He was known for his volunteer work, donating numerous hours to the Surrey Fire Fighters' Charitable Society and taking a leadership role within the British Columbia Professional Fire Fighters Association.

I would like to send my heartfelt prayers and deepest condolences to Ryan's family, friends, and fellow fire personnel. He leaves behind his wife Tiffinie, his son Cole, and his daughter Mataya.

Ryan's dedication and service to our community cannot be overstated. His presence will be deeply missed by all.

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COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Italian Canadians have contributed much to the building and betterment of Canada, and on behalf of all Canadians, I thank the community for all it has done and continues to do.

Specifically, I would like to pay tribute to Angelo and Grace Locilento, who for decades have led by example and worked to put others first. As Canada prepares to celebrate our 150th, it is people like Angelo and Grace who set the standard for good citizenship and community building.

From Opera York and the Basilicata Cultural Society to the Italian Chamber of Commerce, the Lucania Social Club, and the Vitanova Foundation, many organizations owe their success to Angelo and Grace.

Most recently, Angelo was recognized with the volunteer service commendation for his generosity. For that and much more, I offer my personal thanks.

[Member spoke in Italian as follows:]

Grazie mille. Sei molto speciale per me.

Statements by Members

ALS VOLUNTEER

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Mr. Jeffrey Perreault, co-founder of the Adaptive Canuck ALS Foundation and an ALS patient. Diagnosed in 2014, at the age of 32, Jeff became the first ALS patient in the world to walk in a lower body exoskeleton suit. He took 51 steps, the first steps he had taken in over a year without a walker. These steps mark only the beginning of Jeff's important journey. Health permitting, in January, Jeff will be kicking off a national bionic walking tour.

[Translation]

His message to promote the advancement of ALS research is powerful and inspiring.

[English]

I ask that all members recognize Jeff's strength, determination, and courage. We wish Jeff and thousands of ALS patients a cure for ALS.

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●(1415)

GOVERNOR GENERAL'S LITERARY AWARD

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we welcome Bill Waiser from Saskatoon—Grasswood to Ottawa to accept his first Governor General's Literary Award, for *A World We Have Lost: Saskatchewan Before 1905*.

This book is a great history lesson featuring Canada's first people and first explorers and the formidable backdrop of Saskatchewan's climate, landscape, and people. The book is a fascinating look into the formation of our great province and the significance of trading and the relationship with our first people in a pre-Confederation Saskatchewan.

Bill Waiser has published over a dozen works and continues to be one of the top historians in our province, if not our country, but today Bill Waiser will celebrate at the Governor General's Awards for his work, *A World We Have Lost: Saskatchewan Before 1905*.

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[Translation]

PEOPLE OF MARC-AURÈLE-FORTIN

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, December is just around the corner, and it is the last month of a year in which we accomplished a great deal for our country and our constituents. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the wonderful people of my riding of Marc-Aurèle-Fortin for putting their trust in me.

I would also like to wish them all the best for the upcoming holiday season. I hope that the people of Laval, Quebec, and all across the country take the time to express their gratitude by getting involved with local charities.

I will be leading by example on December 20 when I join the volunteers at Moisson Laval to distribute the traditional Christmas hampers.

As this year draws to a close, I wish everyone peace, prosperity, and good health.

[English]

REFUGEE705

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to stand today in the House and recognize the important work of Refugee705, a non-partisan group in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie that helps connect citizens with local refugee sponsorship initiatives.

I am pleased that the federal Sault Ste. Marie Liberal Association will be partnering up with Refugee705 this holiday season. On December 9, our local refugees in Sault Ste. Marie are invited to take part in a holiday tradition that will include a city bus ride tour of the entire city to look at the beautiful holiday lights. Following this outing, hot chocolate and gingerbread cookies will be served, as no holiday tradition is truly complete without holiday treats.

I encourage my colleagues here today and indeed all residents of all communities to partake in the various upcoming holiday traditions across Canada and to embrace the warmth, generosity, and open-heartedness that characterizes this season and this great nation.

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JEWISH REFUGEES

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, each year in Israel, November 30 is set aside to commemorate the plight of the more than one million Jews who were driven from their homes across the Middle East as a result of religious persecution between the 1940s and 1970s.

Following the establishment of the state of Israel, anti-Jewish sentiment and systemic violence dramatically increased, forcing far too many families to flee their homes.

I am proud to share with the House that B'nai Brith Canada, along with several community partners, has launched a week-long campaign to remind us of the suffering of these Jewish refugees, and is looking to mark November 30 in Canada officially to honour them.

Today is November 30. With the stories and memories of Jewish refugees in our thoughts, I can assure the Jewish community of this: I, and my colleagues, will not tolerate, in fact, we will fight against, anti-Semitism in all of its forms, here in Canada and abroad.

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CITYNEWS

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on November 18, 2016, history was made on Canadian television. Ginella Massa became the first hijab-wearing Muslim to anchor a major television newscast in Canada.

Oral Questions

CityNews Toronto gave Ginella the 11 p.m. broadcast time and soon after the world was tuning in. During a time of rising anti-Muslim rhetoric, and discrimination against women and minorities, this is an incredible achievement not only for Muslims, but for all Canadians. She was also the first hijab-wearing television journalist in 2015. As an immigrant from Panama, this story is as Canadian as it gets.

Ginella is a shining example of how amazing our country is and how everyone here has the opportunity to succeed in any field they desire.

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●(1420)

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, indigenous women in this country carry a heavy burden on their backs beginning as children.

Countless families experience intergenerational traumatization. Indigenous women are three to five times more likely to experience violence than non-indigenous women. This traumatization is often explained as the root causes of violence. Alcohol, suicide, abuse, and victims of violence are symptoms of this underlying traumatization. The Auditor General reported his concern regarding overrepresentation of indigenous women in federal penitentiaries. Acts of violence are often committed by individuals for whom violence has become normalized, having themselves been victimized in childhood.

In northern Saskatchewan there are sparse options for access to shelters and limited support for victims and abusers. Individuals end up further entrenched in the cycle of abuse and poverty.

I call upon the government to urgently address these matters. We must act now.

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ROGER PARENT

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I rise today to mark the passing of Saskatchewan Party MLA, Roger Parent at age 63. Only yesterday, it was announced that Roger had been diagnosed with cancer, then literally just hours later, Roger passed away at the Royal University Hospital in Saskatoon.

Roger had been an MLA since 2011. Before his election, he had long been an advocate for aboriginal and poverty issues in and around Saskatoon. He had been involved with the Saskatoon Homelessness Initiative, the Saskatoon aboriginal economic development committee, the Saskatchewan committee on aboriginal procurement, and the Métis Nation—Saskatchewan.

His contributions to the community and to the lives of individual people were many. Needless to say, his passing comes as a complete shock to the people of Saskatchewan, particularly to those who knew him well and who loved him.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to his wife, Sheila, the entire Parent family, and his many friends throughout Saskatchewan to whom we offer our most sincere condolences and sympathies.

LONDON

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to speak about London, Ontario, the city I have the honour of representing in this great House.

London is the birthplace of insulin, our researchers are behind a potential HIV vaccine that is going through the clinical trials process, and many firsts in health care have happened at our world-class hospitals and research facilities.

The list continues.

Whether it is making doors for the White House at the Haring Doors factory; providing social and entertainment news through Dply.com, which is the fastest-growing website in Internet history; or producing 77,000 frozen pizzas a day at Dr. Oetker's North American facility, London has us covered.

London is home to the Labatt Brewery, producing more than one billion cans and bottles of product a year; the makers of 3M products, including duct tape; and the manufacturers of Billy Bee honey.

It gets better. Did I mention every single Chicken McNugget in Canada is made at Cargill?

If members have not been to London, I invite them to come down.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when he rejected the northern gateway pipeline, the Prime Minister robbed 31 aboriginal communities and the people who live in them an opportunity for a better life. These first nations stood to benefit directly from almost \$2 billion in job-creation agreements that would have built desperately needed housing and schools while employing thousands of young aboriginal Canadians.

The Prime Minister had a choice to proceed with more aboriginal consultations and find a way to get to yes for this project. Can the Prime Minister explain why he is taking away hope and opportunity for these first nations?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday's announcement demonstrated that in one year we were able to do what 10 years of the previous government was unable to do.

We were elected on the solemn commitment to both grow the economy and protect the environment at the same time, and that is exactly what we have done. By doing this, by demonstrating that we have listened to Canadians, that we understand their concerns about jobs and about the future but also about protecting the environment for generations to come, we acted in a way that was consistent with what Canadians have been asking for.

•(1425)

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the Prime Minister did yesterday was deny hope and opportunity to thousands of young aboriginal Canadians. The Prime Minister had a choice. He had a choice, but he made a political decision at their expense to take gateway off the table, even as an option to move our resources when we need as many options as we can get.

The 31 first nations and Métis equity partners in gateway have said that they are shocked and disappointed at his decision. They wanted to see consultations continue.

How can the Prime Minister justify killing good jobs for young aboriginal Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is the party opposite has never understood that the way to build a strong future is by both protecting the environment and creating good jobs. The fact that the Conservatives have never understood that those two things go together is why they are flailing about for things to say today. We got done what they were unable to do for 10 years.

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EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been a year, and under the Prime Minister's watch not a single new full-time job has been created in our country, and it is about to get a lot worse with the election of Donald Trump. Canadian families are worried that the Prime Minister does not have a plan to deal with the new U.S. administration. While the Prime Minister raises taxes on Canadians, the Americans are planning to cut taxes by more than half. What is the Prime Minister's plan to ensure that good jobs do not move to the United States?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for one, the announcement we made yesterday will ensure that our natural resources will be able to reach markets overseas. The fact that we can now diversify to a greater degree and reduce our dependence on the U.S. market is a key thing. However, as always, we will engage in constructive ways with the incoming American administration to protect Canadian jobs, to uphold our interests, and to demonstrate that we are the party that is working seriously to grow the economy, and create good middle-class jobs and a better future for all Canadians.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a press conference does not build a pipeline. All the Prime Minister did yesterday was approve a pipeline. Now the difficult work begins, and the very people who oppose this pipeline are his supporters and the people who helped him get elected.

Therefore, my question to the Prime Minister is this. When is he going to go out to British Columbia and convince the very people who oppose this pipeline to get on board?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact is we recognize that on big decisions there will

Oral Questions

be people on both sides of any important decision. We made a decision based on national interest to create good jobs and to make sure that we are consistent with reducing climate emissions by reducing the amount of oil by rail, for example. This is our commitment to Canadians: we will grow the economy in the national interest and protect the environment for generations to come. That is what we succeeded in doing where the Conservatives failed.

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CBC/RADIO-CANADA

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has not succeeded yet.

The CBC receives more than a billion dollars a year from taxpayers. Now it is looking for an extra \$400 million a year. That would mean another \$46 for every man, woman, and child in this country, money that Canadians cannot afford. We are already \$30 billion in deficit, and we cannot afford to keep spending. Will the Prime Minister assure Canadian families that they will not be on the hook for this, do the right thing, and just say no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Conservatives have demonstrated that they do not understand the importance of cultural industries, of artists, and of creators, not just to Canadian identity but to growing the economy. The fact is that investing in the stories that bind us together as a nation, in both official languages, ensuring that Canadians understand each other's lives and experiences, is at the heart of the mandate of the CBC. Listening to Canadians is exactly why we are on this side of the House, and the Conservatives are stuck in opposition.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has spoken passionately about reconciliation with first nations and a true nation-to-nation relationship. The words we use matter but the actions we take matter more.

With 59 first nations saying they were not meaningfully consulted on Kinder Morgan, how can the Prime Minister believe he has the social licence to proceed?

•(1430)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are going to be people on both sides of a major decision. The fact that 39 different indigenous communities signed agreements worth over \$300 million in benefits to them from the Kinder Morgan pipeline, and the fact that a number of indigenous communities are disappointed that we turned down the northern gateway process, shows that both sides have been listened to.

We made decisions in the best interests of Canadians.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister led many people to believe that he would do things differently than Stephen Harper did. He led many people to believe that he would never approve an energy project using the same flawed review process as Stephen Harper did. Today, many Canadians feel betrayed and misled.

Can the Prime Minister honestly tell them that things would have been different if Stephen Harper were still in power?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Yes, Mr. Speaker. By imposing a carbon tax across the country, by establishing an ocean protection plan that is unprecedented in Canada and elsewhere in the world, and by demonstrating that we understand the importance of working constructively with the provinces to meet our greenhouse gas emissions targets, we have shown that we understand that the environment and the economy must go hand in hand.

The NDP has never understood that choices need to be made to create good jobs. In order to protect Canadians and their families, we need to protect the environment while creating jobs.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, true reconciliation requires true consultations.

[English]

True reconciliation also means not taking first nations to court needlessly.

A Manitoba judge has struck down a pernicious requirement that residential school survivors must somehow prove the perpetrator's intent in cases of sexual assault of children.

Will the Prime Minister withdraw this despicable appeal that is making it even harder for residential school survivors to receive long overdue compensation?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we were elected on a solemn commitment to create reconciliation with indigenous peoples across this country. The fact is that the investments we have made, the work we are doing to support indigenous communities, to protect children and to keep doing the good work that Canadians expect of us and that indigenous communities expect of us, to partner in respect and in a positive approach, is what we are going to continue to do.

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DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question for the Prime Minister is this. Will 2015 be "the last federal election conducted under the first-past-the-post voting system"? Yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we made a commitment to ensure that 2015 would be the last election under first past the post. That is why we are working with parties across the House and Canadians across this country to

figure out how to best improve our electoral system. There is a broad range of opinions out there.

I very much look forward to the report of the committee tomorrow and to the consultation that we have launched directly with Canadians to weigh in on the values that they have. I encourage Canadians to look to their mailboxes next week and participate in the national survey, so we can hear their views on electoral reform.

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[Translation]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, consultations with U.S. partners confirm two important things.

In 2006, we had a softwood lumber agreement thanks to prime minister Harper's very strong political will to resolve the matter.

The government of this Prime Minister was not firmly determined to renew the softwood lumber agreement and that has put us in a weak position.

The Prime Minister did not keep his word to resolve the softwood lumber agreement issue within 100 days of President Obama's visit, so can he resolve it now?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I should point out that the softwood lumber agreement expired under the previous government.

Canada is prepared for any eventuality, and we will fiercely and proudly defend the interests of Canadian workers and producers. In the past, the courts have always ruled in our favour and we are confident that they will continue to do so. I will continue negotiating with Ambassador Froman in Geneva this weekend.

We are looking for a good agreement for Canada, not just any agreement.

● (1435)

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the agreement expired during the election campaign after 10 peaceful years for the forestry industry thanks to our former government.

It should come as no surprise that seven ministers of the current government opposed the softwood lumber agreement in 2006, when they were members of the official opposition.

Is this matter finally going to be taken seriously so that an agreement that is good for our 300,000 or 400,000 forestry workers is signed?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we remain committed to protecting the Quebec and Canadian forestry regimes, and we will continue to include them in all our negotiations. We are convinced that the Canadian forestry industry operates in accordance with international rules. I was pleased to speak with Luc Blanchette, the Quebec minister of forests, wildlife and parks, last week, and I look forward to meeting with him again next week, together with the Quebec minister of economy, science and innovation, and my colleague the Minister of Natural Resources.

Oral Questions

We are working on behalf of Canada and Quebec.

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[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister tried to have it both ways on pipelines. He supported the Trans Mountain pipeline because of the science, the evidence, and the conditions imposed by the independent National Energy Board regulator. He said that the Liberals would not accept any political arguments against Trans Mountain. Then he killed the northern gateway pipeline, and the thousands of jobs that go along with it, based entirely on political arguments.

Why was the exact same independent regulatory process that was so good for Trans Mountain so bad for northern gateway?

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the TMX and Line 3 projects received government approval because they met our standards on the environment, but not all pipelines meet these strict criteria.

The Government of Canada has directed the National Energy Board to dismiss the application for the northern gateway pipeline. After consultations, it has become clear that the project is not in the best interests of the local affected communities, including indigenous people.

The Great Bear Rainforest is no place for a pipeline, and the Douglas Channel is no place for tanker traffic.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are completely making it up as they go along and have abandoned the scientific, evidence-based decision-making process.

The Prime Minister made a political decision to overrule the scientific, evidence-based decision of the NEB. There was nothing in the NEB's decision that said the northern gateway pipeline could not be built safely. This project would have created tens of thousands of jobs right across the country.

Why does the Prime Minister think his political interests are more important than the livelihoods of Canadian workers, and why did he kill these jobs?

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have said, we accomplished more in one year than they did in a decade. We listened to Canadians about how the environment and the economy go hand in hand—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I know that people feel very passionately about these topics, but the idea is that we allow each side to have their say. I am having a much easier time hearing the questions than the answers. It should be easy to hear both, as both are important.

Please listen to the hon. parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Kim Rudd: Mr. Speaker, these projects will create 22,000 direct, good-paying jobs for Canadians, including Albertans, and generate billions of dollars for our economy.

On this side of the House, we are supporting Canadian workers, and I encourage members opposite to join us.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the decision to reject northern gateway was based on politics and not evidence, and in doing so, the Liberals decided to pick winners and losers. Now, the losers today are the 31 first nation equity partners who were counting on these jobs for some opportunity for their first nations.

Pipelines are the safest way to transport oil, and so I have a simple question. Exactly what scientific reports did the Liberals use to confirm that Trans Mountain is safe but northern gateway is not?

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know that strong action on the environment is good for our economy. It makes us more competitive, fosters innovation, and reduces pollution. With the approval of these projects and with our announcement of the tanker moratorium, we are moving in the right direction.

These projects will create thousands of good-paying jobs for Canadians and generate billions of dollars for our economy.

• (1440)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 31 first nations and Métis communities, who are equity partners in the northern gateway pipeline, did not mince words. They said, “We are profoundly shocked and...deeply disappointed that a Prime Minister...would now blatantly choose to deny our 31 First Nations and Métis communities of our constitutionally protected right to economic development.” They went on to say that this decision “will eliminate significant financial and social benefits committed to our communities”.

They negotiated in good faith. Why are the Liberals robbing them of the opportunity for future prosperity?

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no relationship is more important to our government than the one with indigenous peoples. We are committed to a renewed nation-to-nation relationship based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership. We have had the opportunity to meet many of the indigenous chiefs, including in the Lower Mainland, affected by these projects to hear their concerns first hand.

Our government continues to work with indigenous leaders in the development of our sustainable natural resources.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Oral Questions

The Speaker: I know that members are capable of self-discipline, including the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands. He is a farmer after all. He has to be disciplined a lot of the time. I know he can do it here too.

The hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government members promised Canadians that if they were elected, they would base their energy decisions on scientific evidence. In reviewing the Kinder Morgan project, the NEB heard clear scientific evidence that the seven-fold increase in oil tanker traffic through the Salish Sea would deliver a near certain extinction of the southern resident killer whale pod.

The NEB agreed that these are significant adverse effects. How does the government explain ignoring the science with the resulting death sentence to these threatened whales?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government shares the hon. member's concerns for the importance of protecting the southern resident killer whale population. This is a population that has been under stress for many years. There are three principal factors that have contributed to the stress: contaminants in the water; the whales' inability to find sufficient prey, in this case often chinook salmon; and the increased noise, represented by a whole series of marine traffic.

I am prepared to tell the House and all Canadians that the Minister of Transport and I have a very ambitious plan to more than mitigate all of these measures to ensure that this iconic species survives.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Kinder Morgan pipeline will triple the capacity of the current pipeline and increase tanker traffic in Vancouver's harbour seven-fold. The likelihood of a spill from the pipeline or a tanker is as high as 97%, which would devastate the environment and the economy of the entire region.

Why are B.C. Liberal MPs turning their backs on British Columbians, ignoring the evidence, and putting politics before safety?

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to achieving a world-leading marine safety system, one that will meet Canada's unique context. That is why the Prime Minister announced our new \$1.5 billion national oceans protection plan. This would allow us to put in place concrete measures to enhance marine safety, to prevent and better respond to marine pollution incidents. We will work with partners, including indigenous and coastal communities, to develop, update, and modernize regulations and other tools to better respond to community issues related to marine traffic.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on November 16, stock trading of Canopy Growth was halted on the TSX, after its stock doubled for no apparent reason. Canopy was founded by Chuck Rifci, the former chief financial officer of the Liberal Party of Canada.

Now, Canopy is refusing to answer questions about allegations that insider information was used to influence stock trading. Was the marijuana task force report leaked?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I think members want to hear the answer.

Order. This could be a short question period, folks. We're losing time from question period. Let us have some order.

The hon. Minister of Health.

• (1445)

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very pleased that an excellent task force has been hard at work over a number of months. It has been tasked to respond to a number of questions that were put to it by myself as well as my colleagues, the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Justice.

We look forward to the task force delivering its document later today. In due time, it will be made public to all Canadians.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, members of the Liberal cabinet are not the only ones questioning what happened. Even stock experts are. Stock analysts are being quoted saying, "Why did it move? Nothing special seemed to be going on. So this is highly unusual". We know that Liberals used the marijuana task force report, and now it is signed sealed and delivered.

On November 16, Liberals were made millionaires using marijuana stocks. Was this insider trader, and what will the minister do to prove that it was not?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is pleased that a number of excellent, well-informed Canadians have met over the last number of months. They have received input from thousands of Canadians who have commented on the discussion paper related to the introduction of legislation, a new project that will require legalization, regulation, restriction of access to cannabis.

We look forward to receiving the report, which will be delivered by the task force later today.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Chuck Rifci was in charge of the Liberal Party of Canada's finances. He was also a co-founder of Canopy Growth Corporation.

Canopy Growth Corporation's share price doubled on November 16. Share prices do not normally double in a single day. It is possible that the report by the task force on marijuana legalization was leaked.

What measures did the government put in place to ensure that the recommendations of that task force would not be disclosed?

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as has been stated, our government is committed to legalizing strictly regulated and restricting access to marijuana.

We have had the fortune of having a task force that will be reporting and sending its report forward today.

It is my understanding that the chair will release a statement publicly. Once translation is complete, the task force recommendations and report will be provided to the Minister of Public Safety, the Minister of Health and myself. We will move forward in this regard.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canopy Growth Corporation, which two weeks ago had a market capitalization of over \$1.7 billion, was co-founded by the former chief financial officer of the Liberal Party of Canada, Chuck Rifici. However, it gets worse. Laurier Club Liberal donors Bruce Linton and Mark Zekulin are also large shareholders and executives of Canopy Growth. Something does not add up here unless an individual is a well-connected Liberal pot shareholder.

What preferential information did these well-connected Liberals get in return for their large Liberal Party donations?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member is intentionally mixing things that need not be mixed.

The member very well knows that when it comes to fundraising, Canada has some of the most strict rules across this nation.

I can assure Canadians that this is the case. Even the Chief Electoral Officer has stated that Canada's political financing laws are the most advanced, constrained, and transparent in the world. We will continue to follow the rules.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been said that those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.

Two and a half years ago, against the wishes of first nations and British Columbians, Stephen Harper approved the northern gateway bitumen pipeline. A year ago, B.C. helped—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1450)

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley has the floor. We need to hear the question and the answer.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: A year ago, Mr. Speaker, British Columbians helped throw them out of office.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister approved a Kinder Morgan bitumen pipeline, once again, against the interests of first nations and British Columbians. He promised a credible review process, and he broke that promise to Canadians.

Does the Prime Minister actually think he can betray British Columbians and get away with it? Will any of the B.C. Liberal caucus stand up for our province and stand against this pipeline?

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday Canada took a step forward in supporting thousands of well-paying middle-class jobs. Our government had taken concrete actions to protect our coasts. It put a price on pollution, while finding new markets for our resources.

However, do not take my word for this. This is what Alberta NDP Premier Rachel Notley had to say:

We don't have to choose between the environment and building the economy. Canada is going to be a global leader on climate change. And our country will still create jobs and greater economic equality.

The Alberta NDP seems to get it. When will the party opposite?

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while B.C. Liberal MPs sit silent, B.C. New Democrats stand united to fight the Kinder Morgan pipeline.

Southern resident killer whales were designated as endangered more than a decade ago. Yet neither the Conservatives nor two Liberal governments have ever produced the recovery strategy required by law. Instead, we get yet another vague promise today.

How could the Liberals betray British Columbians and approve the Kinder Morgan pipeline without a recovery plan in place knowing that this project could wipe out these iconic orcas?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows very well that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans outlined a draft plan and made it public this past summer. We received over 11,000 comments from British Columbians and other Canadians. Those are being incorporated into a new action plan, which will be released in January. It will take into account these suggestions from Canadians.

Make no mistake about it. The Minister of Transport and I will take our responsibility to protect these iconic orcas and will do what is necessary to ensure that they not only survive but that they recover.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier today Statistics Canada released the quarterly GDP numbers for Canada. Would the Minister of Finance please update the House with what Canada's GDP performance was in this quarter of this year?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today's numbers are indeed good news for Canada. However, it is what is behind the numbers that is particularly important.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Oral Questions

The Speaker: Order, please. I ask the member for Elmwood—Transcona and others to quietly listen to the answer. We each get our turn here. Each side does. Therefore, let us ensure we can hear both the questions and the answers.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, today's numbers are indeed good news. It is what is behind the numbers that is particularly important. It is the strength and resiliency of the people in Fort McMurray as they rebuild their homes. They are not only helping them, but contributing to our broader economy. The story is even better. It is the generosity of Canadians who have worked together to make this happen. That is a wonderful story, one we will build on as we build Canada's economy.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I asked the Minister of Public Services and Procurement a very simple question yesterday. She did not answer me, so I would like to repeat my question.

Her government's controversial decision to purchase 18 outdated Super Hornet fighter jets makes no sense. The minister's mandate is to ensure that all contracts awarded by the Canadian government are as profitable as possible and represent the best possible value for Canadian taxpayers.

Will the minister finally confirm the unit price of each Super Hornet? If she cannot do so, we will have to assume that she went ahead without full knowledge of the facts.

[English]

Hon. Judy Foote (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we made a decision that was in the best interest of our men and women in uniform to get them the equipment they needed to cover off a capability gap. We are in the process now of working with Boeing and the U.S. government to determine the best way forward. We will have an interim fleet to take care of our men and women in uniform.

I am not going to stand here and prejudge what the value of the contract will be. We are going to negotiate. We have an idea of what that cost will be, but it would be foolhardy for me to stand here and discuss it with the member and with anyone else before doing so with the U.S. government and Boeing.

• (1455)

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the truth is simple. She is not answering because she does not know the cost of the planes. That is what we call bad governance.

[Translation]

In Norway, their open and transparent process to replace their fleet of fighter jets took two years. The same kind of process took 16 months in South Korea and 11 months in Denmark.

The Liberals know that their management of this file will be a turning point for Canadians, who will judge the current government's

performance very severely. That is precisely why they extended the bidding period over five years, until after the next election.

When will the minister properly fulfill her ministerial mandate instead of—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Public Services and Procurement.

[English]

Hon. Judy Foote (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that our focus is on getting the best equipment we can for the men and women in service. We are going to do that by living up to our commitment to have an open and transparent competition, where any plane that meets the requirements will be able to compete. We want to make sure we get the best deal possible for our men and women in uniform, and for Canadian companies. We want to make sure we have middle-class jobs available for Canadians. We are going to do what the previous government did not do, and that is an open and transparent competition.

Those members know they were in contempt—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we can do that competition within two years and select the proper fighter jet. There is absolutely zero logic to the approach of the Liberals to replacing Canada's fighter jets. The procurement minister has signed a blank cheque to buy a fleet of obsolete fighters. Procurement experts know that this is going to cost taxpayers billions of dollars.

After ignoring the air force, the Liberals unilaterally changed the number of fighter jets that our military needed. When the Liberals decided to sole-source the Super Hornet, who wrote the statement of requirements? Was it our air force or was it the PMO?

Hon. Judy Foote (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the previous government, we are going to deliver for our men and women in uniform. We are going to make sure that we live up to our requirements under NATO and NORAD. We are not going to live with a capability gap as the previous government did when it mismanaged. We are going to make sure that we have the equipment we need to do the job expected of us.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in order to buy the 18 Super Hornets, the Liberals changed the number of jet fighters the Royal Canadian Air Force is required to have ready at any given time. This change was needed in order to justify the Liberals' narrative of Canada's capability gap, but that is nonsense. This move does not respond to any need or reflect the reality of Canada's defence. It only serves the interests of the Liberal Party. The Liberals clearly did not listen to our defence experts.

Who in the government came up with these changes?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is more than mildly ludicrous for Conservatives to lecture this government. Their requirements went from \$9 billion, to \$16 billion, to \$26 billion, to \$42 billion, to \$45 billion, and they are telling us how to manage a procurement.

We have a capability gap. We have to manage the NATO requirements and the NORAD requirements. Those two requirements create a capability gap, which we no longer are prepared to manage; hence the decision this week.

* * *

*[Translation]***PUBLIC SAFETY**

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while the RCMP is still trying to get enhanced surveillance powers, regular citizens have yet to see the changes to Bill C-51 that were promised during the election campaign.

The government seems to be listening more to the RCMP and CSIS than to citizens who have real concerns. The surveillance of journalists and indigenous activists and CSIS' illegal storage of data are hot topics these days.

When will the minister see the urgency of the situation and repeal Bill C-51?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have made it very clear that amendments with respect to Canada's security laws will be forthcoming when the national security consultation is complete. That consultation, by the way online, will finish on December 15. The government will then continue to examine the input from Canadians and take their advice into account, as we shape a new security framework for Canada that benefits from the input of ordinary Canadians.

* * *

● (1500)

*[Translation]***CANADA REVENUE AGENCY**

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General issued a scathing report on the Canada Revenue Agency. Some taxpayers wait more than 896 days for an answer from the agency.

The agency has accumulated more than 171,000 objections to notices of assessment, and the processing times are virtually four times longer than those of other countries. Governments come and go, but the problems remain. We need more than just platitudes, we need action.

The minister wanted to improve services. Does she find it reasonable that Canadians have to wait more than two years to get an answer from her department?

Hon. Diane LeBouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Auditor General for his report and I would like to say that the Canada Revenue Agency accepts the eight recommendations he proposed.

Canadians must have access to outstanding service when they contact the agency. That is a key point in my mandate letter. I made a commitment to do everything possible to provide outstanding service.

It is important to point out that an action plan to reduce processing times for objections is already being drawn up. It will be completed in early 2017.

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*[English]***HEALTH**

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, two years ago, almost today, the former Conservative government granted the Ottawa Hospital's request to build in the big, open field right across the street. Problem solved.

However, the Liberal minister for Ottawa Centre stepped in, delayed the process for a year, and last week tried to force the Ottawa Hospital to move to a location it had twice rejected.

Now the Ottawa Liberal mayor, Liberal MPPs, and pretty much everyone else is disagreeing with her decision. The Liberal minister for Ottawa Centre created this mess.

Will she reverse her decision and let the hospital build in the place that it chose?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will be receiving the report today. Of course, I will have a close look at it.

There is a clear need for a downtown hospital in Ottawa. We will make sure our approach acquires the support of the partners involved in building this important hospital that will serve the Ottawa community for the century to come.

We will be in touch with all levels of government. We look forward to working together to make sure that this important project happens.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all levels of government actually oppose the decision that the government is trying to force on the hospital.

However, when an Ottawa MP asks about an Ottawa hospital, Ottawa patients deserve to get an answer from an Ottawa minister. She is the one who created this mess. Now she is hiding behind a minister from Montreal.

If she cannot stand up, and speak up for her own city, will she step aside so the Prime Minister can appoint someone who will?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives have shown that their way of approaching problems is to pit one region against the other. That is what they have done consistently, and that is what they are trying to do again here.

Oral Questions

We and Canadians reject that approach.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, order. That is enough. The hon. member for Durham will come to order.

The hon. member for York Simcoe.

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CBC/RADIO-CANADA

Hon. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, standing up for our constituents is what we were sent here to do.

Just months ago, the Liberals gave the CBC \$675 million on top of the \$1 billion-a-year it already gets. The CBC now says it is not enough. It wants another third of a billion dollars-a-year, and more from hard-pressed Canadian taxpayers.

When it comes to the CBC, it seems it is just never enough. The Liberals say they are open to this request from their friends.

Will someone over there finally take the side of taxpayers, and halt the convoy of Brink's trucks to the CBC?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I must remind the hon. member that we reinvested \$675 million in CBC/Radio-Canada because there were important cuts in the past 10 years that really negatively affected our public broadcaster.

I would also advise my colleague in front that we just did public consultations on Canadian content. The reality is that members of the NDP and the Bloc participated in the consultations, but nobody from the Conservative Party participated.

We clearly heard that Canadians love—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Skyview.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Darshan Singh Kang (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the government announced several important decisions that will create more good, middle-class jobs while protecting environmentally sensitive areas.

Can the Minister of Natural Resources please inform this House what steps are being taken to create the prosperity we seek while preserving the environment we all cherish?

• (1505)

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have clearly told us the environment and the economy must go hand in hand.

That is why our government has done the hard work to price carbon pollution, to protect our oceans and coastlines, and put in place world-leading safety standards for pipelines.

Our announcement yesterday will create thousands of good, middle-class jobs, and generate billions of dollars for our economy. That is money that can be invested in hospitals, roads, schools, and clean energy initiatives, leaving a cleaner, more prosperous country for our children and grandchildren.

INTERPROVINCIAL TRADE

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Comeau was charged for buying beer in Quebec and taking it home to New Brunswick, but he won his fight in court.

Yesterday, New Brunswick announced it will appeal this decision in the Supreme Court of Canada. Prosecutors have said this case concerns issues of interprovincial trade with significant consequences. All of us in the House would agree that laws should not restrict Canadians from purchasing and selling goods between provinces.

Will the Liberal government commit to protecting the constitutional right of all Canadians, and ensure we have free trade across Canada?

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, although I cannot comment on the specifics of the appeal to the Supreme Court, I can confirm to all hon. members that this government does support freer trade within Canada.

To that end, the ministers had a great role this year in crafting a Canadian free trade agreement. As part of that agreement, the provinces hopped up to set-up a working group on the interprovincial trade of alcohol, with the goal of creating a more open domestic market.

I am quite pleased that we have decided to do something substantial on this issue. It tastes great, and is less filling.

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[Translation]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I cannot figure out why the Minister of International Trade is pinning the absence of a softwood lumber agreement on the previous government. Workers do not want to hear about petty politics when their livelihood is at stake. This is an important issue for them. They want to know if plan B is ready now.

The Americans opened fire. They want to tax our softwood lumber more heavily. The Government of Quebec is also asking the feds for answers.

Is plan B ready or not?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are vigorously and proudly defending our industry's interests.

Last week, André Tremblay, the president and CEO of the Quebec Forest Industry Council, said that our government was doing "excellent work".

Provincial and territorial premiers also "expressed their appreciation for the work of the federal government in attempting to secure a new softwood lumber deal".

We are seeking a good deal for Canada, not just any deal.

[English]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, bovine tuberculosis is a serious issue facing beef ranchers in Alberta and Saskatchewan, whose herds have been placed under quarantine while the CFIA conducts necessary testing.

Could the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food tell us what he is doing to help these ranchers with their costs?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my hon. colleague's concern. Being a farmer, I fully understand how serious this is for our ranchers who are affected.

I am pleased to announce today that we will provide up to \$16.7 million for affected provinces to help these ranchers with their costs, including feed, water, transportation, and interest on their loans.

We are committed to helping these ranchers while we take the appropriate measures to clear the industry of this disease.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, in shocking testimony before a Senate committee, the Chief Electoral Officer said there is no way to restrict or prevent foreigners or foreign organizations from trying to influence Canadian elections.

There are no restrictions on unlimited spending for things like polling, canvassing, phone banking, or election websites. Yet, we see nothing that addresses these concerns in Bill C-33.

Is the democratic institutions minister not concerned about this kind of foreign interference in Canadian elections?

• (1510)

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been a while since I received a question from the hon. member. I thank him for the opportunity to talk about Bill C-33 in the House, where we repealed the unfair elements of the Fair Elections Act, and extended the right to vote to those Canadians living and working abroad.

Our Chief Electoral Officer, to whom we are all indebted, has provided a report based on the results of the last election. The Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs will be delivering its report and recommendations, and we will have an opportunity to debate them in the House.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, many British Columbians believed the Liberal election promises last year. I myself did. I believed the Liberal campaign promises that the National Energy Board process was so badly broken that no pipeline could be approved as a result of that process.

No magical process has intervened, no testing of the evidence, there are no facts to justify this decision, and we know that dilbit cannot be cleaned after being spilled.

Routine Proceedings

Will the Prime Minister reconsider and suspend yesterday's decision to find the facts and the evidence that will show that approving Kinder Morgan is not justified?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the interim process we put in place both extended the consultation period with indigenous Canadians and strengthened the applied science.

We understand we made commitments throughout the election campaign and leading up to it. Getting resources to market in smart sustainable ways is a fundamental responsibility of the prime minister and of the Canadian government. One which was failed by the previous government, but one that we have delivered today.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

COMMISSIONER OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the report to Parliament of the Commissioner of Official Languages on the investigation into the Courts Administration Service under subsection 65(3) of the Official Languages Act.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(f), this report is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

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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, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 20 petitions.

While I am on my feet, I would also move:

That the House do now proceed to Orders of the Day.

The Speaker: I see the opposition House leader is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to challenge our moving to the orders of the day this early in routine proceedings, a procedure that seems to be used habitually by the government when it is poised to close debate on important issues.

Routine Proceedings

In this case, the government has already limited debate on the third reading stage of Bill C-26, which is scheduled today. One day is the minimum number of days that can be allotted under the Standing Orders, and the government House leader chose as that one day, the shortest day in our calendar. I will not take up more of the House's time on that point before I get back to my procedural intervention, but I do want to say one thing. The House expected more than a minimal effort from this so-called new tone government House leader and we are very disappointed.

Back in the spring, the government moved and adopted motions to proceed to the orders of the day four Wednesdays in a row, skipping over all rubrics of routine proceedings. That was done on April 20, May 4, May 11, and May 18. Most recently, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons moved such a motion on Thursday, November 17, and today the government is proposing to do it again for the sixth time.

I would argue that the government House leader is continuing where her predecessor left off in misusing this procedure. I refer to a Speaker's ruling on April 14, 1987. In his ruling on a similar matter, the Speaker stated:

Routine Proceedings are an essential part of House business and if they are not protected the interests of the House and the public it serves are likely to suffer severely.

He referred to a ruling of November 24, 1986, in which a motion having the effect of superseding a number of items under routine proceedings was inappropriate and excessive and was disallowed. However, the circumstances on April 14, 1987, were dramatically different and the Speaker allowed the government to move its motion.

I will compare those circumstances to today's circumstances and let you, Mr. Speaker, and the House draw its own conclusions. The Speaker observed that the opposition was significantly obstructing the progress of Bill C-22. He noted that seven divisions took place prior to the introduction of the bill, most of them resulting from the moving of dilatory motions under routine proceedings. Fourteen more divisions, with most of them again resulting from the moving of dilatory motions during routine proceedings, took place before the bill reached second reading on December 8, 1986. The bill was referred to committee and reported back to the House on March 16, 1987, after 24 meetings and 82 hours of debate. Numerous amendments were proposed at report stage and the House debated those amendments for four days.

On April 7, the minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs gave notice of time allocation. Unlike the opposition in 1987, we have negotiated openly and honestly with the government. Since this Parliament began, only two dilatory motions have been moved by the opposition. In contrast, five such motions have been advanced by the government. Today will be the sixth. The Speaker in 1987 noted that in the British House of Commons, the Speaker has the power to refuse a dilatory motion if he believes it to be an abuse of the rules of the House. He also noted that the Speaker is empowered to allow them if he believes they are justified.

In comparing Bill C-22 in 1987 and any bill the Liberal government has proposed to the House in this Parliament, the opposition has not given the current government justification to

proceed in this manner. The scale of obstruction in 1987 was extreme according to any standard, and only under those circumstances was the government permitted to move its motion. The government should not be allowed to routinely skip over all rubrics during routine proceedings without just cause.

As Speaker Fraser pointed out, routine proceedings are an essential part of House business and they should be protected as a vital component that serves the interests of the House and the public. There is no moral ground or rational reason here for the government to proceed in this manner. Speaker Fraser, in his 1987 ruling, added:

It is essential to our democratic system that controversial issues should be debated at reasonable length so that every reasonable opportunity shall be available to hear the arguments pro and con and that reasonable delaying tactics should be permissible to enable opponents of a measure to enlist public support for their point of view.

● (1515)

Clearly, the 1987 case involving Bill C-22 demonstrated unreasonable delaying tactics. This House has never seen such delaying tactics, and the government has never experienced this sort of sideshow from the opposition. The government's problems are self-inflicted and are not due to the opposition. The government has had the privilege of working with a generally co-operative opposition in this Parliament and has frittered away that goodwill. It has foolishly squandered it through its mismanagement of the House, mean-spirited tactics, and its minimalist efforts to make Parliament work.

While the government house leader was marketed as new, we now discover that we did not get "new and improved".

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you consider my arguments and not allow the government to move its motion to proceed to the orders of the day until it has at least demonstrated that an unreasonable obstruction has taken place.

● (1520)

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. I will be very brief.

For the record, the third party speaks in favour of what the opposition House leader has just said.

For those Canadians watching, what does this mean? It means that MPs will not be able to table bills, will not be able to table petitions or to advance those parts of our roles as members of Parliament that we are here to do in representing our community.

I agree with the opposition House leader that there has been a genuine effort to work in good faith, and I find this very disappointing.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. While I agree with the current opposition House leader, I temper my comments by recognizing the irony that in the previous Parliament, it was her government that quite often brought such a motion forward. However, as a representative of the smallest party, our opportunity to speak in routine proceedings, to put forward petitions and so on, is grievously interfered with as this practice becomes more routine.

As I support the comments made by the member for Victoria, and the hon. opposition House leader, I urge that we find a solution so that we can proceed with routine proceedings more—forgive me—routinely.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. I have moved a motion to proceed to the orders of the day. This motion is in fact in order.

What the member opposite is attempting to do is debate a non-debatable motion. Consistent with the rules of the House and its practices, the Speaker immediately puts the question to the House.

On page 541 of the second edition of *House of Commons Procedures and Practice*, it states, “The Chair has ruled that a motion to proceed to Orders of the Day is in order during Routine Proceedings”.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. opposition House leader for her intervention. I thank the member for Victoria, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, and the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the government House leader for all of their interventions.

I want to refer to page 541 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*. In fact, the full sentence states:

The Chair has ruled that a motion to proceed to the Orders of the Day is in order during Routine Proceedings which, in recent practice, is the only time that it has been proposed.

Therefore, today I will allow the motion. However, I will come back to the House with a more detailed ruling.

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 ye.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1600)

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

(Division No. 159)

YEAS

Members

Aldag
Alleslev
Anandasangaree
Arya
Badawey

Alghabra
Amos
Arseneault
Ayoub
Bagnell

Baylis
Bennett
Bittle
Boissonnault
Bratina
Brison
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chen
Cuzner
Damoff
Dhaliwal
Di Iorio
Drouin
Duguid
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyking
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fry
Gerretsen
Goodale
Graham
Hardie
Holland
Hussen
Iacono
Jordan
Kang
Khera
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lebouthillier
Lemieux
Levitt
Lockhart
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
Maloney
May (Cambridge)
McDonald
McKay
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)
Monsef
Morneau
Murray
Nault
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Petitpas Taylor
Picard
Ratansi
Robillard
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Saini
Sangha
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sohi
Spengemann
Tan
Trudeau
Vandenbeld
Virani
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskij
Zahid — 167

Routine Proceedings

Beech
Bibeau
Blair
Bossio
Breton
Caesar-Chavannes
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Cormier
Dabrusin
DeCoursey
Dhillon
Dion
Dubourg
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson
Fillmore
Fisher
Foote
Fraser (West Nova)
Freeland
Fuhr
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Grewal
Hehr
Housefather
Hutchings
Joly
Jowhari
Khalid
Lametti
Lapointe
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Leslie
Lightbound
Long
Ludwig
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Morrissey
Nassif
O'Connell
Oliver
Ouellette
Peterson
Philpott
Qualtrough
Rioux
Rodriguez
Rota
Ruimy
Sahota
Samson
Sarai
Schieffe
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Simms
Sorbara
Tabbara
Tassi
Vandal
Vaughan
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Young

Government Orders

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Anderson	Angus
Arnold	Ashton
Aubin	Barlow
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Benson	Bergen
Berthold	Bezan
Blaikie	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boucher	Boudrias
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brassard	Brown
Calkins	Cannings
Caron	Carrie
Choquette	Christopherson
Clarke	Cooper
Cullen	Davies
Deltell	Diotte
Doherty	Donnelly
Dreeshen	Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseault
Duvall	Eglinski
Falk	Fast
Finley	Fortin
Gallant	Garrison
Genuis	Gill
Gladu	Godin
Gourde	Hardcastle
Harder	Hoback
Hughes	Jeneroux
Johns	Jolibois
Julian	Kelly
Kent	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kwan
Lake	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Laverdière	Lebel
Liepert	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacGregor
MacKenzie	Maguire
Malcolmson	Masse (Windsor West)
Mathysen	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Moore	Motz
Nantel	Nater
Nicholson	Nuttall
O'Toole	Paul-Hus
Paupé	Poilievre
Quach	Raït
Ramsey	Rankin
Rayes	Reid
Richards	Ritz
Saganash	Sansoucy
Saroya	Scheer
Schmale	Shields
Shiple	Sopuck
Stanton	Ste-Marie
Stetski	Strahl
Sweet	Thériault
Trost	Trudel
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Viersen	Wagantall
Warawa	Warkentin
Watts	Waugh
Webber	Weir
Wong	Yurdiga
Zimmer — 133	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA PENSION PLAN

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.) moved that Bill C-26, An Act to amend the Canada Pension Plan, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act and the Income Tax Act, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to talk today about enhancing the Canada pension plan. I hope colleagues will stay to listen to this very important speech today. They might learn something they do not know.

The Government of Canada understands that a strong economy starts with a strong middle class. With the pace of change accelerating in Canada, we need to make smart decisions and sound investments today to ensure that Canadians have access to the good, well-paying jobs of tomorrow.

As my colleague Minister Morneau recently alluded to in the fall economic statement—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member knows, I think, that we do not refer to members here by their names but by their titles. I think he meant to refer to the Minister of Finance.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Speaker, I apologize. It is because of the emotion about the good work my colleague, the Minister of Finance, is doing.

As the minister recently highlighted in the fall economic statement, this government is putting the middle class first. For example, we are investing an additional \$81 billion in public transit, green and social infrastructure, and transportation infrastructure that supports trade and rural and northern communities to bring Canadians good jobs, a cleaner environment, and thriving communities for years to come.

[Translation]

We are doing this because we believe that Canadians have what it takes to succeed, and our government is willing and able to act to create a better future for our children and grandchildren. That is exactly what we are doing by enhancing the Canada pension plan.

We know that middle-class Canadians are working harder than ever, and many of them are worried that they will not be able to save enough money for their retirement. Here is the big question: how widespread is this problem and how can we help Canadians to do better?

[English]

The Department of Finance has examined whether families nearing retirement are adequately prepared for retirement. About one in four families approaching retirement, which is 1.1 million families in our country, are at risk of not saving enough to maintain their standard of living in retirement. The risk is highest for middle-income families. Families without workplace pension plans are at an even greater risk of under-saving for retirement. A third of these families are at risk.

Economic conditions since the global recession of 2008 pose particular difficulty for younger Canadians. They are facing the challenge of securing adequate retirement savings at a time when fewer can expect to work in jobs that will include a workplace pension plan.

• (1605)

[Translation]

An extended period of low interest rates could mean that young workers will have to deal with a lower return on their retirement savings. That means that they may need to save even more money than previous generations to have the same standard of living when they retire. In addition, because younger generations are more likely to be in debt than previous generations, they are more exposed to a wide range of risks, from financial market volatility to fluctuations in housing prices. Given these factors, younger generations will have to rely more heavily on their personal retirement savings. Furthermore, increased life expectancy increases the risk that members of younger generations will exhaust what money they managed to save for retirement before the end of their lives.

Given these circumstances, we have a simple yet critical responsibility. We need to act now if we want Canadians to have a secure and dignified retirement.

[English]

This is why we are proposing to enhance the Canada pension plan, or as we commonly refer to it, the CPP.

On June 20, Canada's finance ministers reached an historic agreement to make meaningful changes to the CPP that would put more money in the pockets of Canadians after they retire. The CPP enhancement would increase the retirement benefits people will receive. Enhanced benefits would accumulate gradually over time as individuals paid into the enhanced CPP.

Young Canadians just entering the workforce would see the largest increase in benefits. The real question, therefore, is what that means for today's young people and for future generations.

As my fellow members know, the CPP is currently designed to replace one-quarter of income, up to the average industrial wage in retirement. The changes we are proposing would increase that percentage to one-third. This means that a person making \$50,000 a year over a 40-year career would receive about \$16,000 per year in retirement instead of \$12,000. That is \$4,000 more each year right into the people's pockets. Even a more modest earner, one averaging \$35,000 a year, would receive almost \$3,000 a year above the \$8,500 provided by the current CPP. In addition, the enhancement would increase the maximum level of earnings that are replaced by the CPP by about 14%. This would further increase the CPP benefits for those who earn above the average wage at any point in their working years.

To fund these enhanced benefits, annual CPP contributions would increase modestly over seven years, starting in 2019. Right now, for example, people earning about \$50,000 a year contribute around \$2,300 to the CPP per year, or \$190 a month. With the enhancement, those people would contribute an additional \$70 per year, or \$6 a month, starting in 2019. By the end of the seven-year phase-in period in 2025, their contributions would amount to an additional

Government Orders

\$475 per year, or \$40 per month. As members can see, those are modest increases for very significant enhanced benefits.

Helping people achieve a secure retirement with adequate income is among the key elements of long-term economic and social sustainability.

• (1610)

[Translation]

That is what Canada has been doing for a long time. Our retirement income system is widely recognized as being among the best in the world. It offers a combination of public pension plans and voluntary private savings mechanisms enabling people to save for retirement.

The Canada pension plan is one of the cornerstones of the system, and the 28th actuarial report on the Canada pension plan, prepared by the chief actuary, confirms that the CPP will be viable in the long term.

Our system also includes the old age security program, which offers significant income support to Canadian seniors. We recently restored the age of eligibility for old age security to 65 to improve the lives of seniors, particularly vulnerable, low-income individuals, many of whom are single retired women. According to our calculations, if we had not rolled back the policy, 100,000 Canadians aged 65 or 66 would have slipped into poverty, thereby increasing the poverty rate among seniors from 6% to 17%.

In addition to restoring the age of eligibility for old age security, we increased the guaranteed income supplement, which provides additional support to vulnerable, low-income seniors. This measure will significantly improve the financial security of about 900,000 seniors and will lift 13,000 of them out of poverty.

[English]

In addition to these income sources, Canadians can save through voluntary tax-assisted private savings plans, whether it is registered pension plans, pooled registered pension plans, registered retirement savings plans, or tax-free savings accounts.

While so far we have been discussing retirement benefits, it is important to note that the CPP also provides supplementary benefits, including the disability pension and the survivor's pension, which would also increase as a result of this enhancement.

The disability pension is a monthly benefit provided to people who have made sufficient CPP contributions and whose disability prevents them from working at any job on a regular basis. By increasing the amount of this benefit, the enhancement would provide greater security for working-age Canadians.

The survivor's pension is a monthly benefit provided to the surviving spouse of a deceased CPP contributor. By increasing the amount of the survivor's pension, the enhancement would provide more financial security to widows and widowers and further strengthen our retirement income system.

It is also important to note that CPP benefits are funded by the contributions of workers and employers and investments, rather than through tax revenues.

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Employees contribute 4.95% of their earnings, up to \$54,900. This dollar figure approximates the average industrial wage, and increases a little each year to reflect changes in wages.

Employers also contribute at the rate of 4.95%. Self-employed workers pay both halves of the contribution, or 9.9% of pensionable earnings.

However, to put the issue of affordability into perspective, our contribution rates in Canada are much lower than those in other countries with contributory public pension plans.

In fact, the CPP contribution rate is about half the average rate among 25 countries of the OECD, otherwise known as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, which have such plans.

This applies to employers here in Canada. The Canadian employer portion is less than half the average OECD employer rate, which was 11.2%, in 2012.

Employees in Canada also pay lower CPP contribution rates. The average employee rate is 8.4% in comparable OECD countries. Even on the world stage, our contributions are very much lower than what other people are paying in comparable countries with such plans.

I understand some people might be worried an enhanced CPP would change that. However, let me reassure Canadians who are watching at home, our contribution rates will still be much lower than the average.

In fact, even with the enhancement, CPP contribution rates would rank the fourth lowest among 25 OECD countries with contributory pension plans based on their 2012 contribution rates.

An enhanced CPP would still be one of the most affordable plans in the world. More importantly, it would further help Canadians achieve a safe and secure retirement.

I know some are concerned about the increased contributions, and what it would mean to their bottom line, to their paycheque. I am sure people at home watching us are concerned about that, so let me answer that.

We thought about this and designed a phased-in approach so that the modest increase in contributions would occur gradually over a seven-year implementation period.

We also thought about employers in designing the enhanced CPP. The slow phase-in of the CPP contribution increases was designed with the express purpose of minimizing their impact, and giving employers across our nation, as well as employees, time to adjust to these changes.

Let me talk about the working income tax benefit.

●(1615)

[*Translation*]

As I mentioned, the improvements we are proposing include a modest increase in contributions. We know that despite the long-term benefits of enhancing the Canada pension plan, some low-income workers might have a hard time making room in their budget for higher CPP contributions.

Our government is focused on developing policies and implementing programs based on fairness and on helping those less fortunate in our society. Enhancing the Canada pension plan aligns with that perspective and our government's approach.

To ensure that eligible low-income workers are not financially burdened as a result of the extra contributions, the Government of Canada will enhance the working income tax benefit, or WITB. The WITB is a refundable tax credit that supplements the earnings of low-income workers.

The proposed enhancement to the WITB is designed to provide additional benefits to eligible low-income workers in order to more or less offset their incremental CPP contributions.

Clearly, we are standing up for Canadians who need a little extra support.

[*English*]

Let me turn to the economic benefits.

Our analysis shows there are economic benefits flowing from this enhancement. Over the long-term, employment levels will be permanently higher, between 0.03% and 0.06%, in our country.

This is good news for everyone.

Most people do not know that the CPP fund is ranked as one of the 10 largest retirement funds in the world. Because of this and its long investment horizon, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board is able to undertake investments, and form partnerships that are beyond the scope of other investment managers.

It has achieved an enviable record of strong returns on behalf of the contributors and beneficiaries of the CPP. Over the long-term, greater CPP benefits will boost demand and increase overall savings in our country. This will in turn boost our economic output, and make more money available for investment.

We are estimating that Canada's gross domestic product will increase between 0.05% to 0.09% over the long-term as a result of the CPP enhancement. The enhancement will not only provide retirement security for more Canadians, it will create jobs and have a positive, long-term impact on the Canadian economy.

Let me turn to sustainability.

[*Translation*]

We are helping Canadians save more for a secure retirement by relying more on the Canada pension plan, which is a solid and viable financial vehicle. We are ensuring that the CPP increases will be entirely dedicated to increasing the benefits Canadians will receive.

As hon. members will recall, last month, the current chief actuary of Canada said in his latest report that at the current contribution rate the Canada pension plan is on a sustainable financial footing for at least the next 75 years. Canadians can rest assured that the financial foundation of the Canada pension plan expansion will be as solid as a rock.

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As we know, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board, or CPPIB, always invests in public and private assets for the long term, for people who will be retiring over the coming decades.

On June 30, 2016, the Canada pension plan fund stood at more than \$287 billion, which is quite something. Obviously, this is a very solid foundation for the future.

In closing, the expanded Canada pension plan is a good tool used at the right time to improve the retirement income security of today's workers, especially our young workers. Improving the retirement income security of Canadians through the Canada pension plan presents various other benefits in addition to the economic ones I pointed out. The CPP provides secure and predictable benefits for life, which means that Canadians can worry less about exhausting their savings or having their savings affected by the vagaries of the market. Canada pension plan benefits are fully indexed to inflation, which reduces the risk of price hikes gradually eroding the purchasing power of retirement savings. The expansion also includes increased benefits for the families of Canadian workers in the event of death or disability.

• (1620)

[*English*]

The CPP is a good fit for Canada's changing job market.

I would like members to remember this is good for Canada. This is good for younger generations. This is good for all people who are going to retire 40 years from now and in the years to come.

All members in this House will talk to their children and grandchildren, and be proud of this day.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague has stated how good the plan is, and we agree with him that these increases have to go forward to help our future.

However, he has failed to say there is some critical language missing, particularly the drop-out times for people who are child-rearing, and for people with disabilities as it is in the existing CPP.

We have heard many times in this House, when we have raised that, that they will fix it and they have not. We have been assured that the Minister of Finance will bring this up at the next ministers meeting, the triennial meeting, in December.

That is not a commitment. Raising the issue is saying we will talk about it. We need a commitment from the Minister of Finance that when he goes there, he is going to propose that an oversight and a mistake was made, and that language will be included in the enhancement.

I would like to hear the member's comments. Will we have a commitment from the Minister of Finance that he will be proposing this type of language be put in?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: Madam Speaker, let us look back. In June, we achieved a historic agreement with provincial leaders, the finance ministers of the provinces, on an enhancement to the CPP. We are cognizant of the issue that he mentioned, the drop-out provision, but this enhancement will benefit all Canadians. The Minister of Finance has taken his comments into consideration, as members well know.

We have an agreement with the provinces, but in the spirit of understanding the benefits for people with disabilities and women, we will raise this issue again at the finance ministers meeting. As the member well knows, we will have a triennial review. The next meeting is in December. The minister has stated publicly he will raise the issue, and it will be on the agenda. We want to make sure that this enhancement will benefit all Canadians.

We will always be listening to members in the House and Canadians to look at ways we can make further improvements, but let us remember that this is the right thing, right now, for Canadians.

• (1625)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague spoke about the Liberal government's eagerness to hear what all Canadians have to say about the enhancements. However, once again today, the government has denied the opposition an opportunity to express its views. These are actually the views of the people who elected us to send a message to the government concerning its intentions with respect to Bill C-26.

This is the ninth time that the Liberal government has used time allocation since the beginning of this Parliament, and since it adopted its sunny ways. It was supposedly going to do things differently. However, it is now obvious that the Liberals do not like to listen to other points of view when they differ from their own and oppose the measures they want to adopt.

Does my colleague approve of the rather brutal way in which the government is muzzling members of the House in order to pass its bill?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's comments. However, he knows very well that I conducted budget consultations from Moncton to Yellowknife last week. The week before that we were in Ontario. I was in Saint-Constant, Quebec, in Mauricie, and then in Quebec City. We consulted Canadians and we will continue to do so because it is the right thing to do.

What is unfortunate, and the people watching at home will remember it, is that the Conservative Party voted against all the measures we introduced since we formed the government. The Conservatives voted against tax cuts for the middle class, they voted against the Canada child benefit, and they are preparing to vote against the enhancement of the CPP.

Essentially, these are good measures for Canadians, and we will continue to develop our agenda to help the middle class.

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[English]

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Madam Speaker, we know the government has rejected the attempts by the NDP to fix this legislation, particularly for the people who will receive the CPP with the drop-out clause included.

Will the government provide the chamber with an analysis of the financial impact on those who have been excluded from this legislation. I understand the government will be talking to the provinces about this, but the real question is, why was such an analysis not undertaken and provided to the chamber?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: Madam Speaker, I welcome the question from my colleague because it allows me to repeat what I said about the drop-out provision.

First, we reached a historic agreement with the provinces. The member heard in my speech and will concur with me that this is a good thing for Canadians. The Canadians she and I represent in our ridings will benefit from that, especially the younger generation.

We have to look at the broader things we have done for people in retirement. We reduced the age of retirement from 67 to 65, and we increased the GIS top-up. Yes, we heard from the NDP and Canadians, and that is why the Minister of Finance has committed to put this issue on the agenda of the finance ministers meeting, which I will attend, in the next few weeks. And yes, we will talk about that.

However, let us not forget what we are doing for Canadians. We are enhancing the CPP that would benefit all Canadians when they retire. That is what members are going to vote on today, and I am sure that Canadians and their children watching at home will remember the historic vote today.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I want to pursue the question of my hon. friend from Windsor—Tecumseh to the hon. parliamentary secretary. I bemoan the fact that as we are now using time allocation for Bill C-26, one thorny point has not been adequately explained in this place.

I am looking for evidence that would tell me what happens with the drop-off provisions and how they will affect women, lower-income women, the ability to save for retirement, and taking time off for child rearing or illness.

Overall, Bill C-26 is a big step forward in expanding the Canada pension plan, but would the hon. member help me to see why the government has refused to accept what appeared to me to be reasonable amendments?

• (1630)

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: Madam Speaker, I welcome the question from my hon. colleague. She knows I have enormous respect for her and the work she does in this chamber, providing a voice to a number of concerns. I must say that we have listened to these concerns.

This is a great step for Canada. We are taking a great step for Canadians. The member is asking if we can do more, could we improve, and we said yes. Our Prime Minister always said better is always possible.

Yes, we will bring that to the table with the Minister of Finance. This was a historic agreement that was reached in June. I would say

that the member has been heard and we will put it on the agenda, because that is what people expect a responsible government to do, one that is always looking at ways to improve.

Let us not forget that what we are doing today is historic for Canadians. Decades from now we will remember the vote as being historic for the vast majority of Canadians in our country.

[Translation]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his fine speech.

We are doing other things to help seniors. I would like the member to tell us what they are.

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague who does an extraordinary job and who also listens to his constituents.

As he said, the announcement we just made is just one of the measures that we presented in budget 2016. The enhancement of the CPP is an important and historic step for Canada.

We have also implemented other measures. For example, as I was saying in an earlier answer, we changed the age of retirement from 67 back to 65. This is a very good measure for hundreds of thousands of Canadians, particularly Canadian women. As members know, women who are living alone in retirement are more vulnerable. We did the right thing for Canadians by bringing the age of retirement back to 65.

We also enhanced the Canada pension plan. Coming from a region that has known economic hardship, I can say that what we have done for seniors will have a direct impact on them today and in the future.

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 Vancouver East, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship; the hon. member for Nanaimo—Lady-smith, The Environment; the hon. member for Hochelaga, Housing.

[English]

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would ask for unanimous consent to split my time with the member from Brandon—Souris.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the member have unanimous consent to split his time?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. David Sweet: Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in this House to represent my constituents in Flamborough—Glanbrook, all Canadians, and all taxpayers in this country, particularly on this bill.

Government Orders

Today, we begin and end a third reading debate on Bill C-26, an act to amend the Canada pension plan, legislation that I must oppose most vigorously for a number of reasons.

I must express that it is truly unfortunate the government has chosen to shut down debate to less than 90 minutes through its use of closure. This heavy-handed draconian approach is wrong-headed, which are pretty much direct quotes from my Liberals colleagues from the past Parliament, as members on this side of the House have a wide range of legitimate concerns that have gone unaddressed through the committee stage. These concerns should not be just read into the record but should actually provide pause to the government.

Unfortunately, the government is determined to ram this legislation through this chamber without any consideration for the consequences to so many responsible Canadians and small business owners. Bill C-26 expands the Canadian pension plan over the next 40 years in an effort to alleviate the financial burden of retired seniors, particularly those facing poverty.

I believe working toward the improvement of the lives of seniors is always a worthy endeavour. After all, they are the ones who built this country and made it great. However, where we profoundly differ from the members opposite is in how this is to be accomplished. In my view, these changes should have been more sufficiently studied and debated so that we do not trade one problem for another.

The bill mandates an increase in CPP premiums, a cost shared between employers and employees, to the tune of up to \$2,200 per year. For families who already have to stretch their dollars in order to balance their household budget, these proposed measures will limit their ability to put money aside to save for their child's education, to purchase a new minivan, or to plan a much-needed vacation.

As an aside, neither the Minister of Finance nor the Prime Minister, both sons of millionaires, which in and of itself is not an issue, have had to make sacrifices to balance their household budgets, yet these are the masterminds behind Bill C-26, which will quite literally take money from the paycheque of every hard-working Canadians.

What is also very concerning is that the introduction of this bill, and its corresponding tax increase, comes at the same time that the government is imposing a carbon tax, which will drive up the price of everything. Under the carbon pricing scheme, residents in my constituency of Flamborough—Glanbrook will face higher fuel prices to make their morning commutes to work, and at the same time the price of everything from local produce to the costs of flights out of the Hamilton airport will go up. Perhaps most concerning is that the carbon tax will also increase the price of home heating. For my constituents, that is hard to fathom. Families young and old in my community are already tapped out. They can ill-afford the increased costs that are coming under the Prime Minister's carbon tax.

If the timing of two taxes is not bad enough, I must remind the House that Bill C-26 also comes at a time of massive deficit spending. As members know, deficits are simply the taxes of tomorrow. The government is borrowing billions of dollars and has not articulated a plan that would see the budget return to balance. This reality creates further uncertainty and concern for Canadians,

because they know that in order to bring the budget into balance the government will either have to slash programs, raise taxes, or both. All of these initiatives come at a time when in my home province of Ontario energy prices are going through the roof. The experience of living under the Ontario Liberal government of Kathleen Wynne has taught my constituents to be skeptical of flashy new proposals that would see the long arm of government reach further into their pocket and take even more of their hard-earned money.

However, the concerns about Bill C-26, this CPP tax hike, go further than just bad timing. There is also significant concern that the bill effectively hinders the choice of Canadians as to how they save for their retirement. As a result, Canadians who are proactively saving for their future will be forced to invest more into CPP and less into the savings vehicle of their choice. Thanks to our previous Conservative government, Canadians now have an unprecedented number of savings options. Let us take, for example, the tax-free savings account that was implemented and then expanded. These accounts allow Canadians to save for large expenditures or for retirement with no strings attached. The money is available when it is needed, and the interest is accumulated tax-free. I would point out that, by far and away, it is middle-income Canadians who are making the greatest use of TFSA's. Plus, there are other ways to build up a nest egg. Some folks invest in the housing market, others store money away in RRSPs, while others contribute to a workplace pension plan or a pooled registered pension plan, which is yet another savings vehicle brought in by the previous Conservative government.

• (1635)

There is a wide spectrum of savings options available to Canadians who wish to supplement their retirement income and yet the CPP tax hike found in Bill C-26 would limit the ability of Canadians who take the initiative to save on their own.

Take for example a single-income family with a couple of kids. One of the parents goes to work to bring home the proverbial bacon while the other parent stays at home to tend to the needs of the children. They pay to put a roof over their heads, food on the table, and clothes on their backs. They put gas in the tank, heat their home, put their kids into sports, and give to charity. If the money is there, they may splurge on a date night and enjoy a nice meal in a restaurant. And of course they pay their taxes. Once all the bills are paid the bit that is left over could be put into a savings vehicle, but under Bill C-26 that bit left over does not make it into a TFSA but rather is taken off their paycheque and is forced to be invested into the CPP. Rather than having that money available to them for their car or for the car repairs, the family will have to take on more debt, making it even tougher to cover their cost of living by the time the next month's bills arrive. At the very least, Bill C-26 limits choice. At the worst, it may contribute to a cycle of debt by skimming too much off the top.

Bill C-26 would not just impact modest-income families. It would also take the choice away from Canadians who save for their retirement and wish to leave their accumulated wealth behind for loved ones after they pass away.

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I have served in this place for more than a decade now and over the course of my tenure as a member of Parliament many seniors have discussed their priorities with me. I have heard many seniors say two things as they plan for the end of their life: first, they hope not to be a financial burden to their family and second, if possible they would like to leave some of their savings behind for their loved ones. In Canada we have a retirement system that allows them to accomplish these goals.

Our retirement system is the envy of the world. Retired seniors have access to old age security, the CPP, and a raft of savings options that I mentioned earlier. After those sources of income, if seniors are still facing financial difficulty, the guaranteed income supplement is there to top up their income. Thanks to the Conservative government in the last session of Parliament, they could even make a good sum of money without it being clawed back.

Further, those who want to look at the data or parse the numbers should consider the following. Eighty-three per cent of households are on track to maintain their current living standards in retirement, according to a study done by McKinsey & Company. Statistics Canada shows us that the share of Canadian seniors living on low income has dropped from 29% in 1970 to 3.7% today. These facts demonstrate that the vast majority of Canada's seniors are able to save enough to have a dignified retirement and cover their end-of-life costs and are able to meet their goal of passing on some of their earnings when their time comes.

One of my core critiques of the CPP is that the money invested by an individual contributor cannot be accessed by a surviving family member. By forcing Canadians to increase their contributions to the CPP, they will have less money to put into savings vehicles that give them the choice to will their savings to their loved ones. It is no surprise then that fewer than 20% of Canadians surveyed by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business said that they would opt to put more of their savings into the CPP.

Back in the 1960s when the Liberal government of the day introduced CPP, minister Judy LaMarsh, who was responsible for establishing the program, had this to say about the intent of CPP, that it "is not intended to provide all the retirement income which many Canadians wish to have. This is a matter of individual choice and, in the government's view, should properly be left to personal savings and private pension plans."

Canadians who work hard for their money should be able to save in the way they choose and should be trusted to plan for their futures. Not only is Bill C-26 ill-timed and strips responsible Canadians of choice of their savings, it also negatively impacts small business.

As a former small business owner I have first-hand knowledge and experience of what it takes to battle the red tape and the cost of living to make sure that costs stay low in business. For small businesses it is going to be a choice of whether they continue to hire or invest in their business, having to deal with this expanded CPP tax. Two-thirds of all small firms say they will have to freeze or cut salaries and over one-third say they will have to reduce hours or jobs in their business in response to the CPP hike.

● (1640)

Hon. Judy Foote: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am tabling the government's responses to Questions Nos. 537 to 542.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member for Flamborough—Glanbrook talks a lot about the negative aspects in the bill as he sees it. I see this is as a very positive investment in the future. Minister LaMarsh actually funded for the future, and we have to do the same thing again. We have done a lot of things for seniors in the last year with the reduction of the retirement age back to 65 and the increase in the GIS. However, if the member does not want to improve the CPP for the future, would he rather get rid of the CPP altogether? Which is it? Do you think it is sustainable, or do we improve it for the future? Why does he want to keep it at all?

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I must remind the hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle to address his remarks to the Chair.

[*English*]

If member does not use the word "you", it is even better.

The hon. member for Flamborough—Glanbrook.

Mr. David Sweet: Madam Speaker, my colleague missed the point. The CPP is one of the tools in the toolbox to help individual Canadians retire. Forcing people to invest more in it, limits their capability of choice of other tools. It also puts a huge burden on small business at a time when small businesses do not need it, at a time when the Liberal government actually reneged on its promise and did not reduce taxes to small business.

Let me share a quote:

Overall, Canada's retirement income system is performing well. Canadian retirees achieve relatively high levels of income in retirement, and compare well to retirees in other Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development countries. With support from all three pillars of the retirement income system, the median Canadian senior earns about 91 per cent as much as the median Canadian – well above the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development average of 84 per cent.

Who said that? Finance Canada.

● (1645)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, why are the Conservatives out of touch with what Canadians want? Different provinces of all political stripes have recognized what Canadians want. We have seen strong national leadership coming from Ottawa, from the Minister of Finance, where we actually have an agreement. This bill is all about an agreement that was achieved by provinces and Ottawa, with territorial input. It seems that everyone wants to see an enhancement. It is about workers today for tomorrow's retirement.

Why does the member believe the Conservative Party is so out of touch with what everyone else seems to want?

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Mr. David Sweet: Madam Speaker, it is actually the member opposite who is really out of touch. He is obviously not listening to small business operators. He is not listening to Canadians who want choice. He is certainly not listening to the partner of his own finance minister who said that whatever the reasons might be to expand the CPP, it was not to eliminate poverty. The poverty rate among seniors is now as close to zero as we can get.

Yes, a little over 5% of seniors today still have incomes below the poverty line, but CPP is not the mechanism in order to do that. Taxing everybody across the country is not the mechanism to do that. There are other tools we can use that are not as punitive, that do not punish small business, and actually are more effective. Some of those we used in the last Parliament were expanding the age exemption, the personal exemption, increasing the GIS, allowing some seniors who could work to go to work without it being clawed back. There are all kinds of options that the Liberals do not want to consider. They want a payroll tax instead.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, in my riding, the Liberals are totally out of touch. Seniors in my riding were upset about the clawback and cutting the tax-free savings account in half. Could the hon. member speak to that issue when it comes to supporting seniors? Certainly they were really affected by that in my riding.

Mr. David Sweet: Madam Speaker, the biggest reality check is going to be when seniors begin to pay these big sums off of their paycheques and realize it going to be 40 years before any substantive benefits. The seniors of today are not going to be receiving this. Therefore, there will be a lot paid in before anything ever comes back. That is going to be a big wake-up call for today's seniors.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Flamborough—Glanbrook for the opportunity to share his time today, allowing me to make some remarks on Bill C-26.

I rise today to add my voice to the many others who have grave concerns about Bill C-26, and the Liberal plan to further erode the disposable income of hard-working Canadians and its negative impact on job creators.

Every member of Parliament in the House cares about the well-being of seniors. I believe each and every one of us wants to implement policies that will improve the quality of life of Canadians, while also balancing out the costs associated with those changes.

Over the past 50 years, there have been numerous policies introduced with the aim of assisting Canadians in preparing for retirement, changes such as the introduction of the Canada pension plan, old age security, the guarantee income supplement, registered retirement savings plans, and our previous Conservative government's landmark decision to implement tax-free savings accounts.

Through various governments of different political stripes, great improvements have been made, and the poverty level of seniors has dropped dramatically. According to Statistics Canada, the share of Canadian seniors living on low incomes has dropped from 29% in 1970 to 3.7% today, which is among the lowest in the world.

I believe it is vitally important we recognize that the CPP was originally introduced in 1965. When it was introduced, it was a

much different world than we live in now. Many families had to get by with only one source of income, and gender inequalities were far too common. Millions of seniors lived in poverty, and many communities did not have affordable housing options for those who struggled to get by. Probably one of the most significant differences was the lack of financial literacy and the available savings vehicles that are now offered by the private sector.

In 2016, millions of Canadians have opened their own tax-free savings account, or have invested in mutual funds or the stock market through online trading brokerages. I am pleased that Canada's saving rate has climbed from 7.7% in 1990 to 14.1% today. This is a testament of how investing money and saving for retirement is at the top of people's priorities.

According to the Fraser Institute, the vast majority of Canadians are putting enough aside for retirement. In a document published by the institute, Canadians now hold \$9.5 trillion in assets above and beyond CPP.

While the Liberals think they have the best of intentions, their policies to date have not grown the economy. They have put jobs at risk, and Canadians are worse off today than before the Liberals took office. Canadians cannot trust the government with their pensions. The Liberals have not been able to keep promises they made a year ago, let alone ones they are making for decades down the road.

What the legislation before us signifies is that the Liberal government does not trust Canadians with their own money. It is awfully rich to force Canadians to control their spending when the Liberals have moved past their own deficit projections to the tune of billions of dollars. I can assure the Liberal government that millions upon millions of Canadians are being responsible with their own money and do not need to take lessons from my hon. colleagues across the aisle.

A study by McKinsey & Company has found that 83% of Canadian households are on track to maintain their current living standards in retirement. Now 83% is not 100%, but it does not justify the punitive measures being proposed in Bill C-26.

Before the government moves any further with Bill C-26, it should stop assuming that Canadians are as spend happy as its own Liberal finance minister. Perhaps it is time for legislation to force the Liberal government to stop putting Canada's future generations at risk. That is legislation I could support.

I believe it is wrong to force Canadians to put more of their hard-earned dollars into a government-controlled pension plan rather than allowing them the flexibility to make their own investment decisions. We have a good balance in place, and it should be upheld until such time that evidence suggests otherwise.

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If the legalization before us passes as written, it will literally take money out of the wallets and purses of hard-working Canadians and their employers. In fact, it is very possible that some households will be paying up to \$2,200 more per year when the changes are fully implemented.

While the Liberals pontificate about their middle-class tax cut, most of the savings will be eaten up through this CPP tax hike alone. This does not include the carbon tax, which will be unilaterally imposed on provinces and taxpayers in the years to come.

It baffles my mind that Liberals want to force Canadians to put more money into CPP, while at the same time eroding people's investing power into investments of their own choosing. It seems like an oxymoron to me.

• (1650)

I can assure the government that any reputable financial adviser would be able to provide a far more significant return than the government-run pension plan. It is projected that any Canadian who was born after 1972 can expect a real rate of return from the CPP of only 2.1%. Regardless of how well the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board does, the next generation of Canadians had better not be planning on a CPP bonanza due to its rate of returns.

Moreover, Bill C-26 is just another attack on Canadians who do their own financial investments. It is an attack on those who want nothing to do with putting more money into their CPP, as they like the current system. They resent the fact that their government thinks it can do better in saving money than themselves. As we all remember, it was just last year the Liberals clawed back people's tax-free savings accounts and limited the amount of money that could be invested without paying capital gains taxes.

While it is true that some Canadians are not financially prepared for retirement, we on this side of the House do not think that a payroll tax hike is the best or sustainable approach to assist those most in need. The reason why many Canadians are not financially prepared for retirement has nothing to do with the CPP itself, but is due to the fact that they do not have employment or are underemployed. The best way for the government to help Canadians prepare for retirement is to create the right economic environment for the creation of new high-paying jobs.

One of the loudest and most vocal critics of this payroll tax hike has been the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. It has repeatedly asked for the government to apply the brakes, as 70% of small business owners disagree with the notion that this CPP increase is modest as the government suggests it is.

For many small and medium-sized businesses, this legislation would cost them thousands of dollars each and every year. It has the potential to further slow our economic growth, while doing nothing to help those most in need. As I stated, a CPP increase will not help Canadians without a job.

An analysis by the C.D. Howe Institute shows that the Liberals' CPP plan would not benefit low-income workers. While their CPP payments would go up, it would be offset by clawbacks in their GIS benefits.

This is the classic Liberal two-step: give one dollar in the left pocket and take one out from the right. This is why I am very skeptical, as are many Canadians, that the Liberal carbon tax will be revenue neutral. Looking at new innovative ways to assist Canadians to save, such as the tax-free savings account and improving financial literacy, are tangible benefits that are proven to yield results.

Far too often, the government brings out a stick when a carrot would suffice. Levelling a job-killing payroll tax hike, which would reduce employment and Canada's GDP, is quite frankly asinine in today's economic turbulence. Payroll taxes, carbon taxes, small business taxes, and burdensome red tape are hindrances to job creation, to name only a few of the Liberals' regressive acts.

It is abundantly clear the government has no plan for the economy. It is even more worrisome to see it plunge Canada back into deficit, while at the same time its deficit spending has failed to spur our economy. There is little justification that would result in such a heavy-handed approach.

There are alternative ways to assist those who need it the most, and the Liberals showed that when they copied our Conservative move and increased guaranteed income supplements. I should note also that the Liberals ran on a pledge to review the consumer price index, which is used to calculate inflation. There are many other ways to help Canadians save for retirement than forcing through a one-size-fits-all approach.

I will never vote for legislation that financially hurts Canadians. No matter the size of the bow wrapped around this change in policy, it still remains a tax hike. Bill C-26 would not help our most vulnerable seniors in need. It would not create new jobs or grow the economy. It is the wrong approach to take. I call upon my Liberal colleagues to stand up for what is right and oppose the legislation before its impact financially hurts their constituents.

The reason so many of my Conservative colleagues have spoken to this bill, and more would do so if closure had not been moved, is that it is necessary to try, as responsible opposition, to influence the importance of cancelling the bill to the Liberal members for the reasons I have just articulated.

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•(1655)

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

Madam Speaker, as the debate winds up, it is important to recap that in Bill C-26 we are debating the ability of today's generation of workers to have adequate retirement money through the CPP, one of the fundamental pillars of our social pension programs. The CPP, the OAS, and our guaranteed income supplement are things that Canadians truly believe in. The government has demonstrated very clearly over the last number of months that it supports Canadians in a very solid fashion, whether through budgetary motions, regulatory changes, or now with respect to the CPP. The changes to the CPP took a great deal of effort, working with the different stakeholders so we could arrive at this bill today.

Would the member not recognize that in order to have a holistic approach to dealing with the seniors of today and tomorrow, it is in the best interests of all Canadians that we pass this bill?

Mr. Larry Maguire: Madam Speaker, of course my colleague does not get it. He did not hear the last part of my comments about killing this regressive bill that would not do what says it would do.

Two things occur when the Liberals force people, as they are doing, to put \$1,000 more into their retirement funds. First, the worker may not have \$1,000. Where is he going to get it? He or she is going to have to go to his or her employer and ask for a raise. That is in addition to the fact that the employer has to match those funds and also put them into the Canada pension plan. If the business has 10 employees, this would end up costing the small business \$10,000.

The Liberals have said this bill is to enhance the CPP, but it is more likely to be interpreted as an entitlement. It is another example of government knowing what is best, when really, if the Liberals were to allow the opportunity for those to invest in some of the plans I have already outlined, they might be better off on their own.

•(1700)

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Madam Chair, I just want to give the hon. member a chance to assure Canadians that he is using certain language and words to make a point about the opposition to the CPP enhancements. In fact, does the member understand taxation law and the regulatory regime and that this is not actually a tax? A pension serves a different purpose and has a different regulatory environment. I would like the member to assure people that they do understand. Hearing it called a tax does a disservice to all Canadians, and especially to the precarious work activists right now, who are part of a generation that will depend on this.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Madam Speaker, of course the member misses the point as well. It is a tax. It is a tax upon the employer. It is a tax upon the individuals. I will reiterate that individuals might not have the \$1,000 the member is talking about to put into this investment fund. Even if people are forced to do so, how can they put in money they do not have? Therefore, we have tax-free savings accounts and some of the other mechanisms that are used.

I challenge the member to go back and restudy the tax laws to make sure she gets the facts. As I sat in the legislature in Manitoba for some 14 years, it does not surprise me that this is her attitude,

coming from the NDP, because the New Democrats never recognized a tax that they did not want to put on businesses either.

This is certainly a situation where individuals may not even have the capabilities of doing what the government is trying to force them to do. They can only do it by doing two things. Besides going to their employer and asking for a raise, they may have to deprive their families of some things they were previously able to offer them.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Madam Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to split my time.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Scott Duvall: Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Windsor—Tecumseh, and I thank my colleagues for allowing this.

I rise in the House today to speak at third reading of Bill C-26, An Act to amend the Canada Pension Plan, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act and the Income Tax Act.

In my remarks on Monday, I focused on how we in the NDP have found a mistake in the bill and our attempts to fix it. I described how the government had failed to include important provisions that would protect workers whose incomes are reduced because they take time to raise their kids and those whose incomes are reduced because of a disability.

The government either forgot to include those provisions or excluded them on purpose. We are not sure which it is. There are differing opinions on this matter. I must say that the government has been completely unwilling to shed any light on this matter. Government members have intentionally spoken around the issue, using the lines that have been written for them. I think many of them really do not know the answer. Only the minister knows the answer, and he has been the most unclear in his comments of any member on the other side of the House.

I then went on to describe the attempts by the NDP to get the government to fix the bill. Members on both sides of the House know the bill is flawed and needs to be fixed. We were encouraging members on the other side of the House to go to committee to fix the bill. We worked hard with the legislative counsel, and we developed the clauses and the language needed to put the necessary drop-out provision in the bill to fix the problem.

It is an easy fix via just two amendments and less than two pages of language that would protect those who take time off for child-rearing, mostly women, and those living with disabilities. What happened at committee was a real eye-opener to me. The Liberal members of the committee were whipped hard to shut down any attempts to amend and fix the legislation.

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Even though we know that some of them understand that the bill was flawed and needed to be fixed, they all lined up and supported the use of procedural tricks to shut down debate, not once, but twice. They should be ashamed, and I truly think some of them are. The Liberals then had a chance to fix the flaw themselves when the bill came back to the House at report stage. However, the government made it very clear they it no intent or interest in doing that.

Here we now are at third reading of a bill that is still flawed, with the rights of women and those living with disabilities still in question. This leads me to talk about where we go from here. Once we pass this legislation into law, will the problems we have identified ever get fixed? Will provisions that protect women and the disabled ever get included in the legislation? That is unclear, and it is making our continued support of this bill very difficult.

We will vote for it at third reading because the CPP needs to be changed, as we have fought for a long time, alongside our friends in the labour movement, to have the government increase benefits for retirees. However, we are very concerned about the government's supposed commitment to fix the legislation after the fact. We have heard in the House that the government needs to get the agreement of the provinces.

Last week we heard the following from the President of the Treasury Board:

We are aware that more could be done in respect of the dropout provisions for disability and child rearing and, in fact, the Minister of Finance will raise these provisions at the next meeting of the provincial and territorial finance ministers in December in the context of a triennial review of the CPP.

Then the next day we heard this from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance:

Our intent is to pass the bill, as is; however, the Minister of Finance will then raise the dropout provisions at the next provincial and territorial finance ministers' meeting in December, in the context of the triennial review of the Canada pension plan.

Also last week we heard from the finance minister's director of communications that:

We're aware that more could be done with respect to drop-out provisions for disability and child rearing to make sure that this expansion is as inclusive as possible.... However, in order to make any changes to the plan we need agreement from the provinces.

He continued that the finance minister would bring up the omission when he meets with his provincial counterparts in December to review CPP, a routine process that occurs every three years.

• (1705)

Canadians need to note the lack of a clear commitment shown in these quotes. Saying the minister will raise or bring up the omissions is certainly no commitment. How hard would the minister push the provinces to fix the bill and include the missing provisions? We do not know the answer to that. I was hoping to hear a more clear-cut commitment from the minister this week. However, that commitment does not seem to be forthcoming. If anything, the most recent spin makes me think the government is spinning away from any commitment at all.

When the minister was asked yesterday by one of my colleagues if he would fix the bill, he would not even address the question.

Instead, we got the most shallow spin possible. This is all the finance minister would say on the matter:

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.

Those are very inspiring words, but hardly a commitment to fixing the problem caused by the omission of the dropout provision in this bill.

What concerned me even more were the comments made by the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands yesterday during debate, when she said:

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.

We do not have the full facts on this, either. I told the minister that, when he tried to spin me with the same argument in the hallway after question period yesterday. I also told him that the argument makes no sense at all. In fact, I think the inverse is probably true, given that the elimination of the childbearing dropout for the additional benefit would presumably penalize lower and modest-income mothers, since women in higher-income households are better able to adjust.

Besides, the argument fails to take into consideration that the CPP is basically an insurance plan into which people pay benefits. Raising benefits at one level does not mean having to reduce benefits at another level. Surely, someone qualified to be the finance minister of Canada should know this.

I also have to wonder where the minister came up with the calculations he says his argument is based on. We have been told all along that no costing of the dropout provisions has ever been done. Where did the numbers come from? If the minister has numbers, will he share them with us? Will he share them with Canadians?

I fear that the finance minister's proactive spin in this argument may be our best indication yet of the government's spinning away from any commitment to fixing the dropout provision mistake.

What Canadians need is a clear-cut commitment from the finance minister. We need to know that he intends to come away from the December meeting with his provincial counterparts with an agreement in hand. The agreement must fix the problem with the legislation and include a dropout provision that would protect women and those living with disabilities.

Will the finance minister stand in the House and make that commitment?

The NDP will remain vigilant and be persistent in our demands that the government fix its mistake. The government and the minister should be aware that the NDP will not let up its pressure until they follow through on their commitment.

Canadians deserve no less.

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• (1710)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, at the beginning of the debate, I was quite encouraged by the NDP's indication that it would support Bill C-26. I understand today that it will continue to vote in favour of Bill C-26.

However, I would express some disappointment, in the sense that New Democrats do not seem to realize that if we were to follow their advice on this, first, it would put into jeopardy the pension proposal, the legislation itself, for the simple reason that the Conservatives have made a commitment to kill the bill. In other words, they would indefinitely talk it out, which would in essence deny what we believe Canadians want to see.

Then with respect to my other point, maybe I would put it in the form of a question. Would the member not acknowledge that in coming up with enhancements to the CPP, we have to get the support of the provinces and territories to make the changes that we all want to see made. We have achieved that support.

In order to change the law, we have to get the provinces onside. That is the reason the Minister of Finance is going back to the table at a future meeting.

Mr. Scott Duvall: Madam Speaker, why was this omitted to begin with, and why was there a deal with the provinces excluding it?

There is another drop-out provision under the act called the general drop-out provision. That was included in the enhancement. Why were the other two omitted? Was it a mistake, or was it on purpose? That is what New Democrats are trying to find out. We could not get any clear answer from the Liberals. They did every little dirty trick they could to avoid it.

We want the bill to be fixed, and they are refusing to do it, saying that they have to go to the provinces because they had a deal. The deal must have been that they excluded them on purpose.

• (1715)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 5:15 p.m., pursuant to order made on Tuesday, November 29, 2016, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill now before the House.

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 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.

• (1755)

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

(Division No. 160)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Aubin	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baylis
Beech	Bennett
Benson	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boissonnault	Bossio
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Bratina	Breton
Brison	Caesar-Chavannes
Cannings	Caron
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chen	Choquette
Christopherson	Cormier
Cullen	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	DeCoursey
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Dion
Donnelly	Drouin
Dubé	Dubourg
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseau
Duvall	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Eyking	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Foote
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Freeland
Fry	Fuhr
Garrison	Gerretsen
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale
Gould	Graham
Grewal	Hardcastle
Hardie	Hehr
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Johns	Jolibois
Joly	Jordan
Jowhari	Julian
Kang	Khalid
Khera	Kwan
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Laverdière	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Lemieux	Leslie
Levitt	Lightbound
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Malcolmson
Maloney	Masse (Windsor West)
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
Mathysen	
May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McCrimmon	McDonald

Private Members' Business

McGuinty	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès	Medicino
Mihychuk	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Monsef	Moore
Morneau	Morrissey
Murray	Nantel
Nassif	Nault
O'Connell	Olipphant
Oliver	O'Regan
Ouellette	Paradis
Peterson	Petitpas Taylor
Philpott	Picard
Quach	Qualtrough
Ramsey	Rankin
Ratansi	Rioux
Robillard	Rodriguez
Romanado	Rota
Rudd	Ruimy
Rusnak	Saganash
Sahota	Saini
Samson	Sangha
Sansoucy	Sarai
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke
Schulte	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand
Simms	Sohi
Sorbara	Spengemann
Stetski	Tabbara
Tan	Tassi
Trudeau	Trudel
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vaughan	Virani
Weir	Whalen
Wilkinson	Wilson-Raybould
Wrzesnewskyj	Young
Zahid— 209	

Wagantall	Warawa
Warkentin	Watts
Waugh	Webber
Wong	Yurdiga
Zimmer— 87	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

The Speaker: It being 5:55 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

POVERTY REDUCTION ACT

The House resumed from October 31 consideration of the motion that Bill C-245, An Act concerning the development of a national poverty reduction strategy in Canada, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when we talk about poverty in the abstract, we miss the very personal and the very real stories of everyday Canadians who are struggling to improve their well-being from day to day. I come from Alberta, and my province has lost over 100,000 jobs just in this past year. Hard-working middle-class families are now grappling with poverty as jobs have disappeared and government assistance has completely dried up. My social media feed is now filled with families selling a lifetime's worth of belongings just to afford their rent, their mortgage, and the bills that face their family each and every month. Furthermore, food banks are overwhelmed with new clients. One teacher I talked to mentioned how the quality and the quantity of food that he is noticing in children's lunch boxes is actually diminishing. For the charities in my riding, the drop in the Alberta economy has been joined by a drop in donations, and those who are housing-insecure or are part of the working poor are now having to cope with scaled-back assistance.

Ensuring that all Canadians have the opportunity to live a meaningful and dignified life is one of the great motivations for those of us who are here standing in this place. Our previous government did an excellent job of reducing poverty. The universal child care benefit, increases to other child care benefits, and targeted tax cuts lifted more than 250,000 children out of poverty. In fact, childhood poverty was reduced to the lowest levels in Canadian history under the previous Conservative government. In 1997, 18% of children were living in families with low income. In 2013, however, that number was decreased down to 8%. This was after we clawed our way out of the recession of 2008.

NAYS

Members

Aboultouf	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Ambrose	Anderson
Arnold	Barlow
Bergen	Berthold
Bezan	Boucher
Brassard	Brown
Calkins	Carrie
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Cooper
Deltell	Diotte
Doherty	Dreeshen
Eglinski	Falk
Fast	Finley
Gallant	Genuis
Glada	Godin
Gourde	Harder
Hoback	Jeneroux
Kelly	Kent
Kitchen	Kmiec
Lake	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Lebel	Liepert
Lobb	Lukiwski
MacKenzie	Maguire
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Motz	Nater
Nicholson	Nuttall
O'Toole	Paul-Hus
Poillievre	Raith
Rayes	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Ritz	Saroya
Scheer	Schmale
Shields	Shipley
Sopuck	Stanton
Strahl	Sweet
Trost	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Viersen

Private Members' Business

So why did the Conservative approach work? It worked because it put parents in control of their own destiny, it put parents in control of their household budgets, and it reduced the cost of living for everyday Canadian families. The Liberals like to make fun of us for our tax cuts, but the 140 tax cuts that we introduced over our mandate put \$4,000 per family back into their chequebooks. In fact, our Conservative government was celebrated internationally for our ability to respond to the recession while at the same time reducing poverty. Let me provide the House with a very important quote:

Canada's governments at all levels need to be commended for protecting many of our children from the brunt of a recession that wreaked havoc on the world's strongest economies. This was the worst economic downturn since World War II, but Canada emerged from the crisis with 180,000 fewer children living in poverty. This is the good news.

The House may be wondering who gave this quote. It is no other than David Morley, the president and CEO of UNICEF Canada. The Conservative approach worked because we focused on creating jobs and generating economic growth as the greatest solution to poverty. When the economy is growing and jobs are on the rise, poverty decreases. It is a natural relationship.

Our Conservative government championed Canadian jobs. We cut payroll taxes and income taxes for small and medium-sized businesses. We signed free trade deals to give Canadian companies new markets to which to export. We cut red tape and reduced the cost of dealing with the federal government. All of these measures created intense demand for Canadian workers. In my province of Alberta, we had some of the lowest unemployment rates that Canada had seen for a decade. Even if people worked at Subway or Tim Hortons, they still made significantly more than minimum wage.

• (1800)

This did great things for reducing poverty of course.

Fast-forward to today and what do we see? Today we see a federal government that has raised income taxes and is talking about bringing in even more taxes. These taxes will be hugely detrimental to our working families. The Liberal government is also a government that is increasing business costs by raising CPP rates and keeping EI premiums artificially high.

The results are not hard to see. Canada's economic performance is teetering on the edge. We could go into a recession next quarter. Economic growth is abysmal and long-term investor confidence has almost entirely dried up.

The Liberal government is spending like a drunken sailor, piling up massive deficits with absolutely no plan to balance the budget. Investors know that this means higher taxes down the road and they are pulling their money out of Canada and choosing to invest elsewhere.

We see this reflected in the job numbers. The Liberals have been in government for an entire year and not a single, net, new, full-time job has been created since they took office. When we consider all of the new young Canadians entering the workforce, there are fewer full-time jobs available per capita today than there were before the Liberals formed government last October. This is one of the reasons we have seen the unemployment rate increase over the last year.

Why do taxes matter in a discussion about national poverty? They matter because they go to the heart of how different parties tackle the issue of poverty. Our Conservative Party put money in the hands of parents and trusted that they knew what was best for their families. We trusted parents to invest in their children's future by involving them in sports and the arts. We knew that with a bit of extra cash, middle-class families could afford to put their daughter in hockey or their son in piano lessons.

The sad reality is that when parents are forced to choose between keeping the power on and putting food on the table or their child's hockey league fees, they have to prioritize the necessities of life. This is why a marginal income increase matters. This is why a reduction in taxation matters. It is the difference between our children being able to play sports or sitting at home and simply watching TV. It is the difference between nutritious food and not-so-nutritious food being put on the plates of our children.

The Liberal child benefit on the other hand delivers less money each month to Canadian families. It does not increase with inflation, meaning that the Liberals are giving Canadian families less money as time goes on. As a result of all of the cancelled tax credits, Canadian families will get less money back at tax time. This is to say nothing of the thousands of dollars that Canadian families will have to pay each and every year under the carbon tax regime being implemented very soon.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, while we all believe in the importance of reducing poverty, the approach that we take in the House is quite different. The bill that has been introduced and is on the floor today is a clear example of how the NDP approaches this problem, which is heavy on bureaucracy and light on action and help towards families. This legislation would establish a national poverty commissioner and a national poverty reduction council in addition to tasking federal civil servants with developing a national plan.

I will make it short and sweet. It does not work. At the end of the day we know that the plan that was put in place by the Conservatives did work. Reducing taxes works. Benefits for families with children work. Let us leave the decision with parents. They know best.

• (1805)

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today in support of Bill C-245, sponsored by my colleague, the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, which would establish a national poverty reduction strategy.

Poverty is, sadly, still very much a growing problem in Canada. Since the unanimous motion by Ed Broadbent in 1989 to eradicate poverty in Canada by the year 2000, very little has been done by successive Liberal and Conservative governments to actually reach this goal.

Private Members' Business

In the intervening years since 1989, Canada has been proud of its position as the "best" and "second best" country in the world in which to live, according to various United Nations measurements. However, Canadians living in poverty, including an alarming number of children, are no better off than they were in 1989.

How can this be in a country as blessed as Canada, with natural resources, a skilled and educated workforce? How can we tolerate a situation where our neighbours are struggling to find shelter, put food on the table, and take care of their families?

In my office is a poster that says, "All it takes is political will". That poster was created to commemorate Ed Broadbent's motion in 1989, which every member of Parliament voted to support. Yet here we are in 2016 and very little has changed. We obviously did not have the political will. Our governments have failed to make poverty reduction a priority.

Poverty reduction is a complex and challenging issue, but we must not let that paralyze us. Too much time has already been wasted by hand-wringing and repetitive consultations that do not produce any discernible improvements for people living in poverty.

Bill C-245 offers a turnkey proposal that the federal government can readily adopt and implement. It calls for the creation of an officer for the commissioner for poverty reduction, as well as a national council for the elimination of poverty and social exclusion.

These are concrete steps that would focus efforts in poverty reduction in a way that is measurable, accountable, and cumulative. Governments have often said that we cannot afford to do any number of things that would reduce poverty. On the contrary, we cannot afford to not do anything.

I would like to give credit where credit is due. The government has put in place the Canada child benefit and increased the guaranteed income supplement by 10%. Unfortunately, these measures, by themselves, are not sufficient to eradicate poverty in Canada in any meaningful way. The Liberals' Bill C-26, which is supposed to increase retirement security for all Canadians by improving the Canada pension plan, actually omits some of the most vulnerable from the enhancement: women who take time out to have kids and people living with disabilities. Whether this omission was an oversight or deliberate, the Liberals have refused to fix the bill, thereby doing absolutely nothing for two of the most vulnerable groups in society.

I come from the great riding of Saskatoon West, a diverse riding that, unfortunately, is no stranger to poverty, and there is a very high cost to poverty. In Saskatchewan, Poverty Costs, a coalition of community-based organizations, calculated that the economic cost of poverty in Saskatchewan was \$3.8 billion a year.

Of course, the costs of poverty go beyond the dollars and cents spent on maintaining Canada's social safety net. The lost opportunity costs and the consequences of growing inequality among our residents impact all of us. In addition, poverty costs Saskatchewan \$420 million a year in heightened health care service usage. Poverty also causes us to spend between \$50 million and \$120 million a year more than we would otherwise spend on our criminal justice system.

The same report also found that one in 10 of our population lacked the income needed to afford basic necessities. For a parent working full-time, minimum wage pays just over \$20,000 per year. That is almost \$15,000 below the poverty line for a family of four. Poverty affects us unequally and the numbers are shocking: 17% of Canadian children live in poverty, 33% of immigrant children, and 64% of first nations children.

● (1810)

Some of Saskatchewan's population, including women, children, newcomers, indigenous peoples, people living with disabilities, and those in rural areas are at greater risk of living in poverty and face systemic barriers that impede their efforts to rise above the poverty line.

Health disparities due to poverty are a direct result of substandard living conditions, inadequate access to nutritional food, and increased stress associated with making ends meet. The stresses of living in poverty can also be deadly.

In Saskatoon, low-income adults were 4.5 times more likely to experience suicidal thoughts and 15 times more likely to attempt suicide.

In Saskatchewan, and across the country, costs of living are rising, but wages and salaries are not necessarily keeping pace.

In 2012, Saskatchewan had the second highest inflation rate in the country, and yet, still had the second lowest minimum wage.

The good news is that, overall, there is an increased public understanding about the social determinants of health, and growing support for addressing the underlying causes of poor health. Some 94% of Saskatchewan residents support reducing poverty, with 89% supporting a provincial approach to poverty reduction in Saskatchewan.

Therefore, we had high hopes in Saskatchewan when the provincial government adopted a poverty reduction strategy in 2014. Unfortunately, the Saskatchewan Party has now backed away from this priority, at a time when it is needed most.

The evidence shows that working to reduce poverty in the first place costs less than paying to respond to the effects of poverty later. If we needed proof that poverty is growing instead of decreasing, we just have to look at last week's headlines.

According to HungerCount 2016, a comprehensive report on hunger and food bank use in Canada, Saskatchewan has seen one of the largest increases in the number of people accessing a food bank since last year. The percentage of children using food banks is highest in Saskatchewan. It represents 45% of everyone served.

Private Members' Business

Steve Compton, the CEO of the Regina Food Bank, added that a job is no guarantee against food bank use. Nearly one in six households helped in Canada are working, yet still need a food bank to make ends meet. A lot of this has to do with the fact that low-wage and precarious jobs with no benefits are the only job growth our economy is seeing. It is no wonder that Canadians continue to rely on food banks, and yet, the finance minister has said that we should all just get used to job churn.

The Liberal government needs to acknowledge that poverty is growing, and use the levers it has to encourage stable, long-term jobs, instead of shrugging its shoulders. A \$15 federal minimum wage would be a good start.

I am very proud to say that in my riding, four progressive employers have already committed to paying their employees a living wage. A living wage makes a huge difference for families and individuals and their communities. A truly progressive government would understand this and act accordingly.

Last week, Campaign 2000 released its annual report card on child and family poverty. It is heartbreakingly sad that an organization whose goal it was to eradicate child poverty by the year 2000 is not only still in existence today but that they are farther than ever from their stated goal. After decades of advocacy for children and families in poverty, Campaign 2000 is still calling on the federal government to create a national anti-poverty plan.

Its 2016 national report card, “A Road Map to Eradicate Child and Family Poverty”, provides the latest statistics on child and family poverty in Canada, and clear recommendations for federal government action and leadership to end child and family poverty.

Bill C-245 can be the first step. It has already been studied at committee, and the Minister of Families, Children, and Social Development has acknowledged it is an excellent bill.

The Liberals have stated many times in the House, and at various committees, that the federal government has a role to play in reducing poverty in Canada, and that Canada needs a long-term, collaborative strategy to combat poverty.

Safe and affordable housing, affordable child care, accessible health services, a living wage, and a basic income for everyone are all important factors that contribute to the well-being of all Canadians.

• (1815)

It is my hope this excellent bill will be passed without delay, and it will be part of a truly comprehensive and collaborative strategy that will finally tackle all the different factors that contribute to poverty in this country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to Bill C-245. It has a lot going for it, but it certainly deserves to be debated and discussed. Bill C-245 is about developing a national poverty reduction strategy in Canada. It was introduced by our colleague, the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, and I congratulate her on this initiative.

The purpose of the bill is to encourage everyone to participate in poverty reduction. The bill talks about promoting inclusion as a way to fight poverty in Canada, which is certainly a worthy objective. Once again, I would like to congratulate my colleague on her tremendous work in preparing this bill. I would add that the excellent work she has done is in line with our government's agenda to reduce poverty in Canada. I have to add the fact that Bill C-245 is perfectly consistent with our government's direction on this issue.

We share the same vision, the vision of an inclusive society in which everyone can fully participate. However, the bill would provide for the appointment of an independent poverty reduction commissioner and also the establishment of a national council on poverty elimination and social inclusion. The bill would also amend the Canadian Human Rights Act to add social condition as a prohibited ground of discrimination.

Let us be clear, the government is determined to fight poverty and the Liberals agree with the intent of Bill C-245. However, as my colleague knows, we cannot support it at this time. This position is not adversarial, but rather based on logic and common sense.

The reality is that we are not supporting Bill C-245 because some of its initiatives have already been or are about to be implemented. In other words, the work has already started. We sincerely believe that the government's initiatives were specifically designed to achieve the same objectives as those of Bill C-245.

I do not have enough time to list all current and future initiatives, but I will talk about some of the most important ones. To begin with, there is the study of poverty reduction strategies undertaken by the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. The committee will criss-cross the country to hold in-depth consultations with key stakeholders and the general public.

It is absolutely vital that we wait for the committee's report and listen to what it has to say before making any important decisions, such as appointing an independent poverty reduction commissioner.

Private Members' Business

Our government made an absolutely fundamental promise to Canadians. We promised that our decisions about policies and programs would be based on facts and consultations. Today, we must keep our word, just as we have in the past and will in the future. It is as simple as that.

I mentioned the study of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. In fact, that study was part of something much bigger. I am referring to the very broad mandate of my colleague, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development. He was entrusted with this mandate by the Prime Minister of Canada, who asked him to lead the development of a Canadian poverty reduction strategy that includes very specific targets as well as performance indicators that will tell us whether we are achieving the stated goals.

The minister recently appeared before the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. He tabled a discussion paper on poverty in Canada entitled "Towards a Poverty Reduction Strategy". That document was designed to open a dialogue on the subject of poverty reduction in Canada.

•(1820)

This is a valuable tool that will help the committee to carry out its work. It will also help us, as a government, to develop our strategy. As a result, it would be premature to make any decisions about a specific approach, such as the one proposed in Bill C-245, until the discussions and analyses are complete. That does not mean that Bill C-245 does not deserve our attention and respect, quite the contrary.

As I said earlier, the member did an excellent job on this bill, which contains many good suggestions, such as the consultations with provincial, territorial, and municipal governments, indigenous communities, and many other stakeholders and partners. What we are saying is that we should consult people and listen to what they have to say before making a decision. In other words, all in good time. There is a time for everything.

It is also important to point out that last spring the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development began discussions to develop a Canadian poverty reduction strategy. He initiated this important conversation with his provincial and territorial counterparts as well as with many stakeholders in various regions of the country.

In September, our government launched the tackling poverty together project. As part of this project, the government will conduct case studies in six communities in order to obtain a regional perspective and a better understanding of poverty in communities in Canada. It will also allow us to hear directly from Canadians living in poverty and receive recommendations from organizations that deliver poverty reduction programs. The tackling poverty together project will also be a valuable tool for developing our strategy.

My point is that our partners expect a real collaborative effort from us. They expect to be consulted. In fact, they demand it, and rightly so, and that is what we are doing. Therefore, supporting Bill C-245 and its initiatives would go against the approach we promised to adopt, namely to hold consultations.

As I said at the outset, our government made a solemn promise to Canadians. We promised to do things differently, to work together, and to consult Canadians, and we intend to keep our word. I would remind the House that we are already working on budget 2017, which will also include many commitments. We made commitments in 2016, and there will be more in 2017. We are also implementing our plan for a stronger middle class.

In closing, I would like to say that we can see right away that Bill C-245 is positive because it shows that the fight against poverty is something that every party and every member in this House cares about. It also shows that, despite our different political affiliations, we can share the same vision. When we share the same vision, we can join forces and work together to achieve that vision. In this particular case, it is the vision of an inclusive society in which everyone can fully participate. It is the vision of a country in which inclusion leads the fight against poverty, and this is already quite an accomplishment.

•(1825)

[English]

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the member who brought this private member's bill forward. I sit on the human resources committee with him, and as we have heard on the floor of the House tonight, we are working on a poverty-reduction strategy as we speak.

We all want to eliminate poverty, if possible. That is something we can all agree on. We are certainly concerned about families that are affected by poverty and cannot put food on the table or heat their homes. We have heard a lot of heartbreaking stories about poverty in Canada. However, I am concerned that this bill will create another level of bureaucracy instead of dealing with the issues of poverty.

As Conservatives, we had a good record to this effect. In 2004, poverty was at a record low, at 8.8%, which was dramatically down from 11.4% in 2004. What really affects Jane and Joe Taxpayer is lower taxes, because we are able to leave more money in their pockets and they can afford more at home. It is a Conservative principle that we like to leave more in taxpayers' pockets.

Private Members' Business

Some interesting testimony has come before us at committee. One that dramatically affected the committee, on all sides, was the testimony given by Mark Wafer. I do not know if the chamber has heard his story, but he has several Tim Hortons stores. One thing he has done that has really set the bar high for a lot of establishments is hire disabled persons at wages equal to those of the everyday people who work for him. There is no disparity between the disabled versus non-disabled people in his workplace. It is a great story. There have been hundreds employed, hundreds who essentially were taken out of poverty. They were sitting at home with no place to work and no place to go, and he gave them jobs. I asked him the number one way a person can get out of poverty. His answer was that the number one way to get a person out of poverty is a paycheque.

It seems like a very simple concept that a paycheque would help someone out of poverty, but that is as simple as it gets. It is more than just a paycheque. It is a way of life. It is hope, and it is a future. He gave an example of a person he hired who had a disability who had not had an opportunity before. After getting a job at Tim Hortons, he went on to work for a major accounting firm in Canada. We look at solutions like that as real solutions to poverty, not just another bureaucracy.

A Conservative principle that needs to be understood is that Conservatives care about people in poverty. The analogy I use is the old one we all know: Give a person a fish and you feed that person for a day; teach a person to fish and you feed that person for a lifetime. My concern is that this particular bill will establish a bureaucracy that attempts to study how to give a person a fish.

We want to look at real solutions to get people out of poverty. Mark Wafer is an example of someone who creates real change for people in poverty.

What concerns me about the different political parties' views on the way to get people out of poverty is that it is about larger bureaucracies and money through programs to help people out of poverty. What we on this side of the aisle are concerned about are Jane and Joe Taxpayer, regular people who are possibly watching tonight who are just home after a hard day's work. I was a former carpenter. Maybe Joe is a carpenter who is sitting at home trying to have a meal with his family, maybe Kraft Dinner again. It is the end of the month. Maybe they are stuck and that is all they have to eat, or maybe they have nothing at all. We are asking that same family to now pay for another program that will cost millions of dollars and will add more of a burden.

• (1830)

If we are talking about taxes, again the contrast is between the Conservatives reducing taxes as the true way for poor people to change and get out of poverty, and the reverse, which can also happen.

What I am going to refer to is more of a burden to Jane and Joe Taxpayer, but we seem to talk around it in this place. Indeed, I have not heard it mentioned tonight that much, and here I mean the carbon tax.

The government talks a good game. It talks about wanting to see people come out of poverty. I absolutely believe that the NDP as well as the Liberals want people to get out of poverty, but when we

continually ask people to pay more, we know that people who are already close to poverty or in poverty will be disproportionately affected by these taxes, and the lower the income the greater the effect. If we put in place a carbon tax, the person who is at or below the poverty line would be much more dramatically impacted than someone who is not.

Taking a simple look at the carbon tax, guesstimates have been made of its impact: \$1,000 on individuals and \$2,600 and upward on families. Of course, we have not factored in the inflationary effects on food prices, and the extra cost of clothing and absolutely everything. I think a fulsome conversation about carbon reduction has to consider taxation and the reverse effects of pushing people into poverty.

It is always assumed that Jane and Joe Taxpayer can always bear more. The effective tax rates of individuals is 50% in some cases. For some people, half of their paycheques are going to tax, whether provincial, municipal, or federal taxes. Now we will be asking them to pay some more for another governmental program.

We Conservatives want to see poverty eliminated in Canada if at all possible, but we also want to acknowledge the things that work.

Another witness who came to the human resource committee this week was a man named Kory Wood. He is from a little town about two hours away from my hometown in Chetwynd, B.C. He was a young guy who grew up in poverty. He did not even see himself as growing up in poverty, but just in a difficult situation. He now runs an energy company called Kikanaw that has a yearly balance sheet of \$10 million.

This guy says he is not in it for the money, but to make a difference. He is a guy who gives people hope, gives people jobs, but he also sees himself and a lot of those employees he is hiring, and without having a program to tell Kory what to do, he is helping people out of poverty by establishing a business.

He is an aboriginal person, but he does not want to be known for just that. He wants to be known as a businessman, but he gives people, especially in aboriginal communities close to his own, a way out of poverty. He gives them hope for the future.

I used to teach some of these kids in high school. When people do not have job and all they can see in the future is high unemployment, with no opportunities in sight, poverty becomes a destiny rather than something that is optional. Kory gives a person like that a way out of these circumstances, much more along the lines of a Conservative real-life approach, a real way out of poverty.

To summarize, bureaucracies are fine and bills like this are fine and sound great. They establish things that sound great to people, but I am concerned about poor people being really affected by this, and I see it as a limited thing. Just having another policy will have very limited success.

However, I am really concerned about Jane and Joe Taxpayer who bear the burden of one more governmental programs, one more tax that pushes them closer and closer to poverty.

Private Members' Business

Although I acknowledge the hon. member's best intentions in putting the bill forward, and I think we all agree that we want to see people come out of poverty, we just do not think this is the right direction. We want to see actions that really take effect and really do provide a pathway out of poverty.

● (1835)

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to stand in the House today to support Bill C-245 put forward by the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot. It is a progressive piece of legislation that would create the social democratic infrastructure for eliminating poverty in Canada.

The Prime Minister's mandate letter to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development prioritized "the development of a Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy that would set targets to reduce poverty and measure and publicly report on our progress, in collaboration with the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour." Moreover, the Prime Minister said, "Our strategy will align with and support existing provincial and municipal poverty reduction strategies."

As I said, these are the words of the Prime Minister. However, more than a year into their mandate, the Liberals have yet to take on any action on providing a poverty strategy for Canada. I cannot help but think that Canadians who are struggling to find work, to feed their families, and to keep a roof over their heads might be having a hard time believing in sunny days.

There is, however, some very good news here today. New Democrats have done the heavy lifting, as we have done in the past with medicare and workers' rights. The research is filed, Canadians have been consulted, and the experts agree. Bill C-245 would be a framework for fostering social inclusion. It would pave the way to creating the Canada we all know is possible. All that is left now is to make it happen. All that remains is political will on the part of the government.

Thanks to the tireless efforts and consultations of our New Democrat brother Tony Martin, who sat as the member of Parliament for Sault Ste. Marie between 2004 and 2011, we have before us a plan for poverty elimination that is considered, sustainable, and more critically necessary today than it was when first introduced in 2010. Tony's spirit and heroic efforts resonate in Bill C-245.

I applaud the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot and her staff for their efforts in bringing this very important issue to the House, and for the recognition that poverty elimination would firmly set us on the path to the social justice Canadians deserve. I also offer my profound thanks and respect to Tony Martin for the work he has done as a champion of this cause over his lifetime.

In 1989, this House unanimously adopted Ed Broadbent's motion to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000. The turn of the century has come and gone without Y2K ending the world as we know it, and without any substantive progress in ending child poverty in Canada.

The fact that we have reached 2016 without achieving our objectives with regard to poverty is shameful. It is shameful because it is something over which our governments have control. Not only are we no further ahead, it can be argued that the forces of neo-

liberalism and globalization embraced by Conservative and Liberal governments alike have left us worse off instead of better. Post-secondary education has become the privilege of the elite; our health care system is in danger because of underfunding and corporate greed; and our finance minister has told workers and youth to suck it up and resign themselves to a lifetime of precarious and temporary work. When workers and young Canadians challenged the government for espousing these views, the Prime Minister chose to take a patriarchal approach and chided young workers for being disrespectful. Furthermore, the income gap has widened and continues to grow, leaving more and more Canadians unable to make ends meet, forcing them to choose between paying rent and paying the bills.

Taking an intersectional approach to poverty reveals that it has the biggest impacts on Canadians who have historically been disadvantaged. Women, seniors, senior women, children, disabled Canadians, immigrant Canadians, and Canadians of colour all experience poverty at rates higher than the average. Colonialism has entrenched Canada's indigenous peoples in poverty, which continues unchecked because of the government's refusal to honour the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

● (1840)

The fact that we have done little to nothing in the way of fighting poverty in the 21st century in Canada is especially shameful, because the evidence is clear and undeniable. We all, rich and poor, individuals, families, and even the corporate elite, all of Canada thrives when we make efforts to reduce the impacts of poverty.

The cost of poverty in Canada is staggering, placing unnecessary burdens on our systems of health care, education, justice, and social welfare. The Canadian Medical Association has cited poverty as the number one social determinant of health, observing that society, governments, and health care providers, all have an obligation to address poverty, inadequate housing, and nutrition.

In response to a 2011 report from the National Council of Welfare, which placed the cost of poverty to our economy at \$24 billion, the Conservative government of the day responded with its economic action plan. That government has come and gone, and all that remains of that important plan are some tattered signs, and a level of poverty unacceptable in a country as resource rich as Canada.

Poverty and income security are issues that need to be addressed at all levels of government. While the federal government has a fundamental role to play in establishing a strategy, provinces and municipalities are in many ways closer to the issue, and have expertise in delivering social services essential to communities.

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Bill C-245 seeks to reach out to the other levels of government to harness that expertise in an effective way. It will strengthen Canada's social and economic safety net, and promote the involvement of the general public as well as public and private sector stakeholders in poverty reduction. It will ensure that every Canadian has access to affordable, secure, and adequate housing.

In addition, the bill seeks to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act to recognize social condition as a prohibited ground of discrimination, and in doing so, promote equal opportunities for Canadians living in poverty.

Recognizing that a full life is a human right, my community of London, Ontario has adopted a municipal strategy on poverty whose goal is to end poverty in a single generation, thereby allowing our community to reach its full potential. Entitled "London for All: A Roadmap to End Poverty", the report includes 112 recommendations broken down into eight categories, including income and employment, health, housing, transportation, education, and food security.

I would like to remind the House and the government of the proud social democratic roots that the foundation of our country is based on. Social democracy provides balance in a capitalist economy with the recognition that core values of access to decent employment, health care, affordable housing, education, pensions, food, and union representation are not commodities to be marketed away at the whim of the corporate elite or government.

The Liberals campaigned on a platform that, if we were to believe the promises, veered left of Tommy Douglas on a social democratic scale. The Prime Minister, in his victory speech on election night, paraphrased the words of Jack Layton when he declared he had beaten fear with hope. Well, with all the evidence to the contrary, it appears to me that hope is waning and the Prime Minister is neither a Tommy Douglas nor a Jack Layton.

In fact, the Prime Minister is towing the Harper line on climate change and health care transfers to the provinces, revoking citizenship without a hearing, forcing veterans to go to court to fight for their benefits, defying the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, and continuing to underfund indigenous children's education. Where is the promised end to the 2% cap on education, and where is the promise of electoral reform? It certainly sounds like the current Prime Minister is backing away from his promise on just about everything.

Canadians put their hope for social democracy in the Prime Minister. It was he who called on Canadians to step up and pitch in, to get involved in public life, and to know that to be optimistic is to be positive. While I agree with those sentiments, I wonder why Canadians have had to wait more than a year for any kind of change.

Today, we have an important bill that looks to that social democracy that I was talking about. I urge the House, the government, and the Prime Minister to take the gift that we are offering in Bill C-245, and run with it. Put Canada back on track to becoming the country we all know is possible.

I would like to thank the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, and I thank Tony.

● (1845)

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to a private member's bill that deserves recognition. Bill C-245 is an act concerning the development of a national poverty reduction strategy in Canada. It was put forward by our colleague, the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot. I would like to commend the hon. member for the great work she has accomplished with this legislation, and for the passion I know she has for this issue.

The truth is that this bill pairs well with our government's agenda. We share the same vision, a vision of an inclusive society in which people will be able to take part to their fullest. Bill C-245 provides for the development and implementation of a national strategy to reduce poverty in Canada. It also provides for the appointment of an independent poverty reduction commissioner and the establishment of the national council on poverty elimination and social inclusion.

Lastly, Bill C-245 provides for the amendment of the Canadian Human Rights Act to add the term "social condition" as a prohibited ground of discrimination.

As a government that is determined to fight poverty, we welcomed Bill C-245. Unfortunately, we just cannot support it. Not now. It is a matter of timing. Let me explain why we feel compelled to oppose Bill C-245.

A number of poverty reduction initiatives are already being advanced by our government and are still in various stages of development. We strongly believe that they are designed to achieve the same objectives as Bill C-245.

The first one that comes to mind is the study on poverty by the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, also known as HUMA. The hon. member has been attending many of those meetings along with me. This study will take the committee across the country through in-depth consultations with key stakeholders, as well as the general public. We must wait for the committee's findings. We need to hear its recommendations before making any major decisions, such as the appointment of an independent poverty reduction commissioner.

Our government made a promise to Canadians that our decisions, policies and programs would be evidence based. We have to be true to our words.

I talked about HUMA's study, but this study is just part of something much bigger. What am I talking about is the mandate of my colleague, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development. He was asked by our Prime Minister to lead the development of a Canadian poverty reduction strategy that would set targets and measures to reduce poverty.

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In fact, the minister recently tabled, in front of HUMA, a discussion paper entitled, “Towards a Poverty Reduction Strategy”. This document opens the dialogue on the subject of poverty reduction in Canada. It includes perspectives that could be helpful as HUMA conducts its work. That will help us develop our strategy.

It would be premature to decide on a specific approach, such as the one prescribed by Bill C-245, while discussions, engagement, and analysis of these initiatives are still under way. Bill C-245 makes numerous suggestions that could warrant consideration, such as consultations with provincial, territorial, and municipal governments, indigenous communities, and various stakeholders. We have to ensure that such engagement happens prior to deciding on a specific approach, including the one outlined in Bill C-245.

In fact, last spring, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development did discuss the development of the Canadian poverty reduction strategy with his provincial and territorial counterparts, as well as with stakeholders from different parts of the country. This past September, the minister officially launched the tackling poverty together project. This important research project consists of six extensive case studies across Canada. This will help us better understand the impact of poverty reduction programs in communities that have identified poverty as an important issue.

What I am trying to say is that our partners are expecting us to engage with them, and they want to engage with us too. Supporting Bill C-245 and its proposed initiatives could be seen as contrary to the approach we have pledged to take.

• (1850)

Mr. Speaker, could I ask for a clarification? If I do not finish my remarks, I understand that I get 10 minutes. Is that correct?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Unfortunately, the member have about one minute and 12 seconds left, and that's the end of the debate.

Mr. Terry Duguid: Mr. Speaker, thank you for your clarification. I will cut to the chase then.

As I draw to a close, I understand that it might sound like Bill C-245 is not a good thing, but it is a good thing. It is a good thing because it clearly demonstrates that this government is definitely going in the right direction. It is a good thing because it clearly demonstrates that our priorities are similar to those on the other side of the House. It is a good thing because it clearly demonstrates that we share a vision, a vision of a country where everyone works together to fight poverty and where everyone works together to make sure that no one is left out and that everyone is on an equal footing.

Once again, congratulations to my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot. We appreciate her efforts in this regard.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I now call on the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot for her right of reply.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to make it clear that, at this point, we are not making any decisions. The second reading vote is simply about sending the bill to committee.

We just heard that the Prime Minister and his cabinet will vote against the bill because they vote against all private members' bills. By definition, those bills are not part of the government's agenda. They have even voted against Liberal private members' bills.

However, I sincerely hope that the other Liberal members will be able to vote freely because a second reading vote is an opportunity to show openness. In his mandate letter, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development was instructed to lead the development of a poverty reduction strategy. That is exactly why I introduced this bill. I wanted to contribute to the process.

Tony Martin and Jean Crowder held consultations for nearly 10 years. I took their findings and turned them into this bill. I wanted to contribute to the government's deliberations on developing a poverty reduction strategy even though I am well aware that a committee is in the midst of a study on poverty as part of that process.

Voting in favour of Bill C-245 at second reading does not mean that it will be put to another vote next month. We will have time to read the report that comes out of the study on poverty and see the results of the minister's work on the poverty reduction strategy. We are simply asking that Bill C-245 be allowed to contribute to the process and the discussion on what needs to be done.

Similarly, I have discussed the issue with the two Conservative poverty critics, and we managed to agree on certain amendments. Earlier I heard my colleagues talking about human dignity and I heard them say they would like to see full employment. We agree completely, but we are well aware that full employment is not going to happen overnight.

In the meantime, this bill does not create any new programs or offer any concrete solutions. I am the first to support concrete solutions, as I have worked in community-based organizations my entire life. Clearly, concrete solutions on the ground are what is needed to lift people out of poverty. However, this bill is simply saying that a poverty reduction strategy requires specific targets.

Where do we want to be in five or 10 years? We need to measure the effectiveness of our poverty reduction measures every year. For example, we have to ask ourselves whether the government's actions from the past year helped reduce the level of poverty or caused it to increase. We need to check on our progress because, unfortunately, a growing number of people are ending up in poverty.

Canada's food banks issued their report last week. They made it clear that a growing number of families are using food banks. By all accounts, the actions we are taking are causing poverty levels to increase, not decrease. We have to keep a check on our progress.

I urge hon. members from both sides of the House to vote in favour of Bill C-245, so that it can be given consideration by the committee that is studying poverty and by the minister, who is tasked with developing a poverty reduction strategy.

I introduced Bill C-245 because I fundamentally believe that we can work together. Poverty is not a partisan issue. Every one of the 338 members of the House can see it when they return to their ridings. There is poverty in every one of our regions. The face of poverty is the same everywhere in the country. We need to work together and that is why I introduced this bill.

• (1855)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): 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 Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, December 7, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1900)

[*English*]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, revoking someone's legal status in Canada is a very serious issue and carries significant ramifications for the individuals impacted. I have no doubt that the minister knows this and yet the Liberal government is continuing with Harper's unconstitutional process to strip people of their citizenship due to fraud or misrepresentation without ensuring that they have the right to an independent hearing. The minister said that this is wrong, but, to date, the Liberals have failed to fix this.

On top of that, Liberals are aggressively revoking people's citizenships without ensuring that there is procedural fairness. In addition, cessation applications continue to be brought against permanent residents who came to Canada as refugees if, for whatever reason, they travelled back to their countries of origin.

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Based on these current laws, the Minister of Democratic Institutions could have her citizenship revoked for misrepresentation. Just imagine if she were in the process of obtaining her citizenship and cessation proceedings were brought against her, given the fact that she was born in Iran and had travelled back to Iran. Do members think that is the right thing to do? Of course not. Some 300 others are faced with this unjust law.

Mr. Nilam is a taxi driver in Vancouver. He is a refugee from Sri Lanka. He has committed no crime and violated no immigration laws. In fact, he has complied with all requirements to maintain his permanent resident status and has passed the knowledge and language tests to earn his Canadian citizenship.

As he was waiting to be called to the oath ceremony for his citizenship, he found out that his citizenship application had been suspended because cessation proceedings had been brought against him. Why are cessation proceedings being brought against Mr. Nilam? It is simply because he travelled back to Sri Lanka twice after the civil war had ended, once to marry his wife and the second time to be part of a special wedding reception as per the customs of his culture and faith.

As a result of the cessation proceedings, his wife's immigration visa to Canada was cancelled. Mr. Nilam had to hire a lawyer to fight this and even though he was successful in getting his wife's immigration application process resumed, he is still waiting for the re-approval of his wife's application so he can reunite with her. In the meantime, because there are cessation proceedings against him, he has had to travel to a third country in order to see his wife. To say this is absurd is stating it mildly. The emotional stress of this is unbelievable, not to mention the financial burden.

As for Mr. Nilam's Canadian citizenship application, even though his lawyer was successful in filing an mandamus application, the minister is appealing that decision and is actively trying to stop him from becoming a Canadian citizen. This is so wrong on so many levels. Mr. Nilam's life has been so significantly disrupted and he has done nothing wrong.

Then somewhere along the way, a punitive government, the Harper administration, retroactively brought in a law that put Mr. Nilam, unbeknownst to him, in violation of the cessation provisions. Why is the Liberal government continuing with the Harper government's unjust laws? Why are law-abiding people having to fight these unjust cessation provisions that even the current government has condemned?

Instead of carrying on with this absurdity, I am calling on the government to stop all actions against those with cessation proceedings against them.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Vancouver East for her question.

[*English*]

As the member is aware, our government is already moving forward with its commitments to repeal certain provisions of Bill C-24, including provisions relating to the revocation of citizenship on national interest grounds.

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That said, while we want to ensure that citizenship requirements are fair and flexible, Canadians also want to protect the program from abuse. I understand the member's comments related to both citizenship revocation and cessation provisions, and I will address both of those.

On the citizenship revocation, that is available under four grounds: misrepresentation, fraud, knowingly concealing material circumstances, or where national interest grounds are at stake. As part of Bill C-6, which has been voted on and passed third reading in this House, provisions relating to citizenship revocation under national interest grounds are being repealed, which is a step in the right direction I think we would all agree.

With respect to the other grounds related to misrepresentation, fraud, and knowingly concealing material circumstances, the most serious cases are prioritized, such as those involving serious criminality or organized fraud. There have been several large-scale fraud investigations across Canada, which have led to the increase in citizenship revocations.

Canadians are proud of their citizenship, and our government is committed to upholding the integrity of that citizenship. The ability to revoke based on fraud has been in place since the inception of the act in 1947, and will continue to do so.

• (1905)

[*Translation*]

This tool is very important in ensuring that the program remains effective, as the Auditor General indicated in his report.

[*English*]

As things stand now, the minister has the authority to revoke citizenship in basic fraud cases, such as residence fraud, identity fraud, and criminality. The Federal Court has the authority to decide on more complex cases where the misrepresentation is in relation to concealing facts relating to inadmissibility for security violations, human or international rights violations, or organized crime.

With respect to the revocation process, which has been underlined here by the member opposite, under the authority of the minister, once individuals receive a notice of intent advising them that their citizenship may be revoked, along with the evidence that the notice is based on, they are given the opportunity to provide submissions and evidence relating to the case to the decision-maker, which can be taken into consideration.

These are some of the due process components that have to be emphasized to the member opposite. While we are open to suggestions on how to improve the due process protections, certain protections exist at present. In certain circumstances, for example, an oral hearing may be held. Personal circumstances of the individual, including any hardship that may be caused, can be taken into account by a decision-maker.

With respect to the cessation provisions, I know the member opposite has spoken about this. She is an advocate for this provision. We are looking at the cessation provisions, because certain aspects of those cessation provisions, including the retroactivity component and including the ability to revoke not just the refugee status but also the permanent residency of an individual, are aspects that are

concerning to this government. We will, indeed, be analyzing those very provisions that have been raised by the member opposite.

I want to underscore, once again, there are due process protections in place for revocation of citizenship, including what I have outlined, but also the fact that a judicial review can be sought with leave to the Federal Court of Canada.

The minister has said publicly many times in this House, and in the Senate where Bill C-6 is currently, that we are open to considering enhancements to the current process for revocation for citizenship fraud, and that is exactly what we will do should those suggestions be made.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, the minister has said that he would bring in legislation to adopt the amendments that I had proposed, and we have yet to see those. The fact is there are scores of people who do not have due process right now.

Stripping law-abiding former refugees of permanent residence status simply because they travelled back to their country of origin is wrong. Cessation proceedings waste millions of dollars of taxpayers' money, and scarce resources that could be put to much better use. Mr. Nilam and close to 300 others do not deserve this kind of treatment from their Canadian government.

I have drafted a private member's bill that would repeal the cessation provisions. I am calling on the government to adopt my bill as a government bill, and to halt the proceedings against current cessation cases.

As we wait for the government to get into action, and bring these laws in place, there are scores of people whose lives are being impacted right now. The government can actually stop the court proceedings against them until there is a process, and until there is a revocation of the cessation provisions.

I call on the government—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for her advocacy and passion on this issue. We look forward to seeing that private member's bill and debating it when the time comes, as appropriate.

I appreciate her concerns relating to citizenship revocation. The due process protections are as I outlined earlier. There are concerns about the cessation provisions, particularly the amendments that were made by the previous government to make these retroactive and to strip people of not only their refugee status but also their permanent residency. These are things that we are committed to studying and improving. We look forward to working with the member opposite in this regard.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the last time I discussed abandoned vessel response, which is an oil spill prevention mechanism, we were on the verge of having a new federal announcement. Now the oceans strategy has been announced with great fanfare and a bit of a leap of hope in the hearts of coastal people. However, some weeks later, we still have seen no content and are no more confident from the details that have been released so far.

Therefore, I would like to talk, through you, Mr. Speaker, with the representative for the environment and transport on this file.

We recently heard the Prime Minister say, “As a community, we need to protect our magnificent oceans”. Of course, in solidarity with a great number of coastal communities, I, as the member for Parliament for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, am dismayed that the Prime Minister did not heed the call of the Union of B.C. Municipalities and multiple coastal first nations that all opposed the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion with its attendant seven-fold increase in oil tanker traffic through one of the most sensitive regions of our country. It is a region that a Transport Canada's report has described as one of two with the highest probability of a high-impact oil spill. It is already one of the busiest areas for vessel traffic, without counting the increased tanker traffic from once a week to once every day through our very sensitive and very busy waters.

There are a couple of parts of that oceans response plan that I would like to take apart. One is on the oil spill response side. We have had multiple coastal people weigh in on this. Jess Housty, a Heiltsuk Nation council member in Bella Bella, B.C., said:

It's clear that even the best available technology and most qualified personnel can't effectively contain or mitigate a spill.... I shudder to think of the risk we'll face if we see an increase in shipping due the new or expanded pipelines.

I have another quote, this time from Mike Lowry of the Western Canada Marine Response Corporation, the industry-funded oil spill response team, which is a very good group. He says: “100 per cent recovery is never possible”.

One of the most frequently cited statistics, contained in a 2013 report for the federal government on oil spill readiness, is that even with optimal conditions only between 5% to 15% of the oil spilled is ever recovered using booms and skimmers.

I can attest to this. When I was elected to local government, my role was to be part of an incident command around re-certification for Western Canada Marine Response Corporation, which Transport Canada carries out. We did a simulated oil spill of 10,000 tonnes. This was simulated and not actually in the ocean. With 300 personnel on hand and all the best practices of oil spill response, after three days, 35 kilometres of shoreline were oiled and only 15% of the oil had been recovered. This is paralleled by the terrible situation with the *Nathan E. Stewart*, from which tens of thousands of litres of diesel oil spilled. It took 20 hours for the Coast Guard to get there. Multiple times over 20 days booms broke up and oil spilled in rough waters, and we expect rough waters when there is a marine spill.

I understand that our premier is confident in the oil spill regulations, but we have not seen any details whatsoever, and

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because this government is committed to oceans and to transparency, I hope that—

• (1910)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport.

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was under the impression that we were going to be talking about derelict vessels. I do have quite a bit of information about derelict vessels, so that is what I will talk about tonight.

I would like to thank the member opposite for raising the important issue of the ocean protection plan, and we will get to that on another occasion.

Our government takes the issue of derelict vessels very seriously and this is why we announced on November 7, as part of the \$1.5 billion oceans protection plan, a comprehensive national plan to address abandoned, derelict, and wrecked vessels in Canadian waters and will include new legislation that puts the responsibility and liability on vessel owners to properly remove and dispose of their vessels. This legislation will, among other things, prohibit active vessel abandonment. We intend to introduce this legislation in 2017.

The plan includes measures to improve owner identification to ensure owners are held accountable. It also includes education and outreach activities to enhance vessel owner understanding of their responsibilities and liabilities, including paying for vessel clean-up and disposal. We have designed our approach with best practices from other jurisdictions in mind.

Our government will also work in collaboration with provincial, territorial, and municipal governments, as well as indigenous groups, to support the clean up of existing smaller vessels that pose risk to Canadian coastal communities and implement a robust, polluter-pay approach for future vessel clean-up.

Furthermore, Canada's international role will be strengthened by joining the Nairobi international convention for the removal of wrecks, 2007, which will increase vessel owner responsibility and liability for wrecks from maritime incidents in Canadian waters.

These proposed measures are consistent with a private member's motion, Motion No. 40, put forward by the member for South Shore—St. Margarets, which was unanimously adopted by the House earlier this year.

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This plan is consistent with what we heard during consultations this past summer with partners and stakeholders across the country, including provinces, territories, local communities, representatives from ports, harbours, marinas and the marine industry, indigenous groups, and others. Their message was consistently clear. The current legislation, policies and programs are not sufficient to effectively address the problem.

Conversations also included a focus on how to deal with the existing stock of abandoned and derelict vessels. We are proposing measures to address this issue both for the short and long term.

Addressing this issue requires concerted effort from various levels of government. The federal government has a leadership role, given its overarching mandate for navigation and shipping. However, provinces, territories, and local governments must, and will be involved. They have shared responsibilities regarding the environment, as well as waste and land management. They have a role to play in protecting the rights of private property owners. They have the law enforcement capacity needed to reinforce responsible vessel ownership. In some cases, they are the landowners where problem vessels are located and they will want to have a say in how these vessels are addressed.

Coastal and indigenous communities near water, which rely on it for their economic and cultural well-being, also want to be part of the solution. They are the eyes and ears on our coasts and waterways, and their knowledge of the environmental and economic impacts should help inform decisions.

● (1915)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the government's announcement that it intends to act on abandoned vessels, which would prevent oil spills, if we get ahead of them, and prevent them from sinking.

We are still looking for the detail that was expressed by coastal communities in the consultation this summer, and has been expressed by local governments for 15 years. We still have no detail in the plan.

The announcement did not say how the federal government was going to fix the mishmash of responsibility in our current laws. My private member's bill, Bill C-219, would do that by making the Coast Guard the first stop. We need to resource the Coast Guard well to do that.

We need to have new money and a broader mandate for the Coast Guard. We heard this summer about preventative action before the vessels become a hazard. We are looking for a turn-in program, a bring in a boat program, to make it easier for owners to do the right thing. We are looking for support around vessel salvage and fiberglass—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Kate Young: Mr. Speaker, I again thank the member opposite for the opportunity to mention that on November 7 our government announced a comprehensive national plan to address the issue of abandoned and derelict vessels in Canadian waters as part of the \$1.5 billion oceans protection plan. This plan includes new legislation that puts the responsibility and liability on vessel owners to properly

remove and dispose of their vessels. Although the majority of vessel owners act responsibly, even a few instances of abandonment can and does have significant impacts on local communities. This is only reasonable.

Abandoning a car on the side of the road would be unthinkable. The same should apply to ships and boats. We need to ensure that the federal government and other jurisdictions have the necessary information and levers to track careless owners down and hold them accountable. We recognize that abandoned and derelict vessels threaten key fishing and tourism—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Hochelaga.

[*Translation*]

HOUSING

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have taken a keen interest in the expiry of the long-term social housing operating agreements since I was elected in 2011.

In the last Parliament, I moved Motion No. 450, which I moved again in this Parliament. It states:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should, in collaboration with the provinces, territories, municipalities and community partners, maintain and expand, in line with Canada's obligations under the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the federal investment in social housing, which would include the renewal of long-term social housing operating agreements, in order to preserve rent subsidies and provide funds for necessary renovations.

The purpose of the motion is to ensure that we continue to make the necessary investments to maintain the stock of social housing in Canada by securing the funds to renovate the units and maintain the rent subsidies without which so many families could not meet that most basic need: shelter.

To illustrate the situation, in the question I asked on October 7, I referred to a video that went viral in which little five-year-old Brooke Blair took the British Prime Minister to task because she does not understand why people are homeless or why the government is not doing enough to help them.

If we continue to allow Canada's social housing situation to deteriorate, we could end up with many more homeless families. Beginning in the 1970s, more than 620,000 social housing units were created under 25- to 50-year agreements. The agreements provided financial support to low-income households to ensure that they were not spending more than 30% of their income on housing.

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In the early 1990s, the Liberal government stopped funding new social housing units. In recent years, long-term operating agreements began to expire. As of today, nearly 50,000 social housing units have been affected by the expiry of those agreements, and by the end of 2017, nearly 100,000 more households will have to face the prospect of their rent subsidy ending.

Over the years, the federal government has delegated the administration of some social housing to the provinces and, in some cases, the municipalities by transferring to them the federal funding associated with the agreements. That is the case for most low-income housing. Upon the expiry of the agreements, the provinces and municipalities will find themselves having to manage a stock of old social housing requiring major renovations without the benefit of federal money. If these jurisdictions want to prevent an increase in homelessness, maintain the number and quality of social housing units, and preserve the minimum standard of living of households who receive financial assistance, they must cover the cost themselves.

The minister responsible for housing has been given the mandate of restoring the federal government's role of supporting housing mainly by helping municipalities to keep rent subsidies geared to income. The 2016-17 budget also provides \$30 million over two years to maintain rent subsidies for social housing. However, this amount is solely for housing administered by the CMHC, and not the housing whose administration has been delegated to other authorities.

Despite our many questions, we still do not know what will happen to social housing funding that has already expired.

Families who live in subsidized social housing need to hear a firm commitment from the minister. What is he waiting for? When will he clearly announce what he intends to do to resolve the matter of funding for social housing in Canada once and for all?

• (1920)

[*English*]

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome, once again, the opportunity to respond to the member for Hochelaga, who I know has a very deep commitment to affordable housing and social housing.

Let me assure the member that the government shares her concern for the housing needs experienced by many Canadians. As members may know, last year the federal government provided funding to support more than 546,000 households living in existing social housing units. Budget 2016 also included significant new support for social housing, in the form of \$574 million over two years to renovate and repair existing units.

We are also providing up to \$30 million to renew existing subsidies for all federally administered social housing projects with operating agreements expiring by March 31, 2018. The doubling of spending under the investment in affordable housing program also provides provinces and territories with a significant source of new funding that can be used to support projects under their administration.

However, social housing is only part of the solution. The government believes that innovation also plays an important role in building a strong and vibrant housing sector for Canada. This is why budget 2016 included two initiatives that support the construction of affordable rental housing, which is an important option for many Canadian households.

We recently launched the \$200-million affordable rental innovation fund. Through the innovation fund, CMHC will offer financial support for useful ideas for building a more inclusive society, new funding models, and innovative building techniques that spur the rental housing sector. The fund is expected to help create up to 4,000 new affordable rental units over five years, reducing the number of Canadians living in housing need and the reliance on long-term government subsidies for some.

Work is also continuing on the design of a proposed affordable rental housing financing initiative, which will provide up to \$2.5 billion in low-cost loans to municipalities and housing developers during the earliest and riskiest phases of development. This is also why the government is undertaking to identify and implement innovative new approaches through the development of a national housing strategy.

The Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and I, as his parliamentary secretary, led a four-month consultation process to hear from a broad range of stakeholders about how we can improve housing, socio-economic, and environmental outcomes for Canadians.

We consulted with Canadians from coast to coast to coast, because we recognize that the Government of Canada does not have all the answers or the tools needed to address persistent housing problems. We wanted to hear what the experts, stakeholders, and Canadians had to say, because we believe that government should base its policies on facts, not ideology.

We are consulting and we are listening, because housing is such an important component of our government's overall approach to strengthening the middle class, promoting inclusive growth for Canadians, and helping to lift more people out of poverty.

A "What We Heard" report was released on November 22, National Housing Day in Canada that contained a clear message: Canadians want better housing outcomes, especially for those who need help the most.

The feedback we received will inform the development of the strategy, which will be released in 2017. I encourage the member for Hochelaga and indeed all members from the other side of the House to read—

• (1925)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Hochelaga.

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[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Mr. Speaker, the government keeps telling us that it has doubled the amount of funding for affordable housing over two years and that the provinces and territories can use that money to maintain their social housing stock and the subsidies for low-income families.

In Toronto alone, \$2.6 billion is needed just to clear the backlog of repairs that need to be made to the city's social housing. However, the province will only receive just over \$650 million. That is not even to mention the rent subsidies that are set to expire.

If the provinces put all the money into social housing, there will be none left for affordable housing. In his housing strategy, does the minister intend to invest the necessary funds to maintain social housing stocks and rent subsidies, and will funding be allocated for the construction of new social housing units?

[*English*]

Mr. Terry Duguid: Mr. Speaker, one of the messages we heard loud and clear from Canadians was that the national housing strategy must include measures to address the pressing housing needs of low-income and vulnerable Canadians.

Canadians also believe that we need to strengthen the capacity of housing providers and to promote innovative financing solutions to support the development of new affordable rental housing. Special attention needs to be given to improving housing outcomes for indigenous people wherever they live, including in the north. We also heard that a national housing strategy should respond to the growing affordability challenges facing low- and middle-income Canadians.

Finally, Canadians told us they want the national housing strategy to include solutions that support sustainable housing and communities. As I noted earlier, all of this will be taken into account as we develop the national housing strategy, which will be released in 2017.

Good night.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:29 p.m.)

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