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(HANSARD)

Tuesday, December 6, 2016

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, December 6, 2016

The House met at 10 a.m.

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-327, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and to make a consequential amendment to another Act (political financing).

He said: Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to introduce an important bill amending political party financing legislation. This bill will help lessen people's distrust of politicians by reducing the often undue influence of major donors over the party in power.

As recommended by the former chief electoral officer, Mr. Kingsley, this bill will reduce political financing contribution limits, thus enabling all voters of all parties and in all ridings to make their votes truly meaningful.

This fundamentally democratic bill is inspired by Quebec's Act to Govern the Financing of Political Parties, which was adopted unanimously by the National Assembly. I hope that all parties will support it.

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

* * *

[*English*]

PETITIONS

FISHERIES

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table another petition calling on the government to support my private member's bill, Bill C-228, to help save west coast wild salmon.

The petitioners know that Canada could become a world leader while protecting wild salmon. They are asking the government to stand up for the more than 9,000 family-supporting jobs, cultural communities, cultural traditions, and complex ecosystems that depend on healthy west coast wild salmon populations.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to table petitions from hundreds of voters in Edmonton, Sherwood Park, and Camrose. In a democracy, every vote, every voter, should count. Frequently our electoral system allows a party to win 100% of the power with less than 40% of the vote. The Liberal government promised to change our electoral system, but time is running out. We want a fairer system in place before the next election.

The petitioners therefore call on the government to adopt a fairer proportional voting system so that the Parliament of Canada can actually reflect how electors vote.

DIABETES

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of putting forward petition E-288 today, a petition calling for the Government of Canada to put forward a standard type 1 diabetes care policy in all schools across the country based on the recommendations of a number of diabetes research advocacy organizations, including JDRE, Ophea, and the Canadian Diabetes Association.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to table a petition from British Columbians who are opposed to the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion.

The petitioners know that it triples the capacity of the Trans Mountain pipeline system to 890,000 barrels per day. They know that 40,000 barrels of oil have already leaked from the existing Kinder Morgan pipeline, and they know that it would create only 50 permanent full-time jobs. It will increase the number of oil tankers coming into Burrard Inlet from eight to 34 per month, putting at risk our waterways and the industries dependent on them.

INSECTICIDES

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two petitions today. The first deals with an ongoing issue other petitioners have raised. These petitioners are primarily from Barrie, Ontario.

Speaker's Ruling

The petitioners are calling for the government to take action against neonicotinoid insecticides, which are linked very closely to a serious decline in pollinators, threatening all agriculture as well as ecosystems.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition relates to the ongoing demand from British Columbians that the tanker ban be extended to the entire coast.

These petitioners are primarily from Victoria and areas within my riding. They call on the government to protect the coastline of British Columbia by establishing a permanent ban on crude oil tankers.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the point of order raised on November 23, 2016, by the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands concerning the requirement for a royal recommendation for Bill C-243, an act respecting the development of a national maternity assistance program strategy and amending the Employment Insurance Act (maternity benefits), standing in his name.

I would like to thank the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands for having raised this important matter as well as the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, the hon. member for Essex, the hon. member for Cambridge, and the hon. member for Perth—Wellington for their comments.

[English]

This bill is intended to provide for the development and implementation of a national maternity assistance program strategy and to amend the Employment Insurance Act. It is the latter portion of the bill that is at issue in the present case.

The purpose of clauses 6 and 7 of the bill is to allow a pregnant woman to claim employment insurance benefits if she has obtained a certificate, completed by a medical doctor, attesting that she is unable to perform the duties of her regular or usual employment or of other suitable employment, because the job functions may pose a risk to her health or to that of her unborn child.

Under the present regime of the Employment Insurance Act, any pregnant woman could have access to pregnancy benefits for a total of 15 weeks starting, at the earliest, eight weeks before her due date. The decision on when to begin receiving benefits is entirely up to the

applicant, and the act is silent as to any governing reasons or criteria. The bill would provide access to these benefits starting 15 weeks before the due date if there is a health risk due to the claimant's work environment.

● (1010)

[Translation]

In other words, the claimant, instead of claiming eight weeks of benefits before her baby was born and seven weeks after, could claim the entire 15 weeks prior to the birth of the child.

[English]

The member for Kingston and the Islands argued that Bill C-243 does not need a royal recommendation, since the effect of the bill would not result in an increase of the amount of benefits paid or an increase of the benefit period or of the number of weeks an individual is entitled to claim, nor would it change the eligibility requirements to make employment insurance benefits accessible to more claimants.

Since the bill would simply shift the existing entitlements, any cost associated with the changes would be merely operational. His central argument was that protecting maternal health is already a function of maternity benefits, and since the bill aims at achieving the same result through existing entitlements, it cannot be considered to be creating a new function.

He went on to indicate that since “applicants are already permitted to take benefits during their pregnancy, up to eight weeks prior to their due date, [it] is strong evidence that maternal health and maintaining a safe pregnancy are existing purposes of maternity benefits”.

[Translation]

The member for Essex, the member for Cambridge, and the member for Perth—Wellington indicated in their interventions that they supported these arguments.

[English]

The parliamentary secretary to the government House leader argued that the royal recommendation attached to the Employment Insurance Act covers not only the charges envisioned by the act but also the terms and conditions of each benefit. He stated that “altering when a person is eligible to receive a benefit under the Employment Insurance Act, even if the change to the benefit would not increase the overall charge, would constitute an alteration to the terms and conditions”.

[Translation]

House of Commons Procedure and Practice, Second Edition, at page 834 states that:

A royal recommendation not only fixes the allowable charge, but also its objects, purposes, conditions and qualifications. For this reason, a royal recommendation is required not only in the case where money is being appropriated, but also in the case where the authorization to spend for a specific purpose is significantly altered. Without a royal recommendation, a bill that either increases the amount of an appropriation, or extends its objects, purposes, conditions and qualifications is inadmissible on the grounds that it infringes on the Crown's financial initiative.

*Government Orders**[English]*

In the present case, it is clear, as the sponsor of the bill argued, that there is no increase in the overall amount of benefits. The shifting of the time period would have no bearing on the total amount of money disbursed.

However, in these matters, the cost is not the only factor. The question for the Chair is whether or not the changes proposed would significantly alter the objects, purposes, conditions, and qualifications of the benefits such that they would require a royal recommendation.

[Translation]

On May 8, 2008, Speaker Milliken delivered a ruling that can be found at page 5587 of Debates, on Bill C-490, an act to amend the Old Age Security Act (application for supplement, retroactive payments and other amendments). While the bill clearly provided for increases in supplements, it also made changes in the manner in which people applied for benefits and the extent to which qualified persons could claim benefits retroactively. In Speaker Milliken's view, this:

...would alter the conditions and qualifications that were originally placed on public spending on old age security payments when those benefits were approved by Parliament.

As I have reminded the House on a number of occasions, funds may only be appropriated by Parliament in the manner and, as explicitly stated in Standing Order 79(1), for purposes covered by a royal recommendation.

•(1015)

[English]

In this case, Bill C-243 does not impose any new charge on the public treasury but creates a new set of conditions, relating to the safety of their workplace for their pregnancy, under which pregnant women could have access to benefits related to their pregnancy from as early as 15 weeks before the birth of their child. Though the sponsor of the bill argues otherwise, the Chair is not convinced that the current act allows spending under the circumstances, in the manner, and for the purposes he proposes. This being a circumstance not yet envisioned in the Employment Insurance Act, it infringes on the terms and conditions of the initial royal recommendation that accompanied that act and therefore requires now a new royal recommendation. This remains the case, even if the total amount of benefits stays the same.

Consequently, the Chair will decline to put the question on third reading of the bill in its present form unless a royal recommendation is received.

[Translation]

I thank hon. members for their attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2016, NO. 2

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (for the Minister of Finance) moved that Bill C-29, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the

budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2016 and other measures, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a real pleasure to rise this morning at third reading of the budget implementation act, no. 2.

This is an act that is going to be transformational for our nation. I am pleased to be speaking this morning to all of my colleagues to ensure their support of this important act, which would put budget 2016 in place.

[Translation]

I am very pleased to rise in the House this morning to talk about the investments the Government of Canada is making to ensure vigorous growth, over the long term, of course, for the benefit of Canada and Canadians.

The Government of Canada's primary goal is not only to ensure economic growth, but to ensure that families, workers, and the most vulnerable in our society benefit from it. We cannot claim to be making progress unless everyone is prospering from what we are creating together in Canada.

There is no doubt that this is a global challenge, one to which Canada must rise with distinction. Unfortunately, hard work is not always synonymous with progress. That is the problem Canadians have asked us to address and that is what we are trying to do with measures like the ones in the budget implementation bill we are looking at today.

[English]

Let me elaborate on some of the Government of Canada's first steps. Canada has been one of the first countries in the world to put into practice the idea that when we have an economy that works for the middle class, we indeed have a country that works for everyone. With budget 2016, growing the middle class, and with the recent fall economic statement, the Government of Canada has taken important steps toward restoring the confidence of Canadian families in order to drive our economy forward.

We took a big first step by introducing a middle-class tax cut and raising taxes on the wealthiest 1% to help pay for it.

Thanks to our Canada child benefit, nine out of 10 Canadians families are getting more benefits for their children. On average, they will get almost \$2,300 more for the 2016-2017 benefit year. It is helping hundreds of thousands of children get out of poverty. For some families, it could mean more money to spend on skates this winter, or gifts for Christmas. For others, it could mean paying down debt, or saving a little more. That is real progress.

We have also improved retirement security for workers today and for future generations, including signing a historic agreement with the provinces to strengthen the Canada pension plan. We have kept the promises we made to seniors by strengthening the retirement income system. We restored the age of eligibility for the old age security and guaranteed income supplement benefits to 65. We also increased the guaranteed income supplement top-up benefit for single seniors.

Government Orders

We made it easier for young people from low and middle-income families to go to university or college by boosting Canada student grants, and recent grads now get a break on paying back their Canada student loans until they are earning at least \$25,000 per year.

We have also immediately begun investing in our future. The investment we made in the infrastructure needs of our cities and communities creates jobs today, while building Canada's economy for the future. We intend to build on this momentum.

●(1020)

[*Translation*]

This second budget implementation bill would implement outstanding measures from the government's first budget entitled "Growing the Middle Class".

The government is very proud of its first budget. This budget makes historic investments that put Canadian families first and represent a vital step in the growth of the middle class.

This is the first step in the long-term plan that will restore hope and revitalize the economy, which will benefit all Canadians.

As already mentioned, this budget, this plan, has been well received by Canadians and is receiving international recognition. The *Financial Times* called Canada "a glimmer of light". The *Wall Street Journal* called Canada the poster child for the IMF's global growth strategy. The managing director of the International Monetary fund, Christine Lagarde, praised the merits of our approach. During the fall meetings of the IMF, Ms. Lagarde stated that all countries could follow Canada's example and mobilize all possible levers to truly tip the scales in the right direction and foster more growth, the type of growth that will benefit all Canadians.

Our budget has been given the thumbs-up because our efforts focus on the right things, which will ensure the growth of Canada's economy.

[*English*]

I will now move to the help we have provided to seniors. This budget implementation act supports our seniors by helping them to retire in more comfort and with dignity, and we are very proud of that. This is what we wish for all of our seniors. This will continue to be a significant priority in our aging society. Canada's retirement income system has been successful in reducing the incidence of poverty among Canadian seniors. However, some seniors continue to be at a heightened risk of living with low income. In particular, single seniors are nearly three times more likely to live with low income than seniors generally. Budget 2016 helps seniors retire comfortably and with dignity by making significant new investments that will support them in their retirement years. This is not just the right thing to do, it is the smart thing to do.

In budget 2016, we have repealed the provision in the Old Age Security Act that had increased the age of eligibility for the old age security and the guaranteed income supplement benefits from 65 to 67, and for the allowance benefits from 60 to 62 over the 2023-29 period. By reducing the age of eligibility, we have made sure that fewer seniors will retire in poverty. Returning the age of eligibility for old age security and the guaranteed income supplement benefits

to 65 years old will put thousands of dollars back into the pockets of Canadians as they age and look to retire.

Budget 2016 also increased the guaranteed income supplement top-up benefit by up to \$947 annually for the most vulnerable single seniors, starting in July 2016. This will help those seniors who rely almost exclusively on the old age security and the guaranteed income supplement benefits and who may therefore be at risk of experiencing financial difficulties.

As members can see, we are taking care of seniors, and the most vulnerable seniors in our society in particular. This enhancement more than doubles the current maximum guaranteed income supplement top-up benefit and represents a 10% increase in the total maximum guaranteed income supplement benefits available to the lowest income single seniors. I know that all members of the House recognize this is helping seniors in their own communities. I am sure that every member of the House has met single seniors who will benefit from this measure, and I hope they will support it, because I know that working for single seniors and for seniors generally is one of the top priorities of every member of the House.

This measure represents an investment of over \$670 million per year and will improve the financial security of about 900,000 single seniors across Canada. Some 900,000 single seniors will be better off.

●(1025)

[*Translation*]

In this second budget implementation bill, we are delivering on the promise we made in budget 2016 to support senior couples who face higher costs of living and are at an increased risk of poverty because they must live apart. The second budget implementation bill amends the Old Age Security Act to make the program more flexible.

When couples who are receiving the guaranteed income supplement and spouse's allowance have to live apart for reasons beyond their control, each will receive benefits based on their individual income. By extending this treatment to couples receiving the guaranteed income supplement and spouse's allowance, the government is improving fairness for seniors and helping them live with dignity in retirement.

*Government Orders**[English]*

The Government of Canada has also reached a historic agreement with the provincial governments to enhance the Canada pension plan. This plays a key part in our provision of support for the middle class. The Department of Finance has examined whether families nearing retirement are adequately prepared. We have found that about one in four Canadian families approaching retirement, some 1.1 million families, are at risk of not saving enough to maintain their current standard of living when they retire. The risk is highest for middle-income families. Families without workplace pensions are at an even greater risk of under-saving for retirement. In fact, one-third of these families are at risk.

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

There is a particular concern regarding younger Canadians, who tend to have higher debts than previous generations and who, in most cases, will live longer than previous generations. They face the challenge of securing adequate retirement savings at a time when fewer can expect to work in jobs that include a workplace pension plan. That is why the measures in this law are going to help our younger generation. We talked about seniors and now we are talking about youth. I know that members of the House are very concerned about making sure that our youth can retire in dignity as well.

Let me move now to the protection of consumers in the Bank Act.

• (1030)

[Translation]

Canadians deserve financial consumer protection that keeps pace with their needs. In line with this, the second budget implementation bill would amend the Bank Act in order to strengthen and modernize the financial consumer protection framework. That is a very good thing. It is great news for Canadian consumers. The financial sector plays an important role in supporting Canada's economic growth.

Each day, the nation's financial institutions meet the financial needs of consumers and large and small businesses and make payments and financial transactions possible. They form the infrastructure of our market system. We want to make sure that the financial sector is able to adapt to new trends, including emerging financial innovation and technologies that will challenge existing business models, evolving consumer preferences and customer relationships, changing demographics, and globalization.

[English]

Budget 2016 proposes to modernize the financial consumer protection framework by clarifying and enhancing consumer protection in the Bank Act, and we will work with stakeholders to support the implementation of a national framework. The bill proposes to do exactly that. It proposes to consolidate and streamline existing consumer provisions in one new chapter of the Bank Act, introduce amendments to the Bank Act to enhance consumer protection in the areas of access to basic banking services, business practices, disclosure, complaints handling, as well as corporate governance and accountability. That is what consumers want. They want the protection that will be afforded by these new provisions.

The federal government is exercising leadership by taking targeted steps to strengthen financial consumer protection. That is what Canadians have told us. That is what we are doing. These reforms will reaffirm the federal government's intent to have a system of exclusive rules for consumer protection to ensure an efficient national banking system from coast to coast to coast. Wherever consumers are and will be during their careers across Canada, they will always find this government on their side to protect their consumer rights.

Let me move to the Canada child benefit.

[Translation]

One of the foundations of our plan to strengthen the middle class is also a foundation of our first budget. In budget 2016, we brought forward the new Canada child benefit. This benefit will help parents better support what is most precious to them, their children. The Canada child benefit is simpler and more generous than the child benefit plan that it is replacing. It is also completely tax-free.

Furthermore, it is better targeted to help those who most need it. As I mentioned at the beginning of my presentation, the Canada child benefit will help bring hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty in 2017, compared with 2014. Since the benefit was implemented in July, nine families out of ten are receiving more money than they did under the previous child benefit system. I know that all the parliamentarians here in the House know at least one family in their riding that is going to benefit from the new system. Indeed I think they know hundreds, if not thousands of families, who are going to benefit from it in their ridings. By voting for this bill at third reading, they will be voting to help families in their ridings all across the country.

Whether this extra money is used to buy school supplies, to help pay grocery bills, or to buy warm winter coats, the benefit will help parents all over the country to cover the high costs of raising their children.

Allow me to explain how this benefit will be helping Canadian families. The parents of children under 18 will be receiving up to \$6,400 annually for each child under the age of six, and up to \$5,400 per child between the ages of six and 17. In supporting this budget implementation act, my esteemed colleagues will be helping to ensure that the Canada child benefit is indexed to inflation starting in 2020, so that families can count on this additional assistance for many years more.

Government Orders

I hope that all parliamentarians in the House will vote in favour of this bill because it is precisely the families in their ridings, the people who sent them to Ottawa, who are going to benefit from it. Whether it is our seniors, our youth or our families, the people who sent them to Ottawa are the people who will be helped thanks to this bill.

• (1035)

[*English*]

In conclusion, budget 2016 represents a giant step forward in our plan to put people first and to deliver the help they need now, while investing for the years and decades to come. I know members want to invest in the future and put people first, because those are the same people who sent them to Ottawa.

With these investments, inspired by a sense of fairness, we would ensure that Canada's best days lie ahead. Fairness is about everything we stand for. As government and as all parliamentarians, I am sure, we want to do what is fair for all Canadians: Canadian families, seniors, and youth in each of our ridings. Our plan is about creating the necessary conditions to ensure that hope and hard work will not be wasted but rewarded. I am sure every member believes that is true. People working hard in our country should be rewarded. Growth should be inclusive. This is about inclusive growth.

The measures we present in this bill are about inclusive growth, and I do not believe any member in the House would disagree with inclusive growth in our country, investing in families, in seniors, and in youth, and making sure that when people retire, they can retire with dignity. Those are beliefs and values that I am sure are shared by all members in the House. Our children and grandchildren will remember this historic moment. When they vote, they will remember what was done for them, whether it was investments for their future or inclusive growth in our country. The Government of Canada is focused on the larger picture of ensuring prosperity for Canadians well beyond its 150th birthday.

I will finish by saying that I encourage all members in the House to support this bill, not just because it is the smart thing but because it is the right thing to do for the people who sent them to Ottawa. Their voices are those of families, youth, and seniors who sent them to Ottawa to work for them.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague said a couple of things right. I will give him that. We are the voice of our constituents. There were 338 members of Parliament elected to be the voices of our constituents, to deliver their voices from our ridings to Ottawa, not the other way around. We are talking about investing in the future, the investments that the government is going to make, the promises the government wants to keep, and the enormous amount of money the government wants to spend.

However, I want to talk about something else. I live in the beautiful riding of Cariboo—Prince George, and people have been hard hit. There is no softwood lumber agreement and projects are not being approved. I want to know from the member what this budget would do to create jobs and healthy and prosperous lives in my riding. They do not want handouts; they want jobs. What would this bill do?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: Madam Speaker, the member for Cariboo—Prince George is one of the members who

is always there when we are talking about investing in the future. I am pleased to respond to his question because he will recognize that by supporting this bill he would do a number of things to help the people in Cariboo—Prince George. Just like the people in Shawinigan in my home riding of Saint-Maurice—Champlain, those are the people who sent us here.

The first thing we did was to reduce taxes for the middle class. This allows people in the member's own riding to put more money in their pockets so they can make the choice to invest, to save for their retirement or their future, or invest in their children. With the Canada child benefit, nine families out of 10 are going to be better off. I know there are thousands of families in the member's riding of Cariboo—Prince George who are going to benefit. Talking about our investment for students, I am sure that the students in Cariboo—Prince George would agree with me that enhancing the student grants is a good thing, and waiting until they earn \$25,000 to repay these loans is a good thing for students.

There is a number of good things in this bill to help the people of Cariboo—Prince George as well as Canadians across the nation. That is the right thing to do for Canadians.

• (1040)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, with whom it is my pleasure to sit on the Standing Committee on Finance.

I would like to go back to the question of consumer protection and the Bank Act. I will refute virtually the entirety of the interpretation made by my colleague. He says that this is the Liberal government's response to the Marcotte ruling, but that is rather ironic, because if the complaint that led to the Marcotte ruling had been filed under the process proposed by these changes, there would have been no Marcotte ruling, because there would have been no possibility of bringing this sort of class action. That is clear, according to the opinion of most legal experts.

In an article in *Le Soleil*, a commentary by Brigitte Breton clearly demonstrates that consumers will be the losers in this change. I cannot understand how my colleague can claim that consumers will be better served, particularly since consumer protection is a provincial jurisdiction.

Can he resolve this paradox for me?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, for whom I have enormous respect, for his question. He is one of the eminent members of the Standing Committee on Finance. I always enjoy discussing the issues with him.

To give a very simple response to his question, I would like to list the principles in this bill that will amend the Bank Act in order to protect Canadian consumers.

Basic banking services should be accessible. I am sure that my colleague will agree on that point.

Government Orders

Disclosure should enable an institution's customers and the public to make informed financial decisions. I am sure that is a principle that my colleague subscribes to.

An institution's customers and the public should be treated fairly. I am sure that my colleague is in favour of fairness.

Complaints processes should be impartial, transparent and responsive. I am sure that my colleague supports these principles.

These are the principles we want to promote to protect consumers in Quebec and all across the country. That way, whenever they do banking, both in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada, consumers will always be sure they can rely on measures that will afford them proper protection.

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I just want to raise a question for the member opposite. His government talks all the time about innovation and how we need to support innovation in this country. He and his government talk about how they need to co-operate with the provinces on health care and improving our health care. Yet, Bill C-29 targets doctors, particularly medical specialists, so that those who work in group-structure plans could not access the preferential tax rate for small businesses. This would drive doctors to other jurisdictions, particularly the United States.

How can I go back to my riding of Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola where, when I go to the rural areas, I continually hear about access to health care and access to doctors? Why is the only innovation the government has for health care taking more money from doctors and chasing them away?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: Madam Speaker, the member also sits on our finance committee, and I would like to commend him for his great work on that committee.

We appreciate the work doctors are doing across our nation, as well as accountants and lawyers. The only thing we said is that we are not raising taxes on anyone. We just clarified what was happening. What we said, and Canadians understand, is that it is about fairness. This government will always stand for tax fairness.

We are saying that, for one small-business corporation in this country, it is going to get one small-business tax deduction: one corporation, one deduction. I think everyone in the nation understands that. This is all about fairness.

I was at the committee when we heard from the Canadian Medical Association, from doctors, and I thank them for their work. Doctors told us that they created this group to advance science and provide health care, not because of tax structure, and I believe them when they say that. People understand it is one corporation, one deduction.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member who always speaks very well in the House, defending his position.

I would like to ask a question for the hon. member. A lot of promises were made during the election for supporting small business owners, and yet again, there is no tax cut for small businesses and no cap on transaction fees for credit cards.

Small businesses right across the country are suffering, and they are particularly suffering in my province of Alberta with the downturn in the economy.

Could the member explain why the government is still not giving breaks to small business?

• (1045)

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for raising the concerns of her constituents in Alberta, because we care very much about what is going on in Alberta and across the nation, obviously.

I went across the country, from Moncton to Yellowknife, during pre-budget consultations. I probably met with thousands of people. What small business has told us is that we need to make sure the economy is working.

Our belief is that, when we invest in the middle class, the middle class will do well and the economy is going to do well in our country. What small business operators told us they wanted was consumers who could buy their products and services. I think the measures we have taken are going to improve the middle class in our country.

If we have a strong middle class, clearly we will have good small and medium-sized businesses that are going to thrive in our country. That is why we are investing in the middle class, because we know this will benefit small businesses and indeed all businesses across our country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, I must say that the speech I have just heard from my colleague on the other side of the House is one of the most tiresome and cynical speeches I have heard since being elected to this place.

The government is in such a hurry to please the banks that it decided to impose a gag order yesterday so it could move forward with Bill C-29. They talk to us about modernizing the banking system by reducing the rules, by setting aside the Consumer Protection Act we have in Quebec, and by ensuring that people are less well protected with a uniform system, even though the entire National Assembly has denounced this.

What matters most to my colleague: the Quebec voters in his riding or the rich bank lobby?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: Madam Speaker, I have great respect for my colleague.

It is rare to be told in the House that one's speech was the most tiresome ever heard. However I will reassure my colleague by telling him that I work exclusively for the Canadians and the Quebecers who sent me here, to Ottawa, to represent them for the great riding of Saint-Maurice—Champlain.

What we have done is to assume our responsibilities, because as my colleague was saying, in the Marcotte ruling we were asked to modernize and clarify the rules, so that is what we did.

Government Orders

I can assure my colleague that, as our Prime Minister says, “better is always possible”. I will therefore take pains to ensure that my next speech is more interesting for him.

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always an honour to rise to participate in a debate in this chamber. Normally, it is rare for me to speak to a bill numerous times. However, there is so much in Bill C-29 that is of serious concern, it begs for debate.

To be clear, I understand that omnibus budget implementation acts, as bill C-29 most certainly is, will always carry criticism. As a member of the former government in the last Parliament, I can attest to that, as could any member who was a member of Parliament and is elected with us today.

However, I have noticed that there is one profound difference between much of the criticism of the last Conservative government and the criticism directed at the current Liberal government. What is that difference? By and large, when criticism was levied at the former Conservative government, more often than not it was based on hypotheticals. Headlines would typically read, “X, Y, Z could happen”, or “Event Y, X, Z might happen”.

Typically, this criticism was from some sort of expert of which there is no shortage in the Ottawa bubble. Even with my own “free the grapes” bill to legalize direct-to-consumer interprovincial wine shipments, which the former Conservative government expanded to apply to craft beer and artisan spirits in subsequent omnibus budget implementation acts, experts warned it could cost provincial liquor monopolies millions of dollars. Yet, we know in those provinces that do allow direct-to-consumer shipping, like my very home province of British Columbia, this of course did not happen. In fact, in British Columbia, we see consumption and sales of B.C. wine, year over year, perform better and better. Again, the experts were wrong.

However, with our friends, the Liberals, the criticism is not what might happen or what could happen, it is what will happen.

Let me give an example. As part of Bill C-29, the Liberals propose to seriously change the multiplication rates on the small business deduction rules.

We all know the Prime Minister does not like small business. The Liberals have reneged on promised cuts to small business. The Prime Minister is on the record for past stating that he believes small business is simply a way for wealthy people to avoid paying higher tax, which is ironic, coming from a trust fund millionaire. Why have a trust fund? Obviously for tax advantages, but I digress.

Why should we care that the Liberals are making these tax changes for two small business tax rates? Here is a simple example. Many Canadians are not aware of this or may not be aware of this. However, a significant number of physicians and surgeons operate in partnership with each other as small businesses. We all know physicians and surgeons work together within our medical community. Therefore, it is not a surprise that this extends into business and taxation areas as well.

Without delving too far into the technical tax ramifications of Bill C-29, from my time on the finance committee, the end result is that

these changes will massively impact many Canadian physicians and surgeons.

Those who know me know I do not normally use a word like “massively”. What does “massively” mean, in the context of this discussion? In some cases, the amount of corporate tax paid could increase not by 2%, not by 5%, not 10% or 15%, but it could actually double. This is not what could or possibly might happen. This is what will happen.

The Canadian Medical Association hired a well-respected independent accounting firm to assess and quantify these numbers. They are not hypothetical. These changes will seriously impact a significant amount of physicians and surgeons all across our great country.

Let us not forget the Liberals are also raising taxes on those earning \$200,000 per year. Many physicians and surgeons will be hit there, as well.

In short, we could easily call this the “Liberal war on doctors”.

● (1050)

Probably every member in this place knows of ongoing struggles in communities, not just in Canada but across North America, with respect to a shortage of doctors. Considering the massive amount of taxpayer subsidies in Canadian post-secondary institutions, Canada can ill afford to act as a training ground for new doctors to take those much-needed skills elsewhere.

Let us look at the more likely scenario. As much as this federal Liberal government enjoys taking money away from Canada's doctors and physicians, Ottawa, for the most part, does not pay or employ them. It is up to provinces to employ doctors and physicians. In other words, to keep doctors and not lose them to more competitive jurisdictions, most notably the United States, the provinces will likely be forced to make up the hit to the pocket books of doctors' net take-home pay created by the Liberals. It is yet another form of downloading from the Liberal government, and most people have not heard about it.

It gets more offensive. At the same time the Liberals are looking to severely reduce the net take-home pay of doctors, they are conducting a whisper campaign. They may start taxing employer provided medical benefits, all to pay for the Liberals' reckless spending in Ottawa. This is an insult to Canada's doctors. It is unlikely there is a member in this place that has not heard from physicians and surgeons warning the Liberal government of the dire and serious long-term consequences if the Liberals continue to impose these punitive tax changes.

Government Orders

In my riding of Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, I can state with certainty that I will stand for our doctors in speaking out in opposing these changes. Keep in mind, in many regions we are increasingly relying on foreign trained doctors to make up for our lack of capacity. I mention this because a foreign doctor taking the time to immigrate to Canada could just as easily look at other countries as alternatives. These are all very serious concerns. I hope the government is taking this fully into account. It is another reason why I oppose Bill C-29.

While on the same subject of long-term problems that the budget implementation act is creating, let us not forget there is no longer any path to return to balanced budgets. This is yet another broken promise from the Liberal government. Every member in this room, regardless of what side of the House he or she sits on, knows that one day down the road this will create a serious problem. Contrary to what the Prime Minister and the government have past stated, budgets do not balance themselves.

We already see the Liberal government raising taxes in many areas and hinting it is looking at adding more, all because their fiscal plan is failing. I appreciate the government would rather not be in the fiscal situation it is in. It was handed a surplus by a former government, a \$2.9 billion at the year-end of 2015, as confirmed by the parliamentary budget office. That is a fact. Now it is massively in deficit, adding huge debt, all while the Prime Minister just sits around. Our finance minister has become an investing in the middle-class Liberal talking point machine. How did we get here, and so soon?

I know members on the government side are also concerned. People enter public office to help build a stronger Canada, not to break promises and create massive debt while creating hardship both now and down the road. Those are things we should realize.

I also want to give some credit where credit is due. I commend the fact the Liberal government did support the Trans Mountain pipeline recently, a decision for a populist Prime Minister, who is very image conscious, knowing it would be very unpopular with many of those who voted Liberal. I commend the government for making a difficult decision that hopefully can help to reverse the current trajectory this budget is putting us into.

• (1055)

However, I also have to point out that much of the anger of many first nation communities against this pipeline stems from the fact that they believe the Prime Minister promised them a veto, which will be seen as another Liberal broken promise, one that I imagine will carry some consequence for members in British Columbia.

We still have the challenge of the much-needed softwood lumber deal. The Prime Minister jetsetted off to Washington with a massive entourage of Liberal elites on the tab of taxpayers. He told Canadians that they would get good value from the trip on deals like softwood lumber. Now we know that has not happened. It is no different than jetsetting off to Davos. Once again, big promises from the Prime Minister, but he came home empty handed.

Now we have what we are told is an infrastructure bank coming. Billions that could be spent building Canadian infrastructure is instead being diverted, ultimately to act as seed money where it will

line the pockets of wealthy corporate interests, with a \$100 million-minimum project price tag. How many members in this place have a municipality in their riding that can afford projects of the magnitude they are discussing? Guess what? They will all get to pay for the high interest rate of return, for those few who can.

People can understand why wealthy foreign nationals are lining up to pay \$1,500 for each pay to play access to our Prime Minister. That \$1,500 is clearly for them a great investment. However, it is a terrible return for Canadians who will be left paying the bill. On top of that, they will be paying for a national Liberal carbon tax, all at a time when our largest trading partner and competitor is going to be lowering taxes to be more competitive and raising taxes on those companies moving outside of its borders. Meanwhile, the Liberal government is helping them to do exactly that by raising taxes here to make being an employer more costly and less affordable.

Let us not forget that the Liberal government has also made changes to the mortgage rules, which will see the dream of owning a home for many Canadian families gone. We are repeatedly told that all of this is being done to help the middle class.

In my riding, many real middle-class families are already telling me that they do not want this help from the Liberal government, because they cannot afford it. Who could blame them, more so if one is also about to be taxed on health care benefits? This would be particularly punitive and unfair in British Columbia, because British Columbia also charges monthly medical service premiums, MSP, which is over and above what is paid in income tax. Hopefully, the Liberal MPs from B.C. have raised that point with the finance minister.

While I am on my feet, the final subject I will broach is the good news I have to share with this place. Recently we learned that the Comeau decision will be referred to the Supreme Court by the province of New Brunswick. This has huge potential ramifications for Canadian internal trade. While the Liberals opposed this case being heard by the Supreme Court, I remain hopeful that our Supreme Court will take the case on and give it careful scrutiny. As much as I like the new pro-trade tone I have been hearing from the trade minister, the Liberals continued silence on internal trade just is not good enough, but hopefully that will change.

Before I close, I would like to pass on that this was not a speech I greatly enjoyed giving. However, these concerns are very real and I feel must be put on the record. I know there are good people on the government side of the House and we know the Prime Minister spends more time in airports and in the air than he does in his office. Whoever comes up with some of these policy ideas is part of the problem not part of the solution. In my view, a good internal shakeup is required, and we need a clear path in a different direction.

Government Orders

Over the past decade, we watched the Canadian middle class surpass the United States in prosperity, all while taxes were being lowered, jobs increased, and the budget was ultimately balanced. Today, the budget implementation bill sets us in the wrong direction, the opposite direction, with massive debt, deficits, no net new jobs, and higher taxes coming in many areas.

• (1100)

Every member in this place hopes that this situation changes. However, in my view, Bill C-29 is simply not the answer and I simply cannot support it.

I thank all members for hearing a member's concerns. I do hope we can find ways in the future where we can see jobs, where we can see added investment, where we can see further facilitated trade, where we can see the things that people sent us here to do, the public interest to be maintained, and for the Liberal government to look at the way that it is fundraising and ask if that is in the name of the public trust, because we should always be mindful that democracy, that the rule of law, has to have real meaning. If the leaders of a country cannot project those values, if they cannot project those items that are core to holding those things, then how can we expect anyone else to follow that example?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Fredericton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my friend ended his speech by talking about real meaning. I wonder if he sees real meaning in efforts to lift 300,000 children out of poverty and improve the situation for nine out of 10 Canadian families, if he sees real meaning behind a program that would provide upward of \$1,000 for the most vulnerable, low-income, single seniors in our country, and if he sees real meaning in providing adequate service delivery to veterans across this country so that they can be treated with respect for the service they have provided for this country, a program that would reverse mean-spirited closures by the previous government.

Is that the sort of real meaning he is looking for in order for Canadians to understand when he talks about the actions of this government?

• (1105)

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, the member for Fredericton and I served on the pay equity committee together and I do value his opinion.

In my comments I said that this particular budget legislation has raised a variety of concerns. In a previous speech I gave on the same bill I actually said that it is a pleasure to see a government actually follow through with its commitments. Many of my constituents would like to see this same level of pursuit toward the electoral commitments, like balancing the budget and only modest deficits of \$10 billion instead of \$30 billion.

The best thing for Canadians is when good policies are adopted and then enhanced as we go along. The universal child care benefit put out by the previous government was an important step and the Liberal government ran an election campaign on continuing that mandate and that is good public policy over many jurisdictions, which serves our citizens well.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have the honour of sitting on the

finance committee with my colleague from Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

I have listened to the previous questions and I have to wonder if the child benefit is so beneficial and would lift so many people out of poverty, why are the Liberals leaving it unindexed, unchanged, for four years, thereby losing its purchasing power. If a middle-class tax cut is so important, then why does it cover only 9% of the population? Basically, it would be taking from one person on top to give to the following nine people, leaving the rest of the Canadian population, including those who are at the median income level of \$31,000, unaffected by this.

I would like to understand from his perspective why the Liberals are so proud of these achievements, which in the end are not what they seem to be.

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's contributions not just in this Chamber but also on finance committee.

The Liberal government seems to be centred around redistribution of taxation. Obviously there was an oversight and the government did not account for the indexing issue and these are good concerns that the member has raised.

The Liberals like to take and redistribute. Many people in my riding support the Senate finance committee's amendment that would shift taxes so that people who are earning the least would get more support.

The Prime Minister likes to talk about inclusive growth but the trick to inclusive growth is that we first need to have growth. If we do not have growth, then we cannot pay for the many services and the high expectations Canadians have. Eventually there will be a smaller pie, I am talking about indexing, and there will be more hands looking to get into that pie.

The Liberal government needs to focus on growth not just on simply divvying up the goods.

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a nice occasion to consider what the impact of cutting and cutting has done to the growth of the pie, as the hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola has alluded to. In 2013, the previous administration, the Harper government, determined that it was a good idea to get rid of the rural secretariat, which was the one and only mechanism that was used to ensure that all departments across the federal government had a rural lens and were able to focus on the challenges of small rural towns and villages. I know that the member opposite represents such towns and communities and I wonder, in the context of this notion that he is bringing to us of growing the pie, how his constituents could have possibly been served by that killing of the rural secretariat.

• (1110)

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, while it sounds good here in Ottawa to have secretariats for every issue, what really matters to people is knowing if there will be support when they need it, even in the rural areas. I have never had a constituent raise that secretariat with me, which I think says that obviously it was not providing value for anyone, other than bureaucrats here in Ottawa.

Government Orders

Again, unlike the previous Liberals in the 1990s, who in order to balance their budget actually cut health care spending, who actually cut transfers to the provinces, all so that they could say that they were going to save the country's finances. Eventually, they did turn the books around. However, when the member criticizes us for simply reviewing program spending and asking to see if it brings value for dollars, if people in my riding cannot even name what it is, chances are they do not see much value in it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member across the way spent a great deal of his time talking about deficits and trying to tell the government what we should be doing with respect to the deficit, from his perspective. I am wondering if the member could provide some comment to Canadians and this House as to why it is that he believes that this government should be taking advice from the Conservatives given the fact that when Brian Mulroney had left office he left the Chrétien government a multi-billion dollar deficit, which we converted into a multi-billion dollar surplus under Chrétien. Then the Harper government took that surplus and converted it into a multi-billion dollar deficit. In total, the Harper government had over \$150 billion in deficit, and now the Conservatives are trying to give us advice on deficits. I cannot quite get why it is we should be taking advice from the Conservatives on deficits when they have done such a poor job historically at balancing budgets.

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, I do not pretend to be giving the government advice, I just explained the concerns of my riding. However, if the member does not want to take the opinions from this humble member, perhaps he might want to talk to David Dodge, the former governor of the Bank of Canada, who said that if we are to invest that we should invest in productive infrastructure, not the kind of hazy feel-good infrastructure that the Liberals talk about over there, which is actually going toward consumption and is not making our economy more productive or more efficient. Stephen Gordon has gone through this, as has Andrew Coyne, saying that most of the money that the current government is spending is going toward consumption, to certain little pet projects that will not leave Canadian businesses or Canadians wealthier over the next little while. When we were in government, we actually saw wages go up for the first time in 30 years, and we surpassed the United States for the wealth of the middle class, while we lowered taxes and while we paid the bill without cutting transfers, unlike that member's party in the nineties.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, picking up on some of the actual stats from the transfer from 2006, what Stephen Harper inherited was a \$13.8-billion surplus. In point of fact, by the second and third quarter of 2008, before the financial crisis, we entered into a deficit by cutting taxes and raising spending, and the overall debt increased by \$150 billion. Therefore, I would advise my hon. colleague to remember the adage about glass houses and stones.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): A brief answer from the hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, we all have different opinions of what is in the public interest. I can say that the monies that we received as government when it first started, I was not there,

however, went toward lowering taxes for Canadians. The philosophy is that if Canadians have more money in their pocket and they have a vibrant economy, they will spend and invest and that is good for all of us. Members always seem to pick things selectively and then sort them out from where they view things should go. I would like to point out that we did have a financial crisis—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques.

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very happy to rise in the House for the third reading of Bill C-29.

It will come as a surprise to no one that I will be devoting part of my speech to infrastructure. First, however, I would like to look back in general on the work accomplished by the Liberal government that has been in power for a year now.

Over one year, we note in the end that a myriad promises have not been kept. Infrastructure is one example. The election platform of the Liberal party promised to create an infrastructure bank. However, the Liberals were careful not to indicate what this bank would be like.

My colleagues in the House tell me that their mayors and their municipal officials had the impression that, ultimately, the infrastructure bank was money invested by the federal government to ensure that the municipalities could get low-interest loans to finance their infrastructure programs. That impression derived in part from the discussions they had with their Liberal candidates at the time.

Today we find ourselves facing a monster that is a long way from the glowing picture painted for the mayors. In the end, the bank could hit \$200 billion in capitalization, and be about 80% financed by the private sector. Eventually it will have to earn a return for the private sector so that it can make good on the investments. According to some observers, such as Michael Sabia of the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec, the rate of return could be around 7% to 9%.

This is not at all what Canadians had been told. On the contrary, during the campaign, members will recall that the Liberals said that a small deficit of \$10 billion would be needed so it could be invested in infrastructure projects. We now realize that this is not what is happening at all. The deficit is far higher than predicted, since it is over \$30 billion this year, and a tiny portion of that is invested in infrastructure.

During the debate at report stage, I asked a Liberal member some questions. I wanted to know how he justified the fact that the government wanted to invest, and was boasting about investing, an additional \$80 billion over 10 years when, at the end of the day, two-thirds of the new envelopes promised will not be available until two elections from now. He said it was perfectly normal, because we need to take the time to prepare good projects. That is true. However, the current \$30-billion deficit clearly shows that that money will not be invested in infrastructure.

Government Orders

This is an important commitment. The situation promised to Canadians is not at all what the Liberal government is delivering, but that should come as no surprise. The Liberals made big promises to Canadians on a number of different issues, but those promises are not being kept.

For instance, the Liberals made a solemn promise, with hands over hearts, that they would consult first nations on development projects and that those consultations would be meaningful and genuine. However, the approval of Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain project, the Site C project, and the Muskrat Falls project, which involves flooding the area, clearly illustrate that this promise is not worth the paper it is written on.

The government swore up and down that the Trans Mountain and energy east projects would not be approved until the environmental assessment process and the public consultation process were complete. However, we recently learned that the government approved the Trans Mountain project using the Conservatives' process. The Liberals sugarcoated things by saying there would be an extra consultation process, but ultimately, the process they used to approve Trans Mountain was the one the Conservatives implemented in 2012. The same thing will happen with energy east because the government has shown no interest in changing the National Energy Board other than getting industry insiders involved in a process to re-examine what the board should be.

The Liberals also promised to end legal action against veterans and first nations.

• (1120)

My colleagues from Timmins—James Bay and Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou ask questions about that in the House all the time. They ask questions about the fact that the government is pursuing legal action that was originally launched by the Conservatives. I really do not see the Liberals keeping most of their highest-profile promises.

I would like to say a few words about Bill C-29, and then I will come back to infrastructure. One of the fundamental elements of Bill C-29 that we oppose is changes to the Bank Act that will supposedly better protect consumers. It is really just Liberal positioning. Most of the legal experts we have seen and most of the journalists on this file agree that, on the contrary, consumers will lose big if the federal government encroaches on this because it is under Quebec and provincial jurisdiction. I am looking squarely at the Liberal members from Quebec.

It is quite ironic. I asked the parliamentary secretary about this. The the government is saying that it is responding to Marcotte ruling. In that case, a consumer, Mr. Marcotte, filed suit against the Bank of Montreal. The case went all the way to the Supreme Court. The dispute was over the excessive foreign currency conversion fees charged by the banks. The banks claimed they were subject to the Bank Act and not the Consumer Protection Act. The Quebec Superior Court and then the Supreme Court ruled against them.

The government decided to respond to that and change the legislation. The Supreme Court ruled in favour of Mr. Marcotte and forced the banks to pay more than \$30 million in this class action suit. There is a principle referred to as the doctrine of federal

paramountcy, which establishes that where there is a conflict between two valid laws, the federal law will prevail; if there is no conflict, the doctrine of federal paramountcy does not apply. That is what the Supreme Court ruled on when it sided with Mr. Marcotte, because the Consumer Protection Act was not in conflict with the Bank Act in the case in question.

What was the federal government's response? It plans to voluntarily create a conflict. It is going to voluntarily create an ombudsman position, and that office will be the only place that people who feel they have been cheated by the system will be able to go for help. They will no longer be able to go to the Office de la protection du consommateur du Québec or to file class action suits. Therein lies the irony. If the amendments that the Liberals want to make to this law had already been in effect, there would have been an ombudsman, it would not have been possible to go to the Office de la protection du consommateur, and the Marcotte decision would never have been rendered. There would not have even been a lawsuit because that would not have been possible. The amendments proposed by the government will prevent the type of class action lawsuit that led to the amendment proposed in this bill.

That makes no sense, and many journalists and legal experts have recognized that. One of the people we heard from was a representative of the Public Interest Advocacy Centre. He said that this was an intrusion into provincial jurisdiction, and that the federal government should expect this matter to end up before the Supreme Court because it infringes on this area of jurisdiction. The government could also end up in court if it is not careful about the single securities regulator it wants to establish, despite opposition from Quebec and Alberta in particular.

I would like to draw my colleagues' attention to the editorial that Brigitte Breton wrote in *Le Soleil*, which is entitled "Prime Minister protecting banks". Of course, I changed the title so as not to name the Prime Minister. Ms. Breton summarized the situation as follows.

In Marcotte—a class action suit between the banking community and customers who objected to being billed for conversion charges on foreign currency credit card transactions given that they had never been notified that such fees would apply—the Supreme Court ruled that the provincial consumer protection laws applied even though banks fall under federal jurisdiction.

That was what the Supreme Court had to say. The federal government's response is to pass legislation in the hope of getting around the courts, Quebec, and the provinces by saying that it will now appropriate that right.

• (1125)

I would like Quebec members to realize that the information they have been provided by their own party is not consistent with the legal opinions or the media analysis of people who are quite knowledgeable about this matter.

Government Orders

Now that I have stated my main objection to Bill C-29, I would like to go back to the issue of infrastructure. I spoke about the infrastructure bank and the fact that the Liberals led Canadians to believe that they intended to run a deficit in order to invest in infrastructure. I have shown that that was not the case. There are other problematic elements in the Liberals' approach that really should be brought to the public's attention.

First of all, I would really like government members to start reflecting on the following situation: the federal government asked the investment firm Credit Suisse to provide advice on the privatization of airports. Credit Suisse, which is in the business of buying infrastructure, is going to give the federal government advice on whether it should privatize airports in which Credit Suisse itself would have an interest in investing. Does that not seem like a conflict of interest?

Let us move on to something else. The federal government asked Morgan Stanley, another investment firm, to advise it on privatizing 18 port authorities. This same firm was caught up in the 2008 financial crisis. Now the federal government says that all is forgiven and forgotten. There is a link for sure. Imagine a firm caught up in a financial crisis. Oh my God, there have been so many books and films about the roots of the financial crisis. We know how these firms sometimes think.

What should we expect to see at the end of the Morgan Stanley report on whether to privatize our 18 port authorities? Does anyone seriously believe that Morgan Stanley will say it is not in the federal government's interest to do it and that the firm could not in good conscience take advantage of the government like that? Of course the firm will say that privatization is in the public interest. Actually, Morgan Stanley was once a Port of Montreal shareholder, and it still has an interest in buying and in recommending privatization to the federal government.

Does that not seem like a conflict of interest to the government? I am asking in all sincerity. I do not see how the Liberals could have sat here in the last Parliament and let the Conservatives get away with this if they had decided to take that route. It is unconscionable.

The Liberals are acting fundamentally differently now that they are in power, compared to how they acted when they were in opposition. If they were still in opposition, they would be screaming that the Conservatives had no mandate to privatize airports and ports. However, that is what the Liberals are doing, even though they said nothing during the election campaign about the possibility of privatizing these pieces of infrastructure that are key to Canada's economic development.

Anyone who thinks that privatizing this kind of infrastructure is not a problem needs to think again. We have 18 port authorities. If they are to be privatized, of course the private sector will only want the juiciest pieces. That goes without saying. There is no guarantee that all 18 port authorities would find takers. The government will be stuck with the least profitable, and the most profitable will be handed over to the private sector. However, there is nothing to say that they will still be profitable in 20 years' time. That will depend on the government's decisions.

The Port of Churchill, which is vital to Canada's Arctic sovereignty, was privatized 20 years ago. Things were going well for a while. However, various decisions made by the federal government over the years led to the port being closed by the buyer. It was all smoke and mirrors for the people of Churchill. They were told that by privatizing their port, it would be revitalized by private interests.

The same thing may happen to ports, airports, and even infrastructure. What the government said during the election campaign seems to have been completely forgotten. It made fine promises, just as it did on electoral reform.

• (1130)

The Liberals promised to run deficits in order to invest in our infrastructure. Yes, we know that we currently have a major infrastructure deficit. We know that we have to reinvest. That was one of our election promises. However, we would have invested directly in infrastructure. That is what the Liberals said during the election campaign.

Never did they suggest asking the private sector, investment banks and pension funds to invest upwards of \$170 billion on the promise of returns in the form of tolls and user fees. This was never mentioned during the election campaign. The only thing the Liberals said about tolls was that there would be none on the Champlain Bridge. There are going to be tolls everywhere because these pension funds and investment banks are obviously not going to want to invest unless they get a hefty return on their investment.

The Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec said that it did not expect to get a rate of return of 9%. Does the House really think that it will invest in projects that are going to give it a 2% to 4% rate of return only, when the total rate of return on its investments was 9% for the past year? It has the fiduciary responsibility to get the best return possible. It is not going to give up a potential return of 8% to 9% to go after a return of 2% to 4% because it is in the public interest.

I am not talking about private investment funds such as BlackRock. Dominic Barton, head of the advisory council on economic growth, appeared before the Standing Committee on Finance where I asked him a question about private investors. I said that BlackRock must be interested in major infrastructure. He said no, because this investment fund was not big enough for that. However, it is bigger than the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec.

Right now, the government is trying to be reassuring. It is saying that there is nothing to worry about, that this is going to happen, that everything is under control, and that there will be no loss of control over our infrastructure. The government is saying that the private sector and investment funds will get involved in the infrastructure bank because it will be more worthwhile than the 1% or 2% in returns they get elsewhere but that we will not lose control over our infrastructure.

Government Orders

Eighty per cent of the infrastructure bank's capital will come from the private sector. Does the House think that the private sector is going to let the government make all of the decisions regarding that capital? That makes no sense. The House needs to think twice, and maybe even three or four times, before going ahead with this. Would it make sense for the private sector to invest billions of dollars in capital in an infrastructure bank and then leave all the decisions up to the federal government? No.

What we are seeing more and more in the main financial publications is that this infrastructure bank will have to be free and independent from all federal government ties. The government will put the equivalent of \$40 billion in the investment bank, \$15 billion of which will be taken from other funds, in the hopes of attracting between \$160 billion and \$170 billion.

After that, the government will no longer have a say because the bank will be independent and will not have any link whatsoever with the federal government. It will be the bank making the big decisions. It will be making the decisions since it will be 80% capitalized by the private sector. Does the House really think that the private sector will not find this opportunity irresistible? Of course it will.

It is a matter of priorities. If the private sector is seeking a high return, where will it get one? It will get one from projects that yield a good rate of return, such as from tolls and user fees mostly.

In a small community such as mine, which is largely rural, we have a project that could be worth over \$100 million. Obviously, the banks and investors would not be interested in projects under \$100 million. We have a project, highway 20. Does the House think that these investors will be interested in investing in highway 20 to Rimouski instead of investing in what could become a toll highway around Montreal, Toronto, or Vancouver? The answer is obvious.

• (1135)

Bill C-29, just like the budget and its so-called accomplishments, is mostly smoke and mirrors. During the election campaign, Canadians were tricked by the promises being sold to them, which ultimately, with few exceptions, do not at all reflect what Canadians believed from the Liberals during the election campaign. This is a big part of the reason why we will be opposing Bill C-29 at third reading.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from the Standing Committee on Finance for his speech.

During the last election, the NDP promised to balance the budget at all costs, but, as is standard for them, our friends in the NDP were short on ideas with respect to growing the Canadian economy.

We have come up with some ways to do just that. In our platform we put forward ways to find alternatives for funding infrastructure, because that frees up more money for rural communities. We put forward a balanced approach to approving energy infrastructure. The NDP worked hard at finding lots of things to spend money on, but was short on ideas about how to grow the Canadian economy.

I would like my colleague to provide us with some specifics on his plan for growing the Canadian economy, something Canadians so badly need.

Mr. Guy Caron: Madam Speaker, he is asking me to do in a minute what they have not managed to do in a year. Right now we are headed toward a \$35-billion deficit, when they promised a deficit of \$10 billion, and what did we get?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Balance!

Mr. Guy Caron: What we got, Madam Speaker, is very little money invested in infrastructure, because two-thirds of it will be invested in 10 years. With \$30 billion or \$35 billion, what did we get?

Over the past year, we lost 30,000 full-time jobs across the country, 50,000 manufacturing jobs were lost, and, just last month, young people lost 40,000 full-time jobs.

I would say that the government needs to do some soul-searching and find out whether the investments so far have really been growing the economy.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: What is your plan?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would like to remind the hon. member for Gatineau that, when he asked his question, the members listened to him respectfully. I would ask him therefore to show the same respect for those who have the floor. I would appreciate it if he would not lose sight of that.

Resuming questions and comments, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons has the floor.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I find it amazing that New Democratic MPs stand up and talk about all the things we could have done. As my colleague just pointed out, there was a commitment by the NDP in the last election to balance the budget. I asked yesterday how the New Democrats would balance that budget or if their policy has changed in regard to balancing the budget. The member avoided answering the question. It is a legitimate thing that Canadians have the right to know.

If the New Democrats had been elected to government, would they have stuck to a balanced budget? I would like to think not, because if they had stuck to the balanced budget model they were talking about, we would not have seen the lifting of thousands of children and thousands of seniors out of poverty, and we would not see the incredible amount being spent on infrastructure.

Do the New Democrats still support the notion that they would have had a balanced budget, thereby creating massive cuts in every region of our country?

Mr. Guy Caron: Madam Speaker, I am not telling the Liberals what they should do. I am reminding them of what they said they would do. That is very different.

During the campaign, the Liberals promised that they would actually have small deficits of \$10 billion to invest in infrastructure. We know that there is very little investment right now in infrastructure, but we are reaching a deficit of \$30 billion to \$35 billion. We know that the bulk of the proposed infrastructure spending will be two elections from now.

What did we get for that \$30 billion or \$35 billion? At least if we had some growth, it might be justified. However, since they have taken power, we have lost 30,000 full-time jobs in this country. We have lost 50,000 manufacturing jobs in this country. We have lost 40,000 full-time jobs for youth in the last month alone.

I would like the member to actually reflect on this, instead of spouting his talking points. Their government might actually be going in the wrong direction by making the wrong decisions regarding where their investments can actually bring the most bang for the buck. That is what we said during the campaign.

[Translation]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech. He has very clearly explained our positions on a number of issues.

I would like to return to one point he raised, namely the contrast between the way the Conservatives managed infrastructure and the way the Liberals are doing it. As has been said many times, the privatization plan, this privatization bank, goes even further than what the Conservatives themselves did.

My colleague from Spadina—Fort York has called those who oppose the plan stupid. Yesterday he tried in vain to qualify his words by saying that it is not individuals who are stupid but the opposition. I do believe he failed in his attempt.

I raise this point so that it is clear that a body already exists, called PPP Canada. When the government came to power, it made a good decision in agreeing to the municipalities' request that they no longer be obliged to do business with PPP Canada when seeking financial support. Not all municipalities need it. Instead of that, the Liberals took this idea even further by creating a situation where different investment companies will now have control and will make taxpayers pay twice instead of once: once through their taxes and again through tolls and user fees.

I would like to hear my colleague's comments about this contrast in the government's approach. In the end, we can say that real change has really not happened.

● (1140)

Mr. Guy Caron: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent question.

Let us consider the issue of the infrastructure bank. From what we have heard, investors are not really interested in projects under \$100 million.

The Minister of Finance himself has admitted that the smaller municipalities might not get much from the infrastructure bank. The municipalities with high credit ratings, such as AAA, are not interested, because it is more profitable for them to borrow than to provide investors with rates of return ranging between 7% and 9%. So what is left?

Government Orders

The infrastructure bank will mainly target the poorest of the big municipalities and large cities that do not have access to a high credit rating. Obviously, they will be the most attractive targets for privatization of their infrastructures and for collection of tolls and user fees. The consumers, the users, will already have paid for the infrastructures in part, through their income taxes.

Of course the Liberals never mention this, but it will have to be considered within the big infrastructure plan, which seems to me very chaotic.

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, in my region we have the Windsor-Detroit border crossing, where approximately 35% of Canada's national trade to America goes through on a daily basis. One of the things that is happening is that we are in the process of building a new border crossing, which the government wants to do as a P3.

Interestingly, the current crossing, the Ambassador Bridge, has a long history with the Liberal Party. It is basically its patron saint, in many respects. In fact, a private American billionaire has such a cosy relationship with it that the government actually dispatched a former Liberal to talk about buying out the American billionaire and publicly getting the crossing. Meanwhile, we are building a new crossing as a P3. These connections with the Liberal Party are very strong.

I would ask my colleague to talk about the 9% additional user fee as taxation. A toll is a tax. Would he agree?

Mr. Guy Caron: Madam Speaker, that is accurate. What he said was that the return those investors would look for is in the high range. Michael Sabia said so. Dominic Barton said so. He has been speaking around the world for five or six years, since he was at McKinsey, about the virtues of having private capital to fund infrastructure. He is actually very honest in his speeches that yes, there will be tolls and there will be user fees.

That is not what the Liberals promised during the campaign. This is why I am saying that Canadians have the right to feel that they have been betrayed on this promise, as on many others, such as, for example, electoral reform.

● (1145)

[Translation]

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-29. I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Fredericton. Today I want to talk about how the budget implementation bill will affect an ordinary family in my riding.

[English]

One of the things we all saw during the election was how Canadians as a whole, men, women, and children, were affected by actions taken by the government. We listened to what our constituents had to say.

I thought it would be interesting to take an average family of five and put it into this budget. As I do not want to use an actual family in my riding, I will use a fictional family. Let us call them the Simpsons.

Government Orders

The Simpsons are five people. There is a father named Homer. He works in a nuclear power plant and is the sole income earner of the family. His wife's name is Marge. She is a stay-at-home mom, and they have three children, Bart, Lisa, and a little baby named Maggie.

Homer earns approximately \$85,000 a year in the nuclear power plant. That is the sole income for the Simpson family. Homer will now see an added 1.5% on all of his income between \$44,500 and \$85,000, approximately \$1,500, for Homer and Marge to spend on their family. Whether it is for Lisa's saxophone lessons or for such indulgences as hair dye for Marge, the Simpsons will have extra money in their pockets because of the budget this year.

As for the family allowances, now on a tax-free basis, for little Maggie, they could see up to \$6,400. They will not, because they are in a higher income tax bracket, but they will see more money. For children under six, it is \$6,400, and for kids between six and 18, it is \$5,400 for those who are at the lowest income levels. Their neighbours, who are at lower income levels, are actually seeing their children coming out of poverty. Over 300,000 Canadian children are coming out of poverty because of these tax-free Canada child benefits.

The Simpsons will have added money as well from the Canada child benefits, because at their income level, like 90% of Canadian families they will see more money in their pockets for all three of their children.

Let us talk about communication. Marge has two sisters, Patty and Selma. They live in a rural Canadian community where the Internet is difficult to access. This budget puts \$500 million toward enhancing broadband Internet access for those rural communities so that Marge will one day be able to Skype with her sisters and watch them light up as she talks to them.

Homer's dad lives in the community. Abe Simpson, who we will call Grandpa Simpson, lives alone, a single, poor man who is a veteran.

First, he has enhanced veterans benefits now. As well, veterans offices closer to him are re-opening to ensure that his role in protecting his country is recognized.

Second, he is on a guaranteed income supplement. The guaranteed income supplement has been up by close to \$1,000 a year to allow him to live better and in more security.

Let us say that Abe has a partner, and she is in the hospital or in a long-term care facility. One of the things I am happiest about in this budget relates to the fact that now they are recognized as living on their own, for the purpose of the guaranteed income supplement, and not as living together, which would reduce the total benefit they are receiving.

These things are helpful. They help Canadian families and they are making a true difference.

Lisa, alone among the children of Homer and Marge, is an incredibly bright girl and wants to go to college. According to what was laid out in the budget, she will have more ability to get student loans and more ability to afford to go to a good college anywhere in Canada. Not only that, but she will only need to start repaying these student loans when she starts to earn \$25,000 a year, so she will have

a great chance to further her education and then become a very successful person in society, no matter what she chooses to do.

• (1150)

Then there is also more money for vocational training. Let us say Bart does not want to go to college, but he wants to become a plumber or a mechanic. There is more money to help him achieve his goals, including internships, in this budget. On the whole, taking this typical Canadian family, this budget would make things so much better for them.

Let us talk about infrastructure. Homer takes the bus to work. There was a lot of money, which has now been agreed on with the provinces and the federal government, in this budget to go to infrastructure to help public transit, to make our buses greener and cleaner, more environmentally friendly. As a former mayor, I went into federal politics in the hope that there would be budgets like this that enhanced and increased infrastructure spending. This budget achieves that, and would allow Homer's ride to work to be cleaner, safer, and better.

I am just going to talk about the roads that they drive on. In my riding there is the Cavendish Boulevard extension, linking two parts of Cavendish Boulevard together, from the riding of Saint-Laurent to the riding of Mount Royal. This is the most important missing piece of the Montreal Island road network and is something for which we desperately need infrastructure monies. It is one of those projects that could come to fruition because of this type of budget that gives more money for cities to be able to enhance roads, water mains, and all kinds of hard infrastructure, as well as social infrastructure, like public housing.

It could be the case that Marge has another aunt who lives in public housing, in one of those places where the funds were cut by the previous government when it stopped renewing agreements. The Liberal government renewed those agreements to give monies back, so that Marge's aunt would have more money in her pocket to pay her rent. That is important.

One thing I wanted to talk about is the following.

[*Translation*]

Our colleagues in the New Democratic Party talked about the Bank Act and the Marcotte decision. In Marcotte, the provisions of Quebec's Consumer Protection Act were upheld because, although the federal legislation has precedence when it comes to banks, also known as the paramountcy doctrine, the federal government had failed to legislate in certain areas. It was in those areas that Quebec's Consumer Protection Act applied.

If we do not legislate these matters, the Consumer Protection Act will continue to apply. We know that, at present, we refer to the regulations. We do not know exactly what this legislation will look like. We may legislate certain areas and we may not legislate at all. In those areas, the Consumer Protection Act will continue to apply. In the areas in which federal legislation exists, it is true that the Consumer Protection Act might no longer apply. However, we want to have a national approach.

Government Orders

[English]

I want to say that, as a Quebec MP, I am happy that consumers across Canada would be more protected because of this act. There would be the introduction of a cooling-off period during which a consumer could cancel an agreement for products or services provided by a bank. There would be an unfair practice regime to add to the tied selling restriction, and a prohibition against taking advantage of persons who are unable to protect their own interests.

There would be an amendment regime, where banks could not just amend their contracts without notifying and giving the details to consumers. There would be an easier way to set up bank accounts with more types of identification. I am very happy that our government is introducing accountability within the banking framework in Canada and trying to protect consumers from across Canada against the abuses from the banking sector.

In closing, I support Bill C-29. I am sure my hon. colleague from Fredericton, who will follow me with an incredible speech, also supports Bill C-29. I encourage all members of this House to support Bill C-29.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member started so well. He was talking about fictional characters, and I wish this budget was fictional as well and that we would return to reality.

I know the member has a love for Yiddish proverbs, as I do, so to be a critic is easier than to be author. I am mindful of that. I really hope that, during his term as the mayor of Côte-Saint-Luc, he did better than Mayor Quimby of Springfield did in his administration of public funds.

I want to ask a question. The member has mentioned so many government programs—money for everyone, money for children, money for seniors, money for this, money for that—but at the end of the day, it all comes with a bill that has to be paid by future generations. The next generation will have to pay for it.

We know that all of the spending the Liberals have done so far has produced no net, full-time, new jobs. We know that they have achieved very little, if any, with the spending they have done so far. The infrastructure spending has also been very little.

Is the member's government on the road to becoming the next Mayor Quimbys of Canada?

• (1155)

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, I always love the humour of my colleague from Calgary Shepard, and I appreciate his understanding of the references I made.

I certainly would not say I took after Mayor Quimby as mayor of Côte-Saint-Luc, nor do I think the government takes after Mayor Quimby. I will not impugn whoever may have been more like Mayor Quimby, because that would be disrespectful.

Our government is well on its way to creating jobs across Canada. The number of part-time jobs has escalated enormously. The indicators are that the jobs will come back, and more importantly, infrastructure money is now flowing out the door. We know we are taking actions that will enhance the security of Canadians in the long term.

I share the member's concern, always, about more spending. I know it is a short-term issue. While we are now in a position where we have the lowest debt ratio of any country, and with low interest rates, this is indeed the time to spend. It is not always like that, but this is the time.

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Madam Speaker, before a Liberal MP gets up and asks a planted question about how the government has the momentum of a runaway freight train, I do want to repeat the point that our finance critic made, that the government's infrastructure bank scheme is going to turn not only the monorail but a great deal of other infrastructure over to Mr. Burns.

I also want to question the math presented by the member for Mount Royal. He suggested that Homer was making \$85,000 per year and that the middle-class tax cut would give him 1.5% on the amount in excess of \$45,000. He also suggested that would somehow work out to \$1,500. I would submit that 1.5% of that \$40,000 is actually more like \$600. Again, we see these Liberal promises are much less than they are cracked up to be.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my friend from Regina—Lewvan, who also has a great pop culture knowledge, and the reference to the monorail was much appreciated.

First, I want to deal with the infrastructure bank. The infrastructure bank would mean even more money going out, not all money. In fact, an insignificant percentage of the total infrastructure money would be coming from the infrastructure bank. The infrastructure bank is in addition to federal funds flowing out. What it would do is enhance the municipalities' options. No municipality is obliged to go to the infrastructure bank to borrow. This would give municipalities, such as the one I ran, enhanced options.

I want to acknowledge to my colleague, though, because I always try to be as honest and forthcoming as possible, that when I was using \$1,500, that was not only in terms of tax cuts. You are absolutely right. The amount between \$45,000 and \$85,000 is approximately \$600. I was factoring in enhanced monies from the Canada child benefit when I came to the top amount, so I want to thank him for his clarification on my calculation.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member that he referenced “you”. Again, I want to remind members of the House that it would be best not to use the word “you” and to address all questions to the Chair.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Fredericton.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Fredericton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let me thank my hon. colleague for his return to childhood humour and fun in his speech just now.

I am proud to rise in the House today to discuss Bill C-29. The act would fulfill commitments made in budget 2016 and build on other actions taken by the government that would strengthen Canada's middle class, ensure seniors achieve a secure and dignified retirement, and provide necessary supports for our women and men in uniform, among other important measures.

Government Orders

Budget 2016 would have a significant and tangible benefit for Canadians and for people in Fredericton, New Maryland, Oromocto, and the Grand Lake region, the riding I am honoured to represent.

Our government's first order of business was cutting taxes for nine million Canadians, part of our commitment to strengthen the middle class and help those families working hard to join it. This targeted tax cut provided roughly \$3.4 billion in annual financial relief to middle-class individuals and families. More money left in the hands of middle-class Canadians means more money being spent and invested in our local economy.

● (1200)

[*Translation*]

This measure is one of the many changes our government has made to give Canadians what they want and deserve: a fair tax system that gives everyone a chance to succeed and prosper.

The government is committed to putting forward a budget that prioritizes supporting families and ensuring their well-being. That is what we did, and we did it quite decisively by creating the Canada child benefit. This innovative child benefit was designed to help families that need it most so they can cover the high cost of raising children nowadays.

[*English*]

In New Brunswick, the Canada child benefit has had a transformational effect on thousands of families. More than 112,000 children in New Brunswick alone are benefiting from this new instrument, which consequently will add more than \$622 million to the regional economy in its first two years.

As the first tax-free Canada child benefit cheques were sent to families in July, I read a story in Fredericton's *The Daily Gleaner* about a young mother and father of two children who said the benefit had changed everything for them. The mother told the newspaper that every month it was a struggle to keep on top of their bills, keep a roof over their children's heads, and keep food in their bellies, but thanks to the Canada child benefit, the family was getting its bills in order, could comfortably cover the cost of essentials, and could afford opportunities to make memories with their children, such as a trip to the Moncton zoo with the children's grandparents, something that would not have been possible without the new Canada child benefit.

The mother also said that the Canada child benefit would give her the flexibility and possibility to pursue post-secondary studies so she could further improve her family situation. A benefit for families that can do all this is certainly something I know my colleagues can all get behind, as well as Canadians.

In New Brunswick, there is an aging population that is more pronounced than elsewhere in the country. For this reason, I was pleased to see measures in budget 2016 that would provide support and help to seniors and those about to enter retirement.

[*Translation*]

By bringing the age of eligibility for old age security back down to 65, we gave thousands of dollars back to Canadians entering their senior years. The lowest-income seniors will get up to \$17,000. Our government provided additional assistance to more than 900,000 of

the most vulnerable seniors when it enhanced the guaranteed income supplement by up to \$947 per year for seniors living alone.

[*English*]

While shifting demographics present us with many challenges, they also provide us with new and exciting opportunities. I am proud that the Fredericton region has positioned itself as a national leader in addressing our health care challenges in innovative ways and that this vision has been met with enthusiasm from our government.

In September, I was pleased to announce \$36 million in combined funding for the University of New Brunswick to build a centre for healthy living on its Fredericton campus. This project was made possible because of our government's strategic infrastructure fund. This new centre will allow researchers at UNB's faculty of kinesiology to work collaboratively on solving big issues in health. This research and the applications that will come from this centre promise to improve the lives of all Canadians, from my home town of Freddy Beach.

There are already several solution-based projects and commercial development at UNB's faculty of kinesiology, including oxygen-based therapy for healing and wearable robotics that assist people with mobility issues. This is just the start of a vision to establish our province as a living lab and national leader in preventive health care.

As the representative in the House of the riding that is home to Canada's second largest military training base, 5th Canadian Division Support Base Gagetown, I am proud of our women and men in uniform, our veterans, and their families. Soldiers who train at Base Gagetown serve our country and promote peace and stability at home and abroad, and the base itself is an important economic engine for the Fredericton region and the province as a whole.

In fact, Base Gagetown represents roughly 70% of the population of Oromocto and surrounding communities, employs 5,500 military members and 1,100 civilian personnel, and contributes more than \$600 million annually to New Brunswick's economy. As it is such an integral part of the region, I was pleased to join the Minister of National Defence this summer to announce \$38 million in funding to improve critical infrastructure and build new training facilities at Base Gagetown. This investment will ensure suitable infrastructure within the base's vast training grounds and will increase the quality of training for our women and men in uniform.

● (1205)

[*Translation*]

It is just as important to help the active members of the Canadian Armed Forces as it is to ensure that veterans are getting the support and services they deserve after all the efforts and sacrifice they made for our country.

Government Orders

Over the past year, the government's determination to provide better service to veterans and their families has been clear. We are committed to reopening the nine Veterans Affairs Canada offices that were closed by the previous government. This will help us ensure that our veterans have access in their home communities to the services, care, and compassion they deserve.

I know that this is just a few of the many measures that the Government of Canada must take to improve the services and benefits provided to our veterans.

[English]

The government is committed to improving the lives of all Canadians, including families, seniors, and veterans. Bill C-29 demonstrates the government's deep commitment to moving the economy forward without leaving anyone behind. Budget 2016 works to improve the lives of families and to combat poverty through the Canada child benefit. With a simpler, tax-free, and more generous Canada child benefit, nine out of 10 Canadian families will receive higher monthly benefits and hundreds of thousands of children will be lifted out of poverty.

[Translation]

The government is working for seniors across Canada and is determined to improve their quality of life.

[English]

Budget 2016 will work to give back to our veterans who have given so much in service to our country. We will restore critical access to services for veterans and ensure the long-term financial security of disabled veterans and their families.

The government is devoted to improving the lives of all Canadians and Bill C-29 works to do just that.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, between 2006 and 2014, the last year Statistics Canada has data on child poverty, there was significant decrease in the child poverty rate from 16.3% to 14.7%, thanks to our Conservative government. I would lay that on the record to show that it was a Conservative government that significantly decreased child poverty. If we look at the previous 10 years under a Liberal government, poverty rates were around 15% for those within the low-income threshold.

The Liberals are borrowing billions upon billions of dollars to shovel out money for infrastructure spending and to increase program spending. Nothing in their current budget document shows them returning to a balanced budget. When will the Liberals return to a balanced budget?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: Mr. Speaker, my colleague's question allows me to speak to the ongoing initiatives in New Brunswick supported by the federal government, particularly just down the road in Saint John. My hon. colleague from Saint John—Rothesay will say that the federal government is invested in researching, investigating, and finding solutions to lifting children out of poverty. We know that the Canada child benefit will help lift upwards of 300,000 children out of those vulnerable situations on its own, but there is much more that we can do, and starting from a place like Saint John, we are going to figure out how to do that.

My hon. colleague also asked about infrastructure. I did not have a chance to mention in my speech that this summer in New Brunswick alone, through combined federal and provincial funding, 51 projects for water and wastewater upgrades throughout the province were approved, for a total investment of \$176 million to help improve essential services and the quality of life of communities. That is the type of long-term investment this government is focused on and that Canadians across the country, and certainly in Fredericton and New Brunswick, can count on for the foreseeable future.

● (1210)

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to remind my hon. colleague about something that many people were counting on in my riding. It was talked about a lot on the election trail. Many small business owners in my riding really counted on the promised tax reduction. In my riding and many others across Canada, small and medium-sized businesses are really the engine, the job creators, in our communities.

The parliamentary budget officer estimates that the cancellation of the election promise to reduce tax rates on small businesses will cost small and medium-sized businesses more than \$2.1 billion over the next four years. Why not give small and medium-sized businesses a break? Why not follow through on an election promise that many people in my riding were counting on?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, this government is working collaboratively across departments, across jurisdictions, to help grow the economy in Atlantic Canada, where we know the overwhelming majority of businesses are small and medium sized. With our Atlantic growth strategy, we are investing in immigration and in bringing skilled workers to the region to help fill positions and grow enterprises.

I mentioned the Canada child benefit, which will put \$622 million more back into the regional economy. This is spending power in families' pockets so they can spend and help support local businesses.

I can tell the member that in my community on Queen Street in Fredericton, small businesses are feeling quite energized this year. They have had a good year in Fredericton, demonstrated through a reduced unemployment rate; through the Canada child benefit, enabling families to support their children and spend more on the essential services and goods they need; and also through the Atlantic growth strategy, which will only strengthen small and medium-sized businesses in our region and provide for economic growth in Atlantic Canada.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, from the onset I will say that I will be splitting my time with my colleague from Calgary, the member for Calgary Signal Hill.

Government Orders

As I have done before, I want to start with the Yiddish proverb, “To assume is to be deceived”. I believe that the Liberal government and the members of the Liberal caucus have deceived themselves into believing they can spend their way to a brighter future. The Liberals assumed during the election that they could run a little deficit of \$10 billion. In truth, they are now running a \$30 billion deficit just this year. They also assumed that budgets balance themselves, and now we know, thanks to the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, they are borrowing \$3 million per hour.

The Liberals also assumed they could stimulate the economy endlessly by a splurge in spending that would somehow create jobs. We know from Statistics Canada that that is simply untrue. No new net full-time jobs have been created. I heard a member praising the government's efforts to create part-time jobs, but in truth, young people and people who are working want full-time jobs because full-time jobs provide dental and health benefits and the fulsome income they can raise a family with.

The \$100-plus billion of new debt the current government will accumulate in four years represents deferred taxes in the future. The next generation will pay for all of this new debt being accrued. Also, there is no plan to return to a surplus in the federal budget.

I often hear from Liberal members that the previous Conservative government spent a lot of money too. They seem to forget the events that led up to that. One is the great recession. I also remember that when the Liberals were in opposition, it was their members who called for more infrastructure spending, but then said it was simply never enough. They could always find another project to spend on and wanted more infrastructure spending. However, today they say that is not the case and that the infrastructure spending they want is the good stuff and what we want is not. Therefore, we now see the current government looking at new areas to tax. It will be taxing future generations by deferring debt into the future. They are borrowing today to pay for things they want immediately and making future generations pay for them.

What the Liberals will also do is tax dental and health benefits. Yesterday, they refused to say they would not do that. Therefore, the only thing left to assume is that they will be taxing the health and dental benefits of Canadians.

According to the numbers crunched by Doug Porter, the chief economist at BMO Capital Markets, we know that their so-called stimulus and infrastructure spending has in fact acted “as a small drag on the overall economy over the past four quarters”.

As I mentioned, the Liberals assumed that the jobless rate would fix itself. In my home province of Alberta, we know that is not the case. Since November 2015, Alberta's unemployment rate is up by a third, which is equal to 52,000 lost jobs alone. Calgary's unemployment rate is officially now at over 10.3%. These are official Statistics Canada numbers, but they exclude the under-employed, the people who have been furloughed, who have a job but are simply not being paid because their employer does not have the means to do it, as well as people who are no longer looking for work.

With respect to young people and graduates, Statistics Canada published a study on December 5 that states:

...young people have seen their job quality decline over the last four decades, even as the unemployment rate has remained virtually unchanged.... a result driven mainly by the rise of part-time work rather than increases in unemployment rates or decreases in labour force participation.

In a previous life, I worked in human resources. I was the registrar for the Human Resources Institute of Alberta. I registered members. At the time, I had a certified human resources professional designation, so I met many members who were responsible for hiring. They did things like compensation, pension planning, and organizational effectiveness. For the most part, they were always concerned about maximizing the return of every single employee by maximizing their career prospects within the organization they were in. The last thing they wanted to see was people squander their potential in a position that was not the right fit for them.

What is affecting young people as well are the new real estate rules, which will leave a lot of first-time homebuyers out in the cold. I will mention an article that was put out by CBC News on December 3. I will not mention the person's name, but she felt “deceived by the government”. This is a young person who was looking to join the property ladder. The best savings tool anyone can have is to invest in property. Over the last 50 years, those who have done so have gained tremendously from it. It forces people to save and put money aside to pay off their principal.

The article goes on to say, “You're planning ahead and then all of a sudden the government comes and takes it away from you.”

●(1215)

That is pretty typical of the Liberal government. The Liberals think that every single problem society has can be solved with more government. Then when more government is responsible for more problems and things do not quite work out, they will set up a secretariat; then they will do more consultations and they will set up more government and hire more civil servants to try to meet the problems that were initially caused by the government.

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In that same report, the reporter mentions Re/Max L'Espace Griffintown. Talking about the purchase of property that will help people save for the future, he said that 90% of the clients who put their projects on hold or dropped out of the market are millennials. These are young people who are finding they can no longer save or invest in a real estate property. Now, this is pushing people to higher-risk lenders. I will just mention that, "Unchecked expansion in this opaque corner of the real estate credit market means a buildup Canadians carrying uninsured short-term subprime mortgages, putting them at a greater risk of distressed home sales and personal bankruptcies in the event that interest rates go up." We know that eventually interest rates will have to go up and Canadians will be paying more every single month to then service that debt. If they have an uninsured subprime mortgage, or an uninsured mortgage, period, that amount would actually go up faster.

I would be remiss if I did not mention this other assumption that has deceived the Liberals, which is on their income tax cut. We know from the good work in the Senate that this income tax cut is anything but a cut for the middle class. What we see is that those people earning a \$48,000 salary actually would enjoy a cut of \$81.44. For those earning \$60,000, it would be \$261.44. For those earning \$89,000, it is \$696.44. Actually, the people receiving the greatest benefit from this tax cut would be those people who do not need it, people like those who sit in this chamber, as it so happens, because they earn a much higher income than the average Canadian. In fact, the highest 20% in the income quartiles, of unattached individuals, earn \$55,499. The other 80% of Canadians earn less than that. For families of two or more, it is \$125,000 or less, which means that 80% of Canadians are earning less than that amount. In fact, we know this so-called middle-income tax cut is anything but for the middle class. It would not actually benefit a great many of them.

There is this tax cut that the Liberals keep talking about as being so good and so generous. What about the carbon tax they are going to be imposing on Canadians? I know that there is a business owner in my riding who has told me that alone in 2017 that business will be paying \$588,000 more in taxes just in carbon tax. In 2018, that business would pay \$883,000. That business employs almost 500 people and the only way it can pay this increase is by increasing the price of its product. It is involved in exporting products through the Port of Vancouver. This is not something the business owner can simply do, and pass it on to consumers, to purchasers.

My final point is on the so-called infrastructure deficit. My question is this. When is it enough? The members for Scarborough Centre, Spadina—Fort York, Mississauga East—Cooksville, and Louis-Hébert all mentioned this infrastructure deficit. Infrastructure spending that the government has done according to its own records on its own infrastructure website include the following: digital advertising signs in St. John's, arena floor replacements in Fortune, a T1 pre-boarding announcement system, bicycle parking at 40 TTC stations, missing sidewalks in Toronto in 2017-2018, a Bike Share Toronto expansion at 50 TTC stations, real-time alternative transportation information screens, aboriginal consultation, Rideau Canal crossing at Fifth to Clegg. Is this the infrastructure deficit we are talking about? I am told it is much-needed infrastructure to stimulate Canada's economy. What about the Grand Allée naturalized wet pond; restoration, rehabilitation of multiple transit shelters; Wi-Fi installation for the bus fleet; electric bus pilot project

in Halifax; and lagoon rehabilitation? The list goes on to include sidewalk renewal at miscellaneous locations; I guess they could not find them all in Ottawa, that needed to be upgraded. Again, there is more aboriginal consultation in Ottawa.

My question is always this. When is it enough? What types of projects is the government funding with this money that is so-called to stimulate the economy? I really do believe that the Liberals have deceived themselves into believing this. They have accepted the assumptions from the Prime Minister's Office from the Prime Minister's staff, and they have deceived themselves into believing that this budget is good for Canadians when, in truth, it is not. It would pass on massive amounts of debt to future generations. I will be voting against it, and I urge all members to do the same.

• (1220)

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I heard a lot in the speeches by members across the floor today that the new child benefit would bring thousands of dollars to families. My colleague from Calgary Shepard touched on this. Have members on the other side talked to their constituents and told them they will be giving every penny of that back through the carbon tax and the CPP tax hike and now possibly through taxes on medical and dental insurance?

What impact does my colleague see the true part of the budget having on Canadian families? Are there actually going to be savings? What would the tax implications of this budget be?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, the member has the second most beautiful riding in Canada with mine obviously being the first.

I will start with the child poverty rate in Canada over the last nine or so years under the previous Conservative government. According to the latest Statistics Canada data available, the rate went down from 16.3% to 14.7%. The previous Conservative government was lowering taxes, controlling public spending, making sure the debt was not increased too much, and ensuring that it built toward a surplus.

The goal of a budget is to aim toward a surplus. We cannot start nickel-and-diming Canadians, which the Liberal government has done, with its so-called middle-class tax cut, which, as I have shown in my intervention, would not affect the middle class very much. The government will be nickel-and-diming Canadians through its carbon tax and now by taxing their dental and health benefits. What is really pernicious about this is that just a few years down the line all this debt will have to be paid back. Billions of dollars in interest will have to be paid, so taxes will have to go up to pay for that and obviously the quality of life and the quality of living will go down. At that point the government will start cutting into programs, and that is when Canadians will realize that the assumptions that the Liberal government has accepted will not only deceive the government side but will deceive all Canadians.

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• (1225)

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I actually have the honour of representing the most beautiful riding in Canada.

I appreciated my colleague's comments on the effect of this budget on citizens. I should point out that the riding I have the honour of representing has a median income of \$23,000 a year and the average income is \$30,000 a year. It is one of the more low-income ridings in the country. My constituents do very well because they are tough, smart, and entrepreneurial, and they can get by on modest incomes.

Study after study has shown that the carbon tax would especially hit low-income people and rural people the hardest. In fact, I have heard people in Ontario talk about, "Energy poverty, where poor people have to choose between their hydro bills and their food bills".

Could my colleague talk about the effect of this pernicious budget on low-income and rural Canadians?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, the member does indeed have the second most beautiful riding in Canada with mine again being the first—

Mr. John Barlow: What?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, my colleague's riding of Foothills has been downgraded.

People who are on fixed income will suffer the most from a carbon tax. What is most pernicious about it is that it would be a tax on everything. Transportation fuel costs would be much higher. We have seen this in Alberta with what the Alberta NDP government is going to do.

On January 1, 2017, the Alberta government is going to introduce a new carbon tax on basically everything. As a result of us transporting most of our goods between provinces and across international borders, that will have the highest impact on food and rent, because all of the material is going toward renovations and maintenance. Heating costs will go up. People on limited income or fixed income will not be able to pay for it.

Food banks both across Canada and in my community have people going in with their hydro bills and saying they have to choose between paying their rent or paying their food bill. They choose to pay their rent because it is winter and they need a place to live. This is a big problem in Ontario. In Calgary specifically, the number of people using food banks has gone up. People who used to donate are now recipients asking for help, which is the right thing to do. If help is needed people should go to a food bank and ask for it.

All of this is because of government action. None of this was necessary. This is a tax imposed by a government and we know from the Australian experience that it does not work and it does not help the environment in any way. It is simply a tax grab.

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand in this House today. I feel privileged because I will be one of the members who will have the opportunity to speak on third reading on this bill. We know that most of the members will not be able to speak on it because, as we are well aware, the government has brought in time allocation, more commonly known

as closure, the guillotine measure, and so I am privileged to have the opportunity to say a few words today.

I also would like to congratulate my colleague, the member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, for a terrific speech this morning. I think he touched on a lot of the issues that I would probably normally touch on. They are also the kinds of issues that I know my constituents certainly can relate to.

And of course, as always, the member for Calgary Shepard is an eloquent speaker. I just wish I could have done as well when I was his youthful age.

When I was thinking about my remarks today, I got thinking back to when I was a young person, growing up in Saskatchewan. That would have been in the sixties. We had a Liberal premier in Saskatchewan named Ross Thatcher. Of course, everyone knows that Saskatchewan is sort of endless skies and, in some way, endless roads. There was a saying back in the sixties, when the Liberals were in office in Saskatchewan, under Ross Thatcher, "If it moves, tax it; if it doesn't move, pave it". It kind of reminds of this particular budget. In fact, in Saskatchewan, when they did pave it, they were known as "Thatcher's patchers".

What I think I would like to hear in 2016, again, is "If it moves, tax it; if it doesn't move, we'll call it infrastructure".

I just wanted to put that on the record.

What I would like to do, though, is talk a bit about where we are. I guess it's six months, now, after the government introduced this particular budget. There were some statistics that were released in the last few days. I know the Liberals were twisting their arms, trying to pat themselves on their backs with the November job numbers: 10,700 new jobs.

There used to be a guy on the radio called Paul Harvey. He had a program that was called *The Rest of the Story*. I think that is pretty applicable, as well, to this particular situation because of those 10,700 new jobs, 18,000 are part-time. I know even the Liberals' math does not quite equate when we divide 18,000 into 10,700, but what it really amounts to is the fact that we lost 8,700 full-time jobs in the last month.

That now brings the number of full-time jobs that have been lost in this country, in the last year since the government took office, to over 30,000 full-time jobs.

A lot of those jobs are in the member for Calgary Shepard's riding, my riding, and other Alberta MPs' ridings. Calgary has just, I think, hit an all-time high in the unemployment rate at 10.3% for the month of November and as my colleague, the member for Calgary Shepard, made the point, that is only what Statistics Canada is able to measure. We all know that there are a number of others that simply do not fall into those statistics.

Also, the government members were trying, last week, to pat themselves on their backs for a slight increase in GDP in the third quarter.

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The Minister of Finance, in answer to a planted question from one of his backbenchers, stood in this House and said that one of the reasons the GDP increased in the third quarter is because of the rebuilding in Fort McMurray after the fires. That minister should stand in this House and apologize. Not only was that the wrong answer, in terms of how we are creating GDP, but he had the facts wrong.

● (1230)

The reason the GDP increased in the third quarter was because oil production from the oil sands resumed. I know the anti-oil government cannot quite accept that fact, but the third-quarter GDP numbers were specifically attributable to the fact of the resumption of oil out of the oil sands. The Liberals have no reason to take credit for anything.

It is one thing to say that the government should be doing something, but it is another thing to say what could it be doing that it is not doing. We all know about some of the things the government did not do, like keep its election promise to reduce the small business tax rate. That is evident. That would have significantly helped a number of small businesses in Alberta. Again, we have to remind the government that small business in our country creates jobs and not government. I know government does not believe that, but that is a fact.

Another thing we have mentioned is that if the government had allocated some of those dollars in budget 2016 to a program to clean up abandoned oil wells in Alberta, that would have been good for the environment and it would have put thousands of laid-off oil field workers back to work immediately. We are all pleased that the government has finally made a decision on Trans Mountain, but the reality of it is that construction, at the earliest, will not start for another year, and that is provided we do not have protestors and environmentalists holding up that project.

Those are a couple of examples of what the government could have done.

It is typical for the parliamentary secretary to government House leader to rant on about the budget deficits under a Conservative government. I would like to remind the government that one of the first things the Conservatives did when they took over as a government was to reduce the GST from 7% to 6% and then 5%. The Liberal government does not quite remember that. It should take a lesson from when the Conservatives took over government some 11 years ago. Their intent was reduce taxes on the taxpayer, not increase taxes as we see from the Liberal government.

I will just conclude with a couple of comments, and will try to encapsulate what I have said today. Statistically, real earnings in our country from a year ago are down 1%. The Liberals can talk all they want about bringing folks out of poverty and working on behalf of the middle class, but in reality real earnings are down 1%. Again, 30,000 full-time jobs have been lost since the government was elected a year ago.

I will repeat, again, that the Calgary unemployment rate is at 10.3%. What did the Liberals do? They said that they were going to give Alberta a one-time equalization payment of \$250 million. That is in contrast to Alberta contributing some \$20 billion to equalization

for the past 10 years. It is nothing more than the proverbial spit in the bucket.

I will conclude with that. I look forward to any questions that may come as a result of those comments, and will try to elaborate in response to questions.

● (1235)

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege and pleasure of working with my colleague on the finance committee.

The member raised the issue of the commodity collapse in Alberta, and he knows a lot about that. He was the treasurer of Alberta in days when oil prices were at historic highs. Now the fiscal situation of Alberta has deteriorated, naturally, because of that province's reliance on royalty revenues.

The member also knows that world prices are things over which Albertans and even Canada do not have a lot of influence. The government has worked very hard on Keystone, Trans Mountain to get our commodities to world markets.

When the member was treasurer of Alberta, what did he do to save for this rainy day? Would he not now applaud the government's effort to unlock Alberta oil and get it on to world markets as quickly as possible?

Mr. Ron Liepert: Mr. Speaker, the member and I have some interesting exchanges at the finance committee. I say "exchanges", because rarely do we have agreement.

Again, the best way to put this is that this is a sleight. The Liberals stand in the House and say that during the last 10 years, the Conservatives have never built one mile of pipe to tidewater. We all know that is incorrect. However, we do know that during those same 10 years, a number of projects, including northern gateway, were approved to be built. Where we are today is no further along than where we were under the Conservative government.

Yes, we applaud the government for finally approving Trans Mountain. However, approval and getting it built are considerably different things, as we saw with northern gateway. For the member to stand there and say that the government had anything to do with Keystone, well, I rest my case.

● (1240)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one area that I am surprised the member did not talk about was the lack of support for small business. The hon. member comes from the same province I do. He is well aware of the downturn and those suffering. However, small businesses continue to buoy our economy as best they can, and have historically in Canada.

I do not recall the member speaking in support of our concern that there were not the promised tax cuts for small business, and none on the cap on transaction fees that were promised by his government, yet never delivered. Would he like to speak to those matters?

Government Orders

Mr. Ron Liepert: Mr. Speaker, in fact, I did mention small business a couple of times during my remarks. This is about the third or fourth time I have spoken on this bill. While I thank the member for Edmonton Strathcona for her question, I have been a strong advocate for small business every time I stand in the House.

As I said earlier during my remarks, it is small business that creates jobs, not the government. The Liberals think the government can create jobs, but it is the private sector, whether that is small, medium, or large business. The private sector creates jobs, not the government.

Mr. T.J. Harvey (Tobique—Mactaquac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am truly honoured to rise and speak on behalf of my riding of Tobique—Mactaquac today in favour of Bill C-29.

I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Gatineau.

One year ago, the people of Tobique—Mactaquac entrusted me with the responsibility of being their member of Parliament. As a new MP, the last year has been full of learning, challenges, and new relationships. Overall, it been an overwhelmingly positive experience for me as I have worked on behalf of my constituents, and with them, on the opportunities and concerns related to their everyday lives.

The investments we as a government are making to strengthen the middle class and to help those working hard to join it have been unprecedented. Our economy will grow not only in the short term but over the long term as well as a direct result of this. Canada is one of the first countries in the world to put into practice the idea that when we have an economy that works for the middle class, we have a country that works for everyone.

We listened to Canadians when they told us that they are working harder than ever but not getting ahead. That is why we have put in place a plan to help them, not only in the present but also into the future.

There are measures like cutting taxes for close to nine million Canadians who need it most, but also increasing taxes on the wealthiest 1%. We have also introduced the Canada child benefit, which puts more money into the pockets of nine out of 10 families with children to help them with their present need and to ensure they have the tools to succeed in the future. This investment alone will raise over 300,000 children out of poverty.

As a government, we signed an agreement with the provinces to enhance the Canada pension plan so that those entering the workforce now and future generations of workers could be assured of a stable and dignified retirement. There are also measures like increasing monthly payments of the most vulnerable seniors, especially single seniors, and restoring the eligibility for old age security to 65 years of age.

In my riding, I have conducted numerous “Let’s talk” events, consultations on topics such as Canada’s summer jobs, infrastructure, climate change, electoral reform, economic development, youth job creation, employment insurance, pre-budget 2016, pre-budget 2017, and general town hall meetings quarterly on any open topic about which my constituents wish to speak with me. Our Senior’s Healthy Living & Aging Well Expo was attended by over 200 seniors. This

illustrates that seniors are a priority in my riding and continue to be so.

[*Translation*]

Our government is also working hard to help young Canadians succeed. This summer I saw for myself how budget 2016 was helping young people get valuable experience through the Canada summer jobs program.

[*English*]

In my riding alone, funding was increased for Canada summer jobs by \$221,000. We have doubled the number of jobs funded in 2016 by giving businesses and organizations that applied for funding the opportunity to put more young people to work, to earn incomes and gain valuable experience that they will carry with them as they transition into the workforce in the coming years.

Youth in my riding have come together and their voices are being heard. The Tobique—Mactaquac Youth Council has met and understands that the government respects and values its input. Our budget committed to increasing grants for students, from low and middle-income families, as well as part-time students. We have done all of this while simultaneously making strong investments in infrastructure that will help small and medium-sized businesses grow and take advantage of the current and upcoming opportunities as we transition into a cleaner, greener economy.

Since November of 2015, an unprecedented number of businesses and not-for-profit organizations in my riding have received business development funding through ACOA, an organization that plays an integral role in the economic development of rural Canada in the Atlantic provinces. Over 25% of municipalities and not-for-profit organizations in Tobique—Mactaquac have been approved for Canadian infrastructure program funding, CIP 150, for projects such as upgrades to local parks, renovations, and enhancements to community facilities. This type of infrastructure funding is of great importance not only to my riding but to ridings all across this country.

David Dodge has said that over the past 10 years, Canada has been in an infrastructure deficit. Not enough has been committed to infrastructure renewal and now more than ever, the provinces need a federal partner they can work collaboratively with to address these challenges, whether it is crumbling roads, bridges or ports, and rail access.

● (1245)

[*Translation*]

My riding, Tobique—Mactaquac, is a vast rural riding that relies heavily on agriculture and agrifood, the riding’s main industries, as well as manufacturing and natural resources.

Government Orders

[English]

Having grown up on a large family-owned farm myself producing seed potatoes, oilseeds, small grains, and having worked within primary agriculture, construction, transportation, and food processing prior to being elected last year, I have an acute understanding of the many challenges faced by small and medium-sized businesses.

Over the past year, I have had the opportunity to speak with hundreds of small-business owners, as well as large-business owners, about the opportunities and challenges in growing their businesses in an ever-changing and increasingly demanding market.

I also had the opportunity this fall to host a rural economic development round table with key business stakeholders from my riding. I heard their thoughts on budget 2016 and how they feel they can leverage hard work with the initiatives put forth by our government to seize opportunities to grow their businesses. They collectively praised our government's efforts to invest in infrastructure, citing it as traditionally being a major impediment to growing a company in a rural environment. Business owners spoke of the potential positive impact the Atlantic growth strategy will have in the years to come by allowing us to tailor programming investments not only in infrastructure but also in innovation, green technology, skills training, market development, and immigration to the four Atlantic provinces. I completely agree with them.

As one of the 32 elected Liberal MPs from Atlantic Canada, I am proud of the approach our government has taken through budget 2016 and the Atlantic growth strategy to address the need for increased immigration through the Atlantic immigration pilot. It will allow us to grow our population and will allow business growth, with the certainty that we, as a government, will be partnering with them to help them flourish.

In my riding, we have successfully welcomed Syrian newcomers and families in Woodstock, Perth-Andover, Nackawic, and Florenceville-Bristol, with the help of many hands serving on community boards, to ensure that newcomers feel comfortable and supported. Giving newcomers the opportunity to access the necessary supports, training, and tools to become employed and full integrated into the community is a priority for the employers and volunteers in my riding.

Harrison McCain once said that “if you are in business or starting a business, you should do it with the plan to grow”. Working hand in hand with the government is essential to allowing this to happen. Successful government programs that allow the private sector to grow are recommended. I believe that this quote very much reflects our government's approach to rural economic development. It is an approach the government can and should play an active role in to help businesses, both big and small, in both rural and urban environments, access the tools they need to prosper for years to come. That is why we have made specific commitments to help grow Canada's rural and northern economies with a \$2-billion dedicated investment to help them succeed. We understand the vital role rural economies play in the overall health of a nation.

I would be remiss if I did not take a moment to speak about the work we have done and will continue to do through our first budget, budget 2016, to begin to address the inequalities for first nations. We

have made historic investments in first nations through budget 2016, and we have renewed the dialogue with first nations. I am particularly proud of the great work of the Tobique First Nation and the Woodstock First Nation in the past year as they together moved forward in investing in education, infrastructure, training, and other programs that will directly contribute to a better quality of life for indigenous peoples within Tobique—Mactaquac.

As a member of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, I fully support our government's commitment to develop our resources sustainably, ensuring that economic prosperity and environmental protection go hand in hand, which will help indigenous people, ensure that local communities benefit economically and socially, and make resource development a nation-building exercise.

While Canada has the resources to lead the global transition to a lower-carbon future, we will only do so by ensuring that our environmental house is in order, by continuing to engage meaningfully with indigenous peoples, and by earning the confidence of Canadians.

Our government is determined to lead the way. We demonstrated that again last week with the decisions we announced on several major pipeline projects. In each instance, the decisions we took were based on solid science, meaningful consultations, and the best interests of Canadians.

As the Prime Minister has said, the choice between pipelines and wind turbines is a false one. Bill C-29 speaks to this reality and Canada's potential to create the prosperity we seek while protecting the environment we cherish.

We as Canadians agree that veterans should be recognized for their service to Canada and that it is the Government of Canada's official duty to recognize, with respect and dignity, the achievements of Canada's veterans and the fallen. The Prime Minister of Canada gave the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence the mandate to re-open nine previously closed Veterans Affairs service offices and to hire new service delivery staff to better support veterans and their families where they live. I am proud that our budget 2016 reaffirmed the government's intent to give back to veterans and to deliver on its promise to restore critical access to services.

● (1250)

I would like to end my speech today by asking Canadians from coast to coast to coast to join me and my family in thanking the hundreds of Canadian men and women in uniform for their efforts and sacrifices, particularly as they spend the holiday season away from their families and family traditions. I wish to thank them for their continued service to our country.

Government Orders

In conclusion, I am grateful for having the opportunity to represent my riding of Tobique—Mactaquac. I am looking forward to the new energy and hope our Prime Minister brings to Canada and to the world. On behalf of my wife Tanya, our daughters Emma, Madilyn, and Sarah, and our son Jack, I wish the entire chamber, my family, and friends the best holiday season.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a very pointed question.

Through his speech, the hon. member mentioned that his government understands rural Canada and is committed to rural Canada, yet we still have no softwood lumber agreement. We still do not have projects approved. We are struggling in rural Canada. Investments have flowed through major centres within Canada, such as investments in high-speed transit. I have been on the record a number of times saying that there is nothing for my riding of Cariboo—Prince George.

What will this budget do for jobs in my riding, a resource-dependent riding?

Mr. T.J. Harvey: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague can rest assured that his riding of Cariboo—Prince George is very similar to my riding of Tobique—Mactaquac. They are very rural, resource-dependent, agriculture-dependent ridings that rely on the hard work of everyday Canadians. I can assure him that the investments we are making in infrastructure, clean technology, innovation, and skills and training will help businesses transition towards a cleaner, greener economy and to take advantage of the market opportunities we are already creating.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that in 2013, it was actually the opposition member's party that killed the Rural Secretariat, an organization that was dedicated to rural Canada. That was an organization that was put forward, with the best of intentions, to help grow the rural economy and recognize Canadians from rural areas from coast to coast to coast.

I would also be remiss if I did not mention that we are making progress. We are working on softwood lumber, another issue, by the way, that was left out in the cold by his government when it left office. The Conservatives failed to restart negotiations with our U.S. counterparts, and because of that delay, we are caught in the circumstance we are in today. We have not been able to make the significant move forward on softwood lumber we should have had by this point, because the conversation a year ago had not been started, which is very unfortunate.

Last, I would like to take one moment to speak about pipelines and resource development projects. Last week we approved the Line 3 expansion and TMX. Those are two projects that will help rural economies in Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan, workers from my riding of Tobique—Mactaquac, and other ridings across Atlantic Canada that rely on the natural resource sectors, especially oil and gas, to take advantage of opportunities around the world.

• (1255)

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to let my colleague know that many in my riding believed the Liberals on the election trail, who are now the government, on the promises to small and medium-sized businesses, in particular the promise to reduce the small business tax rate to 9%. We now find

that the government has not followed through on that promise and has moved it forward to almost the next election.

I would like my hon. colleague to let me know why the government did not follow through on that promise to small and medium-sized businesses in my riding.

Mr. T.J. Harvey: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to have the opportunity to stand and speak on behalf of small business. The economic situation we were left by the previous government, a situation that was not forecast by the previous government before leaving office, is very unfortunate. The Conservatives led us all to believe that everything was sunshine and roses, that there was absolutely nothing to worry about, and that Canadians could be confident that they were working hard on their behalf, when in fact, we have seen no growth over the last 10 years. We have seen an infrastructure deficit, a lack of investment in the key infrastructure that allows our country to grow its economy and prosper.

We are working hard implementing the budget, and we are working hard planning the next budget so that we can continue to help small businesses across the country from coast to coast to coast, including in the hon. member's riding, my riding, and the riding of the member for Fredericton.

In time, I hope all hon. members—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Gatineau.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague from Tobique—Mactaquac, whose family I have known for many years, for sharing his time with me.

As 2016 draws to a close, I would like to thank the constituents of the most beautiful riding in Canada, Gatineau, for giving me the honour of representing them in the House of Commons. I am pleased to take part in this great shift our new government has undertaken. I was struck by what President Obama said recently. He said that the government is like an ocean liner, and not a little motorboat that can turn on a dime.

If the vessel is on course, it will arrive at its destination, although it may take some patience. That is why I am pleased to rise in support of the most recent bill that will bring about the change initiated by the Minister of Finance's budget. This is the first step in bringing about the change that will result in a fairer Canada, a more equitable society, dynamic economic growth, and a modern economy.

We have been in power a little over a year now, and we are starting to see results, both across the country and in our communities and our ridings. My hon. colleague for Tobique—Mactaquac painted an excellent picture of what those results look like in his riding. My other Outaouais and national capital Liberal caucus colleagues did the same. We are seeing results in our regions and across the country.

Government Orders

However, there is still a lot of work to do. We promised the public service that we would restore respect and stability, which has been largely accomplished. We often talk with the President of the Treasury Board, and he has our full confidence when it comes to the respectful negotiations currently underway with the public service unions. Public servants have told me that respect and stability are back. All this makes for a healthy local economy.

Parents in my riding can claim the Canada child benefit. This benefit helps the poorest in our society and will lift 300,000 Canadian children out of poverty. It is getting results in Gatineau and across the country.

In Gatineau alone, 10,600 payments are sent out each month, benefiting 18,480 children, and on average, a Gatineau family receiving the new Canada child benefit, free of provincial and federal taxes, will get \$520. Under this bill, starting in 2020 these amounts will be indexed to inflation, which will protect them from cost of living increases.

What revolutionary social policy! Not since health insurance and the major social transformations were brought in during the 1960s by Mr. Pearson and the elder Trudeau have we seen such a social transformation as we have today with the Canada child benefit. The money will be going directly to parents and families in our communities.

• (1300)

Because of the investments our government has been making through the Canada 150 community infrastructure program, Gatineau will be hosting Mosaïcultures, which is destined to be the number one tourist attraction in the national capital region in 2017. There has also been an announcement regarding La Vérendrye Boulevard. The City of Gatineau will not be complete until La Vérendrye Boulevard extends all the way to Lorrain Boulevard. Efforts are being made, and I hope that 2017 will bring us good news about extending the Rapibus line to Lorrain Boulevard. Then, we will start considering extending it to the Gatineau airport.

I was very pleased to welcome the Minister of Veterans Affairs. With regard to my first commitment, my commitment to Gatineau, we have a cenotaph that, quite frankly, could use some TLC. Our veterans, members of the Legion, and our serving members cannot be happy about seeing the cenotaph in such disrepair. After discussing the situation with the mayor and the Minister of Veterans Affairs, we were able to announce a significant amount of funding to repair the cenotaph before next Remembrance Day. I am very proud of that, and more importantly, so will the people of Gatineau.

My colleague from Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation went to Thurso and Masson-Angers last week, and he had every reason to be proud. Thanks to his hard work and the support of his colleagues in the Outaouais, he was able to announce an incredible investment from the Minister of Natural Resources to modernize the forestry industry in the Outaouais.

Our region was built on the forestry industry. The pioneers who founded our cities and towns came here to work in the forests and build huge industries, exporting industries that have innovated. The investments that my colleague from Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation announced last week signal the next phase, a new era for the

Outaouais forestry industry. I am sure there are more investments to come.

Like many Canadian cities, ours had a social housing shortage. My colleague from Quebec City, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, listened to people and created a plan that enabled us to announce new housing developments and, most importantly, break ground for new social housing construction projects. We invested in community organizations that fight homelessness.

The fact that our government is doing things differently means greater social equity that will help create social infrastructure and strengthen the social fabric of our cities and towns and our ridings. This will pay off later. This will ensure that our children will benefit, learn, be full citizens, contribute economically, and feel valued. That is why this shift, this change in government, is good for the people of Gatineau and good for Canadians.

We want Gatineau and Quebec to think big. We want Gatineau, as the fourth largest city in Quebec, to step up. We want to start working on meeting these serious needs. With Ottawa, we are the fourth largest city in Canada. We want to be more integrated, to coordinate our transit with Ottawa's transit. We want to be partners in economic development. My colleagues from the National Capital Region and I will continue working together thanks to the decisions made today in the House, specifically to approve the investments planned in our first budget and in all future budgets.

• (1305)

[*English*]

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member talked about social infrastructure. I would like to refer to a comment made by a colleague of mine from Dauphin, Manitoba, talking about a bait and switch.

I am concerned about the government proposing a new tax break for Canadians, as it has said many times, and yet clawing it back with the other hand. We have seen this example. I am on the human resources committee, and we have heard the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development admit this. We asked about the carbon tax, and whether the government has considered its impacts on people in poverty and those close to poverty. His comment was that the government has given so much with the tax credits that it can afford to take it back with the other hand. The minister even admitted this.

With the great bait and switch that the government is putting across Canadians' tables, giving with one hand and taking back with the other, how does the member talk to people who are in poverty and answer those questions honestly? What is the government doing for people in poverty and close to poverty, with things like the carbon tax, etc.?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question.

Government Orders

We are very proud of the Minister of Social Development for the innovative new programs he has tabled in the House, including the Canada child benefit, which will benefit Canadian families.

My colleague also talked about the carbon tax. The beauty of the solution being proposed by this government is that the provincial governments, that of his province or mine, will decide what will become of the proceeds of that tax.

In his case, if he maintains that families are going to be affected, then he will have to ask the premier of his province to offset the impact of this tax by giving this money back to the families and children. We want to tax something that we do not want, namely carbon, in order to reduce the burden on things we do want, namely families, equal opportunity, initiative, and hard work.

I thank the hon. member for the question.

• (1310)

[*English*]

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member commented that the budget was addressing social inequity, and yet we have seen that the middle class tax cut does absolutely zero for the two-thirds of Canadians who make less than \$45,000.

Honestly, how is it addressing social inequity, when the middle class tax cuts help every single person in this room by over \$1,500 but do zero for any of the two-thirds of Canadians who make less than \$45,000?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows very well that nine million Canadians are going to benefit from a middle-class tax cut.

To hear a Conservative talk about tax cuts and vote against tax cuts for the middle class is, quite frankly, a very astounding thing to hear, when we consider the debates that have come before us in this place.

I would also say that for many Canadians, for Canadians who are parents, for Canadians with families—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I am sure the hon. member who is answering the question appreciates the coaching he is getting from the other side, but shouting across the floor is not going to help him that much. I would like to ask the hon. members to maybe just keep it down, and when it is time, get up, get recognized, and then ask the next question.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, trust me; I do not need a lot of help from over on that side.

What I do hear is a lot of regret that they opposed a tax cut on the very middle-class Canadians they purport to represent. After nine years of deficits, they are very disappointed that the government was able to bring in a tax cut that benefits nine million Canadians, and also benefits 300,000 Canadian children, bringing them out of poverty. That is a record on which we are very proud to stand.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by saying that I will be sharing my time with the brand new member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, who was

elected about a month and a half ago and arrived here with a flourish. He has already spoken in question period and in the period for statements by members. In a few minutes, he will be giving his maiden speech. It will be very interesting. I invite all Canadians, particularly those from Medicine Hat, to listen carefully to what he has to say.

We are gathered here for what is likely the final stage of consideration of Bill C-29, which, to some extent, implements the government's budget. It is a very bad budget, which will, unfortunately, once again lead Canada into an unacceptable inflationary spiral of colossal, runaway deficits. We still do not know when the Liberals plan to return to a balanced budget, even though we, the Conservatives, left the house in order when we left office a year and a half ago.

In 2008-09, the entire world was facing the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression in the 1920s. The industrialized countries of the world had to make tough choices and deal with major problems. Which country bounced back more quickly than any other and had the strongest economy after the crisis? It was Stephen Harper's Canada.

Our government achieved the best debt-to-GDP ratio and the best job creation record in the G7. Our government established a prosperous economy. We had the best record in the G7, and it was thanks to Stephen Harper's government.

Canadians' tax burden was also the lowest in 50 years. Today, it is not even close. Furthermore, 192,000 jobs, most of them full-time jobs, were created through the sound management of the Conservative government. I did say "created through the sound management" because the government does not create jobs. It is the private sector that really drives the economy, especially when no obstacles to creating jobs are thrown in its way, as this government is doing. I will come back to that later.

When the Liberals regrettably came to power 14 months ago, the house was in order. However what did they do? Unfortunately, they partied hard, and our children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren will pay later for this government's poor management.

We have to recognize one thing. The Liberals had the gall to get elected by saying that they would run deficits. That took some guts. However, they talked about a small deficit of \$10 billion over three years. After that they would miraculously balance the budget. That was the Liberal platform.

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However, what is the reality today? We are no longer talking about very small deficits, but instead colossal deficits of \$30 billion. That is the reality of this government. This year there will be a \$30-billion deficit, and it will be the same thing for several years, since the government is unable to tell us when we will be returning to a balanced budget. It is not because we have not been asking, because I have put the question to the Minister, not once, twice, five times, ten times, but 13 times. I have asked the Minister and his parliamentary secretary 13 times when will Canada return to balanced budgets. The government has never been able to tell us when Canada will be getting back to zero deficits.

This is completely unacceptable management. No administrative technician would keep his job if his boss asked him when the company would be returning to balanced budgets and he responded by talking about the debt-to-GDP ratio requested by customers. His boss would ask him for an exact date, and if he was unable to give one, you could count the seconds until he was no longer working for that company, because that would be completely unacceptable.

However, the government never answers questions about when the budget will be back in balance. This is appalling to all Canadians.

• (1315)

Fortunately, it is becoming abundantly clear to more and more Canadians that this does not make sense. Just a month ago, the Liberals delivered an economic update. The new thing we learned is that there is no recovery plan and no consideration being given to the current economic situation. On the contrary, the party is continuing and spending is out of control. Another new thing we learned is that there is \$32 billion in additional spending.

That is another \$32 billion for something that is not working. Why is it not working? Because since this government has been in power, no net full-time job has been created by the private sector, by Canada. Zero. That is the current government's record on job creation. Again, it is not the government that creates jobs, it is the private sector, but it needs help.

[*English*]

Speaking of small business, let us talk about the reality. For us Conservatives, small businesses are the backbone of the economy. These are the people who create wealth. Those are the businesses that create employment. These are the people who create wealth for the economy and what is good for Canadians, not the government. But the least the government can do is to help businesses and not impose more taxes.

What has the government done for the last full year? It was very creative. Month after month, the Liberals created a new tax. They created the Liberal carbon tax that will be imposed on all businesses, especially small businesses that will have to pay a high price for the Liberals' carbon tax. They have also imposed more pressure through the Canada pension plan. It will cost \$1,000 more for each person who works at an entrepreneur's business. For the people who work there, it will cost them \$1,000 more every year and they will not see the results of that for the next 40 years.

It is all wrong. The government can help small businesses that create jobs, wealth, and create a strong economic Canada. That is what we need to do.

[*Translation*]

This government makes such a big deal about making income tax changes and about being like Robin Hood, taking from the rich and giving to the poor. Stop it. The way I see it, their Robin Hood policy is to shoot arrows like a bad archer and then get hit in the face.

Here are the facts: 65% of Canadians will not receive this so-called help for families. This means that 65% of Canadians do not get a tax cut. The ones who benefit the most from these tax changes are those making between \$144,000 and \$200,000 a year. Yes, someone making \$199,999.99 per year has won the Liberal government jackpot. Is this anywhere close to the middle class and ordinary workers? No.

Once again, in the interest of honesty and integrity, I want to give Canadians the facts. I have a conflict of interest, as do all the members of the House of Commons, including the parliamentary secretaries. In fact, we benefit the most from these tax changes. I could be selfish and think only of myself and be happy and say how wonderful it is that the government is helping me a lot, because since I make \$175,000 a year, I am the one benefiting the most.

I prefer, however, to put such selfish considerations aside. My thoughts are with the taxpayers first and foremost, 65% of which are not affected by these changes. The Liberals continue to crow about their great principles. My friend and colleague the hon. member for Québec, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, says that the government is thinking of Canadian families, the least fortunate, all of those people. We are not against any of that.

The only difference is that we were reaching our goals without creating a \$30-billion deficit as they are doing. Better still, these people have forgotten one little detail, once again. When they did their calculations, they forgot to index. They forgot that, over time, the cost of living goes up just a trifle. Well, maybe more than that: after five years, that trifle begins to swell. That is the Liberal reality: once again, pure amateurism.

The Liberals cannot say when we will return to a balanced budget, and when they draw up the family allowance budget, they forget to index after five years. That is totally unacceptable.

We hope that this debate will cause some Liberals to open their eyes before it is through. Unfortunately, there is a risk this budget will pass. It is not a good budget because it commits us to out-of-control spending by a government that has already lost control of public spending.

• (1320)

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague, with whom I also have the pleasure of working on the Standing Committee on Finance.

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Unfortunately, he is proposing the same solutions in the House as on the Standing Committee on Finance. It is the same dog's breakfast that was served up all through the Harper years. However, the hon. member cannot take much credit for those Harper years since he wasn't here. He was in the National Assembly selling much the same line as he has been selling this morning.

I am going to address a question to my hon. colleague, who so enjoys asking questions himself. The question I am desperate to ask him is one that I often ask, but he never answers.

We have a plan for the Canadian economy: investments in infrastructure, a tax cut for the middle class, social investment, investment in families and investment in Canadian productivity and exports.

What is the plan of the finance critic for the Conservative party of Canada?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, the member is right. Unfortunately, I did not have the privilege of being part of Stephen Harper's excellent Conservative government, a government that left the house in order and ensured that Canada was in better shape than all other G7 countries post-crisis. I would have been proud to be part of that government, the best of this country's best.

The big difference between the Liberal plan and our plan is that ours achieved a balanced budget. When we left power, the hon. member for Roberval, a Quebec MP, was in charge of the department. He worked to promote Quebec's economic development because we respected the provinces and the regions.

Our plan involved major investments to the tune of \$80 billion, the biggest plan in Canadian history up to that point, and balanced the budget. Our plan to help families and breathe life into private enterprise included a balanced budget. In contrast, this government creates and imposes new taxes, including the Liberal carbon tax and extra pension plan costs. Its latest move would have 13 million Canadians pay tax on prescription drug and dental insurance.

That is the difference between the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party: we put our trust in people, whereas they tax people more.

• (1325)

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in recent weeks and even recent days, there has been some discussion about an element of Bill C-29 that allows the banks to circumvent Quebec's Consumer Protection Act.

My hon. colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent cannot be unaware of the unanimous motion of the National Assembly, adopted last week, denouncing this practice of the federal government, which wants to circumvent the Consumer Protection Act to ensure that the banks can escape their obligations.

This will allow the banks to raise credit limits and increase their fees without asking the permission of consumers and to stave off all class action suits, since those lawsuits will no longer be possible, as they are now.

Since my colleague comes from the National Assembly, does he share my concerns on this sensitive matter? It must be said, it makes no sense.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

Indeed, we are in favour of the position so well laid out by the member for Joliette in parliamentary committee. There was also a vote here in the House, yesterday or the day before yesterday, if memory serves. We all voted together here against this measure, except for the Liberal government.

History has its lessons, and history tells us that in 2012 the Conservative government proposed and passed a law to oversee all banking institutions, and there was a court challenge. In 2014 the Supreme Court ruled that, on the specific issue of Quebec's Consumer Protection Act, the federal statute did not apply. Consequently the government had to rework its method and approach, as the current government is doing with Bill C-29. However, after hearing expert witnesses in parliamentary committee, we were not convinced.

The National Assembly has passed a unanimous motion, with the following outcome: if this bill is unfortunately passed tomorrow morning, it will be challenged in court, and we will be paying a lot of lawyers' fees. The only winners in this story will be lawyers, not Canadians.

[*English*]

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-29. First let me say that I am truly humbled to be here as the voice my constituents and to hold the government to account.

At a time when Albertans, and specifically the people of my riding of Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, need it the most, the government has failed them. The Liberal economic action plan has failed Canadians. The only solution the Liberals seem to have for our current economic downturn is to spend more. Borrowed money has to be paid back, and it will be paid back by working Canadian families for generations to come.

Constituents across my riding are concerned about the downturn in our economy and its impact in terms of devastating job losses, out-of-control Liberal spending, the staggering \$35 billion deficit, increased taxes, the looming national carbon tax, and the Liberal opposition to the northern gateway pipeline, which would have provided thousands of well-paying jobs for Canadians.

The Liberal legacy of just the last 12 months has sucked the hope and optimism of many in my riding. The good news is that this legacy does not have to be our future. The Conservatives advocated a different path, and our record has spoken for itself, with balanced budgets, 1.3 million net new jobs, the lowest taxes in 50 years, the approval of four new pipelines that move over a million barrels of oil a day, a commitment to our allies, and ongoing support for families.

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On October 24, the constituents of my riding sent a strong message to the Liberal government that they were not in favour of rising taxes or wasting money on misplaced priorities. They want someone to stand up for the things that we Albertans, and quite frankly, most Canadians, believe in.

Just over a year ago, the Liberals promised they could spend their way to prosperity, that if hard-working Canadians trusted them to borrow a modest sum, they would create jobs and put more money into the pockets of Canadian families. Canadians are still waiting, and by most measures they are worse off now than they were the year before the Liberals took office.

The economy is stagnant. Despite a big spending budget, the Bank of Canada, the International Monetary Fund, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development have all downgraded their forecasts for Canada this year and next. Moreover, the Statistics Canada “Economic Insights” report for fall 2016 states:

Labour market conditions in Alberta deteriorated markedly since oil prices began to decline in mid-2014....

The province’s unemployment rate rose above the 8% mark during the summer of 2016, averaging 8.5% from July to September....This marks the first time that the unemployment rate in the province has risen above 8% since mid-1995.

This is the sad reality for Albertans. Where are the jobs that have been promised by the Liberal government?

What is more, with a national unemployment rate of 7%, Canada is worse off now than when the Liberals entered office. Recent reports indicate that a further 30,500 full-time jobs have been lost in the last year alone. Good jobs are in short supply, and the vast majority of new jobs created under the Liberals have been part time.

The situation in my riding of Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner is no different than the outlook for Alberta. According to labour force survey estimates, the unemployment rate is at a five-year high of 6.9% in 2016. The “2016 Medicine Hat’s Vital Signs” report by the Community Foundation of Southeastern Alberta states that the average number of EI recipients in the municipality of Medicine Hat alone rose from 890 in June of 2015 to 1,340 in June of 2016. That is a 51% year over year increase.

What do all of these jobless statistics mean for our community? The reality is that many of those who used to donate to the Medicine Hat and District Food Bank now find it necessary to use its services for their very survival and that of their family. Residents are struggling to make ends meet, evidenced by the increase in the number of Medicine Hat and District Food Bank clients over the last three years.

In 2014, the food bank served a total of 5,336 clients, 1,898 being children. In 2015, that number grew to a total of 12,371, with 4,614 being children.

• (1330)

On December 2, last Friday, the food bank has already served 16,137 clients, 6,165 of them children, and that is within a population of 63,000. This represents nearly 475,000 pounds of food so far in 2016.

These are not just vague statistics. They are the faces of families and what is really going on across this country, especially in Alberta.

The devastating reality of our economic climate is that some individuals have gone so far as to take their own life. Sadly, they saw suicide as the only way to resolve their specific situation. This feeling of being destitute is what many are experiencing back home.

Jobs should be priority number one in all of Canada, especially Alberta. Too many families are struggling, and instead the Liberal government is repealing employment insurance measures our previous Conservative government introduced to help unemployed Canadians get back to work. We have always focused on the priorities of Canadians by helping families to make ends meet through reductions in income tax, and the creation and protection of jobs.

As I said earlier, the Conservative record speaks for itself. During the worst economic downturn since the great recession, Canada had the best job creation and economic growth record among G7 nations. We reduced taxes to the lowest point in 50 years, with the typical family of four saving almost \$7,000 a year. After running a targeted stimulus program that created and maintained approximately 200,000 jobs, we kept our promise to balance the budget and left the Liberals with a \$2.9 billion surplus in 2015-16.

Not only have the Liberals mismanaged the surplus that was left to them, they rolled back small business tax cuts, tax-free savings account increases, as well as the arts and sports tax credit for kids. They are proposing a new CPP premium as well as a massive new carbon tax on everyone. These CPP premiums will affect employees and employers at a time when they are struggling to keep employees employed.

The carbon tax and the Liberals’ opposition to pipelines are also kicking people while they are down. Any form of carbon tax will diminish Canada’s continental competitiveness. It will be a threat to even more job losses and create an unbearable burden to thousands of families already struggling to stay out of poverty. As of yet, I have not seen any evidence that suggests that a carbon tax will have any measurable positive impact on Canada’s extremely small global carbon footprint. This is a tax grab, plain and simple.

Imposing a punishing new tax while holding back approval on job-creating pipeline projects, such as the recent rejection of northern gateway, shows how misplaced the current government’s priorities are when it comes to jobs and economic growth. In rejecting northern gateway, it is unacceptable for the Liberal Prime Minister to be killing jobs. All options should have been left on the table. It was truly a tough day for unemployed Canadians who just want to get back to work to support their families. Instead of more jobs and growing wealth, Canadians are left with higher taxes, out-of-control government spending, and broken promises.

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In closing, our previous Conservative government believed in creating a competitive environment for business, keeping taxes low, limiting red tape, and getting out of the way so that job creators can do what they do best. The Liberals believe that the best way to create a job is through increased spending, government programs, and regulation. That method has shown time and again that it does not work.

For the sake of those in my riding, all Albertans, and the well-being of Canadians, I will continue to speak up against higher taxes and challenge the Liberal government on its blatant disregard for Albertans, for misplaced priorities, and its continued wastefulness on bureaucracy and bloat.

● (1335)

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the new member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner and congratulate him on his speech here in the House today.

The member talked a lot about numbers and figures and whatnot, but I will just highlight one. He mentioned a carbon tax, but from a federal government point of view, it is revenue neutral. The money would go back to the provinces. In the case of Alberta, the provincial government in Alberta was bringing in a carbon pricing policy regardless of what the federal government did.

How does the member square that circle and lay the blame on the federal government when the provincial government was bringing in the same thing?

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that no one in Alberta agrees with the \$30-carbon tax. However, our Liberal government has been kind enough to increase that to \$50. Therefore, it is exactly that: a tax.

Any time we have one government that says it is going to take money from Canadians and give that money to another government to try and distribute it, Canadians do not trust that, and I do not blame them.

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner is a constituency that is near and dear to my heart, because during the last general election campaign the federal NDP candidate in that riding was a woman named Erin Weir. Had two MPs with exactly the same name been elected from the same party, I believe it would have greatly improved *Hansard* in this assembly.

But the member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner mentioned the large increase in EI use in Medicine Hat, and of course the main reason for that is a deterioration in labour market conditions, which we have also suffered in Saskatchewan. Another reason for it is that the federal budget did provide an extension of EI benefits across Alberta, and in most of Saskatchewan except for the city that I represent.

Could my colleague comment on the federal government's decision to leave laid-off workers in Regina out of the EI extension provided everywhere else in Saskatchewan and across his province?

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, there were many people in Alberta who experienced the same confusion as to why the federal government would leave certain areas of the province unattended by EI benefits. It not only happened in Alberta, but it happened in

Saskatchewan as the member said. It was disturbing, and the Liberal government wears this.

● (1340)

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague for his great electoral victory. I have great confidence that he will serve his constituents with all his strength.

Our colleague was on the electoral trail just a few weeks ago. He had the chance to knock on doors, go to many events and organizations, and hear from his constituents. We all did that during the election. Now we might do it a bit less because we are always here.

As the member was there a few weeks ago, I would like him to tell us what was the most common criticism that always came back again and again against the current government from his constituents.

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, one of the things that was loud and clear throughout the entire nomination process as well as the election was the Liberals' proposed carbon tax. There were no individuals in our riding of Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner whom I heard speak positively that this would benefit them, the province, or Canadians. That was one issue.

Another issue that came forward loud and clear all the time was the out-of-control spending that the current government seems to be exercising and its inability to create jobs at a time when our riding is desperate for jobs and we are losing full-time jobs. The Liberals tell us that they are creating all these jobs. We do not know where they are. If they are anywhere, they are part-time, if that, and they are sporadic at best.

Those are the issues that have come forward. There are many other ones. What this speaks to, as I have heard over and over again at all the events and the doors we have knocked on, is that the government is out of touch with what is going on with Canadians and out of touch with what real Canadians are experiencing, and that is what matters.

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I want to congratulate the new member, the member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, for his intervention in the House today. It is always great to welcome new members, whatever side of the aisle they are from. It is good to see that he is a very quick study on the Conservative talking points. I praise him for that.

It is a pleasure today to rise to support Bill C-29. This legislation, once passed, would implement budget 2016.

I would like to take this opportunity to briefly highlight some of the important aspects of budget 2016.

Canadians are willing to work hard to build a better future for themselves, for their children, and for their grandchildren. They want a government to work with them to make that goal a reality. Budget 2016 would do just that.

The budget would focus on the economy, on creating jobs, on strengthening the middle class, and on helping those working so hard to join the middle class.

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I think all of us in the House can agree. Every Canadian deserves a real and a fair chance at success.

Let us take a step back in history, if we may. For generations, Canadians worked hard under the belief that hard work would be rewarded. Canadians believed that by working hard they would get ahead. Canadians believed that their children and grandchildren would have, if not a better opportunity, at least the same opportunity that they had.

That was the Canadian dream. That was the promise of what it meant to be lucky and fortunate, and blessed enough to be born or to live in Canada.

Back in the 1960s, the 1970s, the 1980s, our society was marked by optimism, by decades of economic growth, by scientific discovery, and by nation-building projects that made Canada so much more than the sum of its parts.

However, over the past 30 years, median wages have barely risen. Meanwhile, the cost of living has continued to rise. Increases in food prices, increases in child care costs, increases in tuition, all are making it harder and harder for the Canadian family and Canadians to feel like they are getting ahead. Canadians were working harder and harder, yet feeling like it was not worth it. They were concerned about the ability to pay for their children's education, concerned about the ability to care for elderly parents. Frankly, they were concerned about their own retirement. Canadians were asking themselves, sadly, "Is the Canadian dream dead?"

Budget 2016 is an answer to these real and legitimate concerns of too many Canadians. It is an answer for shifting global economic forces. Most important, it is a long-term plan for growth; in particular, it is a plan for inclusive growth.

Canada is well-positioned because we have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio of all G7 countries. Couple this with the fact that interest rates are very low. Now is the time to make strategic investments in things like better roads, better transit, broadband Internet, better infrastructure, affordable housing, and clean technology. These investments will grow the economy today, for tomorrow, and well into the future.

It also builds communities. It is an investment in communities and it is a key investment in Canadians. The only way for Canada to move forward is to ensure that our growth is inclusive.

• (1345)

Our growth should leave no one behind. Fairness is a key attribute of what it means to be Canadian. We now see globally what happens when large segments of populations feel left out or left behind and that no one is speaking for them. We cannot go down the road where growth only works for a few. It is bad economic policy and, quite frankly, dangerous social policy. Canadians are better than that, and we must always remain vigilant toward that end.

Of course, Canada's economy is intertwined with the global economy, but Canada must use its fiscal policy to deliver stronger economic growth. In the words of the IMF at the meeting of the G20 finance ministers and central bank governors in February of this year:

...a comprehensive approach is needed to reduce over-reliance on monetary policy. In particular, near-term fiscal policy should be more supportive where appropriate and provided there is fiscal space, especially through investment that boosts both the demand and the supply potential of the economy.

I could not agree more.

I neglected to mention that I will be splitting my time with the member for Joliette.

We know that wages are not growing at the rate to which Canadians have been accustomed. We know more and more Canadians are feeling that, no matter how hard they work, they will not get ahead. On top of that, global growth continues to slow and market volatility is rising. Emerging market economies are slowing. All of these factors make it incumbent on us to invest now in infrastructure, innovation, communities, our country, and most importantly, Canadians. There can be no doubt that investment is needed, and it is needed now.

I would like to highlight a few of the key investments that are an important part of budget 2016. First, on December 7, 2015, one year ago tomorrow, one of the first acts of this government was to introduce a tax cut for Canada's middle class, which benefited nearly nine billion Canadians. Colleagues have talked about the benefits of the Canada child benefit, we have heard about the important investment in the CPP expansion, we moved the retirement age to 65, and we increased the GIS. These are some of the key features of budget 2016.

What I am very enthused about is that the budget shows a great commitment to youth. Historically, parents have told their children that if they want to succeed, they should stay in school, go to university or college, or become an apprentice. Unfortunately, this is becoming more and more out of reach for too many young people. It is harder to save for education and to pay back loans. The reforms to the Canada student loan program would make post-secondary education more affordable and attainable.

Budget 2016 would help youth in Canada, which I think everyone can agree is an important component of our society. All students who qualify deserve the right to go to university or college or to train in the skill of their choice. The inability to pay for that should not be an obstacle or a closed door to the great young Canadians of today, so they can continue to contribute to Canada well into the future. I think everybody in the House agrees with that.

Under this plan, nearly 250,000 low-income students would benefit and nearly 100,000 middle-income students would benefit. It would be an investment of \$1.5 billion over five years. What is more, budget 2016 would also make student debt more manageable. Students would not have to pay back student loans until they earn more than \$25,000 a year. This, I suggest, is welcome relief.

Government Orders

Youth also need valuable work experience. We know the age-old dilemma that they cannot get jobs without the experience, but they cannot get the experience because they cannot get jobs. This government would commit another \$165 million to the Canada student jobs program, which is fantastic. It would give youth an opportunity to get the experience and the job skills they need to continue to be contributing members of society.

• (1350)

Lastly, I want to briefly highlight this government's investment in innovation. This budget would establish Canada as a centre of global innovation. We must empower our creative and entrepreneurial citizens, and this budget would do exactly that by working in partnership and coordination with the private sector, the provinces and territories, municipalities, universities and colleges, and the not-for-profit sector. This plan would see innovative companies move from start-up to commercialization to global success.

Canada is at its best when every Canadian has the opportunity to reach his or her full potential, and long-term economic growth that is fair and inclusive will do just that.

It is imperative that the House support Bill C-29 and create a strong, inclusive economy for today, tomorrow, and well into the future.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we can all get up in the House and read speeches that have been prepared by staff members or somebody at another level.

Today I received a letter from a hard-working person in my riding. This lady is married and has two children, one of whom is autistic. Her husband makes less than \$40,000 a year, and she drives a school bus for \$68 a day. She asked a simple question at Christmastime: If we are already cutting out gifts, birthdays, TVs, cell phones, toys, trips, food, clothing, home repairs, and medical treatments for the sake of not going bankrupt or becoming totally poor, then how on earth are we and others like us expected to survive if this carbon tax is actually applied? It is an appropriate question that we all need to ponder.

I wonder if my friend across the aisle could answer that question.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Mr. Speaker, if my colleague from Oxford would indulge me, I will show him that my notes were actually hand-written by me. I do not know why he thinks I have a speech writer working for me. We do not have the budget that our Tory friends do for their staff members.

I do empathize with anybody who is in a position of hardship. To characterize something as a carbon tax is not doing that person any justice. We all know it is a revenue-neutral plan. Just because people keep calling something a carbon tax does not make it a carbon tax.

There are many programs available to help any of my colleague's constituents who may need it. I am sure he serves all of his constituents well in trying to help them out.

• (1355)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my Liberal colleague was quick to fine-tune the Liberal talking points in his speech today in the House.

For the benefit of the House, could the hon. member point specifically to where it was suggested in the Liberal platform that our infrastructures would be privatized? The budget refers to asset recycling, where government-owned assets that were paid for by Canadian taxpayers are taken and sold to private interests. In addition, there was the recent announcement of the infrastructure bank, which will require that our infrastructure assets, in partnership with private investors, earn interest for investors and be profitable.

On these two points, can the hon. member tell us where in the Liberal platform is there any reference to privatization, and where it states that private interests can become owners of infrastructure assets that are now public?

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Sherbrooke for his question.

[*English*]

We have talked about it during the campaign. It is in our platform. The overarching thing here is the theme of the NDP. Those members hate the word "private". They hate any involvement of the private sector.

We on this side of the House think, if private sector funds can be leveraged with government money to make life better for Canadians, then why would we as a government not leverage that potential? Why would we not take advantage of being able to deliver more services, more infrastructure, and a better life for all Canadians? I do not share the fear of the private sector, as the member opposite and his colleagues do. That is why we will always have to agree to disagree on this point.

I for one am proud that we are able to leverage private money, if the case is appropriate, to get things built for Canadians. That is what Canadians demand. That is what Canadians want. That is what Canadians deserve.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I have wanted to ask this question throughout the debate, particularly of a Liberal government member.

Earlier the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance quoted at length comments made by the head of the IMF, Christine Lagarde, and her approval of spending. I would like to point to Christine Lagarde's other advice as head of the International Monetary Fund, that Canada keep its commitment to eliminate fossil fuel subsidies, which are still in this budget. I am speaking of youth, as the hon. member just did. I would remind him of Christine Lagarde's words: if we do not act on climate change, "future generations will be roasted, toasted, fried and grilled".

When will the Liberal government live up to its commitment to remove fossil fuel subsidies?

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands knows as well as everyone in this House that I do not have the authority to speak for the government, so I cannot give her a date or a time frame.

*Statements by Members***NORTH OKANAGAN—SHUSWAP**

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the people and opportunities of the North Okanagan—Shuswap.

While the area is well known for its summertime holidays, with beaches and vineyards, it is also a wonderful wintertime playground. Starting now are horse-drawn sleigh rides, some with theatre along the way, and skating on frozen ponds, complete with bonfires and hot chocolate, warm toes and spirits. People can experience the thrill of our famous champagne powder while snowboarding on SilverStar, heli-skiing on Monashees, or on nordic trails scattered across the riding.

Later in the season there is the Vernon Winter Carnival, the largest in western Canada. With nearly 100 events, many of them free, there is sure to be something for everyone.

However, the biggest attraction is our people. Summer or winter, we will find welcoming faces, making the North Okanagan—Shuswap an amazing place to live, work, and play.

* * *

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for thousands of women, what ought to be the security of family, hearth, and home becomes a place of fear.

On any given night, more than 3,300 Canadian women escape domestic violence to sleep in emergency shelters. The solemn vow of “I will love and honour you all the days of my life”, a shattered dream.

Fifty percent of Canada's women have experienced sexual or physical violence after the age of 16. In Canada, the most horrific act of hate-fuelled mass murder occurred on December 6, 1989, at École Polytechnique in Montréal. On that terrible day, 14 young women were rounded up, separated from their male counterparts, and murdered, shot in cold blood.

We must expose and address the culture of violence, the propagation of hatred against women, whether cloaked in popular music or on the Internet. Canadians must confront the issue of a culture of violence against women.

* * *

[*Translation*]

ALGOMA—MANITOULIN—KAPUSKASING FOOD BANKS

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the holidays are a time when Canadians think about helping their community, something the people who work at food banks do every single day.

However, I will let the hon. member know that I am happy to be part of a government that believes climate change is real, that has real policies to affect climate change, to improve the situation, and we will continue to work hard together with the Department of Environment and Climate Change and all my colleagues on this side of the House and any colleagues who want to help us to make sure that we leave the planet in better shape than it was for our children.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the scar left from December 6, 1989, has never fully healed. The pain, sadness, feeling of loss, and this waste of precious human life still weigh heavy on our hearts. Every December 6, all Quebecers sigh together in sadness. This is our burden.

Before the tragic events at École Polytechnique, we thought that that kind of tragedy was impossible. We thought that equality between men and women had been achieved long before that. Those events were a cruel and brutal wake-up call. We have a duty to remain vigilant because that tragedy taught us that nothing can be taken for granted.

Today, December 6, we remember those women. We continue to condemn all violence against women with the same vigour and the same rage in our hearts.

We must never forget and never accept what happened; we must never allow the pain to disappear, and always ensure that December 6, 1989, never happens again.

* * *

• (1400)

[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY

Ms. Karina Gould (Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, International Volunteer Day, we celebrated the millions of Canadians who volunteered in their communities and abroad to make the world a better place.

Today, I would like to thank the people in my community who give so generously of themselves, people like Bob Pring, a volunteer at the art gallery and Red Cross, and Burlington's Senior Person of the Year, who works with the Woodcarvers Guild to carve beautiful and unique canes for military veterans. Chuck Learn with Children of Christmas Past has spent the last decade delivering thousands of gifts across southern Ontario to seniors who spend the holidays alone. Esperanza Peacock, devoted and enthusiastic, has spent countless hours helping newcomers to Burlington navigate the city and find their place in the community.

These are just three examples of the wonderful people who volunteer their time and talents in Burlington. We thank all of Canada's volunteers, at home and around the world, for strengthening and enriching our social fabric. They truly make a difference.

*Statements by Members**[English]*

They know that hunger never takes a holiday, and that need is always growing. Individuals like Pastor Dan Lee of Chapleau are part of the solution. He founded the food bank, alongside his ministry. Groups like the Rotary Club of Kapuskasing are taking their turn running the food bank after years of great service by the Kinsmen Club.

Food banks are not the only way that need is met in the north. On Manitoulin Island this November, over 6,000 individuals were served during the Homeland Missions' free food giveaway, led by Pastor Rodney Deforge. In Elliot Lake, the Al Collett memorial Christmas dinner continues a 33-year tradition of giving to those in need of food and company over the holidays.

These are just a few examples of how people all across Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksasing are volunteering to make their communities more compassionate and caring for the holidays and all through the year.

I thank everyone, and happy holidays to all.

* * *

CANADIAN COAST GUARD

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan (South Shore—St. Margarets, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising in the House today to recognize heroic actions of Eric Nickerson, Trevor Munroe, and their fellow Coast Guard members.

Last month, the Canadian Coast Guard responded to a distress signal 50 miles offshore of Clark's Harbour, Nova Scotia. A helicopter and two Coast Guard vessels responded to the call of a vessel in distress. Mr. Nickerson, a crew member on the Coast Guard vessel *Spray*, ended up in the water supporting the person from the jeopardized vessel for 15 to 20 minutes before helping him to safety. Mr. Nickerson does not consider himself to be a hero. He says that it is just part of his job.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the lobster season in LFA 33 and 34 opened last week, and safety of their loved ones is always on people's minds at this time of year. It is important to recognize the work that crews of fishing vessels and the men and women of the Coast Guard do for folks back home so their families are home at the end of the day.

I would like to wish all of those who work on the water a safe and prosperous season.

* * *

• (1405)

CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the holiday season approaches, Canadians across the country will spend time with family and friends. However, during this time of year it is important to remember that there are thousands of Canadians who are away from their families. These are the brave men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces who are currently protecting our borders at home and our values and allies abroad.

Not only is it very difficult to be away from their loved ones, they are doing dangerous work in service to Canada. Whether it be in our high Arctic, along our coastlines, working with our partners in the United States, stopping the flow of drug trafficking in the Caribbean, supporting our allies in Ukraine and Eastern Europe, fighting terrorism in the Middle East or any other mission that the brave men and women in uniform are taking on, it is at this time of year we are especially thankful for their service.

Wherever they are deployed, at home or abroad, we wish all members of the Canadian Armed Forces a merry Christmas, happy Hanukkah, seasons greetings, and a healthy and prosperous new year.

* * *

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 27 years ago today, I was a first year university student. I remember walking the halls between classes, hearing the gasps of students huddled around televisions as the news broke. A man walked into École Polytechnique in Montreal and shot and killed 14 young women just like me.

Across the country, Canadians, myself included, will take a moment today to mark the tragedy. I would like to commend those on the front line who day in and day out continue to support women survivors and those vulnerable to violence.

[Translation]

I am talking about organizations in my riding such as the NROC resource centre, whose counselling program provides isolated and victimized women a space where they can break that isolation. There are also the volunteers at Nelson House and other shelters in the area who work around the clock to help women in need.

[English]

I applaud the Grandmothers Advocacy Network and many other organizations for their work in ending gender-based violence.

* * *

LABOURERS' INTERNATIONAL UNION OF NORTH AMERICA

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Labourers' International Union of North America Local 183.

Founded in 1952, LiUNA represents workers from every aspect of construction, the men and women who build Canada's roads and bridges, schools and hospitals, railroads and pipelines.

By surpassing the 50,000 members milestone, it is the biggest local in North America. Since 2011, the executive board, led by their business manager Jack Oliveira, put an emphasis on strengthening their membership, not just for the workers but for their families. They have worked tirelessly to ensure workers have fair wages and safe working conditions. They have worked together with employers as well as municipalities, the provincial governments, and federal governments to achieve better regulation and strong policing of work sites.

With this growth, Local 183 will continue to provide best in class pensions and benefits for its members and retirees, and reach its next goal of 55,000 members by 2020.

I congratulate Jack Oliveira and his team on this great achievement and the many more to come.

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COMMANDER OF THE FRENCH LEGION OF HONOUR

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to recognize that the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney, Canada's 18th prime minister, will be the first Canadian prime minister to be named a Commander of the French Legion of Honour.

The award is France's highest honour, which was established by Napoleon in 1802. Mr. Mulroney is being recognized for, among other things, strengthening of the ties between Canada and France.

The very fact that his leadership is being recognized yet again on the world stage speaks to the magnitude of the impact that Mr. Mulroney made as Canada's prime minister. He was the first western leader to stand up against apartheid, the first to call for the release of Nelson Mandela, and the first to recognize the independence of Ukraine.

To be named a Commander of the French Legion of Honour is yet another great achievement for Canada's 18th prime minister, the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney.

I cannot say enough how proud I am to have served in his government. I ask my colleagues to please join with me in celebrating Mr. Mulroney's latest accomplishment.

* * *

● (1410)

ALEX AND RILEY MERCER

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize the Mercer family of Conception Bay South. In 2002, Bernie and Louise lost their daughter Alex to a rare form of brain cancer at the age of nine. Eleven years later, the Mercers lost their second child, Riley, to the same terrible disease at the age of 15.

Such tremendous loss devastated so many, but with the support of friends, family, and community, they have worked hard to ensure Alex and Riley's memory lives on. Even in light of such tragedy and heartbreak, the Mercers displayed incredible courage and love.

This Saturday, I will join the Mercers for one of many events that they organize, the third annual Christmas Toy Drive in Riley's name.

Statements by Members

Giving back to the community while paying tribute to their children is now Bernie and Louise's passion.

[Translation]

It is my pleasure to stand in this House and recognize such a remarkable family. I invite all members to join me in thanking them for their commitment and dedication.

* * *

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this 27th anniversary of the Montreal massacre, as we pay tribute to the 14 young women who lost their lives on that awful December 6, it is time to reflect on what progress has been made since. I want to mention here the Coalition for Gun Control, an organization that focuses on preventing gun-related crime.

With the significant legislative changes made by the Liberal government in the 1990s to 2012, gun-related homicides of women dropped, as did gun-related suicides, especially among young people. Unfortunately, there were major setbacks in the final years of the Conservative government, including the number of restricted weapons owned by individuals, which practically doubled. There are now more than 800,000 across the country.

In memory of the 14 young women killed on December 6, 1989, we must do better.

* * *

NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been marking the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women for 25 years now, following the tragic events of the École Polytechnique massacre in Montreal on December 6, 1989.

Unfortunately, once again this year, too many women have been killed or have been abused simply because they are women. Violence affects women all over the world, regardless of their age, socio-economic status, and education level.

A country like Canada should be a world leader when it comes to taking action to address violence against women and setting an example right here. No one who lives in Canada should tolerate any form of violence or intimidation committed against the girls and women in our families, our workplaces, or in public places.

To all women who have ever been victims of violence, I wish them courage, while we remember those we have lost.

*Statements by Members***CHRISTIAN BRUN**

Mr. Serge Cormier (Acadie—Bathurst, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I inform the House that a remarkable man, Christian Brun, has passed away.

Christian was the director general of the Maritime Fishermen's Union and had been working in the fisheries sector since 2004. He was also the president of the Canadian Independent Fish Harvester's Federation. We had the opportunity to meet Christian many times since forming government. He vigorously defended fishers' interests and his efforts always resulted in concrete solutions.

The fisheries have lost a strong advocate, but his voice will continue to resonate forever.

[*English*]

As the member for Acadie—Bathurst and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, I join the minister in offering my most sincere condolences to the family, friends, and colleagues of Christian Brun.

[*Translation*]

Rest in peace, Christian.

* * *

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on December 6, 1989, l'École polytechnique in Montreal was the scene of a terrible act: 14 female engineering students were murdered because they were women and dared to aspire to have a so-called man's job. It is a tragedy that we must never forget.

Despite all the struggles of the past decades, we have not eliminated the violence and inequality experienced by women. Every day, women face discrimination and cyberbullying, and have to fight for pay equity.

Many groups are advocating for women's rights and self-fulfillment. I would like to point out the work of Pixelles, an organization that helps women find their place in video gaming, a new area of technology dominated by men.

The best way to commemorate the Polytechnique tragedy is to firmly oppose any form of discrimination and violence against women.

* * *

● (1415)

NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, December 6, is the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women.

Twenty-seven years ago today, 14 women were killed in cold blood at École polytechnique in Montreal. This sad anniversary marks a dark day in Canada's history, and we will never forget the victims of those crimes.

[*English*]

However, our observance today strengthens our resolve to end violence against women. This is a duty that calls us all to action, men and women, government and business, community organizations, and everyday citizens, because remembrance is not enough. We need concrete actions. As parliamentarians, we have the power to help women who have been the target of violence, whether it is verbal, emotional, or physical.

Today, and every day, let us work together, men and women, to end violence against women.

* * *

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, December 6 is the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women.

This day was established so that we never forget the young women who lost their lives at École polytechnique in Montreal just because they were women.

[*English*]

Violence against women is still as relevant today. Even though 27 years has passed, the shock our nation felt that day remains with us. We join with the families and friends of these young women, with the people of Montreal, and with all Canadians mourning their loss.

[*Translation*]

Every action that we take to put an end to violence counts. Together, we can build a society where women and girls are treated equally and with respect.

[*English*]

Every action we take in our communities to stop gender-based violence matters.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: Following discussions among representatives of all parties in the House, I understand that there is agreement to observe a moment of silence.

[*English*]

I now invite the House to rise and observe a minute of silence in memory of the victims of the tragic event that happened 27 years ago at École Polytechnique in Montreal.

[*A moment of silence observed*]

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTIONS***[English]***INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS**

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been nearly a year since the inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women was announced, and families are now saying they are being left in the dark.

Conservatives support the inquiry, but it is also our job to hold the government to account. There is no website, barely any staff has been hired, and no testimony will be heard until at least spring at the earliest, yet indigenous women are still suffering and there is no interim plan in place to help them.

Can the Prime Minister explain what action has been taken to help at-risk indigenous women?

• (1420)

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is deeply committed to renewing the relationship with indigenous people, and we are delivering on our promise to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action.

In this year alone, we launched the national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, have launched an overhaul of the child welfare system, made historic investments in first nations education of over \$8 billion in budget 2016, and supported the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

This is just the beginning, and we are committed to making meaningful progress toward true reconciliation.

* * *

TAXATION

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's new tax on health care is just one of the things he is doing to make it harder for Canadian families to get by.

We already knew that the wages of Canadian workers are not keeping up with the rising cost of living under the Liberals, but now we have learned that families may pay up to \$420 more for food each year.

At a time when Canadians are struggling to make ends meet, why is the Prime Minister making life more expensive?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that many Canadians are struggling. We know that middle-class Canadians have seen a decade where their taxes have not been the key issue, but where growth has been the big challenge.

We moved forward immediately as a government to lower taxes on middle-class Canadians. We moved forward with the Canada child benefit, which is helping nine out of 10 families with children to have a better situation with their family.

We recognize the challenges facing middle-class Canadians. We have taken measures to help them today. We will invest in tomorrow so their children will be better off tomorrow.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are planning yet another new tax on employee health and dental benefits. Nowhere during the election did the Prime Minister say he would tax health and dental benefits, but that is not a surprise, because he has raised income taxes, carbon taxes, and CPP taxes. He has hiked taxes on Canadians' savings and he is even raising taxes on kids' sports and music lessons.

Why is the Prime Minister raising health care taxes to pay for his own out-of-control spending?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, the first thing we did was to lower taxes on Canadians. We think it is important to remember that the party opposite did not vote for the reduction in middle-class taxes. They did not vote for the Canada child benefit.

What is true is that we are focused on tax fairness. We are focused on tax simplicity, so we are looking at ways to ensure that our tax code is fair for Canadians. We are looking at ways to make sure that Canadians can understand the tax code.

We will move forward on helping Canadians through lower, understood taxes.

* * *

*[Translation]***ETHICS**

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all know that cash for access fundraisers with the Prime Minister are not in keeping with the government's ethics rules. Now, we know that the people who attend those events discuss government business with the Prime Minister and that he is happy to engage in those discussions. His plan is so worrisome that we asked the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner and the Commissioner of Lobbying to investigate.

When will the Prime Minister admit his total failure when it comes to ethics?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we held unprecedented public consultations in order to respond to the real challenges Canadians are facing. The rules governing fundraising are among the strictest in the country, and we follow the rules.

The Chief Electoral Officer said that political financing laws in Canada are the most advanced and constrained and transparent in the world.

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's cash for access events are not open and transparent. They are hidden and they are secretive.

Oral Questions

We found out about his event with Chinese billionaires only after it was reported on a website in China. Guests have plainly said that at several fundraisers the Prime Minister has openly discussed government business on which they were seeking his support.

What are we to believe? Has the Prime Minister ever discussed government business with someone who paid the Liberal Party to meet with him to seek his support on a topic that benefits them directly, yes or no?

• (1425)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I just finished saying in French, but I will say it in English, when it comes to the level of consultation this government is having with Canadians, it is unprecedented. When it comes to the rules around fundraising, they are the most open and transparent, and they are the most strict across the country. This government and this party will continue to follow the rules.

The member knows very well that only Canadians can donate to Canadian political parties.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fisheries minister told the House that government business is not discussed at cash for access events, but the host of one of these events not only contradicted him but confirmed that he lobbied the Prime Minister without being registered. Now we learn that this same individual was personally invited by the Prime Minister to meet the Chinese premier. As a result, he accepted to hold a Liberal fundraiser.

Is there really nobody on the government side who can see the problem here?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will remind members and Canadians that if they do not want to listen to me, they can listen to the Chief Electoral Officer who stated that Canada's political financing laws are “the most advanced and constrained and transparent” in the world. We know that when it comes to fundraising, the rules are very strict, especially across this country. This party will continue to follow the rules.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, from sunny ways to shady deals.

[*Translation*]

If, as the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons says, Canada has some of the strictest fundraising rules, then why did the Prime Minister go to the trouble of introducing new rules prohibiting cash for access to his own political party?

Was this just another one of their shams?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has confirmed that he heard the response I have given many times. The rules governing fundraising are among the strictest in the country and we follow the rules.

The Chief Electoral Officer said that Canadian election financing laws are the most advanced, transparent, and constrained in the world.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary budget officer was crystal clear: the government is shirking its responsibilities, and indigenous children are paying the price.

The Liberals promised to do better than the Conservatives, but the list of broken promises is getting longer. Legal battles against indigenous rights continue and the Liberals keep using Harper's system for approving pipelines.

Does the government understand that the first nations communities are fed up with the lies and broken promises?

[*English*]

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary budget officer rightly noted that the previous government underfunded K-to-12 education on reserve. That is why we prioritized closing the gap in first nations education outcomes, including a historic \$2.6 billion over five years for K-to-12 education on reserve, and nearly \$1 billion in educational infrastructure, which today's report said is addressing these shortfalls.

We will not let another generation of first nations youth behind.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Justice Sinclair said that the government's attitude on first nations court cases like the sixties scoop is “unconscionable”. Following the Kinder Morgan approval, Grand Chief Stewart Phillip said the Prime Minister “completely failed to do [his] job”. And to add recklessness to betrayal, the natural resources minister mused about calling in the military to quell protests.

Will the Liberals back away from this dangerous rhetoric, and will they show first nations communities the respect they deserve?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe that among the reasons that Canada is such a special place and a great country is because we welcome diversity of opinion, we appreciate the importance of peaceful protest, and we are protected by the rule of law. That is what I intended to say in Edmonton last week, and I now look forward to working with indigenous people and all Canadians so that our children and those who follow will have a brighter and cleaner future.

Oral Questions

•(1430)

[Translation]

ETHICS

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they can give any answer they want, but the fact is that the Prime Minister admitted to the House that he attended a fundraiser with Chinese billionaires to talk about Canadian issues. He said that his intent was to attract investors to Canada.

Was it a Liberal Party of Canada fundraiser or an event during which people could lobby the Prime Minister on matters of personal interest to them?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are holding an unprecedented number of consultations to respond to the real challenges Canadians are facing.

As I have said several times, the fundraising rules are among the strictest in the country, and we are following the rules.

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when non-Canadians attend a gathering and did not pay to be there, obviously they are there to lobby the Prime Minister. That is very clear.

This morning, we discovered that we have a very hard time getting access to the Prime Minister so we can ask him our questions.

Will MPs have to pay \$1,500 to ask a question?

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 very well aware that only Canadians can donate to Canadian political parties. He is also very well aware that our government is holding consultations at an unprecedented level.

Everyone has access to our government and to the Prime Minister. We will continue our work to make things better for Canadians.

[English]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals do not seem to get what is wrong with their cash for access fundraisers, so I will spell it out for them. It is not a problem to have a fundraiser, it is a problem to invite people who are clearly doing business with the government. That is called conflict of interest. Then, when they do favours for their fundraising guests, like approving their bank or appointing them to the Halifax Port Authority, that is called preferential access and undue influence. When will the Prime Minister stop violating government rules, ethics rules, and his own rules?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have some of the strongest rules around fundraising in the country, and those rules are always followed. I have said this time and time again. I will continue to remind members of this House and Canadians that this government is committed to responding to the very real challenges that Canadians are facing. We will continue to consult with Canadians,

we will continue to engage with Canadians, and we will continue to work hard for Canadians.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve a real answer from an open and transparent government.

When I used to work in engineering and construction building projects for China, I was aware of the corruption there. Bribes to get permits were common practice. However, this is Canada. When I see wealthy Chinese investors donating to the Prime Minister's family foundation and looking for openings to buy up our country's assets by greasing the palms of the Liberal Party with a \$1,500 cash for access fundraiser, I get concerned. When will the Prime Minister put a stop to this Liberal corruption?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will repeat once again that when it comes to fundraising we have some of the strictest rules across this country. It is important that the member understands that it is also true that the rules clearly state that only Canadians can donate to Canadian political parties.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it appears that China is now dictating how we spend money on health care for our seniors. Eighty elite business people attended a fundraiser in the home of a wealthy Chinese businessman where the Prime Minister was directly lobbied to support this Chinese foreign investment. This type of investment appears to need approval by cabinet under the Investment Canada Act. The Prime Minister has exposed himself by selling access to an issue that will have to come before cabinet. When will the Prime Minister finally put an end to these shady, corrupt cash for access events?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the Investment Canada Act, it is an independent process that is put in place to look at the net economic benefit for Canada. As the minister responsible for innovation, science and economic development, I am responsible for overseeing that process. I can assure the member and this House that any decision we make will be in the best interests of Canadians. That is always guiding our decisions. It is an independent process, and we take that process very seriously.

•(1435)

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is just in. The individual who organized the Prime Minister's Vancouver fundraiser in November with Chinese millionaires is now bragging the fundraiser was a quid pro quo. He got an invitation from the Prime Minister to meet the Chinese premier in Ottawa and then offered to host the cash for access fundraiser in return.

The gig is up. This rotten, stinking, filthy, corrupt cash for access fundraising scheme has finally been exposed for what it is, so the only question is: When will the Prime Minister stop it?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important that the member recognize that when it comes to political financing, we have some of the strongest rules across this country and when all of the rules are followed, no conflicts of interest can exist. This government is committed to working hard to respond to the very real challenges that Canadians are facing: the concerns that my constituents raise with me and the concerns that many members in the House hear from their constituents. Let us get to work so that we can actually work harder for Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are not the only ones who found the Liberals' MyDemocracy.ca survey to be completely bogus. I applaud the thousands of Canadians who have mocked the survey's questions on social media. One question asks whether people prefer online voting or being chased by a horde of bloodthirsty clowns.

This is about our values. All kidding aside, how can we take a survey seriously when, at the end, it puts participants in these phantasmagoric categories? Where did they find this quiz, in a celebrity gossip magazine?

[English]

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his sense of humour. I would also like to thank the tens of thousands of Canadians who have already participated in MyDemocracy.ca.

This initiative is about empowering as many Canadians as possible to be part of this conversation. I encourage all Canadians and all members of the House to do so.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, watching the Liberals' electoral reform process is like watching that bus in Montreal slowly sliding down the icy hill, mesmerizing disaster in slow motion. After just one day, the minister's electoral reform survey turned into a dumpster fire on social media. Pollsters like Mario Canseco at Insights West said, "I've seen @Cosmopolitan quizzes that were better designed", "Bad questionnaire... = Unusable data".

I have a question for the minister, inspired by her own survey. Does she believe seats in Parliament should be allocated based on popular vote or based on the outcome of rock, paper, scissors?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are pleased that so many Canadians are involved in MyDemocracy.ca and engaging with the questions. Here is what Cliff, the CEO of this Canadian company that created MyDemocracy.ca, had to say, "we worked with an advisory panel —"

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, order. I know that members are enjoying the humour in today's question period. We need to hear the questions and we need to hear the answers, and we do not need to hear

anybody else who does not have the floor. Let us show a little respect for each other here or at least for this place.

The hon. Minister of Democratic Institutions.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Mr. Speaker, I think we can all agree that we are proud of Canadian scientists. We worked with an advisory panel of prominent scholars in areas such as research design, survey methodology, and electoral politics. We developed a survey that drew from existing literature on electoral reform in Canada and tried to identify various values—

● (1440)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last Friday, the Prime Minister described the MyDemocracy.ca survey in the *Toronto Star* as "a fun little questionnaire". He was so right. Based on people's responses, the website groups them as a guardian, a challenger, a co-operator, a fossil, or a snowflake. I found out I am a unicorn. The shared values of unicorns include rainbows, sparkles, and ranked ballots.

My question to the minister is this. Will she now share with Canadians the identities of the academics who advised the Liberals to model their survey on the Sorting Hat at Hogwarts?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. We are losing time. I know members are enjoying question period. They would not want it to be shorter today, with all this fun they are having.

The hon. Minister of Democratic Institutions.

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it appears the member opposite has gone to MyDemocracy.com, and not mydemocracy.ca. I encourage him to go back to the website.

This questionnaire is about reaching out to those Canadians who are not engaged in this conversation. This engagement initiative is about hearing from as many voices as possible before we make a decision. Surely we can all agree that it is a good idea to hear from more people.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, do not blame me for going to the wrong website. They only registered MyDemocracy.ca with GoDaddy on October 24. Check that out; it is true.

Last Thursday, the minister said the committee ducked its responsibilities because it did not recommend any particular electoral system. Why, then, does her survey not contain any questions about any particular electoral system? Does this not just mean that, when the responses are all counted, the minister will be lecturing Canadians about whether they too had ducked the hard choices and failed it?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government will be responding to the committee's report in due course.

Oral Questions

Let us go to page 43 the report, which said:

...increasing involvement in the greater political process is a goal shared by all members of the Committee. The Committee recognizes that fulfilling the objectives of this principle requires ongoing work and commitment.

We agree. Engaging more Canadians is exactly what MyDemocracy.ca is about. We are encouraged by the Canadians who are accepting our invitation, and we encourage all members of this House to join us and Canadians.

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when I was taking the minister's BuzzFeed, I mean democracy quiz, I learned two things: first that I am more of a Monica than a Rachel; and, as it turns out, the Liberals will only count the surveys that they want to count.

It says that people do not have to provide personal information, but if they do not give their gender, their year of birth, their level of education, their household income, and other demographic information like their postal code, their input will just be thrown out.

Was the minister misleading this House when she said that Canadians did not need to provide their personal information?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are thrilled that tens of thousands of Canadians are engaging in MyDemocracy.ca. The member opposite knows that providing demographic information is completely optional; it is not required to engage with MyDemocracy.ca. Responses will remain anonymous, and any data collected will be protected by the federal Privacy Act. I encourage all members and Canadians to engage with this exciting new initiative.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the past year, there have been over 600 interventions by government members in the House, and we are still hearing the same thing from the minister, like a broken record.

At the same time, a parliamentary committee representing the House consulted Canadians and experts from all over for six months and reached one simple conclusion: if we are going to change our electoral system, we must seek the approval of Canadians through a referendum.

Will the minister finally respect this institution and the people of Canada and require a referendum be held if she wants to change our electoral system?

● (1445)

[English]

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member opposite's passion for a referendum, and I encourage all members of this House to read the committee's report. This government will be responding to the report in due course

* * *

[Translation]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the financial crisis began less than 10 years ago and was caused by Wall Street firms, including Morgan

Stanley. Today, the Liberals are asking Morgan Stanley to advise them on the privatization of Canada's ports.

In 2014, Credit Suisse paid a record fine of \$2.4 billion to the United States for tax evasion. Today, the Liberals are asking Credit Suisse to advise them on airport privatization.

What is next? Will they ask Tony Accurso to advise them on the privatization of infrastructure?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course, as a new government, we are looking at all sorts of options. In the case of airports, we will certainly not do anything unless it is in the best interests of airline passengers. When it comes to our ports, which are extremely important economic drivers, once again, we will not make any decisions that are not in the best interests of our ports and our economy.

[English]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, speaking of infrastructure, the Competition Bureau is already witnessing some collusion taking place in the federal infrastructure program. In fact, investigations have been launched, and according to the bureau, developments could be announced in the coming months.

Liberals have been warned by the bureau that shady companies will definitely be tempted to pull a fast one on taxpayers. Do the Liberals understand the danger? What safeguards are they putting in place to protect Canadians from being scammed?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 98% of the infrastructure that we fund is owned by provinces and municipalities.

We expect government partners to ensure that their procurements are fair and transparent and provide value for Canadians. Infrastructure Canada provides infrastructure funding for projects for municipalities and provinces. The agreements require that the project proponents attest that contracts are awarded fairly, and the department has rigorous reporting and auditing provisions in place.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women in Canada.

This day marks the anniversary of the death in 1989 of 14 young women at L'École polytechnique de Montréal who were murdered simply because they were women.

Can the Minister of Status of Women inform this House what actions we can take to remember the victims, and ensure that this type of senseless violence never happens again?

Oral Questions

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today Canadians remember the tragic murder of 14 young engineering students at L'École polytechnique de Montréal, who were killed because they were women.

Our government is taking important actions to raise awareness about violence against women and girls, help prevent it, and support survivors. We are currently developing a federal gender-based violence strategy that will prevent and address violence.

Today, we invite all Canadians to renew their commitment to ending gender-based violence and reflect on this solemn occasion by observing a minute of silence or participating in a vigil. Our actions do matter.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are doing anything but making Canada's tax system fair and progressive.

Talk shows and Liberal friends will be receiving tax cuts, while hard-working Canadians will be seeing a new health tax. Introducing this new health tax on more than 13 million Canadians is targeting the middle-class families, all because the Liberals cannot control their reckless spending.

Will the Liberals assure Canadians that they will not implement a tax on health and dental benefits, simply yes or no?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as mentioned, we started off in government by lowering taxes on Canadians.

The people opposite have voted against a reduction in taxes for middle-class Canadians. They have voted against the Canada child benefit, which is helping nine out of 10 families with children.

We can assure Canadians that we are working to ensure that our tax system is fair. We can assure Canadians that we are working to ensure it is simple.

What I can tell all Canadians is that, as we review our tax system, we are not looking at any measure in isolation. We are moving forward in a way to ensure fairness and simplicity.

• (1450)

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the House and all Canadians that we voted against \$30-billion deficits and against the loss of control over public spending by this government for more than a year now.

This government invented the Liberal tax on carbon. This government invented new charges associated with pensions, and now it is inventing a health and dental benefits tax. More than just a few Canadians will be affected by this measure. In fact, more than 13 million Canadians will pay a surtax, a Liberal tax on health benefits and a Liberal tax on dental benefits.

Can the minister explain why he wants to tax—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be clear. We reduced taxes for the middle class. That is very important. We introduced the Canada child benefit, which will help 9 out of 10 children.

We want to ensure that our tax system is clear, simple, efficient, and equitable. That is very important. We will continue to carry out studies. Nothing has been decided yet, and every decision will be made with a view to having an equitable and easily understood system.

* * *

*[English]***ETHICS**

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the justice minister dodged my question about who leaked the marijuana report. Everyone seems to have seen this report, yet she insists that her ministerial colleagues have not. I asked if she has launched an investigation into her leak, and her lack of a direct answer makes it look as if she is hiding something.

The question is: Who is the justice minister protecting?

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government committed to legalizing, strictly regulating, and restricting access to marijuana in order to keep it out of the hands of youth and to keep profits out of the hands of criminals.

The government, in order to get the best advice on what a regulated regime for legal access to marijuana could look like, appointed a task force of nine eminently qualified Canadians. The task force finalized its report on November 30th. It will be released to all MPs and the public in mid-December.

If I may be very clear in response to the member opposite's speculations, no member of our government has yet seen the final report. We will see it at the same time as—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, so far the justice minister has told us that they see no need to investigate the leak.

We know that the RCMP has been asked to investigate. We know that the Ontario Securities Commission is investigating. We know that the document has been leaked.

When will the minister begin her own investigation?

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to be very clear, the task force finalized its report on November 30. In mid-December that report will be released to all MPs and to the public.

If I may be clear again, no member of our government has yet seen the final report. We will see it at the same time as every member of this House, when it is made public in mid-December.

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today we honour the memory of the women murdered in the École polytechnique massacre.

In Canada and around the world, violence against women is intolerably high. More than half of Canadian women will experience violence, and thousands of indigenous women have gone missing or been murdered in the past 30 years.

The United Nations critiqued the government for not going far enough in the fight to end gender-based violence. Will the government listen to Canadians and listen to the United Nations and act on a national action plan to end violence against women?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we remember the 14 young women whose lives ended in an act of gender-based violence that shocked a nation.

On December 6, we must reflect on the phenomenon of gender-based violence in our society and consider concrete actions to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. Every action matters when it comes to preventing gender-based violence.

Our government is developing a federal gender-based violence strategy that will raise awareness and take action to end the violence that women and girls face in our country today.

* * *

[Translation]

YOUTH

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to a new Statistics Canada study, the number of young people 24 and under with a full-time job fell by close to 20% in 30 years, while the number of part-time jobs has tripled. Young people's wages have also fallen compared to previous generations. The precarious situation of young people has now been scientifically proven.

What is the Prime Minister and Minister of Youth's plan to ensure that people my age, of my generation and the following generations have full-time jobs?

• (1455)

[English]

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that we have announced the formation of the expert panel on youth employment, which is helping to generate bold and innovative ideas to address those very concerns.

In addition, I want to point out that we put in \$1.5 billion to increase grants, \$175 million that was transferred to the provinces and territories for training, an additional \$85 million for union-based training, \$73 million for work-integrated learning, and \$165 million for a youth employment strategy.

We will continue to work to make—

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

Oral Questions

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the energy east pipeline would replace around 700,000 barrels of foreign oil per day with Canadian oil at east coast refineries. New Brunswick's Liberal premier says there is still a strong need for energy east. The natural resource minister says there is still room for it.

Will he finally restart the hearings and commit, today, that he will accept the recommendation of the independent, arm's-length, science-based National Energy Board review; or will the Liberals kill the project for political reasons, as they did with the northern gateway pipeline?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the process is unfolding according to the timelines.

I would have thought the hon. member would want to talk about the two pipelines that were approved last week that will create 22,000 jobs in his province, in Alberta, and right across the country. I have had conversations with energy workers, who those opposite have been defending all of these months. Why is it not time to say that these decisions are in the interest of the workers of Alberta and all of Canada?

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the northern gateway pipeline was in the interest of workers as well.

When the minister delayed the Trans Mountain pipeline by half a year for the Liberals' ministerial advisory panel process, we were told that it would create pipeline peace, love, and social licence. How is that working out? The panel was completely ignored, pipeline opponents are promising coordinated civil disobedience, and the minister has threatened to call in the army—great success.

Will the minister admit that all he has accomplished with his unnecessary delays and provocations is stir up dissent, inflame tensions, and make it more difficult to get this pipeline built?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that conversations about pipelines in Canada are not generally all calm. For example, in the New Democratic Party, there are many who think that Rachel Notley and union members are on the right track. Other members might disagree. Within other communities, there are differences of opinion.

I just think that after all the questions, all the energy the official opposition has put into encouraging us to approve pipelines, the member would reflect for a moment and be grateful that 22,000 Canadians will have work.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, November job numbers show the most unemployment in Alberta in a quarter century. More Albertans lost their jobs last month than in all of the rest of Canada. There have been 13,000 more full-time jobs lost, right before Christmas.

Oral Questions

Today the Minister of Natural Resources claimed that Albertans have a spring in their step.

People are devastated. They are losing their jobs. They are losing their homes. They are being forced to use food banks. How can the Liberals be so out of touch?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since our government took power in October of last year, according to Statistics Canada 183,200 jobs have been created from coast to coast to coast, including in Alberta.

When we ask companies why they invest in Canada, it is very clear that it is because of the policies we put forward, the investments we are making in infrastructure, and the investments we are making to help the middle class.

We have a plan that is creating jobs and creating growth across the country, particularly in Alberta.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, investing in infrastructure to support the move to a cleaner transportation system would make it easier for Canadians to choose low carbon vehicles while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and creating middle-class jobs.

Could the Minister of Natural Resources please tell the House about what investments the government is making in low-carbon transportation initiatives to make it easier for Canadians to use cleaner fuels and vehicles?

• (1500)

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we announced investments to create a cleaner transportation sector by expanding the infrastructure that supports electric and alternate fuel vehicles. Once fully implemented, our commitment of \$62.5 million over two years will result in more than 280 electric vehicle charging stations, nine natural gas refuelling stations, and three hydrogen refuelling stations.

By establishing new infrastructure, we are setting Canada's transportation system on a path to lower our carbon in the future while creating jobs—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Thornhill.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Lebanon has long claimed to be the only democracy in the Arab world, but we know dark forces are constantly at play inside past and current governments. The minister just held what were called productive meetings with Lebanon's president and foreign minister, and he announced \$8 million in security and defence assistance for Lebanon.

Did Canada's minister offer this generous aid fully aware that the Lebanese foreign minister is on the record equating what he called ISIS and Israeli terrorism?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister's visit to Lebanon was an important opportunity to reinforce our strong relationship as we continue to work together to achieve peace, security, and stability in the Middle East.

Working with the UN and other organizations, we are supporting Lebanon in welcoming refugees who are escaping the brutal conflict in Syria and also helping to provide critical services to meet the needs of all Lebanese people. The minister announced an \$8-million commitment to that end.

This government will continue to rally the international community to support the victims of the ongoing conflict in Syria.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Answer the question, Pam.

The Speaker: I urge the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan not to interrupt when the member is speaking.

The hon. member for Vancouver East.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister became emotional when speaking about Syrian refugees. That is understandable, when we think about the hardships they faced before arriving here. Month 13 is just days away, and for many Syrian refugees, federal assistance will abruptly end. Yet over 30% have not had any language training, and B.C. has the longest waiting lists. In fact, I have met Syrian refugees who have been here for two years, and they still are waiting. How are they supposed to integrate into the workforce if they are still on a wait-list for language training?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question and also for her good work in this area.

When one is welcoming refugees to Canada, there is nothing more important than to teach them English or French, especially in the case of Syrian refugees, who typically speak not a word of either language, so we have committed hundreds of millions of dollars to this enterprise. Just last month we invested an additional \$18 million for language training and settlement, of which \$3.2 million is going to go to British Columbia. We have recently, since April, created 7,000 new language spaces, so we are working very hard on—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Kitchener Centre.

* * *

[Translation]

SCIENCE

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government supports science research. We know that scientific expertise must inform decision-making.

Points of Order

[English]

Could the Minister of Science update the House on the ways she is ensuring that science and evidence make it to the cabinet table?

[Translation]

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Minister of Science, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Kitchener Centre for his question.

[English]

This government was elected on a promise to respect science and to restore it to its rightful place. Yesterday we delivered on that promise and launched a search for a chief science adviser. This person will ensure that government science is made available to Canadians, that government scientists can speak freely about their work, and that scientific analysis informs decision-making.

* * *

INDUSTRY

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in my region in southwestern Ontario, greenhouse growers use large amounts of electricity. As hydro rates continue to soar, businesses are leaving Canada, killing jobs across the country. The latest, Mucci Farms in Kingsville, is paying three times more for hydro in Ontario than across the border. Guess what. They are expanding, not in Canada but in the U.S.

How can the Liberals justify imposing a carbon tax on job creators, when our sky-high hydro rates are already driving them out of the country?

• (1505)

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, according to Statistics Canada, we have seen 183,200 jobs created since November 2015.

Particularly if we look at GE, it has created 220 jobs in Welland. What did the vice chairman John Rice say? He said, “Canada has all the essential ingredients to succeed in this new digital industrial reality”. That is an investment made in Welland.

With respect to Bell Helicopter Textron, Mitch Snyder, president and CEO, said, “Mirabel is a vital part of Bell Helicopter’s long-term growth strategy”, and he thanked and commended the federal government for its leadership. That is—

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

* * *

[Translation]

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-29 will place consumer protection at the mercy of Toronto banks. This is a direct attack on consumers and on Quebec’s ability to make social choices.

The National Assembly has unanimously condemned Bill C-29, as have consumer protection groups, notaries, an army of constitutional experts, and law professors. In Quebec, consumers are the ones we want to fight for, not the big banks.

Will the 40 Liberal government members from Quebec stand up and—

The Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we want to be clear. It is very important to protect Canadian consumers everywhere in Canada. We want a bill that will do a better job of protecting consumers vis-à-vis the banking sector. That is our goal, and it will make things better for Canadians across the country.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-29 is a major step backward when it comes to protecting consumers in Quebec.

Yesterday, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance played the “little guy from Shawinigan” card. That is exactly what we are telling him. The people of Shawinigan are just like other Quebecers. They want their elected representatives to defend them, not banks. I am also talking to all of his Quebec colleagues. The National Assembly unanimously asked them to stand up for their fellow citizens.

Will they do that for once, or are they just here to take advantage of the ministerial limousine service?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have made things better for consumers across the country. It is important to protect Canadian consumers, and that is exactly what we aim to do with Bill C-29.

* * *

[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Honourable Jackson Lafferty, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

[Translation]

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed the following bill, to which the concurrence of the House is desired: Bill S-4, An Act to implement a Convention and an Arrangement for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income and to amend an Act in respect of a similar Agreement.

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL DEFENCE

The Speaker: I have notice of two points of order. The first is from the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman.

Government Orders

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on Standing Order 18 to deal with some disrespectful comments at committee by the member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

I realize that committees are masters of their own domain, but I would welcome your opinion on this situation, and would invite you to remind all chair occupants to be very fair, temperate, and unbiased when they are in the chair.

The example I wish to give is a comment by the member for Kelowna—Lake Country, who is the chair of the Standing Committee on National Defence. It was just brought to my attention this morning that at our last meeting at the defence committee on Thursday, December 1, the chair, the member for Kelowna—Lake Country, said, when he thought his microphone was shut off after an exchange between him and me—and I do not think he was referring to the Minister of National Defence, who I was questioning—“You jerk” in response to me, at 12:24:13.

I would invite you, Mr. Speaker, to remind all chair occupants to be fair and temperate and to act in a parliamentary manner to ensure proper discourse at our committees—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1510)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman has not quite finished.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, I would just ask and invite you to encourage the member for Kelowna—Lake Country to apologize.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman for raising his point of order. As he says, committees are masters of their own houses.

I certainly encourage all members to be judicious in their language at all times and to be respectful of one another. Although Standing Order 18 prohibits disrespectful comments about the sovereign, the Governor General, and so forth, and/or offensive words toward another member of Parliament, I would obviously prefer that members use respectful language toward each other at all times. I would certainly encourage them to do that.

If the hon. member who was referred to wishes to comment, I would certainly allow him to. I do not see him standing; therefore, I will go on.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order, and in a moment I will move a motion seeking the unanimous consent of the House.

During question period on November 24, 2016, the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard said the following on the topic of his party's fundraising activities: “Mr. Speaker, our colleague knows very well that at events like this, government business is not discussed.” We have since learned that that was not the case.

I ask for unanimous consent to move the following motion: Given that the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard

has misled the House, that this House call on the minister to withdraw his remarks and apologize to this House.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1515)

[*Translation*]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2016, NO. 2

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-29, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2016 and other measures, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have no words to express my outrage. Bill C-29 is a scam perpetrated on Quebec consumers that benefits Toronto bankers. That is not all. Bill C-29 is a direct attack on Quebec, on segments of our legal system and on our ability to decide for ourselves how to run our own society.

Legally speaking, Bill C-29 is the biggest power grab since the patriation of the Constitution in 1982, but that is not all. Bill C-29 is a hypocritical bill, a gift for cigar smokers and champagne drinkers hidden in this massive bill. This bill is being rammed through without an opportunity for debate, defended by Bay Street hacks with bogus arguments. These arguments are categorically untrue. I will come back to that in a few moments.

No matter how we slice or dice it, this bill stinks. It reeks of cronyism and moral turpitude. In fact, the only good thing I see about the bill is that it takes the masks off. Now we know who Ali Baba's 40 thieves are. We can see how two-faced they are, with their fake smiles, which, when we look closely, look more like snarls.

When it comes to consumer protection, Quebec is nothing short of the most advanced society in North America. Back home is where the average citizen has the most rights to confront big money. That is what Bill C-29 is jeopardizing. Everyone knows that Toronto banks are no fans of Quebec's legal system. They would not be disappointed if Quebec were more like Canada. Then they could have a standard practice from coast to coast to coast, as the government says, without having to worry about some original and distinct society somewhere on this continent.

Indeed, Quebec is unlike any other nation in North America. The Supreme Court got it right two years ago when it asked the banks to respect Quebec's laws. It got it right when it ruled that Quebec's different approach was not a major threat to the banking system.

Even the Supreme Court, the court that almost always rules the same way, sentenced the banks to respecting Quebec and its laws. Outside Quebec, Bill C-29 will not have many adverse effects, but back home it will. Back home, our government sets the strictest safeguards to ensure that consumers are not swindled.

Government Orders

Bill C-29 eliminates all of the safeguards that protect ordinary people but that bother rich Bay Street bankers, including those that ban misleading advertising and hidden fees, those that prevent unilateral changes to contracts, and those that prohibit banks from increasing the maximum liability for unauthorized credit card charges to more than \$50.

In order to ensure that banks obey the law, there is a simple, yet legally binding, recourse mechanism available, and it is the Office de la protection du consommateur, a Quebec government institution. This organization defends ordinary people rather than profiteers, and has the ability to initiate class action suits so that David does not have to go up against Goliath alone. Bill C-29 has just replaced all that with a few provisions that do not protect anyone.

These provisions are written in the conditional tense. Banks should not gouge people and should not charge hidden fees. If they do, the banking ombudsman, who is appointed by the banks themselves, will not be happy with them. That is it. There are no sanctions, no fines, no reimbursements, nothing. This is a joke, and Quebec consumers are the butt of it. They are the ones who are losing out.

The Consumer Protection Act stems from the Civil Code. Quebec's powers in civil law are at the heart of the society we have built. All of the Government of Quebec's economic powers are derived from our autonomy with respect to property and civil rights. These powers are just one reason why Quebec has become the most egalitarian society in North America. The Consumer Protection Act is another. The federal government has always respected that, even if it was not happy about it.

During the British military dictatorship, which began in 1763, the Civil Code was enforced. When Quebec ceased to exist under the Act of Union, the Civil Code applied. Since 1867, even the federal government has respected the Civil Code in its relations with the people of Quebec.

• (1520)

The federal government is not above the Civil Code, but with this measure the banks will be. This is an incredible blow. What is more, not only is Bill C-29 appalling, but so is the manner in which this measure is being introduced. It is hidden among a multitude of clauses in a mammoth bill, and is being rammed through by gagging members to ensure that there is no debate. We have no way of knowing why this is being done.

The only argument cited by the government is the Supreme Court ruling. Apparently the Supreme Court required action on the government's part, which responded with Bill C-29. I have read the Supreme Court ruling several times. In *Marcotte*, the court does not cite the federal government, but requires the banks to respect Quebec and Quebec laws. In fact, the only time that the court refers to the federal government, it tells the government to do nothing.

This is what the court had to say about Quebec's consumer protection act:

It is hard to imagine how these provisions would force Parliament to pass legislation to countermand them...

The government is therefore not responding to the court ruling; it is going against it. That is not the same, and it does not bode well. I

can understand why Liberals outside Quebec support Bill C-29. It does not take away any rights from Canadians outside Quebec. It is in Quebec, and nowhere else, where ordinary folk are being taken to the cleaners.

The Liberal MPs from Quebec are beneath contempt on this issue. They are hacks being used by Bay Street to work against their own people. It is not surprising to see them all by themselves. The National Assembly has denounced them. Their own friends, the Quebec Liberals, are asking them to backtrack. The usually quiet *Chambre des notaires du Québec* is alarmed by this direct attack on our legal system. There is not a single consumer rights or constitutional law expert on their side. There is absolutely no one standing by them. What is happening is serious.

This debate reminds me of one thing: my people, whom I love, are a minority in this country. The boss is not us, and this country is not ours. In my anger, a quote from Léon Dion comes to mind. Yes, I am talking about Léon Dion, political scientist and father of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who said this:

Since 1763, we no longer have a history, except one, by refraction, that our conquerors would have us experience, as a way to pacify us. Their task has been made all the easier because we produce our own worst enemies.

There is no need for me to name these executioners. There are 40 of them and they know who they are.

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his comments, which I find a bit far-fetched.

He decided to quote Léon Dion, who has said many remarkable things throughout his academic career in Quebec. However, in which context did Dr. Dion say this? How can my hon. colleague bring up what Dr. Dion said in the final chapter of his life, when he had other things to say about Quebec's place in Canada?

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, I will stick to Bill C-29 and the impasse put before us. Never have the rights of consumers in Quebec been so diminished than they will be by this bill.

In the drafting of the government's Bill C-29, just like in the answers that the Minister of Finance gave to Senator Pratte earlier, the solution of "opting out"—which would maintain the Quebec Consumer Protection Act and strengthen consumer protection in the other provinces—was never proposed.

This is not the case, and the masks have come off. This does not strengthen protection for Quebec consumers, but instead weakens it to the benefit of the banks and shields them against the people. This is despicable, and those words were not far-fetched at all. What is far-fetched is the government's attitude, and this is why I am angry. We need to protect the people, not the banks.

• (1525)

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his speech and for focusing on what this really means for Quebecers.

I think the government is exhibiting gross misunderstanding, or perhaps even unadulterated bad faith, in choosing to ignore the provisions already in place in Quebec.

Government Orders

Does my colleague agree that this is also a wasted opportunity to convince the banks to treat their clients like civilized people and not to charge ridiculous credit card interest rates as they are doing now? This would have been a perfect opportunity to do that. Not only is the government encroaching on Quebec's jurisdiction, it is also not even doing its job.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with my colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert. It is awful.

For example, in Quebec, if someone's credit card is stolen, the law says that banks cannot charge fees in excess of \$50. Bill C-29 encourages credit card thieves because it does away with both law and limits. The bank can claim the entire \$2,000, say, that the thief spends. This is a major, serious, and appalling step backward. The government is helping itself to a huge power.

Earlier, my colleague from Hull—Aylmer talked about the patriation of the Constitution when he was talking about Mr. Dion's remarks. In this case, the government is patriating power. It is stealing the Quebec Civil Code. This is unprecedented, outrageous, and an appalling attack. The government is exempting banks from the Quebec Civil Code.

In conclusion, I want to mention that Minister Fournier of the Quebec National Assembly announced a few minutes ago that he is considering taking legal action against the federal government if it goes ahead with Bill C-29.

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very thoughtful and passionate remarks in this debate. I think he may have raised people's awareness of certain things, and I sincerely thank him for it.

The only point in his speech that I really take exception to is the same point that always bugs me about the Bloc Québécois, namely when they try to say that they are the only ones defending the interests of Quebec. Of course I strongly disagree with that.

Professors of constitutional law have issued an opinion. I would like him to name the professors who are saying that the Consumer Protection Act could not be supplemental to what Bill C-29 provides. Could he give us some examples?

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleague to read an article published in today's *La Presse* penned by Vincent Brousseau-Pouliot, in which he cites two professors, including one professor from Université Laval, which, I believe, is his alma mater.

In addition, clause 131 of Bill C-29 clearly states in black and white that this federal statute is intended to be paramount to any provision of a law or regulation of a province. My colleague need not check with any constitutional experts; he just has to read that clause. It is written in black and white.

The experts cited by Mr. Brousseau-Pouliot, among others, remind us of this, and so does the open letter from the representative of the *Chambre des notaires du Québec*. These are experts in contract and civil law. They have no interest in defending a client as litigators would. Rather, they defend the common good, the clarity of contracts. They agree with us on this.

I urge my colleague to defend the interest of Quebec, and I urge him to vote against Bill C-29, which was put under time allocation.

[English]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member from the beautiful area of Edmonton Riverbend.

I am honoured to represent the hard-working people of Elgin—Middlesex—London, and today I stand to discuss Bill C-29 with many of their concerns in mind.

Just one year ago, the Liberals promised modest deficits, and made many more promises. We have seen media reports that show the cost of food will go up 5% in the new year. Not one new full-time job has been created. With the new measurements put in place by the government, it is harder for Canadians to purchase homes under the new mortgage laws. Instead, we see huge deficits, high taxes, and low economic growth.

We have heard about the carbon tax that will be introduced by all provincial and territorial governments, and enforced by the federal government. We have an infrastructure bank that will not be supporting rural Canada at all. We have infrastructure projects that the government suggests have been approved, but where is the actual work being done? The tax cuts that were scheduled for small businesses have been reversed. The tax credits that helped families offset the costs of children's arts and fitness programs have been cancelled. We have seen extravagant spending on programs, but nothing to show for the expenditure of these dollars.

Canadians are growing concerned. Just yesterday in the House, the government did not deny its plans for new taxes on health and dental benefits.

With every middle-class tax cut, there is a new tax introduced for all Canadians, young and old, rich and poor.

Let us stop kidding ourselves. The economy is stagnant, and the Liberals' promise to spend their way to prosperity is failing. Although there is a lot of talk, I am honestly worried not only for the next generation and the large debt load that the government is burdening it with, but also for our current generation, where people find it difficult to pay for their hydro and cannot find a job.

Students are graduating from universities with no chance of permanent full-time positions, and they are not getting the chance to use their higher education because the government is not creating the necessary environment for job creation.

Is the sky falling? No, but it is pretty gloomy out there.

Government Orders

Back in July, I did a lot of media interviews regarding the new Canada child benefit. As the critic for families, children and social development, I was asked my thoughts on this new program. I will not deny that it does help families. However, we are talking about a very unsustainable program. According to the parliamentary budget officer, it will cost \$42.6 billion over the next five years. The parliamentary secretary said that these plans would be going forward regardless of the strain on public finances. I wonder where this money will come from? If we have a government that does not create a single job and spends out of control, where do we get the revenue to pay for these programs? I hope the government is listening to this speech and keeping that in mind.

The answer to this question, as we see it, is more taxes. More and more taxes will continue to be introduced by the Liberal government with no concern for the average taxpayer.

In an open letter received at my office on December 1, which was sent to the members of the Canadian Parliament, the author discusses the impacts of Bill C-29, and, “the complicated, administratively burdensome, and compliance challenged income tax provision” that will be placed on businesses. Who would want, and why would we want, this to be the case? We see a lot of things coming down from the Liberal government that do not seem to be looked at and do not seem to be the appropriate measures for an average Canadian and for Canadian businesses.

We have heard many quotes in the House from executives and analysts, but I would like to share with the House five quotes from people who I think are experts, taxpayers who pay their bills, and the bills of the government. These are from householders, and I will quote the fantastic people and constituents from Elgin—Middlesex—London.

Wayne Johnston from St. Thomas wrote, “I believe that policies such as the carbon tax and so-called cap and trade initiatives are environmentally useless and serve only to increase the tax burden on Canadians who are already over taxed.”

Karl Crocker from my hometown of Sparta wrote, “I don't think our present government gives a...about the average rural tax payer. With the carbon tax, hydro rates and now natural gas going up. We are mad.”

●(1530)

Gary and Vickie Gould from St. Thomas wrote, “The carbon tax is going to chase us out of our home....We have already two medium size businesses going to the United States if the carbon tax goes through. They do not want to move, but we have to because of the cost of their utilities.”

James Manning from Dorchester, “1. Good paying jobs need to be secured and new investment in Canada in job sectors is needed. 2. Follow up on government work projects to be completed as stated.”

These parties have concerns also for the 2017 budget. People are getting on track and voicing their opinions now because they are concerned with what they are seeing in their Canada today.

Edwin Zavitz from Dorchester said, “The Liberal Goo will do the same as always and tax and spend and steal from the people. The

Prime Minister is the same as his father. Looks down his nose at Canadians.”

The government needs to start listening to taxpayers who are the people burdened by the government's debt. Without proper employment and precarious employment, revenue to the government is going to be precarious.

Despite the big spending being done by the government, the Bank of Canada, the International Monetary Fund and the OECD have all downgraded their forecasts for Canada for both 2016 and 2017.

Jobs are in short supply, and I have not seen the job creation that the government has promised. The cost of living continues to rise and the government is making it harder for Canadians. The government needs to refocus its plans for growing the economy. Instead of meeting at Liberal fundraisers with billionaires, the government needs to start meeting with small business owners and ordinary everyday Canadians.

The philosophy that actions speak louder than words needs to be front of mind for the government. We hear so much about the government's plans to raise more families into the middle class, but we do not see programs that actually do it.

We hear time and time again about reducing taxes for the middle-class on the one hand, but on the other hand, all we see are tax increases for every Canadian.

The carbon tax is something extremely concerning to me. During the month of November, I held an agricultural round table with local producers. The carbon tax was discussed and it was a great concern to many of these farmers. I would like to note that during this discussion, it was not I who brought up the carbon tax. It was just in a regular round table where people could speak their mind.

We know it will increase the costs of doing business. In Elgin—Middlesex—London, over 20% of people are connected to the agricultural sector. What type of negative impact will we see? We hear that the price of gas will be going up 11¢ per litre. What happens to rural Canadians who have to drive to work every day?

Public transportation is not an option, therefore the growth with their strategy does not have any impact on farmers or rural people from Rodney to Thorndale in my riding. Because of this new tax, they will see increased expenses.

We know that the cost of shipping goods will be increased. At the end of the day, this cost will be passed on to the consumer. The same people will be paying more for gas, taxed on their dental and health benefits, and taxed to pay for this huge debt. They will continue to pay more money out of their pockets.

The government needs to find a solution to help put people back to work. It needs to find a way of getting those who are looking for jobs back into the labour force. People cannot continue to be unemployed.

Government Orders

That takes me to the changes to the employment insurance, changes that were made to the program in 2013 and were focused on helping get people back to work. We recognize that employment insurance is a temporary solution, and a huge majority of Canadians believe so as well. The best option is to improve employment insurance to assist people to find jobs and create jobs.

Instead, the government is taking anything done in the past 10 years, good or bad, and reversing it. We see that with so many of its bills that have been introduced in the past year. The government has indicated that Canadians voted for change. I am not sure that Canadians who voted for change expected to see what they do today.

I hear all the time that we can do better, and I definitely agree. When is the government going to start?

• (1535)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Intergovernmental Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to a list of taxes, which do not exist, about which the member is concerned.

I guess she can be concerned about taxes that do not exist, but it seems odd to be concerned about those taxes that do not exist when what does exist is a legacy from the previous government, which is an additional \$150 billion on the debt, a debt delivered by mismanagement of the economy by the party opposite.

Before we even start to talk about the challenges this government faces, could the member please give us some ideas on how she would repay that \$150 billion, where those resources would come from, and what that party was thinking, if it cared so much about taxpayers, when it failed to provide any leadership on debt reduction? It went into deficit before the meltdown of 2008, through tax cuts, and stayed in that position because of the inability of the Conservatives to manage an economy.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, maybe I will remind the member what a tax is. It is when people pay money back to the government. We are going to see the government taking money for the carbon tax. The member may not call it a carbon tax; he may want to call it something fluffier, but that is exactly what it is. It is money that is going to be coming out of everyday Canadians' pockets, and it is going to be put into the coffers of the Liberal government. That is a tax. We are also going to see an increase in CPP premiums. That is a tax.

I do not care personally if people shake their heads. That is fine. The member and I may have different ideas on what we would call a tax, but even in the last couple of days, our official critic for health has been asking about health and dental tax benefits, and the members opposite have not denied it. We see time and time again: tax, tax, tax.

I think one of the biggest things we see in this bill is the small business tax not being reduced. The bill is hurting the small businesses and employment environment.

• (1540)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe Canadians are quite pleased with the progress this government has made in a relatively short time span. We can

talk, as I have, about the GIS increase, the increase in the Canada child benefit, the tax cut for Canada's middle class, and the price on carbon. There are so many things out there.

Focusing on the province of Alberta, which has been in need, we have dealt with employment insurance, had more coordination of different departments, and made a heavy investment in infrastructure.

Could the member comment on whether there is something very specific she believes we could be doing as a government to assist?

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, I have two parts to my answer.

First, Karl Crocker from Sparta has written, "I don't think our present government gives a '_____' about the average rural tax payer. With the carbon tax, hydro rates and now natural gas going up. We are mad." That says to me that Canadians, at least those living in Elgin—Middlesex—London, are not happy.

We are hearing from different people, obviously. I am hearing from people in Elgin—Middlesex—London in southwestern Ontario. We are not seeing infrastructure being built. We are not seeing new job creation. I am fortunate, but for the people living in the province of Ontario right now, I feel for those who are unemployed.

Second, we need to create an environment where businesses will come to this country, where businesses will continue to invest in their future and for their employees. We had the Canada jobs grants, which I am hoping the government will continue to support. I only hear from these businesses when it is a great thing, when people whom they know are great employees get the opportunity to increase their productivity, to increase their knowledge, so they can continue to have excellent employment. Therefore, continue with our training to make sure that we can get people back to work, and make sure we are graduating people—

The Deputy Speaker: There is time for one more short question.

The hon. member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals always talk about the debt. We paid off \$40 billion. We gave them a surplus of \$3 billion, which they blew through, plus the slush fund of \$6 billion. They have not created a single full-time job.

The other part of it is rural infrastructure. The Liberals just took money from the rural infrastructure fund to put into an infrastructure bank, which is actually an insurance program to protect foreign investors.

Could the member comment about the concerns in rural Canada about infrastructure, which we likely are not going to get money for?

Government Orders

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, I met with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities when its members were here in their lobbying week. I asked them directly if they were here to see me as a critic looking at something national or as a rural MP who represents rural Canada. They wanted to speak to me as a rural Canadian. Funnily enough, the people who were sent here were from Toronto and Montreal. I think they do a wonderful job, and two days later, I was fortunate enough to have someone from the city of London come to speak with me.

If we invest in an infrastructure bank, the problem I see is that the people from urban Canada I speak with believe that it will be good, because it will be good for their projects. However, we do not have large infrastructure projects of that huge proportion unless we amalgamate all of our programs together. Therefore, I am really worried, and I know that Elgin—Middlesex—London will not see a dollar from that infrastructure bank.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to stand today to speak to Bill C-29.

Just last month, a group of respected physicians in Edmonton and the surrounding area wrote to me about a new federal tax proposal in Bill C-29 that would alter the small business deduction to exclude group medical structures. Their email reads:

I urge the federal government to amend Clause 13 of the Legislative Proposals Relating to Income Tax, Sales Tax and Excise Duties by exempting group medical structures and health care delivery from the proposed changes to S. 125 of the *Income Tax Act* regarding multiplication of access to the small business deduction.

The proposal outlined in C-29 will hobble the efforts of these doctors and their colleagues from effectively serving Canadians, as it would unfairly penalize group medical structures. These structures are not formed to avoid the taxman. They are formed to deliver team-based integrated medical health services according to priorities set out by the provinces.

In many of the sub-specialties these physicians work in, these arrangements are the standard of delivering care in a safe and cost-effective manner. This tax proposal threatens to tear this balance apart, heaping rising costs upon health care providers and forcing many to potentially move their practice to other countries with less punishing tax burdens. Most important, these changes will directly impact the medical care received by Canadian families across the country.

These arrangements are the fruit of years, decades even, of careful planning and negotiation between the provinces and their health care providers to implement their health care priorities. The division of powers is quite clear in this country: the delivery of health services is a major component of the provincial mandate, not the federal government's. The government is once again ignoring the concerns and opinions of experts and forcing its views onto our provinces.

I would like to turn my comments to Alberta. Alberta is struggling right now. It is going through one of the worst job crises in the province's history. The unemployment rate right now is at a 22-year high. Over 222,000 Albertans are out of work. They are not just from the oil patch, but work in restaurants, in small businesses, and in gyms as physical fitness experts. I was speaking with one the other day. These people are the heart and soul of Alberta and to have them out of work really leaves Alberta at an incredible disadvantage.

We are suffering from the low oil and gas prices. That is fair. The government on the other side will stand up and announce its decisions on pipelines, issue a press release, and say everything is fixed: "Move on, Alberta, on to our next hurdle".

We cannot just rely on these pipelines. Right now what we have is a jobs crisis. It leaves us at a disadvantage in all of our sectors. These pipelines that we hope will be built eventually do not address anything happening right now.

We need to ensure that we have particular infrastructure in place, yet we have no shovels in the ground. We need more jobs. However, we keep seeing part-time jobs. It is unfair what is happening in Alberta and there seems to be a real lack of recognition of this on the other side.

Furthermore, to add to everything that is happening in Alberta, the Liberals have now announced a carbon tax. The carbon tax is going to \$50 a tonne. The Alberta provincial government has set the carbon taxes at \$30 per tonne, but because of the good faith in these new pipelines, they have decided to move it up to \$50 a tonne.

That has an impact not just on the oil and gas sector, but on regular families. I have a letter I received from a family in my area, which said that the YMCA daycare, a solid daycare provider in our constituency, has decided to raise the annual fee for parents in the community, because they think the carbon tax will have an impact on the YMCA. It seems to me that this carbon tax is not just building social licence, as the government states, but is really having an impact on young families on the ground.

We figure, great, the Liberals have put in place a carbon tax, let us apply pressure to the government to ensure that it understands the impact of this. Then the government landed the CPP increases on small businesses, and on families as well; then there were mortgage rules, and now we are hearing today about taxation of health and dental benefits.

● (1545)

There is only one taxpayer, and this one taxpayer continually has to pay all of the taxes that are added on. I plead with the members on the other side that Bill C-29 is yet a further indication that the current government is completely out of touch, not just with Alberta, but with the families across the country this bill would have an impact on.

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We keep hearing that infrastructure investments are going to save the day, are going to be the way to put Albertans and other western Canadians back to work. We have a minister who can stand up here and say “from coast to coast to coast” as much as he likes, yet quite honestly, we have not seen a single shovel in the ground yet. Oh wait, there is one in central Alberta for waste management. That is the only one. The minister will stand in Edmonton and Calgary and call press conferences with anyone who will come, and he will say, “Look at us, we are creating jobs”. Where are the jobs? We have yet to see a single full-time job created. We have part-time jobs. Statistics Canada reports say there are all these part-time jobs, but that in terms of full-time jobs on the infrastructure side, we actually lost construction jobs. Over the last year, there were fewer construction jobs than the year before. It does not add up and does not make sense how this infrastructure plan is going to jumpstart our communities.

Then we asked the Minister of Infrastructure, the Prime Minister, the natural resources minister, and the minister of industry what we are supposed to tell Albertans when none of this is coming to fruition, when nothing is happening, and when people are still unemployed. The unemployment rate is still the highest in 22 years. We are told to hang in there by the Prime Minister. We are told not to worry, that we will hold hands together and get through this, by the infrastructure minister. I do not know how the minister's warm embrace will help the many people who are unemployed in Alberta. It seems a little optimistic on the minister's side.

I would encourage the minister, the Prime Minister, and the finance minister to listen to us on this side of the House. We are sitting down with everyday Albertans. We created what we call the “Alberta Jobs Taskforce”. Every Alberta member of Parliament is participating, actively meeting with as many stakeholders as they can. We are sitting down at round tables, town halls, and one-on-one meetings. I cannot say how many people have been in my office crying because they have lost their jobs, because they do not know how they are going to put a roof over their heads, and because now that their government is increasing the carbon tax, they are not going to be able to afford day care for their children.

I believe it is incumbent on us, in a non-partisan approach, to ensure that we are listening to those in our constituency. I know that the member for Calgary Shepard has had a number of round tables and is meeting with his constituents regularly. I know that the member for Lethbridge has met with a number of youth who do not know where they will get jobs out of university. So it is incumbent on us as members of Parliament to communicate to the government what we are hearing on the ground.

We have a budget coming up in the new year. As part of that budget, we want to make sure that the Prime Minister and the finance minister have heard exactly what we have heard from these Albertans. We are hearing not only from small businesses and oil and gas companies, but also from food banks. I spoke with an individual at a food bank the other day who said that because of the carbon tax, the people there are concerned about how they will continue operating. There are now more people lined up at the food bank, yet the people working there do not know how the food bank will continue operating. That would bother me if I were sitting on the

side of the House. We need to ensure that we have solutions for this crisis in Alberta.

Over the years, Albertans have stood shoulder to shoulder with other provinces across the country, making sure that we were there in their time of need. Right now, Alberta is hurting. Alberta is going through an incredible jobs crisis, and we need the rest of the country to listen to Albertans and hear our thoughts.

● (1550)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in reaction to the hon. member's comments, as a member of Parliament from British Columbia, I have stuck my neck way out there and supported the decision by this government to allow the Kinder Morgan and Line 3 pipelines to go ahead. I also support our decision not to build the Enbridge line.

I am concerned by the misinformation, or perhaps the misunderstanding, and I will be charitable here. A price on carbon means that the revenue goes back to the province where it was collected, where the province can do what it wishes with it. It can cut other taxes; it can exempt certain sectors, as British Columbia did with agriculture. British Columbia has had a carbon tax now for almost nine years, yet we have the best economy in the country and the lowest tax rates.

Could the member dig a bit more on the implications of putting a price on carbon and particularly how it can be worked within a province to the benefit of the people who live there?

● (1555)

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Mr. Speaker, I do not envy the member's position on the other side of the House with having to stand against his government on the Kinder Morgan pipeline. Apparently, giving his approval, I guess, goes a long way to the Prime Minister, I wish he would have listened to me on energy east, Keystone, and northern gateway.

The social licence on the other side has gotten us nowhere. There is now a president-elect in the United States who is moving ahead without a carbon tax and not going along with the Paris agreement. I would think that would indicate that there goes investment, there goes business out of Canada to the United States.

I would hope that the member on the other side recognizes the implications of a carbon tax, not just on the side that he speaks about but because of what that is going to do for the rest of the country and the economy.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned Alberta a lot, and his riding and the need for jobs. I am sure, like in my riding of Essex, his riding consists of a lot of small businesses, which drive the economy in a lot of ridings. It is very concerning to me that we do not see the promise in this bill of a small business tax reduction. This is hurting small businesses in the communities in Essex and I am sure it is hurting the member's as well.

Could the hon. member comment on the government not following through on the reduction of the small business tax cut and how it has impacted his riding?

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Mr. Speaker, that is a hard-hitting question.

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I have to say that small businesses are hurting enough with the promises they thought they would get from the government, but now a CPP increase is being piled on, and that includes health and dental benefits, too. Small businesses right now do not know where the next saving grace from the government is coming from. It is a challenging time, particularly in Alberta, and I imagine in Essex as well, to have a small business knowing there may be a carbon tax, a CPP enhancement, and EI premiums. That is a lot for small businesses. I would think it is a struggle for small businesses these days because of the actions of the Liberal government.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to draw on a curious comment made in response to the question of my colleague. The hon. member said he wished the member for Fleetwood—Port Kells had listened to him when it came to Keystone and energy east. I would like to point out that the approvals are in place for Keystone and the question has not come to cabinet for energy east.

My question relates to a comment made during the member's remarks, when he suggested that not a single shovel was in the ground when it came to federal infrastructure spending. In Central Nova, the Nova Scotia Community College Trades Innovation Centre in the town of Stellarton is under construction, there are seven small craft harbours under construction, and a series of other municipal infrastructure projects.

Does the hon. member not recognize that construction is under way, employing people in my community, and if not, where does he get his information?

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Mr. Speaker, it feels like a set-up on that side, too. We were able to pull the infrastructure list of what has been invested in and there are certain things on this list. In Toronto, there is funding for missing sidewalk links. I wonder what the sidewalks look like now. Are people about to fall off the sidewalks? There is a digital advertising sign in St. John's, Newfoundland, which will use infrastructure money. That seems strange. There is a playground in Inqaluit.

These announcements are all fair and good, but without having shovels in the ground and without putting people to work, it is really unfair for that side of the House to say that they are really incenting jobs, because they are not.

● (1600)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, maybe a good place to start is to provide a comment. We have heard this from other Conservatives. They try to demean the importance of all jobs. I come from a working-class riding where all jobs are important. Not everyone wants to be a member of Parliament, or a car salesman, or a health care worker. There is a good selection of jobs from coast to coast to coast and some of them are part-time, some of them are full-time. Over the last number of months, we have been able to accomplish a great deal as government. We constantly hear from the other side that they are just part-time jobs. I can assure the member that many of those part-time jobs are of great value and Canadians truly do appreciate part-time jobs too. Part-time jobs do matter and they do count.

We have seen in the last 12 months, I believe the record was 139,600 new jobs. I believe the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development indicated that number has gone up in the last month to just over 145,000. I might be a little off in that number. The bottom line is that this is a government that does care about jobs. We are concerned about how the economy is improving and that is the reason we brought forward such a progressive budget. Quite frankly, I am disappointed in the Conservatives and especially in the New Democrats for not recognizing what most Canadians believe and that is that this government has it right. We have a budget that all Canadians can get behind because it literally assists every region, every community of our country.

I would suggest that if members want to reflect on what has been said over the last number of months, because we have been talking about this budget for months now, it is nice to see that we are going to have the final vote on Bill C-29 in the not-too-distant future. I would suggest that the budget is one that all members should get behind. I do not say that lightly. I say it because I genuinely believe it. There is so much in the budget that people can be very proud of. Even the Conservatives should be proud. After all, they talk about the importance of tax breaks. There is good news in this budget. There is a tax break worth hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars for Canada's middle class.

Who are the people we are talking about? The bulk of the benefits are going to individuals who are firefighters, sales people, health care workers, or factory shop workers, and many of those jobs are in the hard-working middle class. In excess of nine million Canadians will benefit from this middle-class tax cut. One would think that the Conservative Party would be behind that tax cut. I am sorry to say that the Conservative Party is not voting for that tax cut.

I say to my colleagues across the way that if they were to canvass some of the constituents I just referred to they would find that people would be disappointed in the criticism coming from across the way in regard to this middle-class tax cut.

I would like to think that there is always an opportunity to see one's way clear and understand that this is a good tax cut. I would suggest to my friends across the way that they might want to reconsider their position on this budget.

As much as I am disappointed in terms of how the Conservatives are voting on this, I am somewhat surprised by my New Democratic friends because there is even more within this budget. When we talk about equalization or tax fairness, one of the things I thought the government was right on was to do some readjusting where we actually have a tax on Canada's wealthiest, a significant number of dollars that are going to be coming in and that money is going to be reused.

● (1605)

Given some of the rhetoric coming from the New Democrats on the issue of tax fairness, they are voting against the budget, which ultimately would see an additional tax put on some of Canada's wealthiest people.

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However, it is more than that, because when we talk about reaching into our communities and families and trying to enable those who are working hard to become part of the middle class, or are middle class, we have a couple of initiatives that we should all be proud of. I have had the opportunity to talk at great length in the House about them.

One of them is the Canada child benefit program. This is tax free, unlike the Conservatives, who felt even if someone was a multi-millionaire they should still get the tax benefit. We disagreed with that. Those who need it the most are the ones who are going to receive the most under the Liberal plan, and there is a dramatic overall increase to the Canada child benefit program. This is good news. We are going to see thousands of children being lifted out of poverty because of this direct increase to the Canada child benefit program.

We could go on about the guaranteed income supplement. Again, this is something I have talked about in the past. We often talk about the most vulnerable in our communities. How many of us have knocked on a door and run into a senior who is finding it difficult to meet their financial needs? Perhaps it is medication, or additional food supplements, whatever it might be. Often, the most vulnerable are those seniors who are limited to their old age supplement. We have seen a historic commitment to the GIS to the degree that some seniors will get an additional benefit of \$900 plus on an annual basis. Many might say that is not much money, but I can assure them, if someone is only receiving \$10,000 or \$12,000 a year, that is a lot of money. What we are doing by increasing the guaranteed income supplement for our seniors is lifting them out of poverty. We are voting on a budget that is going to lift thousands of seniors out of poverty.

That is not all. We can talk about the infrastructure, but I will defer that for the moment. I want to talk about the importance of a national government working in co-operation with our provinces on two issues. I like to think that we are not only a government for today but we also think about future generations. Not only is our government demonstrating strong national leadership on the file, but we are working with the provinces. I am talking about the Canada pension plan. For years, I sat in opposition when Mr. Harper and the Conservative government did absolutely nothing in regard to the CPP. Even though we had provinces calling for strong national leadership, the Conservative government at the time did absolutely nothing in that regard. Within a year, under the leadership of our Prime Minister, and the Minister of Finance, we were able to get a historic agreement with the provinces and territories that is ultimately going to ensure that our future seniors, our workers of today who are moving our economy forward, are going to be able to contribute a little more toward a pension. At the end of the day, they are going to be receiving more money when it comes time to retire.

That is about having a vision and thinking about future generations. That was something we did not see with the Harper government. It was non-existent in dealing on the issue of pensions.

• (1610)

The other issue that I often hear members talk about is the price on carbon. They made it very clear. The Conservative Party here in Ottawa, albeit unique in the entire country, has declared that the price

on carbon is a bad idea. It does not care what real Canadians have to say.

Mr. Speaker, one or two member are starting to applaud on it.

It is a good way to demonstrate just how out of touch with Canadians the Conservative Party today still remains. Political parties of all stripes—and we can talk about the Progressive Conservatives in Manitoba, the NDP in Alberta, or the Liberals in other jurisdictions—have acknowledged the importance of dealing with Canada's environment. We saw that from the Prime Minister, shortly after becoming the Prime Minister, becoming a part of the Paris agreement. Then literally months later, here we are, meeting with our provincial counterparts and we now have an agreement, which includes provincial governments of all political stripes saying that the issue of a price on carbon is a good thing.

We have the Conservative Party saying that, no, it is a bad thing and that the federal government is just trying to raise more money. I should remind the Conservatives—because sometimes I think they like to play with reality and maybe stretch the truth to turn it into a bit of a falsehood—that under that price on carbon, yes, we saw strong national leadership and, through that strong national leadership, we have an agreement that applies in every region of our country. However, Ottawa is not going to get a dime from it. All the money is going back to the provincial and territorial jurisdictions. That is a good thing.

At the end of the day, if we have premiers who want to take that revenue generated and reduce their income tax or another form of tax, they can do that. It is going back to the individual provinces. In fact, many of the provinces already have it in place.

Only the Conservatives are trying to make us walk backwards on the issue. It does not make sense; unless, of course, we believe that the Conservative Party, as I have argued, has lost complete touch with reality and what Canadians feel and know are important.

I would suggest that it is indeed the latter.

The nice thing about when we have debates of this nature is that we are able to express ourselves and, hopefully, members of the Conservative Party will start to question some of their leadership. There are a number of leadership candidates who are running to become their new leader. They might want to try to think outside of the box and see which ones are starting to come up with ideas that Canadians can buy into. I can tell members that there are initiatives that are being taken by this government that will have a very positive impact on Canada's economy and our environment because, as the minister responsible for natural resources has so well articulated, we can do both.

That was clearly demonstrated by this government when we saw the approval of two pipelines and, ultimately, the rejection of one pipeline. We do not believe that there has to be a tradeoff, unlike the NDP that would like to keep all the oil in the ground or the Conservatives who would build a pipeline anywhere, even though they never built an inch of it to tidewaters. If we listen to rhetoric from the two, we hear they are at complete odds.

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I would suggest that this government got it right. We set up a process that is fair, a process that allows for consultation, and we are starting to see the benefits of that already. In just over one year, we have been able to accomplish more on the pipeline file than the previous government did in 10 years. We are very proud of that. At the end of the day, look at the benefits of getting the job done: tens of thousands of direct jobs, not to mention the indirect jobs, that are being created by a government that not only cares, but has the ability to get the job done—something the Conservative Party failed at doing.

• (1615)

A lot of things are happening on this side of the House that will impact the everyday lives of Canadians, and those things are coming through a budget that is good for all Canadians in every region of this country.

A great way to emphasize that is by talking about Canada's infrastructure program. I said earlier that I would add some thoughts on the infrastructure program because it is one of the programs whereby we made a tangible commitment to Canadians. Once again, our government is delivering on the commitments that we made to Canadians. We are investing historic amounts of money in infrastructure. Unlike the Conservative Party, we are actually spending the money today in a big way to ensure that the infrastructure moves forward.

Member ask where. Many members are critical of us with respect to Alberta. Not only are we moving forward in Alberta, but for the first time in a long time we have a government that actually walks the talk, as opposed to just talking. Those members just need to look at the number of infrastructure dollars that have been committed to the province of Alberta. The only reason I single out Alberta is because of some of the comments coming from members across the way in regard to that province. The principle I am talking about with regard to Alberta could be applied to every region of our country, where we have seen our national government work with local governments, whether they be municipal or provincial, to deliver priority projects. Millions of dollars have already been committed.

Let us not underestimate the important work of city councillors, MLAs, and community advocates. They came to the table and put in an effort that made it possible for this government to do what Canadians wanted us to do, and that was to invest in Canada's infrastructure. They wanted us to not just talk about. That is something we saw when Mr. Harper sat in the prime minister's chair. This is a government that not only talks about it but gets the job done, because we understand the importance of it.

I could be a bit out on this, but about 70 projects have received approval to date in the province of Alberta. Many of those projects are actually under way; the sod has been turned. This could not have been done without that high sense of co-operation.

So much is happening within our country. There are so many things to talk about. I focused on the budget, and I also focused attention on some national initiatives.

Earlier today a number of members raised the issue of the murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. This is an issue that is very close to my heart. For many years while I sat on the

opposition benches I called on the prime minister of the day and the Conservative government to hold a public inquiry. A couple of months into government the Liberals initiated that public inquiry.

Our Minister of Health is truly committed to our strong national health care system. We all benefit from it. Members should ask their constituents what makes them feel good about being Canadian. From my perspective, one of the things would be our health care system. For the first time in many years, we have a Minister of Health who truly believes in Canada's health care system. She has been working diligently at trying to achieve something that the Conservative Party could not achieve and that is to get a health care accord. I would argue that it was because the Conservatives did not want one. We finally have a Minister of Health who is committed to working hard to achieve a health care accord, something that is long overdue.

A personal favourite of mine with respect to policy is immigration, and I referenced that in an S.O. 31. Immigration is so important and valuable for Canada. The population of my home province of Manitoba would have decreased if it were not for immigration over the last 10 years. Our Liberal government continues to fix the many problems with immigration today, whether it is processing times or especially family reunification. I underline family reunification. Marriage is a serious issue and it has to be dealt with.

I see I am out of time, but I still want to talk about housing and so much more. I will wait for a question or two.

• (1620)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let there be no doubt that the member is an expert at ratcheting up the rhetoric in the House.

There are so many things to fix in the member's commentary, especially on the facts side, and I will deal with a few of them. I know that members on this side of the House will explain whatever else needs to be explained to the member.

What the member said about the carbon tax is that it was introduced in co-operation. However, as I remember it, environment ministers had it dropped on them during an announcement here. They were at a federal, provincial, territorial meeting, and it was imposed on all of the provinces. In fact, it was the current government that said if they did not do this, it would force them. It would shackle them on this policy question and they would have a carbon tax whether they wanted it or not, or whether the residents of their provinces wanted it. Brad Wall, the Premier of Saskatchewan, opposed it. Jason Kenney, the next premier of Alberta, is opposed to it as well.

It is a shell game with taxes. On one side, the Liberals say that they are going to be reducing personal income taxes. However, I have explained to the House repeatedly that it does not benefit middle-class Canadians, because in fact the highest 20% of income earners make over \$55,000, and we know that those earning \$60,000 can expect \$261.44 in an income tax decrease.

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With these pretend tax decreases and the carbon tax and the health and dental taxes that are coming in, when will the government actually balance the budget?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member has it all wrong. I do not think he truly understands what has actually taken place. I do not believe that the provinces were bullied into signing off on an agreement. Maybe the member could identify a province that felt it was bullied into signing off on an agreement. My understanding is that, yes, there might have been one province that did not want to sign onto the agreement, and I will concede that particular point to the member. We will have to wait and see what happens from that premier choosing not to sign the agreement.

At the end of the day, every region of this country, and I would argue, the vast majority of Canadians who care about the environment, see that a price on carbon is the right way to go.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague across the way seems to think that perhaps the louder he speaks, the more the opposition will believe him.

For the benefit of our hon. colleague across the way, the Liberals have created no new jobs. They are spending billions of dollars on the backs of our future. They are going to tax the next generation, which they say is the most important generation coming forward, and they want to do things for that next generation.

So that our hon. colleague can perhaps understand it, hear it, and maybe believe it, the Liberals have created no new jobs. What are they going to do? What is this budget going to do to create jobs in my riding?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member is wrong. He can tell that to those holding the 139,600 jobs that were actually created with assistance.

Again, members across the way heckle that some of those are part-time jobs. Well, part-time jobs, full-time jobs, jobs are a good thing. The point is that the member has it wrong.

At the end of the day, we have a government that is putting in place an economic strategy that would in fact benefit all Canadians. The member made reference to tax breaks, but he will be standing up shortly to vote against one of the most significant tax breaks for the middle class. I do not know how he justifies that to Canadians and to his constituents.

We are literally going to be putting hundreds of millions of dollars in the pockets of many of his constituents.

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member very much for an impassioned and reasoned speech. There are so many good things in this budget for Manitobans, both in the city and outside of the city.

For example, the town of Gimli in Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman is getting \$3.5 million for a new water treatment plant. The town of Selkirk in the same riding is getting \$3 million for a new waste water treatment plant. The town of St-Pierre-Jolys in southern Manitoba in the riding of Provencher is getting \$3 million for a lagoon expansion. This is all in rural Manitoba, all represented by Conservative

representatives, and yet the Conservative Party is going to vote against this budget.

Can the member explain why members of the Conservative Party would vote against their own interests when they would get millions in their own ridings in budget 2016?

• (1625)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, my colleague and friend across the way brings up a number of examples of rural and urban infrastructure dollars that are being spent. I would emphasize the magnitude of how this government is committed to building Canada's infrastructure. It does not matter whether it is a Conservative, Liberal, New Democratic, Green, or Bloc riding, the infrastructure program is about Canadians and investing in Canada's infrastructure. There is a huge infrastructure deficit, and for the first time in many years, this is a government that is prepared to invest in Canada's infrastructure.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the member's speech this afternoon, and I have to admit that for the most part, he did a good job, but parts of it were truly laughable.

He stated that all Canadians should get behind this budget. We are getting behind with this budget, but it is \$30 billion behind that we are getting. What we are getting, right in the behind, is a \$30-billion deficit. The member talked about hundreds of millions of dollars in tax cuts, but he has not talked about the \$30-billion deficit, which he needs to pay attention to.

He talked about all the benefits, but what he has not talked about are all the extra taxes that will be added on, more taxes than we can shake a Liberal stick at: taxes on employment; taxes on medical benefits; taxes on small businesses, which the Liberals did not remove as they promised; and taxes on everything we buy, through the carbon tax.

How can the member opposite explain the kick-start to the economy his government promised, when it has put this on the backs of taxpayers and has created zero new full-time jobs?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the issue of the deficit, the first thing I would say is that the Conservative Party has absolutely zero credibility on the issue of deficit financing or balanced budgets, because when Mr. Harper became the prime minister of Canada, he inherited a proven, well-demonstrated, multi-billion dollar surplus. Before the recession even kicked in, he not only got rid of that surplus, he got us into a deficit situation. That continued to the degree that he accumulated \$150 billion. There are no lessons to be taught by the Conservatives on the issue of deficits.

On the issue of jobs, I can assure the member that there have been in excess of 139,600 jobs. That is not bad for one year.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the volume. It is the first time I have been in this House in a year that I do not need to listen with my earpiece, because of his screaming. It reminds me a lot of Nigel Tufnel of Spinal Tap, who claimed that most people have their speakers up to 10, but his cranks up to 11.

I just want to comment and correct a couple of things.

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With respect to infrastructure spending in Alberta, back in the 10 years before the Harper government was in power, the Liberal government contributed a combined \$350 million over 10 years. During the Harper period, it was \$3.5 billion.

Transit infrastructure spending under this Liberal plan short-changes Alberta on a per-capita basis by 12%, so the government is actually underfunding. I wonder if the minister would stand up for Alberta and get this fixed, unlike the infrastructure minister, from Edmonton Manning, who is happy to underfund Alberta on transit infrastructure spending. Will you stand up and tell this House that you will back Alberta for the full amount per capita we should get?

The Deputy Speaker: I would remind hon. members to direct their speech and questions through the Chair.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is very easy to get excited about this budget. When they find out the types of things that are in this budget, the members will realize why I get so passionate about it. I truly believe in this budget, because it is in the best interests of Canadians. All members should feel passionate about this budget. Some acknowledgement of the value of the budget would be great.

I can assure the member that this government looks at Alberta in a fair and equitable way, as it does all regions. We are there for Albertans, as we are there for all Canadians.

• (1630)

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: 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 Essex, International Trade; the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona, Public Safety; the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam, Fisheries and Oceans.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is a first. Compared to the previous speaker, it seems like I am the calm one in the House. I would like to start by saying that I will be sharing my time with my wonderful colleague from North Island—Powell River. It is an honour.

I would remind the House and those watching us that, again, we are discussing the budget implementation bill under the pressure of closure imposed by the Liberal government, who promised to do politics differently, to respect the institutions, and give parliamentarians their rightful place.

It is amazing to see how the bad habits they once criticized became standard operating procedure for the Liberals, once they won their majority.

Speaking of which, since there is a lot of talk about this these days, maybe the following question could be added to the MyDemocracy.ca website: “Are you in favour of giving the Liberal Party a majority, knowing full well that it will not keep its promises?”

The first point that I would like to make with regard to Bill C-29 has to do with the changes related to banks and credit card companies. Quebec is extremely concerned about consumer protection. It is strange. Even though Quebecers elected 40 Liberal

MPs in the last election, no one on the government side has raised this issue.

Bank customers in Quebec are protected by Quebec's Consumer Protection Act. This law does all kinds of good things for people, such as limiting credit card fees. It also protects people when their credit card gets stolen and the thief uses their card to make all sorts of big purchases, such as electronics and other things. I think most people can relate to that situation. Under the Quebec law, the credit card holder is liable only for a maximum of \$50.

The fact that these provisions are absent from Bill C-29 is worrisome. People do not know what is going to happen. Will the government allow credit card companies to raise the maximum liability from \$50 to \$200, \$500, or even \$1,000?

We could lose this protection, which was hard-won for consumers, and their concern is quite justified.

The host for more than 10 years of *La facture*, a Radio-Canada program, went to the trouble of writing an article for this morning's edition of *La Presse*. He told everyone to beware because we run the risk of losing all the protections that we take for granted.

I see some government members opposite nodding their heads. I hope we will be able to fix things and make amendments to preserve those protections.

There is also some uncertainty with respect to annual credit card fees. We are not quite sure what the future holds. We are concerned, and I hope that we will be able to work together to find solutions.

One thing that is bothering the NDP is the whole issue of the Liberal promise to help the middle class. The Liberals droned on about it for 78 days. They said that we would have a government that would finally meet the aspirations and the needs of the middle class. How? By cutting taxes. That is just one way. We prefer to provide services that cut costs for families, such as public, affordable, accessible child care. The Liberals talked about it, but nothing is happening right now.

When we look at the Liberal government's plan to cut taxes for families, we realize that their definition of the middle class benefits the rich. Anyone earning less than \$45,000 a year will not receive any tax cuts. Anyone earning less than \$23 an hour does not qualify for assistance from the Liberal government. For a single person with no children who earns \$21 an hour, the Liberal government's promise is worthless.

Government Orders

● (1635)

We find this unacceptable, given that the median income in Canada is around \$33,000 or \$34,000. Right away at least half of the population is left out of the Liberal plan. There is still another \$10,000 to go before we get to \$45,000. The ones benefiting the most are those making \$80,000, \$100,000 or \$120,000 per year. We do not believe that they are part of the middle class. They are not the ones who need help. This is extremely disappointing on the part of the Liberal government. This is another broken promise.

Bill C-29 also deals with employment insurance. We must admit that it includes a more acceptable redefinition of what constitutes suitable employment, and this is a step in the right direction. However, one of the major problems with the employment insurance system in the country right now, and this has been a problem for years, is that fewer and fewer unemployed workers qualify for benefits when they need them.

The employment insurance fund, as its name would suggest, is insurance. All workers put money into the fund so that if one day they unfortunately lose their job, because of a plant closure or if misfortune strikes, they will be able to get what they need in order to transition to another job and pay bills, the rent, the mortgage, and groceries.

In the 1980s, practically everyone who lost their job received EI benefits. Today only 38% of unemployed Canadians receive benefits. Most people who contribute to the kitty do not have access to it when they need it. Bill C-29 does nothing to change the situation, and that really worries us. EI is part of our values and part of our social safety net, which is supposed to ensure that no one is left behind.

No one wants to lose their job, no one wants to see a plant close, and no one wanted Canada's manufacturing sector to be eviscerated, without any industrial policies in place. We need to be able to help the unemployed. We also have to work harder to help seasonal workers who were hit hard by the actions of previous governments. There is nothing on the table right now to help the unemployed or future unemployed Canadians. That is unfortunate, because their numbers keep increasing.

What is noticeably absent from the budget implementation bill is the promise to help small and medium-sized businesses. These are the creators of new jobs, the jobs of tomorrow. These businesses invigorate our communities, whether we live in urban or rural areas. The SMEs of Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie are its lifeblood. They create jobs and wealth, which makes the riding an attractive and good place to live.

What did the Liberals tell small and medium-sized businesses? They said that they would be there for them and that they recognized their contribution as job and wealth creators in Canada. Where is the help for SMEs in Bill C-29 and in the Liberal budget?

The Liberals said they would lower their tax rate from 11% to 9%. Where does it say that? There is nothing about that in the bill. This is utterly disappointing. We had hoped that the Liberals meant what they were saying during the election campaign. We had hoped that they understood the message of those who start up small businesses,

of those who work for them, and of those who have managed small family businesses for a long time.

There is one very simple way to help small businesses, but it is not in Bill C-29. More and more frequently, corner stores are not letting customers pay with credit cards because the fees are exorbitant. When people use Interac, there is a set fee that is not too high, and merchants do not complain about it much. The percentage charged on credit card payments, on the other hand, is ridiculously high. We kind of expected the Liberal government to do one simple thing to help small businesses: reduce the cost of accepting credit card payments.

The infrastructure bank is a huge scheme to privatize our public services and our infrastructure, and we should all be very worried about it. Why attract private investment with a guaranteed return of 7% when the government can borrow money at 2%?

We are extremely worried at the prospect of major economic drivers, such as our ports and airports, being sold off to private and, in many cases, foreign interests. We do not understand why the government is consulting Credit Suisse, a company that specializes in airport privatization.

● (1640)

That gives us great concern, and I hope we will get some answers from the government. Unfortunately, we do not have a lot of time to debate it, but then again that was the government's decision.

[*English*]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we had an election over a year ago in which the NDP talked about balancing the budget. I have not seen the plan that we could have followed, which would have resulted in a balanced budget. So far I am hearing a lot of costs, a lot of decreased revenues, but I have not seen where that goes in balancing our budget. Could the hon. member describe to the House how we could come to a balanced budget under the NDP's programs?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, but I think he read only half of our election platform, the one where we talked about expenditures. The other half dealt with revenues, and it was particularly interesting. Yes, we wanted to help small and medium-sized businesses. However, there are some pretty simple ways to increase government revenues.

For example, could we stop giving subsidies to oil companies? Could we be much more effective than the government is at combating tax havens, tax evasion, and tax avoidance? We are losing tens of billions of dollars each year because of tax havens. The government talks tough but is doing absolutely nothing.

We are unable to help post-secondary students, create jobs or improve public services because of tax havens. I might add that we could also raise taxes on big corporations. Since 2002, the corporate tax rate has fallen from 28% to 15%. I think that they too can contribute their share.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Intergovernmental Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I read the platform very closely in the last election and saw the part where the day care program relied entirely on the provinces picking up the bill for it and the NDP getting the credit. The question I have for the member opposite is a very simple one. Asked a direct question by the NDP about selling airports, the answer was “no”. Why is the NDP still afraid that this is going to happen?

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

With respect to affordable public day care that would provide real help to families, especially families in Toronto, who pay \$70 or \$80 a day for child care, it is quite ironic that this question comes from a member of a party that, in its red book, promised for three consecutive elections to create a national child care program, which it has never done.

As for election promises, I would also like to remind my colleague that I read the Liberal platform. It was written in black and white that the 2015 election would be the last one under the current voting system. What does the member think now?

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Although he represents a Montreal riding, I know that he is also aware of the reality of the regions. At the end of his speech, he talked about the infrastructure privatization bank.

For my part, I represent a riding whose largest town has a population of 56,000. The second largest town has less than 10,000 people, and the third largest has 5,000. The 22 other towns have even smaller populations, as small as 500. They feel abandoned by this government when it comes to its choices on infrastructure.

I would like the hon. member to elaborate on what the infrastructure provisions in Bill C-29 mean for rural communities like the one I represent.

• (1645)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot for her question. Yes, I am from Montreal. No one is perfect. However, I am well aware of what is going on in the regions.

The Liberal government's current plan for the infrastructure privatization bank leads us to believe that the projects have to be rather sizeable in order for the communities and municipalities to have access to it. If it indeed takes projects worth more than \$100 million, then 90% or 95% of the communities and municipalities in Quebec will be excluded. We are very concerned about that.

I would be pleased to see that money invested in Montreal, but this is not just about Montreal. If there is privatization and the private entities invest in this bank, there will be user fees and tolls for everyone and that is not what we want.

[English]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I rise in the House to speak to Bill C-29.

My constituents have identified three priorities in our riding. They have serious concerns around the needs of seniors, about housing that is affordable, and addressing the serious issue of climate change. This work has influenced my actions heavily. I am holding seniors' town halls that will be wrapping up in January, and in a riding of my size, I will be hosting a total of 11.

The need for affordable housing has been framed in my private member's bill, Bill C-325, on the right for housing for Canadians. This summer, we will begin the work we have to do with our constituents around the important issue of climate change.

Beyond these three priorities, my staff and I work hard on many challenges constituents face. They include small business needs, transportation issues around our ocean, issues with trade, and much much more.

My constituents sent me here to have a strong voice for them in this place. This is why I was very disappointed yesterday when the government reduced the time we could speak on this important bill. Bill C-29 includes 146 clauses that would amend 13 pieces of legislation. It was introduced in the House of Commons and this past Friday, three days later, debate began. With the time allocation now, there is very little time for parliamentarians to debate its content.

Time allocation provides the government with a mechanism for setting out the amount of debate a bill will receive at any given stage. When the notice is given, a short debate is had, a vote is called for, and if the motion is approved, as it was by this government, a limit for debate is established.

I take the duties of my job very seriously. Part of those duties are standing in the House debating on the bills before this place. During the last Parliament, the New Democrats decried the Conservatives' routine habit of this procedure. A year into the Liberal mandate, and the Liberals have not copied this practice; they have outright championed it.

I would like to remind members on the governing side that Canadians expect to know how they spend their money. Bill C-29 is a budgetary instrument, a bill that has specific changes to the Bank Act, to small businesses, the Canada child benefit, and the Employment Insurance Act. It must be taken seriously.

Specifically, the NDP is concerned by the fact that many relatively technical legislative changes, 239 pages amending over a dozen acts, are included in a single bill, while we have not had the time needed to debate them sufficiently.

Government Orders

In my riding, families are struggling daily. They have to make decisions if they can send their children to swimming with their classes because they cannot afford the \$2 fee the school is requesting. Families are also facing serious challenges around finding day care. Day care spaces are limited, and the cost is often just too much. The child benefit was a step in the right direction, but the amount did not create child care spaces, nor make it affordable for families. Now we see that the Canada child benefit will be indexed in 2020, as the Liberals have proposed, rather than listening to the so-called inadmissible amendment made in the committee to see it indexed to inflation each year starting January 1, 2017. This means that each year the benefit will be worth less to Canadian families.

I have veterans who are standing outside of local businesses in my riding fundraising for their medication and seniors who are making choices among medication, food, or paying for their heat. Where is there anything in the budget that will help these folks to afford their medication?

Small business owners are looking for ways to build their businesses because they see opportunities. However, without the promised tax break, they are finding it hard to invest in the important infrastructure or human capital they need. Small businesses have grown in my riding and have provided jobs when our larger resource based jobs were lost. The government saying that businesses want money in people's pockets to spend in those businesses is only one part of the equation. The promised tax cut would have meant an equitable support to businesses across the country. Each area faces multiple challenges, and this tax break would have really made an impact in my riding.

The Liberals have rejected our proposals to cap transaction fees for credit cards and are doing nothing to facilitate the transfer of family businesses within the immediate family. Small businesses could not be clearer. As the job creators of our country, a cap on transaction fees for credit cards would make a real difference. Why is the government prioritizing credit card companies over small and medium-sized businesses in Canada?

• (1650)

In my riding of North Island—Powell River, it is the small and medium-sized businesses that are participating in the chambers of commerce, giving back to the communities at events, and employing people. It is time to give them the support they need, because they benefit us all so very much.

This budget also shows a worrisome trend with the government, a hands-off approach that signals an increase in upcoming privatization schemes. This comes to us as a bit of a surprise because budget 2016 did not include any details of a privatized Canadian infrastructure bank. It did have the term “asset recycling”, about which we asked numerous questions. We know that “asset recycling” is a financial term that involves the sale of an asset and the use of proceeds of the sale to invest in another asset. For the government, it means selling public infrastructure or privatizing it to raise money that will be used to fund other infrastructure.

On October 20, we learned that Liberals gave Credit Suisse, an investment firm specializing in privatization, the mandate to advise the Liberals on the benefits of privatizing Canadian airports. It seems

like a foregone conclusion that the recommendation will be privatization.

Other pension fund experts are salivating at the prospect and do not even hide that it is about private ownership or private management of public assets. As Claude Lamoureux, former CEO of Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, said on May 25, “For government, it is a way of offloading, of giving that to someone else. And in my opinion, this someone else might be more efficient than government”.

The road map is pretty clear: sell airports and possibly other infrastructure to raise some or all of the \$40 billion to be invested in the Canadian infrastructure bank. The Liberals hope that these public funds will attract \$160 billion in private capital. Regardless of the way the bank will work, it is clear that private investors and pension funds will be asking for a return on investment, which makes sense. That is what they do. The only way to do this is to create a revenue stream, and that means imposing tolls and user fees at a rate of between 7% to 9%.

What will this mean for communities across Canada? I represent many small and rural communities. The need for infrastructure is profound and often they are left behind. This scheme would not benefit the people of these small communities. How long will they have to pay tolls or user fees to get a benefit of 7% to 9% return on investment? This scheme is so speculative that even president-elect Donald Trump thinks it is a great idea.

Since we are on the topic of implementing certain provisions of the budget, can the government finally admit which ports, airports, and bridges will be privatized? What will be tolled and which user fees can Canadians expect? These are simple questions. My constituents, who work so hard, are left wondering when these costs will appear. I am particularly concerned with what this would mean for smaller communities that will not be able to generate the kind of user-fee revenue streams that would be attractive to investors of this bank. Why is the government taking away allocated funds for infrastructure for a new scheme that simply will not help communities in my riding?

During this time of year, many organizations, service groups, and people are working to ensure the holidays will be good ones for those struggling to make ends meet. I remember being in Port Hardy and one member of the community showing me the food bank. He said that 20 years ago they did not have them, that there were enough jobs, but now they had been forgotten and they fundraised to feed themselves. This budget could do so much more.

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I want to thank all of the people, organizations, and service groups that are actively working to feed those across the riding who are hungry, whether it be the Eagles Ladies Auxiliary that has been fundraising for weeks now, selling food to raise money to feed those who desperately need it; the Angel tree, where people buy a gift for a child who would go without if not for the generosity of the communities I serve; the Community Resource Centre in Powell River; the Salvation Army; the Good Food Box; all the food banks across the riding; Grassroots Kind Hearts; and the Beacon Club, just to mention a few. Poverty is real in our communities and I thank all of those who work everyday on the ground to fight it.

• (1655)

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member that poverty is very real all across Canada. Certainly in the city of Winnipeg there is too much child poverty. That is why, in 2016, I was so proud of the Canada child benefit. It is a more generous child benefit than what existed before. It is targeted at those who need it. The less people make, the more they will receive. At a certain level, if people make too much, they do not receive anything. Probably the most important thing is that it is tax free. Therefore, if a family receives \$400 from the Canada child benefit, it will keep \$400 per month, and it will lift 300,000 children out of poverty.

As a faithful NDP member and a fine representative, how can she vote against something as beneficial to fight child poverty as the Canada child benefit?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that many families are facing multiple challenges around poverty. When I knocked on doors, I talked to many women who had quit their jobs because they could not afford to work and pay for daycare at the same time, simply because there was not affordable daycare. That meant they were sacrificing opportunities for themselves and their own careers. They felt hopeless, as if there were no way forward for their families. They wanted to provide good opportunities for their children and families' futures, but could not.

My answer to the member is that, first of all, it was a step in the right direction. We want to make sure that families are getting the resources they need to meet the needs of their families. But it does not have any impact on affordable child care, for having the child care spaces that are so badly needed in my riding and everywhere else, and the government did not index the Canada child benefit. They are not going to do that until 2020, and that is a shame.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Intergovernmental Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I heard and listened with great interest to the need for child care. I hope the member opposite recognizes that we were a matter of days away from a national daycare strategy when the party opposite chose to pull the trigger on a minority government and defeated a national daycare program. For that, they should be held responsible. They could have waited and could have delivered that, and \$2.7 billion for housing. They could have delivered the Kelowna accord, and they could have delivered so much for this country if they had just had a little patience.

My question is this. I have heard the NDP rail against public-private partnerships ever since we started talking about the infrastructure bank. There is a project on Bay Street, a street they

love to point fingers at in Toronto, that requires a public-private partnership to succeed. It requires the sale of a public asset, a parking lot, and the redesign and reconstruction of the GO bus terminal in a new office tower, which will be built by a Quebec pension fund. The profits from this project would not only deliver a new park over the rail corridor, it would also build a new ferry terminal, one of the most important pieces of infrastructure for the working class in Toronto. That ferry terminal cannot be built without a public-private partnership. It will be called the Jack Layton ferry terminal.

Would they like us to cancel the Jack Layton ferry terminal? Is that what they are actually saying in their—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for North Island—Powell River.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to remind the hon. member that it is 2016 and that we should let go of something that happened 13 years ago and really deal with the issue that we need to see a real change on, namely, providing affordable child care. This is something that people across this country are asking for. As a government, I believe it is the Liberals' job to listen.

If we are going to talk about a privatized bank for infrastructure, my response is very simple. If this were the plan of the Liberal government all along, why was it not clearly spelled out in the Liberals' campaign? Were they so afraid to tell Canadians what their plan was that they did not inform them as they should have? That is what we do when we campaign. We put forward a plan and we are transparent, and if the Liberals want to talk about transparency, maybe they should try it a little more.

• (1700)

The Deputy Speaker: Before we resume debate with the hon. member for Vaughan—Woodbridge, I will let him know that while he would normally have 20 minutes for his remarks, we are going to be down to about 14 minutes, given the time available for government orders this afternoon.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak again to Bill C-29 in this House. I am not sure my remarks will be as colourful or as passionate as the prior exchange, but I will try my best.

When I speak to Bill C-29 and think about budget 2016, I think about where it will take our economy, I think about where it will take the residents of my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge, and I think about what it will do for those middle-class Canadians, those working Canadians in our country, who are working every day and putting food on their tables and saving money for their children's future, for their children's school, for their education, for their sports and so forth.

Government Orders

I think about our budget and what our government is doing for Canadians on a daily basis, whether via the Canada child benefit or the tax cut that has benefited nine million Canadians over the last year, and the \$20 billion in tax relief over the next five years. I think about the enhanced CPP and the historic agreement that our government reached with the provinces. I think about all these measures that we are putting in place, which will strengthen our economy, which will translate into faster economic growth and, fundamentally, translate into good-paying jobs for all Canadians.

In this part of the speech, I look at what we have done with the Bank Act and some of the regulations that we have codified and changed. I was there when the global financial crisis hit Canada and the world. I remember seeing some of the banks in the United States not make it due to a liquidity crisis, and during that time I saw the strength and regulation of the Canadian banking industry come through. I saw how strong our banks were, with their tier-one capital levels and the low delinquency rates in the Canadian housing market. I saw how the regulators, whether at OSFI, the Bank of Canada, or the superintendent of financial institutions, were all coordinating and working together to ensure that we had a strong banking sector. We have continued to evolve along that line. We have continued to work with the Department of Finance, OSFI, and the Bank of Canada to ensure that we have a strong housing sector.

It gives me great pleasure to talk about the Canada child benefit, which helps nine out of every 10 Canadian families with \$2,300 extra a year that will lift 300,000 children out of poverty in Canada. That is something I am sure that all of my colleagues from all parties should applaud and vote for. I am surprised they have not done so.

The CCB is transformational. The CPP enhancement is historic. The tax cut for middle-class Canadians is the centrepiece.

With with Bill C-29 and budget 2016, we are moving our economy forward and building a stronger Canada, a more diverse, inclusive country, with better economic growth. We are in a period, I would say, of world economic history when Canada is standing out as a beacon of light. We have strong fiscal framework that we continue to improve, a balance sheet that is the envy of the world, and an AAA credit rating. I cannot be more proud to be on the Standing Committee on Finance to ensure that Canada moves forward in a strong way.

On a personal level, it speaks to my two children at home, Eliana and Natalia, my two girls whom I miss fondly when I am here in Ottawa and who I hope have brighter futures. They are 4 and 6 years old, and I am here as the representative of my riding, fighting to make sure that their future is one heck of a bright one.

I will stop my remarks there and look forward to Q and A.

• (1705)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have asked this question a number of times. In fact, I asked the member for Winnipeg North yesterday why he moved an amendment to remove a clause from this bill, and then during the votes last night voted against his own amendment. I wonder if my colleague could answer that question.

Another question that has not been answered in this debate is when the Liberal government intends to return the budget to balance.

Continuing to build on the deficits we have is adding unbelievable amounts of interest costs. In fact, interest costs will go up by \$15 billion per year over the next four years. I am wondering if my colleague could answer that.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, in their 10 years of governing, the Conservatives added about \$155 billion of new debt to Canada's total debt. They basically ran deficits every year after inheriting a \$13 billion surplus when they came to power. So, nice job, gentlemen.

In my years of experience working on Bay Street and Wall Street, one of the measures that many of us have looked at was the debt-to-GDP ratio. That ratio is around the mid-thirties right now. We intend to keep it in that area and for it to decline on a year-over-year basis. That is a proper measure.

I would add that we inherited not only a fiscal deficit but also an infrastructure deficit and an educational deficit, and that we had to invest. We had to invest in social infrastructure and green infrastructure.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I would like to remind him that credit card companies never give average Quebecers a break.

On that topic, one of my constituents, who owns a supermarket, came to see me to tell me how ridiculously expensive credit cards are for both consumers and retailers.

Obviously, the Liberals were so busy playing holier than thou throughout the election campaign that now we have to constantly remind them that they promised that everything would be fine. In reality, what we are seeing is the return of omnibus bills. What is more, the Liberals do not even have the guts to deal with the real problem, the exorbitant interest rates on credit cards. It gets even better. They are giving our infrastructure and great returns to their friends the banks while continuing to run up the deficit. Who will get that interest? The banks.

Why are the Liberals favouring banks to the detriment of consumers in Quebec and Canada?

[*English*]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of our government's work with the Province of Quebec and all the infrastructure funding that we have announced over the last several months for *la belle province*.

I would also like to add that our government is very supportive of and understands full well the importance of small and medium enterprises, and that we will do everything within our wherewithal to make sure they succeed from coast to coast to coast.

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Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, let me try again. During the finance committee's pre-budget consultations, the committee heard from many people across Canada, many experts, who were cautioning the government about going further and further into debt.

In fact, I want to quote from The Macdonald-Laurier Institute:

...setting out a clear and credible plan to eliminate the deficit in particular should be the government's top budget priority, and—I put it to the committee with respect—your top priority as well.

Failing to do so risks setting us on a path of protracted deficit and increasing long-term costs or long-term opportunity costs. In this regard, I'd encourage the government to reconsider the enactment of fiscal rules, such as balanced budget legislation.

Would my colleague explain why his government, upon taking office, immediately reversed the balanced budget legislation our government had enacted, which would have kept us from this precarious position of going further and further into deficit financing?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, our government ran on a platform of investing in Canada and Canadians. That is what we plan to do. That is what we are executing on. It is a \$180-billion program to invest in infrastructure. The members opposite left us with a huge infrastructure deficit. We are looking at the world environment, a period of very low interest rates. Every expert who came to the finance committee encouraged the governing party to invest in infrastructure to take advantage of the low interest rates currently in effect, basically globally, and to use this opportunity to invest in Canada and Canadians. That is what we will continue to do.

• (1710)

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the nine years from 2006 to 2015, the Conservatives managed to balance two budgets that they inherited from the Liberals, then threw us into deficit in 2008, and then spent \$160 billion in new debt without having anything to show for it.

When we buy a car, the value of the car drops over time. The Conservatives spent \$160 billion. When we buy a house, it generally retains its value. It is an investment.

I wonder if the member could speak to the value of the gazebos we acquired, the fake lakes, and so forth, and whether they could have done a bit better with that investment over those nine years.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, I do remember quite well the gazebo that was built. I have not visited it, so I cannot describe what it looks like. I do understand it was an investment made in one of the member's communities. I am not sure quite why.

Our government is continuing to invest in Canada and Canadians. If we look at our Canada child benefit, if we look at our infrastructure program, whether it is green infrastructure or social infrastructure, whether it is helping daycare centres rebuild, whether it is helping to put investment into women's shelters, we are doing what Canadians expected and wanted us to do when they voted for us and gave us our mandate.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, I ask this question of all my Liberal colleagues. How can they stand in the House and say time after time that they were left with a deficit when the parliamentary budget officer and the Department of Finance clearly said that the Conservatives left the government with a huge surplus? In fact, over

one billion dollars. I would like the member to correct the record for the House and all Canadians and let them know that the Conservative government left the Liberal government as it came into power with a huge surplus.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, what I will say to my hon. colleague, very simply, is I am here to build a better Canada along with my colleagues and to make sure that my children, who are growing up in this wonderful country of ours, have a bright future ahead. That is why we are making the necessary investments, be it infrastructure, social, green, community housing, or introducing the Canada child benefit, those key investments that will provide long, more inclusive, and higher growth rates for the economy.

Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member more about the Conservative deficit they left us, not only the financial deficit, but deficits in staffing levels in government departments, in supports for veterans, in support for the poorest Canadians and children. I am hoping the member can elaborate a little more on all the good we are doing to undo the other social fabric deficits, infrastructure deficits, and government support deficits that the previous government left this government with.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, my focus here as a representative for Vaughan—Woodbridge is very simple. It is to make sure that we are working hard day in, day out to provide a better future for not only the residents I represent, but for all Canadians. That is what our government is doing. That is the plan we put forward and that is why we are executing on it, whether it is the Canada child benefit, whether it is the measures contained in Bill C-29 that deal with tax fairness, tax evasion, and tax avoidance, whether it is our regulations dealing with the Bank Act to make sure that Canadians from coast to coast to coast know that the banking system is sound and stable, that there are people they can turn to if they have concerns.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5:15 p.m., pursuant to order made Monday, December 5, 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 Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

Government Orders

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1750)

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

(Division No. 173)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baylis
Beech	Bennett
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Boissonnault
Bossio	Bratina
Breton	Caesar-Chavannes
Carr	Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger	Champagne
Chan	Chen
Cormier	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
DeCoursey	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Di Iorio
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyking
Eyolfson	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Footé	Fragiskatos
Fraser (West Nova)	Fraser (Central Nova)
Freeland	Fry
Fuhr	Gameau
Gerretsen	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Gould
Graham	Grewal
Hajdu	Hardie
Harvey	Hehr
Holland	Housefather
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Kang
Khalid	Khera
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Lemieux
Leslie	Levitt
Lightbound	Lockhart
Long	Longfield
Ludwig	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
May (Cambridge)	
McCallum	McCrimmon
McDonald	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Mendicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	
Monsef	
Morneau	Morrissey
Nassif	O'Connell
Oliphant	Oliver
O'Regan	Ouellette
Peschisolido	Peterson
Petitpas Taylor	Philpott
Picard	Poissant
Qualtrough	Ratansi
Robillard	Rodriguez

Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Saini
Samson
Saraï
Schiefke
Sgro
Sheehan
Sikand
Sohi
Spengemann
Tassi
Vandal
Vaughan
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Young

Rota
Ruimy
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Simms
Sorbara
Tan
Trudeau
Vandenbeld
Virani
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Zahid— 168

NAYS

Members

Aboultatif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Ambrose	Anderson
Arnold	Ashton
Aubin	Barlow
Barsalou-Duval	Benson
Bergen	Berthold
Bezan	Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Block
Boucher	Boudrias
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brassard	Brosseau
Brown	Calkins
Cannings	Caron
Carrie	Clarke
Clement	Cooper
Cullen	Davies
Deltell	Diotte
Doherty	Donnelly
Dreeshen	Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseault
Eglinski	Falk
Finley	Fortin
Gallant	Généreux
Genuis	Gill
Gladu	Godin
Gourde	Hardcastle
Harder	Hughes
Jeneroux	Johns
Julian	Kelly
Kent	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kwan
Lake	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Laverdière	Lebel
Liepert	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacGregor
MacKenzie	Maguire
Malcolmson	Marcil
Masse (Windsor West)	Mathysen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McCaulley (Edmonton West)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Moore
Motz	Mulcair
Nantel	Nater
Nicholson	Nuttall
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Plamondon	Poilievre
Quach	Ramsey
Rankin	Rayes
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Ritz
Sansoucy	Saroya
Shields	Shipley
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Ste-Marie
Stetski	Stewart
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Thériault
Trudel	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vecchio
Viersen	Wagantall
Warawa	Warkentin

Private Members' Business

Watts
Webber
Wong
Zimmer — 129

Waugh
Weir
Yurdiga

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

POVERTY REDUCTION ACT

The House resumed from November 30 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.

The Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Thursday, December 1, the House will now proceed to taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-245 under private members' business.

• (1800)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 174*)

YEAS

Members

Arseneault	Ashton
Aubin	Barsalou-Duval
Benson	Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Boudrias
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau	Cannings
Caron	Cullen
Davies	Donnelly
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dusseau	Erskine-Smith
Fortin	Gill
Hardcastle	Housefather
Hughes	Johns
Julian	Kwan
Laverdière	Lightbound
MacGregor	Malcolmson
Marcel	Masse (Windsor West)
Mathyssen	May (Saanic—Gulf Islands)
Moore	Mulcair
Nantel	Pauzé
Plamondon	Quach
Ramsey	Rankin
Samson	Sansoucy
Ste-Marie	Stetski
Stewart	Thériault
Trudel	Weir — 52

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Aldag
Alghabra	Alleslev
Allison	Ambrose
Amos	Anderson
Arnold	Arya
Ayoub	Badawey

Bains	Barlow
Baylis	Beech
Bennett	Bergen
Berthold	Bezan
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Block
Boissonnault	Bossio
Boucher	Brassard
Bratina	Breton
Brown	Caesar-Chavannes
Calkins	Carr
Carrie	Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger	Champagne
Chan	Chen
Clarke	Clement
Cooper	Cormier
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeCoursey
Deltell	Dhalwal
Dhillon	Di Iorio
Diotte	Doherty
Dreesen	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Easter
Eglinski	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Eyking	Eyolfson
Falk	Fergus
Fillmore	Finley
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Foote
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Freeland
Fry	Fuhr
Gallant	Gameau
Généreux	Genuis
Gerretsen	Glada
Godin	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Gould
Gourde	Graham
Grewal	Hajdu
Harder	Hardie
Harvey	Hehr
Holland	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Jeneroux	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Kang
Kelly	Kent
Khalid	Khera
Kitchen	Kmiec
Lake	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauson (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Lauson (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lebel	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Leslie
Levitt	Liepert
Lobb	Lockhart
Long	Longfield
Ludwig	Lukiwski
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacKenzie
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maguire
Maloney	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)	McCallum
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McCrimmon
McDonald	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	
Monsef	
Morneau	Morrissey
Motz	Nassif
Nater	Nicholson
Nuttall	O'Connell
Oliphant	Oliver
O'Regan	Paul-Hus
Peschisolido	Peterson
Petitpas Taylor	Philpott
Picard	Poillievre
Poissant	Qualtrough
Ratansi	Rayes
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Ritz

Private Members' Business

Robillard	Rodriguez
Romanado	Rota
Rudd	Ruimy
Rusnak	Sahota
Saini	Sajjan
Sangha	Sarai
Saroya	Scarpaleggia
Schulte	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Shields	Shipley
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Sikand
Simms	Sohi
Sopuck	Sorbara
Sorenson	Spengemann
Stanton	Strahl
Stubbs	Sweet
Tan	Tassi
Trudeau	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Vecchio	Viersen
Virani	Wagantall
Warawa	Warkentin
Watts	Waugh
Webber	Whalen
Wilkinson	Wilson-Raybould
Wong	Wrzesnewskyj
Young	Yurdiga
Zahid	Zimmer — 238

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

* * *

● (1805)

[English]

FISHERIES ACT

The House resumed from December 2 consideration of the motion that Bill C-228, An Act to amend the Fisheries Act (closed containment aquaculture), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Thursday, December 1, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-228 under private members' business.

● (1810)

[Translation]

Before the Clerk announced the results of the vote:

The Speaker: The member for Hochelaga is rising on a point of order.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Mr. Speaker, we would like clarification on whether, during the second and third votes, some members may have voted twice. We believe that to be the case, but we would like that clarified.

● (1815)

The Speaker: If a member votes twice, one vote cancels the other. If there are any members who voted and wish to clarify their intention, they may do so.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Mr. Speaker, regarding the second vote, to quote an American politician:

[English]

I was for it before I was against it. I just wanted to let you know that I did vote against the second vote.

Mrs. Deborah Schulte: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I missed my opportunity to stand when I meant to vote in favour of this motion, so I would like to register my vote as in favour of this motion.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, I rise on another matter. On private members' business, the entire process is designed so that the votes start at the back and move their way forward.

It is disturbing to me that there have been numerous occasions when entire rows have missed the vote, and the vote has come forward and then jumped back to a row farther to the back. I think that defeats the purpose of the way that we vote on private members' business.

I would encourage you to look at the tape. I think if people miss an entire row, they probably have missed their opportunity to cast their ballot on a particular issue.

The Speaker: I appreciate the intervention by the hon. member for Chilliwack—Hope. I think that the intention and desire is to make sure the members' vote is counted in the way they desire.

Were I someone who never made a mistake, I might be less open to that, but I am certainly not one of those.

I will consider it further, and if I need to come back to the House, I will do so. I thank the member for raising this.

Further to the first point of order, if a member did not stand at all on a vote, he or she would require unanimous consent to have that vote counted. The member for King—Vaughan did not stand at all. I suspect she would like unanimous consent. I see her nodding.

The hon. member for King—Vaughan.

Mrs. Deborah Schulte: Yes, please, if it is possible, I would appreciate that consent.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: No.

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

(Division No. 175)

YEAS

Members

Albas	Aldag
Amos	Ashton
Aubin	Bagnell
Barlow	Barsalou-Duval
Baylis	Beech
Benson	Blaikie
Blair	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boudrias	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brosseau
Cannings	Caron
Cullen	Dabrusin
Damoff	Davies
Dhaliwal	Donnelly
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)

Private Members' Business

Dusseault
Eglinski
Erskine-Smith
Fortin
Gill
Hardcastle
Hughes
Julian
Laverdière
Malcolmson
Masse (Windsor West)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Moore
Nantel
Pauzé
Quach
Rankin
Ruimy
Sarai
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Ste-Marie
Stewart
Thériault
Vaughan
Watts
Wilkinson

Dzerowicz
Ellis
Fergus
Fry
Goldsmith-Jones
Hardie
Johns
Kwan
MacGregor
Marcil
Mathysen
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mulcair
Ouellette
Plamondon
Ramsey
Rota
Sansoucy
Schiefke
Stanton
Stetski
Strahl
Trudel
Wagantall
Weir
Yurdiga — 80

Lamoureux
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Lebel
Lebouthillier
Lemieux
Levitt
Lightbound
Lockhart
Longfield
Lukiwski
MacKenzie
Maguire
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)
McCallum
McCrimmon
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)
Monsef
Morneau
Motz
Nater
Nuttall
Oliphant
O'Regan
Peschisolido
Petitpas Taylor
Picard
Qualtrough
Rayes
Rempel
Ritz
Rodriguez
Rudd
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Scarpaleggia
Shanahan
Shields
Sikand
Sohi
Sorbara
Spengemann
Sweet
Tassi
Van Kesteren
Vandal
Vecchio
Virani
Warkentin
Webber
Wilson-Raybould
Wrzesnewskyj
Yurdiga
Zimmer — 215

Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Leslie
Liepert
Lobb
Long
Ludwig
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McDonald
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mihychuk
Morrissey
Nassif
Nicholson
O'Connell
Oliver
Paul-Hus
Peterson
Philpott
Poissant
Ratansi
Reid
Richards
Robillard
Romanado
Rusnak
Saini
Samson
Saroya
Sgro
Sheehan
Shipley
Simms
Sopuck
Sorenson
Stubbs
Tan
Trudeau
Van Loan
Vandenbeld
Viersen
Warawa
Waugh
Whalen
Wong
Young
Zahid

NAYS

Members

Abouitaif
Alghabra
Allison
Anandasangaree
Arnold
Arya
Badawey
Barlow
Bergen
Bezan
Bittle
Boissonnault
Boucher
Bratina
Brown
Calkins
Carrie
Chagger
Chan
Clarke
Cooper
Cuzner
Deltell
Di Iorio
Doherty
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Eglinski
El-Khoury
Eyolfson
Fillmore
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fuhr
Garneau
Gerretsen
Godin
Gourde
Grewal
Harder
Hehr
Housefather
Hutchings
Jeneroux
Jones
Jowhari
Kelly
Khalid
Kitchen
Lake

Albrecht
Alleslev
Ambrose
Anderson
Arseneault
Ayoub
Bains
Bennett
Berthold
Bibeau
Block
Bossio
Brassard
Breton
Caesar-Chavannes
Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Champagne
Chen
Clement
Cormier
DeCoursey
Dhillon
Diotte
Dreeshen
Dubourg
Duguid
Easter
Ehsassi
Eyking
Falk
Finley
Fisher
Foote
Fraser (West Nova)
Freeland
Gallant
Généreux
Gladu
Goodale
Graham
Hajdu
Harvey
Holland
Hussen
Iacono
Joly
Jordan
Kang
Kent
Khera
Kmiec
Lametti

Nil

PAIRED

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

It being 6:20 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

* * *

● (1820)

[*Translation*]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from November 3 consideration of the motion that Bill C-235, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (fetal alcohol disorder), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Private Members' Business

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have a chance to finish the speech that I was just getting started on. In my speech, I talked about how, in the conversation around fetal alcohol disorder, it can be hard for mothers to admit to drinking alcohol during pregnancy. They are often embarrassed to admit it, especially if they have said that they stopped drinking when they found out they were pregnant.

Unfortunately, scientific research tells us that consuming alcohol can be most harmful to the fetus in the first trimester. By that time, the damage is already done.

Scientists started talking about fetal alcohol syndrome in 1968. The first case was described by a French pediatrician, Paul Lemoine, but it was not until 1973 that the syndrome was officially recognized. That means that some people over the age of 43 may have the syndrome, but may not have been diagnosed at birth because the condition was not recognized then.

Individuals aged 43 and up might have this problem, be in the prison system, have a criminal record, and be misunderstood because of this health condition. What is more, sometimes it can be a challenge to look to the past to determine whether it is a case of fetal alcohol disorder because that requires a record of drinking during pregnancy. The mother may already be deceased making it impossible to establish whether alcohol was consumed during the pregnancy or not.

This is important to note because there is a clear link between fetal alcohol disorder and criminal behaviour. An estimated 60% of people with fetal alcohol disorder will have run-ins with the law in their lifetime. That is a very high number. Sixty percent is more than one in two people and that creates problems. These are persons who are more easily influenced by the ill-intentioned people around them. These are persons who struggle with judgment, which makes them more susceptible to being lured by others into a life of crime. There are many effects—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1825)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I am sorry, but I am having a hard time hearing the hon. member. If hon. members are having discussions that need to be continued, they should do so somewhere other than in the House while another member has the floor.

The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, according to a 1998 survey on fetal alcohol disorder around the world, the prevalence of FASD is about 2 cases per 1,000 births.

However, in Canada, there are 9 cases per 1,000 births, which translates to about 3,000 infants a year. The prevalence is much higher in this country.

The prevalence may be higher here because the consumption of alcohol is legal in Canada and not frowned upon. For example, there are more cases here than in countries where alcohol is illegal, frowned upon, or much less available. I think that this is an important issue that we must consider. It may be specific to Canada, and our legal system should take it into account.

Some of the diagnostic guidelines are very specific. In particular, there can be prenatal or postnatal growth deficiency, which can be identified through weight-to-height ratios. There are also defects such as facial distortions, which are fairly technical, but are characteristic of the disorder. There will be evidence of deficiencies in three of the central nervous system domains such as cognition, brain structure, and communication. It is also evident in school performance, especially memory and executive functioning.

Some of these symptoms will be obvious at birth, while others may be more difficult to see at that time. These individuals must therefore be monitored to determine whether they actually do have fetal alcohol disorder. For example, a baby who has a high birth weight but then later fails to thrive may have fetal alcohol disorder.

Craniofacial deformities may not always be a sign of this disorder. If a delivery was particularly difficult and the doctor had to use forceps or vacuum extractor, the doctor will likely wait before providing a diagnosis. Obviously, cognitive problems are also difficult to assess in a newborn.

In my opinion, it is important to monitor these individuals. Since they are also at a higher risk of becoming involved in criminal activity, it is important that their disorder be taken into account by the corrections system at sentencing. However, it is also important that the condition be considered in determining what assistance that person can be given, from childhood through adolescence, to ensure that they receive the psychosocial support they need and that they are monitored by a social worker. That is why I think it is worth implementing this bill.

Since we know that there is a high incidence of fetal alcohol disorder in indigenous communities, it would be worthwhile to implement specific programs there to help people with this disorder. We need to ensure that these young people are carefully monitored because we know that they are at increased risk for delinquency.

It is important to take fetal alcohol disorder into account in the corrections system, in sentencing, and in the justice system. However, I think it is also important to take it into account in general, to help prevent these individuals from ending up in our prisons. We should incorporate that aspect into our discussion about the bill.

• (1830)

[*English*]

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand in the House of Commons for debate on Bill C-235, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act.

It is an act that looks at fetal alcohol spectrum disorder in the criminal justice system. It would make it more responsive to the needs of our society.

Private Members' Business

It is incredible that today, in 2016, we still lock up people who suffer and take little to no account of the impact on their mental health or the long-term outcomes. In this case, we are talking about FASD. We are talking about outcomes in the criminal justice system and the hopeful rehabilitation of our fellow citizens.

In Winnipeg I have had the great privilege of meeting youth who have been impacted by FASD, youth who want to contribute to our society. FASD Life's Journey, an organization in Winnipeg Centre, helps by offering training and support to our fellow citizens so that they can navigate life more successfully.

FASD affects the central nervous system. Symptoms include learning difficulties, difficulty with social interactions, behaviour affected by impulses and passions, which has consequences, and memory issues.

I spoke with these youth about politics and what we do here in this House. It was just last month. I also had the opportunity to see them working with the drum, using traditional indigenous healing techniques to make their lives better. They did that drumming with such passion. They lived in the moment. It was as if there was no tomorrow. It was not in 10 minutes that we were going to be living but right now, today.

They sang Gitchi Manitou Makwa, which is a song called great bear spirit, and it was great. I was proud to participate with them.

I have had the opportunity of reading the annual report of the Office of the Correctional Investigator. In January 2016, it reported that the federal corrections system had a sad milestone: 25% of the inmate population in federal penitentiaries are indigenous people. They are 35% of the women's population in prison. Between 2005 and 2015, the federal inmate population grew by 10%. In the same period, the indigenous population grew by 50%.

We all know these stats here in the House. It was a decade of darkness. We have become ready in our society to lock up people who are suffering and throw away the keys. They are people like James, who I met at the John Howard Society. He has been in and out of prison most of his adult life. As an indigenous man, he has been given no support, except now, by the John Howard Society. He is a man who suffers from FASD. He is my relation. He is all of our relation. He is my brother. I believe that he, too, can become a productive member of our society.

This bill is the work of the hon. member for Yukon. I am very proud of what he has done. It has four recommendations, which come from the Canadian Bar Association. This association represents thousands of lawyers who deal with this affliction every day.

First, this bill would allow the courts to order an assessment to determine if a person charged with a crime had FASD. Second, if the assessment was positive, it would allow the judge to use it as a mitigating factor in sentencing in certain circumstances. Third, the bill directs that FASD would be added to the already prescribed list of special needs the correctional institution must be responsive to. Fourth, and most importantly, offenders with FASD would have an external support plan when they left prison so they would not immediately reoffend or miss a probation meeting, and as judges often say, use the revolving door of a broken system again and again

and end up in my riding, clogging up, unfortunately, our justice system.

On December 18, 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission issued its final report, "Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future". The Government of Canada has committed to implementing all of the recommendations. These goals are important, and they are also very ambitious.

● (1835)

The TRC's calls to action impact corrections as well. I am going to read those calls to action:

1. Eliminate the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people and youth in custody over the next decade.
2. Implement community sanctions that provide realistic alternatives to imprisonment for Aboriginal offenders and respond to the underlying causes of offending.
3. Eliminate barriers to the creation of additional Aboriginal healing lodges within the federal correctional system.
4. Enact statutory exemptions for mandatory minimum sentences or imprisonment for offenders affected by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).
5. Reduce the rate of criminal victimization of Aboriginal people.

We promised that during the election. I promised that during the election. This bill goes a long way to making a difference. It will go a long way to making this system more responsive.

I have been told there are some provincial justice ministers who are concerned with the bill. However, they should remember what their title says. It says "justice minister". As a justice minister they must offer justice to all Canadians. It is unjust when young people with FASD do not receive the community supports they need, when they end up in prison because of a series of poor choices they make throughout their life.

We should be focused on ensuring that our most vulnerable fellow citizens are not in prison due to a lack of resources, or time, or effort, or cost or perhaps just the plain laziness of bureaucracy and the inability of systems to be flexible.

I would hope our government would be able to support this legislation. I hope my fellow parliamentarians will hear the call from the hon. member for Yukon for the great work he has done, because it is important. It is one small step in realizing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 recommendations, and it is a path that we can make today. It is something we can start today.

Tapwe akwa khitwam.

[Translation]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to speak to Bill C-235, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (fetal alcohol disorder).

Private Members' Business

I want to begin by saying that my NDP colleagues and I will support this bill. The NDP would like all parties in the House to work together to adopt this positive and long-overdue reform, which the previous government neglected.

Fetal alcohol disorder can have a range of effects on affected individuals. Those effects may include difficulty reasoning, inability to remember things, and trouble learning from past experiences and not repeating mistakes.

Bill C-235 defines the neurodevelopmental disorders associated with prenatal alcohol exposure. The spectrum of these disorders is commonly known as “fetal alcohol spectrum disorder” or by the acronym FASD, which I will use. This bill would amend the Criminal Code to establish a procedure for assessing individuals who are involved in the criminal justice system and who may suffer from fetal alcohol disorder. It would also include FASD as a mitigating factor in sentencing.

The bill also recognizes FASD as a disability in the federal correctional system. It also requires the courts to order people who have FASD to follow an external support plan so that they receive the support they need for their reintegration into society. It finally makes a consequential amendment to the Corrections and Conditional Release Act.

Bill C-235 is actually a reintroduction of two past bills to better address the needs of individuals suffering from fetal alcohol syndrome disorder who find themselves in our criminal justice system. In terms of the trial process, this latest version of the bill allows the courts to order an assessment over the objections of the defendant and at any stage of the proceedings. We have supported every past incarnation of this bill, which seeks to better address the needs and circumstances of offenders suffering from fetal alcohol spectrum disorder in the criminal justice system.

In accordance with its order of reference of Wednesday, November 26, 2014, the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights studied a previous version of this bill, Bill C-583. The report of that study was tabled in May 2015. The report indicates conclusively that people with fetal alcohol disorder are over-represented in the penal justice system. According to a study conducted by the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society of Yukon, 76% of the target population affected by fetal alcohol disorder had contact with the justice system.

Currently, our justice system does not leave room to take the individual's situation into account or to address it. It is therefore very important to support this bill, which needs to be passed quickly if we are to take people and their particular condition into consideration when we seek justice. We sincerely lament the fact that for years, the Conservatives ignored evidence and used a one-size-fits-all approach to impose mandatory minimum sentences that are costly, ineffective, and even unconstitutional.

The NDP is in favour of a more effective approach that is more suited to the victims. We have a real problem when it comes to identifying this disorder in those who have it. Wenda Bradley, one of the witnesses who appeared before the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, said that “there are many people within

our society who are affected by FASD but who have not been recognized and who keep circling in and out of the justice system”.

The problem is that this disorder is somewhat invisible. Those who have it look like you and me. However, they have special needs and that is why we must provide them with the appropriate support throughout the entire penal process.

● (1840)

In fact, when he appeared before the same committee, Rodney Snow had this to say:

...criminal law assumes that individuals make informed choices, that they decide to commit crimes, and that they learn from their own behaviour and the behaviour of others. Fourth, these assumptions are often not valid for individuals with FASD, so our criminal justice system fails them and it fails us.

By considering this disorder as a mitigating factor in criminal proceedings, we could better adjust sentences for these individuals. Studies of young offenders indicated, for example, that the sentence alone does not reduce criminal recidivism. On the contrary, it could even encourage it.

The passage of this bill would allow the criminal justice system to adapt sentences for these individuals so that they are as effective as possible. Moreover, a system would have to be put in place to identify children with fetal alcohol syndrome as early as possible.

The data I have collected on children with fetal alcohol syndrome demonstrate the extent of the problem in Canada. In Quebec, one in 128 children are affected by this disorder. In Ontario, one in 156 are affected. In Saskatchewan, it is one in 40. In the Northwest Territories, it is one in 33.

We must not wait until these individuals wind up in court for committing a crime before they are diagnosed with this disorder. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Yes, including FASD as a mitigating factor in sentencing is already a big step forward. However, this disorder also carries other consequences. A number of FASD symptoms, such as impulsiveness, make it hard for sufferers to hold down a job or live a stable life, which can lead to poverty and homelessness.

Having spent many years working in community-based organizations, including over 10 years as executive director of Auberge du coeur Le Baluchon, I knew a few young people who had FASD who, as a result of the disorder, had developmental delays and were constantly having problems at school. These young people endure one failure after another, and often they do not even understand why. They think that they are to blame for their problems and that they are inadequate. They often have very low self-esteem, which creates a whole slew of other problems. They will be penalized throughout their lives by the lack of appropriate care and support.

I think that it is critical that the government do more to support other levels of government in order to help people who have FASD and invest in prevention and awareness.

Private Members' Business

As an NDP member, I support this bill, and I urge all my colleagues in the House to do the same. Let us think of all the young people suffering from FASD and bring in measures that could help them.

Rod Snow, former president of the Canadian Bar Association, agrees that everyone should support this amendment to the Criminal Code and to our correctional system so that they are appropriate and effective when it comes to fighting crime. The old approach is simply not working.

● (1845)

[English]

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak in support of Bill C-235, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (fetal alcohol disorder).

Alcohol is one of the most toxic substances we humans consume. Unfortunately, in pregnancy, it crosses the placenta and disrupts the fetal development. As a result, some children are born with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, or FASD.

FASD was first identified a little more than 40 years ago when a similar pattern of malformations was discovered in children, but the disorder goes way beyond the physical. Individuals affected by FASD may have trouble with memory, attention, self-care, decision-making and social skills, and may also suffer from mental health disorders such as depression, addiction, and difficulty controlling their emotions. They may also have problems with organization and planning daily activities, controlling their emotions and completing tasks, which would allow them to lead productive lives.

Circumstances such as these often lead these individuals into trouble with the law and create further issues once they are incarcerated. The consequences associated with FASD are widespread. They may affect the child, the families, and the communities they reside in.

To give everyone a better picture of the prevalence of FASD in Canada, this disorder affects nearly one in 100 children. Some Canadian data indicates greater prevalence of FASD in children in rural communities, the foster care systems, the juvenile justice systems, and aboriginal populations.

This higher prevalence of FASD found in aboriginal children is often linked to historical and multi-generational trauma. Research and data on the consequences of FASD have grown in the past decades, and programs are being implemented to prevent the disorder and address the special circumstances and the difficulties people are suffering from FASD.

However, it is time to address FASD in the criminal justice system. In fact, in its calls to action, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission called upon the Government of Canada and the provincial and territorial governments to undertake reform of the criminal justice system to address the needs of offenders suffering from FASD.

That said, let us get to the reasons why the bill is important. As my colleague, the hon. member for Yukon, mentioned, the bill seeks to do a number of things. First, it seeks to define FASD. Second, the

bill would give a court the right to order FASD assessments where it has reasonable grounds to believe an offender may be suffering from the disorder and that FASD could have had an impact on the offence committed. Third, the bill would give the court discretion to consider FASD as a mitigating factor when handing down a sentence. Fourth, when a person with FASD is released, they would have an external support plan.

It is important to understand that the goal of the bill is not to consider FASD as an excuse for bad behaviour. When a person breaks the law, it is important that this person be held to account. Why it is important to give the court the ability to order FASD assessments where it has reasonable grounds to believe an offender may be affected by the disorder is that not all cases of FASD are physically recognizable, and not all individuals affected by FASD are diagnosed early in life. They may only discover they have FASD once they enter the criminal justice system. It is essential that screening for FASD take place within the criminal justice system to better address the needs of those individuals affected by this disorder. The earlier we are able to identify offenders with FASD, the more we will be able to avoid more serious crimes being committed in the future, and the more we will be able to manage these individuals when they are incarcerated.

Then comes the question, why is it important to consider FASD as a mitigating factor in the sentencing process? When a person breaks the law, it is important that this person be held to account, but it is also important to consider the greater picture and to look at the explanation of the person's behaviour.

● (1850)

As I mentioned earlier, people with FASD may suffer from an array of symptoms, such as a lack of understanding of the consequences of their actions, making them more prone to trouble with the law.

We need to understand that these individuals are born with a development disorder due to exposure to alcohol before they were even born. We need to recognize that they are victims of a disorder. It therefore becomes all about creating a balance between recognizing the effects of this disorder on offenders and the need to hold people accountable for their actions. This bill would give the courts the power to do this.

Health Canada estimates that as many as nine in every 1,000 babies born in Canada have a disability on the FASD spectrum. The effects of this are a lifelong array of mental and physical disabilities, including difficulty understanding the consequence of their actions. As a result, many of the victims of FASD end up in Canada's justice system and prisons. Data suggests that between 10% and 23% of inmates in our prisons have FASD.

The Canadian Bar Association, the organization representing Canada's legal professionals, agrees that this is too many people and has indicated its support for Bill C-235. It feels that an unfair number of people with FASD are being prosecuted by the legal system. Here is a quote directly from a CBA letter, which all members should have received this week from the member for Yukon. It states:

Private Members' Business

We believe that Bill C-235 is an important step in addressing some of the shortcomings of the current framework....

Bill C-235 advances several changes, in line with previous suggestions made by CBA. The CBA supports the proposed amendment to define FASD in section 2 of the Criminal Code. The CBA also supports an amendment to allow a judge to order an assessment of someone they suspect has FASD. We believe this would assist courts in handing out more appropriate dispositions to people with FASD. The CBA supports amending the sentencing provisions in section 718.2 of the Criminal Code to allow a judge to consider evidence that an offender has FASD as a mitigating factor on sentencing. We also appreciate the section that would require judges to include, as a condition of probation, compliance with an external support plan established for the purpose of supporting and facilitating successful reintegration into society. Finally we commend the proposed amendment to the Corrections and Conditional Release Act to expressly require Correctional Services Canada to be responsive to special requirements or limitations of people with FASD. The problem of incarcerating people with FASD is pressing and can no longer be ignored.

This is a strong endorsement from the legal profession. We need to take action to assist those who have been incarcerated to help ensure they receive support to help them get back into society. That is why I urge all my hon. colleagues to consider voting in favour of this very important bill.

• (1855)

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to contribute to the second reading debate on the matter of Bill C-235, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, fetal alcohol disorder. I would like to begin by thanking most sincerely the member for Yukon for his advocacy on this very important issue. With this private member's bill and other initiatives, he is showing a greater awareness of a disorder that often goes unnoticed.

The private member's bill would amend both the Criminal Code and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act to provide special treatment for individuals with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, FASD, who are involved in the criminal justice system. The bill proposes to do essentially four things: first, to define FASD in the Criminal Code; second, to permit judges to order FASD assessments for bail and sentencing; third, to require sentencing judges to consider FASD as a mitigating factor for the purposes of sentencing; and, finally, to require Correctional Service of Canada to provide FASD-specific programming for individuals who are serving prison sentences in federal facilities.

FASD is a diagnostic term used to describe the brain damage caused by prenatal exposure to alcohol as a result of maternal consumption of alcohol. In other words, if a pregnant woman consumes alcohol while she is pregnant, it may result in irreversible, lifelong brain damage to her baby. According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, FASD affects at least 1% of all babies born in Canada, and it is the leading cause of preventable congenital brain damage and developmental disability. However, due to the fact that there are usually no obvious external physical indicators, FASD is for all intents and purposes invisible. The invisible nature of this condition is one of the reasons it poses such a challenge to the criminal justice system and, indeed, to our greater society.

I want to emphasize at the outset that the government fully supports the very laudable objectives of the private member's bill. However, after careful consideration, we have concluded that the bill presents serious policy and legal challenges that cannot be substantially addressed through amendments; and therefore, for

these reasons, the government is unable to support the specific proposals of this bill.

We come to these conclusions after reading the recently released report from a committee of federal-provincial-territorial experts on the exact proposals covered in this bill. This group of experts, the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Steering Committee on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder was struck at the request of federal-provincial-territorial ministers responsible for justice and public safety. Their mandate was to study the issue of FASD in the criminal justice system, and to consider how to improve access to justice for individuals with FASD and to make recommendations for action to ministers and deputy ministers responsible for justice and public safety.

The committee members considered several proposals for legislative reform to address FASD, including the specific ones that are proposed in Bill C-235. The FASD steering committee reported its findings and recommendations to the ministers of justice just this past October and their report was made publicly available. I would encourage each and every member who has not already done so to read this report, which is publicly available online at the Canadian Intergovernmental Conference Secretariat. I would also like to draw members' attention to one of the overarching themes in the report that speaks directly to the heart of the proposals that are before us today.

The committee concluded:

...legislative amendments which would single out one specific disability for special treatment to the exclusion of others was not supported. It was noted that the criminal law does not currently single out specific disabilities and no policy rationale for singling out FASD in this way was identified.

This is a very important point, and I would like to take a moment to reflect briefly on it. The Criminal Code does not currently define any specific mental disorders or disabilities. Instead, section 2 of the code defines mental disorder broadly as disease of the mind. This has been interpreted by the Supreme Court of Canada to embrace any illness, disorder, or abnormal condition which impairs the human mind and its functioning. FASD has been found on numerous occasions to be a mental disorder under this very broad definition. The bill's proposal to include a definition of only FASD would therefore likely raise questions about why the law does not also specifically identify any other disorder, and may lead to calls for their inclusion in the future.

While specifically identifying other disorders may seem like an obvious solution to this challenge, I invite members to consider that there are more than 300 separate and distinct mental disorders listed in the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*.

Private Members' Business

● (1900)

One can only imagine what the Criminal Code would look like if each and every disorder was specifically defined and our courts were given instructions to treat each specific disorder diagnosis differently. Proceeding in the manner proposed by the bill before us could, unfortunately, create a potential discriminatory impact of establishing a regime that focuses exclusively on one particular disorder to the exclusion of others. This reflects one of the many possible unintended consequences of the bill.

The government also had similar concerns with respect to the proposed FASD assessment power. It would permit judges to order FASD-specific assessments for a number of enumerated reasons under the criminal law. The proposal to only permit a court to order an FASD assessment would mean that other disorders would not be diagnosed, potentially creating a hierarchy of medical conditions in the criminal law.

I would like to return for a moment to the report of the FASD steering committee. It also expressed concern with the issue of creating a specific FASD assessment power in the Criminal Code. However, it recognized that in the area of sentencing, the ability of the court to order a broader assessment of the mental condition of the accused was unclear, and therefore these assessments are not undertaken in a consistent way across the country.

The steering committee was of the view that clarifying the Criminal Code assessment power to permit a broader assessment of the mental condition of the accused for the purposes of sentencing would permit the court to gather relevant evidence about the accused, including information about the offender's capacities, limitations, and support needs. Such an approach would provide an opportunity to address many of the concerns underlying the proposal for specific FASD assessment and could have a positive impact for all offenders in the criminal justice system, not only for those with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

The government agrees with the conclusions of the steering committee that FASD should not be specifically singled out, but that there should be a study of a broader assessment power for the purposes of sentencing, and I would support that approach.

In conclusion, although the government cannot support the proposals as they are presented in the bill, I want to take a moment to reflect and to again thank the member for Yukon for bringing this very important issue before Parliament. His efforts and his passion have created a national discussion on this very important issue, and I would like to personally commend him for his leadership and his commitment.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there we have it. We finally have before us a bill that reflects what the legal, medical, and psychological experts have been asking for years, a bill to make long overdue changes to the criminal justice system to more accurately effect the appropriate just treatment for thousands of victims of FASD and to save millions of dollars in courts and prison costs.

What do the legal experts say? The largest body of experts, the Canadian Bar Association, comprised of 36,000 prosecutors, defence lawyers, judges, etc., says the following:

People with FASD have a permanent organic brain injury caused by maternal alcohol consumption during pregnancy. That brain injury results in a wide range of symptoms of varying severity, but is characterized by symptoms that often go against underlying principles of criminal law. These normative assumptions of criminal law infer that individuals are responsible for their own actions, that they can control their behaviors in keeping with societal expectations and that they can learn from and be deterred by previous experience.

Characteristics of FASD directly challenge these assumptions. Individuals with FASD may exhibit a lack of impulse control, impaired judgment, and an inability to control or modify their behavior. They may be susceptible to pressure from others and lack the ability to learn from past experiences or to understand the consequences of their own actions. Poor executive functioning skills mean that they may make the same mistakes over and over.

For these and other reasons, many people with FASD are in frequent contact with the criminal justice system. Often, the characteristics that made them susceptible to coming before the system are the very same characteristics that will keep them unreasonably enmeshed in the system over time...In June 2015, this reality was recognized in the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The current criminal justice framework does not give individuals with FASD adequate support, which in turn increases both the suffering of those involved and increases the costs to the criminal justice system. We believe that Bill C-235 is an important step in addressing some of the shortcomings of the current framework... Trial judges must have discretion to deal humanely with people who have FASD... We urge Parliament to adopt Bill C-235...

We heard some minor concerns raised earlier, but those have all been addressed in the first hour of debate and in the information I sent everyone today.

● (1905)

I am going to close with an excerpt from a long letter I will send everyone. It is from the mother of an FASD victim. She says:

“Your vote can slash the suicide rate in certain populations, save innocent people from destructive criminal records which ruin employment prospects in an already vulnerable group which are the invisibly disabled ...Those with both diagnosed and undiagnosed FASD end up in segregation, because they are at the bottom of the food chain among convicts...Send a disabled innocent person to jail to get punished and treated badly, and then wonder why they either kill themselves or come out of jail unable to function, and refuse help from anyone who offers it. Why would they trust us?”

You can save lots of taxpayer money...by voting for this slight adjustment to our justice system ... [FASD suffering] is not due to anything they've done to themselves, but was rather done to them before they were born. Have you thought about the real meaning of mens rea? The same way someone with a developmental delay cannot form criminal intent, someone with poor executive functioning due to [FASD] cannot plan a crime. It's about time we allow science to inform some outdated concepts which do nothing to protect society and do inflict a lot of harm. The punishment must fit the crime.

In many cases for the person with FASD, the punishment has nothing to do with fairness, and everything to do with our inability to look at the real person behind the crime and what brought them into contact with law enforcement... When we overlook the large number of cases in which FASD is a factor, we miss a chance to address the trauma of living with FASD, and instead, add to that trauma. We send the message that our children are not worth the effort it would take tell this population that they belong in the world. Please vote for Bill C-235.”

Adjournment Proceedings

One day this long-standing injustice will be rectified. It is inevitable. As members of the 42nd Parliament, we could be the pioneers that forge this great accomplishment by eliminating the suffering of thousands of innocent victims. The choice is ours.

• (1910)

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 yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Pursuant to an order made on Thursday, December 1, 2016, the recorded division stands deferred until Tuesday, December 13, 2016, 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.

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising tonight to follow up on a question I asked the government some weeks ago that was based on the commissioner's broadcast put out to RCMP members in January this year. We are now in December. It was an update letting members know that in January of the previous year, the beginning of 2015, he had recommended a raise for RCMP members. He was letting them know, at that time, that because of the election and the new government, there was going to be some delay in processing that raise and getting a decision.

Of course, it has been well over a year since we have had a new government, and we have not heard anything about that raise. I will say that the minister, frankly, seemed surprised when I raised it in question period some weeks ago.

I am curious to know if we can get a further update on that, because what is going on here, and I think what is really frustrating for RCMP members, is that they are transitioning to a new system, or they ought to be, where they are represented by a union and these

things, in terms of pay and benefits, are figured out at the bargaining table.

In the meantime, the old system recommended a raise, and the government is not going ahead with that raise, or if it is, it certainly has not let anyone know that it is. RCMP members right now are in the frustrating position of being denied their raise under the old system.

It has been a long time since they had a raise under the old system. With inflation and everything else, I think it is fair to say that their real wages have actually been going down. Even the old system thought that was a bad idea, which is why it recommended a raise.

The government, in the spring, refused to deal with good amendments presented by the NDP that would have removed certain exclusions in Bill C-7, which would set the framework for bargaining. It said at that time that it was really imperative that this law be passed or the sky was going to fall, there would be disorder, and there would not be an appropriate framework for collective bargaining for RCMP members, so it rammed that bill through.

The other place came to agree with the NDP on the matter of the exclusions and moved that they be taken out. The bill was then sent back to the government from the other place, and then the bill disappeared. Therefore, there is not the framework the government promised for collective bargaining for RCMP members.

The bill, which it was so important to pass, has not come up in this entire fall session. It seems to me, given that there are only five or six sitting days left, that it is very unlikely to grace the House with its presence before we adjourn for the Christmas break.

RCMP members are in the very unenviable position of being denied the raise under the old system and being denied the framework to go ahead and pursue a raise at the bargaining table under the new system.

How can the government say that it respects RCMP officers, when it is denying them the raise they deserve under the old system and are refusing to bring forward the legislation that would allow them to go ahead and bargain a raise under the new system?

Mr. Michel Picard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP is an iconic police force, and its members serve Canadians from coast to coast to coast with professionalism and valour. Mounties are recognized the world over as a symbol of Canada's values and traditions. The women and men of the RCMP work hard every day to prevent crime, apprehend offenders, and keep Canadians safe in their homes and communities. I know that all of us in the House hold RCMP members and the work they do in the highest regard, and I agree that they must be remunerated in a manner commensurate with the job we ask them to do.

The RCMP is comprised of over 30,000 employees, of which almost 18,400 are police officers, operating from over 750 service points across Canada. The RCMP also operates internationally through a network of liaison officers strategically deployed to 30 countries. Collectively, the efforts of these individuals form an exemplary model of policing that works to keep our country and its people safe and secure.

Each year, the RCMP responds to well over two million calls for service from Canadians, while continually operating a host of long-term, complex federal investigations, from organized crime to financial integrity to corruption and terrorism-related cases.

[*Translation*]

When tragic events occur, RCMP members are there to help. This spring, for example, local RCMP in the Fort McMurray area, supported by members from detachments throughout Alberta, were fully involved in supporting search and evacuation efforts, and they have played a vital role in re-entry and recovery.

In August, when the RCMP received credible information regarding a potential terrorist threat, it worked swiftly and effectively, in concert with other security and police forces, to keep Canadians safe.

Moreover, in many places, RCMP members are de facto social workers, big brothers and big sisters, and, in countless other ways that go beyond the traditional conception of law enforcement, integral and indispensable parts of community life. That is why it is so important that the members of our national police force have the resources they need to get the job done, and that they be fairly compensated for the difficult and crucial work that they do.

It is regrettable that, in the last four years of the Harper government, the Conservatives cut over half a billion dollars from the RCMP's budget. We are currently in the midst of an integrity review to assess the adequacy of RCMP resources. In the meantime, Budget 2016 included a temporary program integrity fund for the RCMP to address funding issues.

As well, it is worth noting that the RCMP currently provides contract policing services to eight provinces, all three territories, and some 150 municipalities across Canada. These arrangements are based on cost-sharing mechanisms. For contracts with provinces and territories, they pay 70% of costs, including salaries, and the federal government covers 30%.

Municipal agreements are based on a number of different cost-share formulas that vary depending on population size and the year the original agreement was struck.

Nevertheless, there is no question that the concerns raised by RCMP members and management about compensation are very important, and we take them very seriously. Their requests will be taken fully into consideration as we continue working to ensure that the brave women and men of the RCMP receive fair remuneration, and have the resources they need to keep Canadians safe.

• (1915)

[*English*]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I think RCMP members want more than platitudes about just compensation. They want the government to move forward. The government can move forward either under the old system, which recommended a significant raise, or it can move forward under a new system. In either case, government action is needed before any of it goes forward. Which will it be? Will the government give them the raise that they are entitled to under the old system or will it get moving and bring in a new system where they can negotiate a raise?

Adjournment Proceedings

The only unacceptable option is the one the government has chosen to take thus far, which is to simply do nothing when we know the rate of compensation for RCMP officers is not currently adequate for the job we are asking them to do. The parliamentary secretary has said that he believes they should get adequate compensation for the job. We know they are not. There are two ways to go forward. Which way will the government go forward and when?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Picard: Mr. Speaker, the process of examining the RCMP's request for an increase in salary is underway. Our government is certainly aware of the need to ensure that members of our unique national police force receive fair compensation. I say unique because the RCMP is the only police force in the world that functions as a national, provincial, and municipal policing body. In fact, RCMP members also serve with distinction in over 600 indigenous communities and at three international airports.

[*English*]

From its beginnings as the Northwest Mounted Police in the latter half of the 19th century to its establishment as a truly national police force in 1920, the RCMP that we know today, which is involved in operations dealing with everything from organized crime to terrorism to economic crime to the protection of dignitaries to the protection of communities across Canada, has emerged as an institution fundamental to this country.

I agree with the member for Elmwood—Transcona that the question of fair compensation for RCMP members—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last year during the federal election campaign the Liberals promised to restore habitat protections in the Fisheries Act, which were gutted by the Conservatives in 2012. When I asked the minister about getting these lost protections restored, he responded that the government needed to consult with stakeholders.

I do not object to consulting with Canadians on introducing new measures to the Fisheries Act, but I was asking about restoring the protections that were already in the act prior to 2012. Restoring these lost and desperately needed protections, which the government promised to do, should have been a priority. The longer we go without these protections, the more we continue to lose sensitive fish habitat to industrial activity and development forever.

Adjournment Proceedings

At the fisheries committee we are hearing from proponents of major infrastructure projects who have benefited from this loose regulatory environment. We are also hearing about the loss and destruction of essential fish habitat, but the government continues to approve projects under the old, destructive Conservative regulatory regime. It is not acceptable to approve major projects like the Site C dam, the Pacific Northwest LNG terminal, and the Kinder Morgan pipeline when we know proper fish habitat protection is not in place.

DFO signed off on the Site C dam project despite evidence from those on the ground that this unnecessary destruction of fish habitat would obviously lead to damaged fish stocks. There are many images of earth movers operating in the river with no silt fences at all. Clearly, the government not only needs to strengthen environmental protections but also needs to increase staffing levels to enforce the rules. Bull trout, rainbow trout, kokanee salmon, whitefish, and many other species migrate through this area each spring and fall. These species and the people who rely on them deserve better protection from the government.

The government also approved the Pacific NorthWest LNG terminal under these weak environmental protections. This project threatens one of the last great B.C. salmon runs by compromising the Skeena River estuary. Of particular interest is the sandy area with eelgrass beds called Flora Bank, near Lelu Island, where the terminal is proposed to be located. Flora Bank has long been recognized as important habitat for salmon in the Skeena watershed, which is the second largest salmon-bearing river in Canada.

Again, if proper protections were in place, first nation fishers, recreational fishers, and commercial fishers would not have their livelihoods jeopardized.

More recently, the government approved the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion after failing to overhaul the National Energy Board review process. Shame on the government for allowing this project that will negatively impact affected watersheds and our coastal ecosystem from top to bottom. The increased tanker traffic will jeopardize the southern resident killer whales, including the forage fish that sustain so many species.

Again, while we wait for these promised protections, devastating environmental decisions continue to be made, affecting our ecosystems, local economies, and local communities.

Will the government finally live up to its campaign promise and immediately restore the lost protections before we lose even more fish habitat?

● (1920)

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me start by thanking the member opposite for his good work on the fisheries and oceans committee and in the House.

[*Translation*]

It is a great honour for me to present to the House on behalf of the Minister of Fisheries Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard on a topic that is very important to the Minister and to our government.

The Minister takes very seriously his mandate to review the changes made by the previous government to the Fisheries Act and

looks forward to consulting with indigenous peoples, provinces, and territories, stakeholders, and all Canadians to find the best path forward to protect our fisheries resources.

[*English*]

The Fisheries Act is an essential tool to support the conservation and protection of fish and fish habitat and the sustainability of fisheries.

[*Translation*]

Since the 1970s, the habitat protection provisions of this act have been considered one of the most important pieces of environmental legislation. In 2012, the changes to the Fisheries Act were introduced to incorporate a variety of provisions, including those related to fish passage, fish habitat protection, and enforcement.

These changes were made with little consultation or transparency and were poorly received by environmental and indigenous groups, and Canadians in general. Of particular concern was that the changes would result in reduced environmental protection for fish and fish habitat.

[*English*]

The new fisheries provisions have no direct reference to the fish habitat. Concerns were raised that the provisions do not apply to as many water bodies and fish species as the previous regime. Of course, without fish habitat there is no fisheries.

This lost protections combined with program reorganization and departmental cuts to significantly erode public confidence.

● (1925)

[*Translation*]

I believe that a simple cut and paste back to the previous version of the legislation will not go far enough to protect fish and fish habitat in Canada. We have also heard from some stakeholders over the last months that there are some positive changes that were made to the Fisheries Act that we should consider keeping. However, we also heard that several changes need to be reviewed.

This is also an opportunity to further strengthen fish and fish habitat protection through the incorporation of modern safeguards. The Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans is currently leading the review of the 2012 changes to the Fisheries Act.

Adjournment Proceedings

What is more, departmental officials are complementing this approach by undertaking targeted consultation activities since some groups will be unable or unlikely capable to participate in the parliamentary process, including indigenous groups.

[*English*]

Finally, I would like to inform the House that departmental officials also launched an online consultation tool to provide the greatest number of individual Canadians with the opportunity to provide their views.

[*Translation*]

The recommendations of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans and the feedback from indigenous groups, stakeholders, and Canadians will be vital to shaping the renewed fisheries protection provisions of the Fisheries Act.

[*English*]

This project is an ambitious one, but an exciting one as well. The minister is looking forward to working with all parliamentarians to see it to completion.

[*Translation*]

I welcome any comments, questions or suggestions you might have.

[*English*]

In closing, I would like to thank all the members on the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard for their excellent work. It is a pleasure working with them and we will make sure that we will look at the Fisheries Act in the most timely fashion possible.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, restoring the lost fish habitat protections to pre-2012 levels is not only mandatory, but it was promised by the government. We need to restore the lost protections to the Fisheries Act without delay as there are many other major projects that will impact fisheries habitat if they are built waiting in the wings.

For instance, the energy east pipeline proposal crosses 90 watersheds, nearly 3,000 waterways and will impact the drinking water of over five million people along its route.

As I am sure the parliamentary knows, this pipeline route is slated to cross more than 280 waterways. If the Fisheries Act is not restored immediately, these waterways will be examined under the old Harper regime and fish habitat will remain at risk.

Residents are concerned that the energy east pipeline would not only impact fish habitat and watershed ecosystems, but would impact beluga whales. This proposal under the current Fisheries Act—

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Mr. Speaker, I believe the member opposite is well aware of our commitment to overhauling the Fisheries Act.

[*English*]

As I said before, I believe that a simple cut back to the previous version of this legislation would not go far enough to protect the fish and fish habitat.

[*Translation*]

As I said, the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans is leading the review of changes to the act. We heard from many groups and stakeholders who appeared before the committee to share their concerns and their vision for the new act.

The Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans' recommendations will be vital to shaping the act's new provisions.

[*English*]

We are working really hard to consult with all Canadians, and look forward to the standing committee's report.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Essex is not present to raise the matter for which adjournment notice has been given. Accordingly, the notice is deemed withdrawn.

[*Translation*]

The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

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

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