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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, April 12, 2016

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, April 12, 2016

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

•(1000)

[*Translation*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaty entitled “Ministerial Declaration on Trade in Information Technology Products” adopted in Nairobi on December 16, 2015.

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[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food in relation to its study of the main estimates for the fiscal year 2016-17.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding the provisions of any Standing Order, for the remainder of 2016, when a recorded division is to be held on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday, except recorded divisions deferred to the conclusion of oral questions, the bells to call in the Members shall be sounded for not more than thirty minutes.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

HIV/AIDS

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

The first is from constituents in my riding of Saanich—Gulf Islands calling on the government to move to a national strategy on HIV/AIDS, particularly based on the principle of treatment as prevention.

SECURITY CERTIFICATES

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition deals with the very troubling ongoing issue of the violation of human rights and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in the use of security certificates. In particular, the petitioners are very concerned that security certificates risk deportation to countries that conduct torture.

HEALTH

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition, signed by dozens of my constituents, who are concerned about the imbalance in health care that was created by the government with regard to health care provided to regular Canadian citizens versus that provided to refugees presently.

* * *

•(1005)

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 ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Budget

[Translation]

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

SITUATION IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, suicide in indigenous communities is an international scandal. The entire world is appalled at the scale of the tragedy in northern communities and is urging the Government of Canada to take action. I therefore request an emergency debate about this tragedy because it is happening not just in Attawapiskat, but in all indigenous communities in Canada.

[English]

The crisis in Attawapiskat has gathered world attention, and people are looking to this Parliament to explain the lack of hope that is not just in Attawapiskat but in so many indigenous communities. They are looking to us in this new Parliament to offer change.

I am asking for this emergency debate because we do not have the opportunity in this session of Parliament to raise this through opposition day motions. We have raised individual questions in the House of Commons; however, that is not sufficient to be able to address the lack of mental health services, police services, and community supports in so many of the communities.

Also, question period is not sufficient for Parliament to talk about how we can actually build a national response, working with indigenous youth, families, and leaders, to actually bring a hopeful solution.

In closing, the Prime Minister called the situation in Attawapiskat heartbreaking, but it is up to us as parliamentarians to turn this into a moment of hope-making. That is why I am asking my colleagues to work with me, to work together, to discuss this issue tonight, and to start to lay a path forward to give hope to the children of our northern and all our indigenous communities.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay for this request for an emergency debate. I note the gravity of this situation, and I believe this does meet the exigencies of the Standing Order. I therefore grant an emergency debate for this evening.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from April 11 consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government, and of the amendment, and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am going to be splitting my time today with the member for Burlington.

I rise today to speak to the budget that was delivered by our hon. Minister of Finance, but before I begin, I would like to take a

moment to sincerely thank my constituents of Kitchener South—Hespeler for the trust they have placed in me. I truly am blessed and honoured to represent them here in Ottawa.

Also I would like to thank all the volunteers and donors who played a vital and critical role in the election campaign. I cannot thank them enough for their hard work and commitment. From the bottom of my heart, I truly appreciate their efforts and thank them very much. I would not be here without them.

Because time is limited, I will focus on five key areas in budget 2016: the middle-class tax cut, the child benefit, the historic infrastructure plan, benefits to seniors, and help for young people. However, first I would like to establish some context by telling everyone about the people of Kitchener South—Hespeler, the electoral district I represent here in the House.

Kitchener South—Hespeler is a new electoral district created in Waterloo region. I know Kitchener South—Hespeler very well. It is where I grew up and have lived most of my life. I would be remiss if I didn't say how beautiful it is. There are two rivers that run through it, the Speed and the Grand, where people canoe and fish to their hearts' content in the summer and fall.

Historic Hespeler Village has been the setting for many movies and TV series. The natural settings are a photographer's delight. There are lots of hiking trails and green space, and plenty of soccer fields and baseball diamonds to play on.

Right in the centre of the riding, there is the 165-acre Chicopee Ski and Summer Resort, where families hike and bike in the summer and ski and snowboard in the winter. We are a blend of suburban settings with a lot of manufacturing and business parks, Canada's premier polytechnic, Conestoga College, some regional government and health institutions, and all the usual retail providers.

The most recent data from Statistics Canada tells us that the residents of Kitchener South—Hespeler number about 98,000 people, 23,000 of whom are children under age 18, and 10% of us are seniors, around 10,000. Our average age is 36.

This means that my riding has many young families that will be assisted by our child benefit plan, which I will get to in a moment.

In brief, Kitchener South—Hespeler is home to the middle class and those seeking to join the middle class.

The budget is one that will grow the middle class and help hard-working Canadians keep more money in their pockets.

For nearly a decade the middle class has seen stagnant growth, lack of job opportunities, and cuts to services. Real wages have not seen a significant increase for many years, and house prices keep increasing, making it harder for the average Canadian to enter the market.

The Budget

Families are working longer hours, overtime shifts, night shifts, and even two jobs just to make ends meet. At what cost are Canadian families forced to work two jobs and long hours? This is robbing them of time better spent with family.

I will be addressing five key areas of budget 2016. The first commitment is the middle-class tax cut.

Our Liberal government knows that, when we have a strong, healthy, and vibrant middle class, we have a strong Canada. I am sure all in the House will agree that we live in the greatest country on earth. It is up to us as elected officials to keep Canada great and prosperous, but with the shrinking middle class, some of us have lost hope, lost hope that no matter how hard families are working, their efforts are not leading to greater wealth and prosperity. Great opportunities in a great country are slipping away from average Canadians.

However, during the election campaign we listened to Canadians. We heard their concerns and we made a promise to Canadians that we will help the middle class and we will stand next to them and ensure opportunity and prosperity can and will be achieved under our Prime Minister and our current government.

As of 2016, we have cut taxes for the middle class from 22% down to 20.5%. This is a much-needed 7% tax reduction, which will benefit nine million Canadians. This means the average individual will save up to \$670 per year.

● (1010)

The second commitment is the child benefit plan.

With the new child benefit plan, nine out of ten families will benefit. Hundreds of thousands of children will be lifted out of poverty. This represents an essential core value, a value that ensures all children in this country have a fair chance at success in achieving their goals and aspirations.

This child benefit plan is dear to my heart. Coming from a single-parent household, I can appreciate how this plan will make a significant and positive impact upon many families.

This child benefit plan is tax-free; it is better targeted for those families which need it the most, and it is more generous. Families will see an average increase in child benefits of almost \$2,300 more per child.

This is a great plan, a plan that not only helps parents with the high cost of raising children, but it also helps long term. When we assist one individual like a single mother with a generous child benefit plan, we provide her and her children with the opportunity to succeed. This is a long-term plan that will build and grow our nation, with more generous assistance to those who need it the most. We are helping to change the trajectory of many families toward prosperity for a better future.

The third commitment is an historic infrastructure investment plan.

This is a promise that the Liberal government would strengthen the middle class, create jobs, and grow Canada's economy by making a historic new investment in the kind of infrastructure projects that our community needs, such as public transit, affordable

housing, early learning and child care, cultural and recreational facilities, and green infrastructure that will adapt to climate change.

The fourth commitment is to seniors.

The Liberal government made a series of promises to protect income splitting for seniors, to restore the OAS and GIS eligibility back to the age of 65, and to increase the GIS payments to single seniors. I am happy to stand here today in support of the fulfillment of this promise to ensure that our government is helping those who have worked hard in building this great nation.

The fifth and final commitment is to young people.

It is important that we help young Canadians succeed in our country's prosperity. It depends upon the young generation. That is why it is vital that youth get the training they need to prepare for the jobs of today and tomorrow. That is why budget 2016 proposes to increase Canada student grants by 50%.

Furthermore, our government is committed to making student debt more manageable. No student will have to repay their loan if he or she is not earning at least \$25,000 per year. I am happy to stand here today in support of that fulfillment of the commitment to helping young Canadians succeed in their studies.

We understand that the middle class is struggling. Middle-class Canadians have not been able to get ahead. They are not able to assist their children in post-secondary education. They are not able to save for their much-deserved retirement, and they are struggling to keep their homes. That is why we are focused on helping the middle class. We understand that the middle class plays a critical role as the engine of growth. The prosperity of our country lies in the hands of the middle-class Canadians. When middle-class Canadians are given the tools and opportunity to succeed, they go above and beyond. Their passion and drive leads them to great success, here at home and abroad.

That is why, with our tax cut to middle-class families, our child benefit plan, our infrastructure investment plan, our help to seniors, and our assistance for youth, we will build an even better Canada, a Canada that we can be proud of, a Canada where every child, senior, and individual has a fair and equal opportunity for a brighter future. We live in the greatest nation on earth, and with our 2016 budget, we will keep Canada great. That is our commitment, and that is what we will deliver to Canadians.

The Budget

• (1015)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if I do the math under this new budget for middle-class families, I see an extra \$600 a year for the middle-class income tax reduction. I see another \$2,200 for the child benefit, if there are a couple of kids. However, I see that they lose \$3,000 for the tax fitness credit if they have a couple of kids. They would lose another \$3,000 or more, if they think about income splitting, then maybe \$200 more for CPP increases, and another maybe \$100 for EI. That means that all of these middle-class Canadians will be paying about \$3,500 or more in taxes, and that is before we put in the carbon tax. In fact, everyone under this budget will be paying more taxes.

Has the member done the math?

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: Mr. Speaker, I have done the math, but I do not think the member has checked our child benefit plan. It targets nine out of ten families, and it would lift over 300,000 children out of poverty. As an example, a single mother making \$45,000 a year with one child under six, would get roughly \$2,300 more under our plan. I think the member is missing the math on this one.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in looking at the budget, I still feel that we are dealing with this shell game, with promises made but not necessarily kept in terms of indigenous children. What we are talking about is that 30% of that money will be the next government's mandate. That is not closing the gap; that is just putting out a press release.

We see that in child welfare the government is refusing to meet the standards. Cindy Blackstock said that the government is failing indigenous children. My real concern is that there are zero dollars to deal with the health care issues, particularly the mental health crisis in indigenous communities. With the suicide pandemic in so many communities, it astounds me that there are zero dollars to address health care in the budget. I want to ask my hon. colleague why the Liberals felt that was something they could skimp on.

• (1020)

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: Mr. Speaker, first I would like to tell the hon. member that my heart goes out to everyone who is suffering in Attawapiskat right now.

Our commitment was to invest in indigenous communities. That is why we have invested billions of dollars in indigenous communities. We are working with the provinces and territories to look at a better health care system, and hopefully we will come out with a great plan. We are working to discuss with provinces and territories on the best way forward with that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I applaud the member on his speech. In essence, he encapsulated a number of positive things that are coming out of this particular budget. One of the underlying themes in the budget is that it is trying to build a healthier, stronger middle class. Ultimately, if we have a healthier middle class in Canada, we will have a healthier economy.

I wonder if the member might want to provide some of his thoughts in regard to how important it is that we give additional strength to our middle class. If we look at the core of this budget, we

are saying that Canada needs a healthier middle class. This budget would in fact meet that need. Would the member not agree?

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: Mr. Speaker, I do agree. The middle class is vital. In my speech, I said it is the economic engine of this country. We need to ensure that we are helping the middle class in order for those people to achieve prosperity and health, and to achieve a great future for their children.

In my region of Waterloo, we are investing in the middle class, in transit, and we are investing in the high-tech sector. That is how we can grow our middle class.

Ms. Karina Gould (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great honour to rise in the House today to express my support for budget 2016.

Over the past three weeks, my office in Burlington has seen over 250 people visit the community volunteer income tax program that we are hosting. The program helps low-income Canadians file their taxes. I was glad to see an additional \$4 million in the budget to expand this excellent program, which enables low-income earners to receive the benefits for which they qualify. This might come as surprise to many who often think of Burlington as a wealthy community, and in many ways we are.

We have a beautiful, vibrant, safe community. However, we also have many people who are struggling with the high cost of living. In the year leading up to the election, my team and I knocked on over 44,000 doors. What struck me when I asked the people in my community about issues they cared about most was that, for the majority, it had to do with making ends meet; social issues, such as opportunities for youth, retirement security, affordable housing; the environment, and climate change. Importantly, Canadian values, such as our generosity and inclusiveness and our good international citizenship, were at the top of the list.

In my nomination speech, I spoke of several of the issues that propelled me to seek office and serve my community and my country. These are issues such as affordable and quality child care, affordable housing for seniors and newcomers, efficient and reliable transportation and transit, a focus on fostering an innovative global-oriented economy to ensure dignified jobs, support for sustainable local farming practices, a balanced approach to global affairs, and restoring funding and respect to our research facilities and environmental agencies across the country, particularly in relation to our great lakes and fresh water, as well as having a thoughtful and consensual plan when it comes to managing our natural resources.

I am proud that budget 2016 recognizes each of these issues and demonstrates that this government will be both a partner for provinces, territories, and municipalities, and a true leader for Canadians.

The Budget

While there are many parts of this budget that I would like to speak to, since I only have 10 minutes, let me focus on five areas that are particularly important for my community of Burlington: seniors, youth, infrastructure, our innovation agenda, and equality.

Let me begin with our deliverables to seniors.

As members may know, my riding of Burlington has a large, vibrant seniors population. We have an active seniors centre with over 3,000 members, which the Prime Minister had the opportunity to visit around this time last year. If there was one issue that I heard at the door, it was with respect to seniors.

In the region of Halton, there are over 4,000 people on the waiting list for affordable housing. Our commitment to renew the subsidies for federal housing, build more affordable rental housing, and provide over \$200 million for affordable seniors housing will have a meaningful impact on helping seniors in my community live in dignity.

I have met many seniors who rely on OAS and GIS and who have been struggling to make ends meet. Our increase to the GIS by 10% will have a tangible, positive impact to improve the bottom line and the quality of life for many low-income seniors in Burlington. I am proud that our government has fulfilled its promise to make their lives a little better.

This next issue bridges generations, and I am encouraged to see it highlighted in the budget: enhancing the Canada pension plan. From business leaders to organized labour, seniors groups and youth, I have had many conversations about the importance of pension enhancement. While I encourage all Canadians to save for retirement and encourage organizations to develop pension plans for their employees, sometimes there just is not any money left over to put away. The CPP is a well-managed fund and could make a real impact toward a dignified and secure retirement for all Canadians. I applaud the Minister of Finance for taking on this challenge and working with his provincial and territorial colleagues to provide secure retirements for future generations of Canadians.

This budget also highlights our government's commitment to youth and our desire to build a robust economy that will provide quality opportunities for our young Canadians. After completing high school, many of the young people in my community head off to universities and colleges across Canada. The youth employment strategy and the Canada summer jobs program will help create jobs in Burlington, so that when students come home for the summer, they can find good jobs in their hometown that may lead to opportunities after graduation. A young, vibrant workforce is essential in my riding of Burlington, and many ridings across Canada, to support the aging demographic while also continuing to build for the future.

• (1025)

A good education is fundamental to joining today's workforce. The Canada student grants program is an asset for those embarking on post-secondary studies. It is long overdue that these amounts be raised to reflect the rising costs and to keep debt loads manageable for our young people to get a toehold into a successful adult life. This budget is a strong reflection of the issues raised by so many young people I have spoken to in Burlington.

Importantly, budget 2016 recognizes the existential need for physical infrastructure improvements and additions.

In the summer of 2014, Burlington experienced unprecedented levels of rain, which overwhelmed our sewage systems and resulted in a major flood that affected over 4,000 homes. The reality of climate change and increase in extreme weather literally flooded into our homes. I welcome the \$2 billion commitment to a new clean water and waste water fund.

My riding, like many in the GTA, is no stranger to congestion. There are solutions, and widening all roads is not the only one. We must invest in and expand our public transit systems. The new public transit infrastructure fund would help shorten commute times and reduce air pollution. Not only will this be better for the environment, but getting people where they need to go in a timely and efficient manner will improve our physical and mental health as well as our collective productivity, which leads me to what is Burlington's best-kept secret: our innovative and varied manufacturing sector.

I have had the distinct honour of touring a number of companies that are thriving and rising to the challenges of a competitive global marketplace. I want to see them grow and continue to prosper. They create good jobs and add value to our local communities. However, they can do more, and this budget aims to support their ambitions and add new successful enterprises to their ranks.

By providing the National Research Council's IRAP with additional funding, this government will help the small and medium-sized companies in my riding innovate and grow. The new high-impact firm initiative will assist firms in furthering their global competitiveness. Our plan to foster a clean growth economy will provide new opportunities to the next generation of entrepreneurs. I am heartened to see the importance placed on all aspects of the manufacturing sector, including the auto sector, in the recent budget.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not mention two additional items in this budget that are important for me: the increased funding for shelters for victims of violence and the additional funding for status of women.

President Obama recently said that a country should be judged by how it treats its women. While we still have work to do in this country, having a feminist Prime Minister, a gender-balanced cabinet, and a commitment to equality is a good starting point.

Our commitment of \$500 million over the next five years toward a national framework for child care and early learning is another important step toward gender equality.

The Budget

I am proud to support budget 2016, as it responds to many of the issues I heard from my constituents at their doorways. This budget lays out the plan to put our country back on a path toward growth and social inclusion, and it reaffirms the values generations of Canadians have cherished as the foundations of our national identity.

It is clear that these issues are intertwined. Skills, training, and experience develop our young people, but we need to ensure that young people have the opportunities to excel. We will achieve this by fostering a robust environment and economy by providing the infrastructure—social, green, and physical—for all Canadians to thrive at every stage of life in an inclusive society that is based on equality for all. Yes, this sounds like my Canada.

I have met thousands of people in my community and across Canada. The ingenuity, the resilience, and the possibilities the people of our country take hold of every day never cease to amaze me.

Another prime minister by the name of Trudeau once said, “The Canadian ideal which we have tried to live, with varying degrees of success and failure for a hundred years, is really an act of defiance against the history of mankind.” In Canada, we work to overcome our challenges peacefully and to create a fair society. It is my hope that we will continue to defy history.

For the individuals and families, the parents and seniors who have come to our community volunteer income tax clinic, the measures in this budget will make a meaningful impact on their lives.

A fair society is a strong society, and that is good for us all.

Budget 2016 speaks to our present and to our future, a future that is focused on creating the opportunity for all Canadians to reach their full potential. I encourage my colleagues in this place to join me in supporting this budget and the opportunities that lie ahead.

• (1030)

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know everyone is proud of their budget. Budgets are what governments do, I guess.

It is interesting that they talk about the middle class, actually the middle-income group, which under our government was actually the wealthiest in not only the developed countries but one of the wealthiest in the world. What is interesting is that the Liberals are actually going to tax them \$1.3 billion over this coming year and another \$2.4 billion over the next year. It is going to increase the taxes on Lambton—Kent—Middlesex agriculture and small businesses. The Liberals will also increase the payroll taxes and EI, and they did not drop the small business tax as promised.

I have always believed that it is not what people say but what they do. The Liberals said they would have a modest \$10 billion deficit; it is now \$30 billion plus. They said the tax shift from the top to the middle class would be revenue neutral, but the biggest benefit is if someone makes just under \$200,000, so I guess that is an indication of middle class. However, they were out by \$2 billion a year. Then they said they would balance the budget. That is at least three within the first six months. If they cannot make any predictions come true in their budget, I am wondering why Canadians would believe them about finishing their mandate in the next year until the next budget comes along.

Ms. Karina Gould: Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that some promises are going to be delivered right away. On July 1, 2017, the guaranteed income supplement is going to be increased by 10% for low-income seniors. The Canada child benefit and the tax cut for the middle class are measures that have already come into force.

This budget is about investing, growing the middle class, and putting Canada back on a path toward growth.

My colleagues on the other side tend to forget that the past 10 years saw some of the lowest growth in Canadian history since the Great Depression. We have a plan to get Canada back on track, to expand the middle class, and to expand opportunities for all of us so that we can all be stronger together.

• (1035)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her speech and for her listing of priorities. Those priorities are the same as they are in my constituency. Sadly, though, the budget does not address those priorities.

I am happy to see that the green infrastructure is going to include an expansion of LRT. My mayor is certainly happy that there will be additional money, but in this budget, sadly, there will be no monies to actually extend the line. The decision was to base it on ridership, but ridership cannot be increased until the line is built.

I welcome an increase, and my mayor is happy. It will be 50% potential funding by the federal government, but it costs a billion dollars to build the line. We need more than \$130 million.

Here is my big concern. The hon. member says that one of her top priorities is seniors. It is the same for me in my riding. The Liberal Party promised \$3 billion over three years for health care, but it is not in the budget. The Liberals are not committed to renegotiating the cutting of \$36 billion over 10 years in health care, and there is no money for pharmacare.

Could the member please speak to the matter? They promised additional action on providing health care to Canadians. Where are the dollars?

Ms. Karina Gould: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Edmonton for her question and for her concerns and for the issues that we share. They are issues that are relevant not only in Burlington but across Canada.

One of the things that is important to note is this is the first of four budgets in the cycle. We have an entire mandate. We have four years. Although the previous government tried to take Rome down in a day, it takes more than a day to build it back up.

The Budget

We are working together. The Minister of Health is negotiating with and working with her provincial colleagues to see how we can renegotiate the Canada health accord and hopefully talk about issues that are important for my constituents, for me, and for everyone in the House, such as pharmacare and home care.

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since this is my first chance in the House to actually spend more than 60 seconds asking questions or doing S. O. 31s, I want to take the opportunity to thank my constituents for the opportunity to represent them again in Niagara West for the fifth straight time. I certainly want to thank all the volunteers who helped out and those who created donations, because we realize campaigns do not work unless we have the finances to make them happen.

I also want to indicate that I will be splitting my time with the member for Cariboo—Prince George.

My perspective in talking about the budget today will be around small business and confidence, as well as some other things.

I have a concern when I look at creating jobs. I realize that governments do not actually create jobs, but they create a set of circumstances that create a climate that gives businesses confidence to invest in the country.

In looking at some of the things that our government did in the last nine years, I will use the acronym TIRE to put in perspective all the things we did to try to give the economy confidence and give Canada a great reputation on the world stage as a place to invest. That has been borne out by a number of articles. As a matter of fact, in January, *Forbes* rated Canada as the number one country in the G20 to do business in.

Let us think about that. Considering what went on over the last number of years and the great economic meltdown around the world in 2008, *Forbes Magazine* is saying in 2016 that Canada is number one in the G20 as a place to do business. That is because of all the hard work our government did over the last 10 years.

Here is why I use the acronym TIRE.

The “T” in TIRE is because we reduced corporate taxes. One of the things I will talk about is not dealing with the small business tax reduction, which I think is important. There were also the trade deals that we fostered with over 51 countries, including the TPP, which is the most recent one. We can look at how we lowered taxes for corporations, which made us one of the lowest-taxing jurisdictions in the G7. When global companies are deciding where they are going to invest money, they take a lot of things into consideration, and that is certainly one of them.

The “I” in TIRE is with regard to infrastructure, investments, and immigration reforms. We did a number of things around infrastructure. The new government is committed to infrastructure as well, which I think is great, because these are important things, but our previous government had unprecedented investments in infrastructure around this country and certainly in my region of Niagara as well. We were able to accomplish a number of things over a short period of time that have made Niagara a much better place to be. Not only were there a number of infrastructure projects there, but work was also done at the border, which enhanced transportation and a number of different things.

The “R” in TIRE is for research and development and red tape reduction. I had the opportunity to sit on a red tape reduction round table, and one of the things we heard was that red tape continues to be an issue for businesses in terms of their confidence when they have to deal with a bunch of red tape issues in one country versus another. It is an important issue. It is something that I hope the new government will continue to pursue, because, quite frankly, we can look at red tape once and have a commission to deal with it, but one of the laws of government or bureaucracy is that red tape will always continue to creep back in. We need to be diligent on this issue, and the current government needs to be committed to pursuing it.

Last, the “E” in TIRE is for entrepreneurship and the economy. As I mentioned previously, *Forbes* said that the best place to invest within the G20 is Canada, and I think we need to focus on entrepreneurship and small business. One of my concerns is reflected in some of the commitments made earlier by the current government, which is that business needs to have the confidence to know that if they invest money and move forward with something, the rules are not going to change and they can count on the rules of engagement as they move forward. One of the things we need to continue to do in this country is nurture small business and entrepreneurs.

One of the things our previous government did was to set aside \$400 million for a venture capital fund, which is a good start, but I do not think it goes nearly far enough to address one of the most serious issues that small business has in this country, which is access to capital.

● (1040)

One of the reasons why we have hotspots in the U.S., whether it is Boston or Silicon Valley, is that there is a lot of money there. Yes, there is a lot of other factors. There are very smart people, but we have very smart people Canada. Access to capital continues to be one of the things that we will need to change in our country if we are to be more effective and have a chance to attract the businesses. Businesses need grow.

What sometimes happens is we get a great idea, we move forward and then we lack the ability to raise additional funds, so businesses invariably go next door because there is a lot of cash and big private markets and equity markets down there. These are some of the things we need to do to move forward.

In light of that, one of the promises the Liberals made, and they campaigned on it before the election, was that they would continue to lower the small business tax. This is one of the underlying factors in confidence, where small businesses could decide, or SMEs in general, how they invest and how they grow. If things do not line up that make it easier for them to do these things, then they will either sit on their funds or they will have a lot of other opportunities.

The Budget

A number of manufacturers in my riding said that they could not believe the offers they were getting from the southern U.S. to move there. We are not just talking about taxes, but other things like energy costs, which are crazy. I realize that is a provincial issue, but all governments need to be concerned about this. It troubles me when I hear manufacturers in my riding say that the only reason they are here is because they are committed to the community, that they have roots there because they grew up there. It is great for the individuals who do that, but we are competing in a global economy for dollars, for talent and all these other things that go into it.

The Liberals promised to reduce small business taxes to 9%. Now they have said that they will not do that, and that concerns me. Once again that undermines the confidence of small businesses to make a difference in moving forward.

Another challenge was dealing with the whole issue of EI. It is great that we look out for the most vulnerable, but we need to be careful over time. Businesses have to pay those premiums.

We have talked about CPP expansion. On the surface, that is a great idea. The challenge, though, is there is only one taxpayer, and that is individuals and businesses. They have to bear the brunt of that.

The challenge I have from that point of view is that we continue to place more burdens on small businesses. We continue to not look at all the other things that affect what is going on. Then what happens? There is a lack of confidence and businesses may decide not to invest additional money here. They may decide to move to other countries such as the United States. That is troubling because the previous government worked very hard over the last nine years to instill that confidence.

As we saw in various articles written about our country over the last number of years, whether it was *Forbes* or *Fortune*, all indicated that Canada was on the right track.

I also want to talk a bit about the comments of the parliamentary budget officer in trying to determine the budget. It is interesting that the opposition gave us a hard time when we were in government. It talked about how we did not listen to the PBO, that we were not open, transparent, and all those things. Now the parliamentary budget officer is saying that there is no openness or transparency. Once again, whether it is changing or playing down forecasts of long-term spending plans, how can the public understand what is really going on? The Liberals campaigned on the ability to be open and transparent.

Unfortunately, 10 minutes is not nearly enough time to talk about all the issues that one would talk about in the budget. However, Canada is facing a number of issues right now, whether it is dealing with pipelines and our resource sector, or a whole bunch of other things.

As a government, the Liberals have to create confidence for businesses. My concern is with the number of broken promises already. No one forced the Liberals to campaign on those promises and now they are renegeing on some of them. Ultimately, that creates instability among SME's and businesses in general and causes them to question whether the Liberals will keep their word. As a result,

those funds can actually flow to other places. Businesses, as we know, are the ones that create jobs.

● (1045)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I tend to disagree with the concluding remarks of the member. Maybe I put it in a different perspective.

I want to refer specifically to the tax break the middle class will be receiving. Hundreds and millions of dollars will go directly into the pockets of the middle class. With that additional disposal income, that will help invest in small businesses. An increase in disposable income means more consumer spending. When there is more consumer spending, businesses hopefully will hire more people.

We are adding more value to the economy. By investing in the middle class, we are investing in Canada's economy. A healthier middle class means a healthier economy.

All the other stuff aside, would the member not at the very least agree that if the middle class has more money, there is more money to spend and it helps small businesses, no matter what region of the country they are in?

Mr. Dean Allison: Mr. Speaker, once again, this is one of the issues we have. Individuals who have more money to spend does something.

We have to understand that with a population of 35 million people, and I know the member across the way understands this, for us to increase our GDP, we need to sell goods outside the country.

One of the greatest challenges we have is free trade deals. I did not actually mention TPP. We have heard mixed signals from the government on where it stands, and the compensation it will provide agriculture groups, which we negotiated.

One of the most important ways we increase the GDP in our country is by ensuring we have places for our businesses to sell goods. There is certainly a benefit to selling goods locally, and we need that to happen. However, for businesses to really grow, we need to sell those goods outside our country.

With an almost \$2 trillion economy, we know 35 million people are not actually driving that as much as businesses and exports. This is one of the things I believe will help improve the standard of living for all Canadians and will create more jobs in the future.

● (1050)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my hon. colleague. Living in northern Ontario, we are resource-dependent. Many of us have small businesses, but our small businesses are dependent on the fact that if we do not have the resource economy, we do not have the small business.

I am looking at the FedNor portfolio. I know the member is not from the north, but FedNor is where money is reinvested so we can create economic development opportunities. All the resource shares go to Queen's Park in Ontario, and we get very little back from the Wynne government. There is no augmenting in the FedNor budget.

The Budget

Second, there is no action on the Ring of Fire. For the last 10 years, the Wynne government has sat on the sidelines. This project will bring generational economic change to all the regions and the indigenous communities of the north. However, we see no action on it.

The previous government did not move on it. The present government has not moved on it. Does my hon. colleague not agree that if we are to build this economy, we have to maintain that balance and we have to ensure that small businesses in our resource-dependent regions actually have the economic development dollars they need to diversify the economy?

Mr. Dean Allison: Mr. Speaker, I know the member did not intend to debate the job that Ms. Wynne has been doing in Ontario. We would need another full day on that one and on the disastrous legacy of her government.

The member's question was around the Ring of Fire and resource development. Once again, I look at programs like FedNor, FedDev, and some of the regional agencies, and they do have their place. These are important.

For development in the north, I do not think there is anything more important than getting the Ring of Fire right. It has been a lost opportunity, as far as I can see. We could do a much better job of coordinating efforts there. There is a whole bunch of assets there and resources that, quite frankly, if we could get our act together, we could do a great job at not only extracting those resources, but creating jobs for our north and for indigenous communities as well.

That was a great question. My concern is that there is more to be done in Ontario. If we could get that right, we would have a thriving economy in the north.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am here on behalf of hard-working families and friends of Cariboo—Prince George. We have some concerns with the budget released by the government three weeks ago.

Historically speaking, budgets are presented once a year. They identify planned government spending and expected government revenue, and provide a plan for job growth and a road back for when borrowed money will eventually be paid back. More important, they provide hope.

In releasing the national budget, governments send a message to Canadians that they have a sound fiscal plan. The budget serves to build confidence with investors, business, and political allies throughout the world that Canada remains stable, that our country is sound, and that it will continue to be a leading country for investment, growth, and partnership.

Budget 2016 did one thing extremely well. It confirmed that we were in for another era of broken Liberal promises. A few of these broken promises include tripling the modest \$10 billion deficit projection, backing away from the Liberals' pledge to balance the budget by 2019, and a broken promise to bring the debt-to-GDP ratio down every year of their mandate. That is not even touching their spending promises. I most certainly need more than 10 minutes to get into that.

The price tag is \$29.4 billion for 2016 alone. That is a broken promise in the magnitude of almost 300%. I am not sure about anyone else, but I cannot run my finances off of credit, and the government is doing just that: maxing out Canada's corporate credit card.

Over the years, I was fortunate to have been part of a few incredibly talented teams tasked with building business plans, long-term budgets, and strategic forecasting, where our vulnerability as an industry and as an organization lay. I can say with complete sincerity that no way would a budget with no plan to make a company flush, let alone turn a profit, ever have been accepted. Why should we ask Canadians to approve such a plan, especially when they are the ones who will be left footing the bill for years to come?

Not only is the government saddling Canadians with enormous debt, it backed away from the promise of an open and transparent model of government. Even a report from the independent parliamentary budget officer found that Liberals were hiding information from Canadians, creating their own economic growth projections, and exaggerating job growth expectations. Debt just does not go away no matter how hard the Liberals try to wish it away. Borrowed money is not free money.

Over the last 20 years, my wife and I have been small business owners, and we know first hand how challenging it can be to make ends meet. Instead of falling through on their election promise to lower the small business tax from 10.5% to the scheduled 9%, the Liberals have left it at the current level. However, should this surprise us?

The Prime Minister had this to say on this matter during the campaign, "We have to know that a large percentage of small businesses are actually just ways for wealthier Canadians to save on their taxes", to hide money, "and we want to reward the people who are actually creating jobs, and contributing in concrete ways." We all know the Prime Minister has never had to worry about choosing between putting food on the table for his family or making payroll for his employees at the end of the month, but the constituents in my riding of Cariboo—Prince George have.

I would like to relay a recent conversation I had with local farming families. There are over 4,000 beef producers in B.C., employing roughly 8,800 people directly and indirectly. Beef producers contribute approximately \$25 billion to Canada's economy, \$35 million of that alone from one of the communities in Cariboo—Prince George. There are over 68,000 beef producers Canada-wide, yet there is not one mention of hard-working farm families in this budget.

The message I was asked to deliver is this. The hard-working farm families, many of which have worked their operations for generations, are small business owners. Their businesses are run 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The money they make is not spent on fancy cars, condos, or vacations. That money is spent directly in the communities in which they live.

The Budget

•(1055)

The current government failed the hard-working farm families in its Speech from the Throne and, once again, in its first budget speech. The government failed rural Canada. This is simply unacceptable. Our farm families have faced increasingly challenging times in the last six months due to market volatility stemming from the current government's lack of recognition of the importance of this vital industry.

Now that the Prime Minister has approved his first budget, I think he is just figuring out that budgets do not balance themselves. That is why the Liberal government has chosen to raise taxes on our job creators by ending the hiring credit for small businesses. I can only assume, based on his words, that the Prime Minister believes that these are the wealthy Canadians who can afford to take the hit. Dan Kelly, president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business said this:

...the new government promised to reduce the small business corporate tax rate to nine per cent by 2019. That promise was broken...[when they] announced the rate will remain at 10.5 per cent.... This decision will cost small firms over \$900 million more per year as of 2019.

One does not need to be an economist to realize that job creators in this country, be they the hard-working entrepreneurs, the local farmers, or the neighbourhood grocery stores, will find it harder to operate in light of these Liberal tax hikes.

The current Liberal government was elected on a promise to address a perceived infrastructure deficit. To do so, it is borrowing \$12 billion over the next five years. However, the majority of this money would not go toward roads, bridges, and public transportation, the infrastructure promises on which the current government was elected. The Liberals had the perfect opportunity to invest in projects that would provide concrete, long-term benefits in the form of jobs and increased economic activity.

The review of the Canada Transportation Act, released in December, pointed out a need for a national transportation strategy, saying it will be fundamental for Canada's economic development, moving forward. Canada is a trading nation. We need trade agreements that give our producers the ability to compete in global markets. We need secure and seamless movement of these commodities and access for business to and from our country and our communities. This is critical for Canada to remain competitive. I may have missed it, but I did not see any money set aside in the budget for our ports and our airports, Canada's vital transportation gateways. While investment in green infrastructure is commendable and remains important, the current Liberal government is so blindsided by its own buzz words and pet projects that it is failing to invest in the crucial projects that are the foundation of our regional and national economies.

I too was elected on a promise to fight for my hard-working constituents of Cariboo—Prince George, to keep taxes low, be a strong voice in Ottawa for the people who do not feel they are being heard, and to bring the priorities of Cariboo—Prince George to Ottawa. I look at budget 2016 and I see nothing for rural Canada, nothing for the mills, mines, farmers, or small businesses. Investment in high-speed transit in major centres would not create jobs or opportunities in the industries that fuel the economies of

Cariboo—Prince George, where people have been hit hard by the downturn in the resource sector. Giving them an additional five weeks on EI is nice, but they need jobs.

We are still waiting for a softwood lumber agreement. We are still waiting for the trans-Pacific partnership agreement to be ratified. We are still left with higher taxes, a large national deficit, no additional resources for our police forces, and measures that actually do more harm than good for small businesses that are the backbone of our economy.

For my colleagues across the floor, I would say that Canadians did not give the Liberals a mandate to borrow beyond our means, they did not give them a mandate for a pile of broken promises, and they most certainly did not give them a mandate for higher taxes that would be passed on for future generations.

I will leave with a quote from the late Jim Flaherty, regarded as the world's best finance minister, who shepherded us through the world's worst economic recession since the Great Depression while having the strongest job growth in the G7, keeping taxes low, and balancing the budget. He said,

...nearly 150 years ago, Canada was founded with fiscal responsibility as its cornerstone. The men and women who carved this great country out of the wilderness simply called it "good government".

That is what minister of finance John Rose was talking about when he stood before this assembly to deliver Canada's first budget speech in 1868. He said, "...I say that we ought to be most careful in our outlay, and consider well every shilling we expend".

Canadians deserve a responsible government that is thinking about the long-term interests of this country. Simply put, Canadians deserve better.

•(1100)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I would like to ask some questions about the budget. People in my riding have a lot of questions about social housing. Municipal housing office representatives in Drummondville have asked me what is holding the government back from investing in social housing.

The federal government promised to invest \$520 million over four years to build new affordable rental housing. However, the budget seems to suggest that promise will not be kept.

What does my hon. colleague think of that? There are probably social housing needs in his riding too. It is extremely important to invest so that our neediest citizens can thrive and become productive members of their communities once again.

The Budget

[English]

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, without a doubt we need to do everything in our power to look after those who are most vulnerable. In my riding of Cariboo—Prince George, we indeed do have a necessity for affordable housing, but these are questions I am getting. How is the money going to be rolled out, being a provincial responsibility? Who is the government talking to? How do people get in line for these dollars to be doled out?

There has been no plan. Again, there are more vague answers, more in the coming weeks and months. There is a concern over whether the money that has been allocated will make it to rural Canada or simply go to the major cities across Canada.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saenich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I know we will disagree—the Green Party's point of view looking to a colleague in the Conservative Party. The previous 10 years' budgets left me devastated in terms of the things that did not get attention. When I look at this budget, my heartbreak is that the words are there, but the commitment is not sufficient to meet the promises.

For instance, I agree that we need to see infrastructure dollars in those parts of the country, because we know that the infrastructure deficit is massive. One of the things that I am glad is preserved by the government from the previous administration is the \$3 billion a year gas tax for infrastructure.

Does my hon. colleague agree that we need more investment in infrastructure, particularly for public transit that right now has \$3.4 billion in the budget over three years, which is quite insufficient to the need?

• (1105)

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, while we may differ on many issues, we do agree and share our passion for our communities and for Canada and for doing the best we can in representing our regions and ridings.

My concern is that rural Canada has seemingly been forgotten in the budget. Whether it is high-speed transit or any transit, it does nothing in my riding. If I go to my municipalities and say they have to choose between a transit program and a road infrastructure program, where is that balance or that priority is going to be?

Again, high-speed transit does nothing in our riding. We are okay with our transit program. We need investment in infrastructure. We need investment in jobs and creating an environment so that we have investment in our region. We need a softwood lumber agreement to bring confidence to our softwood lumber industry, to our forestry industry. We need a trans-Pacific partnership so that our producers from across Canada can have some confidence that they will be able to access new markets to compete on the global stage.

[Translation]

Mr. Rémi Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Toronto—Danforth.

I am delighted to rise in the House this morning to speak to the budget tabled by our government a few weeks ago. While we were in our respective ridings recently, I had the opportunity to present our budget to some of the chambers of commerce in my region. I met

with just over 200 people to share the budget's main points with them.

To answer my colleague across the aisle, I would like to talk about what the budget will do for our regions and our communities. This budget includes some very positive things for our rural communities and regions like mine, such as eastern Quebec and the Gaspé. That is what I want to talk about here in the House this morning.

First I would like to paint a picture of my region's socio-economic situation. My riding covers an area of about 16,000 square kilometres and has 57 municipalities and as many elected representatives. As for population density, one of the counties has about 6.5 people per square kilometre and therefore has a vast expanse of land. The population is relatively evenly distributed in terms of age. There are about 2,500 people aged zero to 14, 2,000 people aged 15 to 24, and 4,000 aged 25 to 44.

My region has a negative migration flow, which means that it is slowly losing its population, and this saddens me. The same is true for three of the four municipalities in my riding. In addition, the population is aging, and the employment rate is 69%.

In my riding, per capita disposable income is \$23,000. It is one of the lowest average disposable incomes in Canada, if not the lowest. It is a particularly tough economic situation. When the budget was brought down, I was very proud of the tangible measures that the Minister of Finance and our government put in place to help those in great need who are having a hard time making ends meet. Solid commitments were presented and announced in the budget to address this. We also talked about lowering taxes for the middle class. It is quite an achievement.

We also committed to presenting tangible measures for families, young people, and seniors. I would like to quickly mention those. The first pillar of budget 2016 is the Canada child benefit. Many families in our region need this benefit. It will allow families with children under six to receive up to \$6,400 per child. Families with children between six and 17 will receive up to \$5,400 per child. That is a lot of money for families in our regions who need extra money to make ends meet. We clearly indicated in the budget that these benefits would not be taxable, which is very important.

As far as young people and students are concerned, we announced a 50% increase in student grants, meaning an extra \$1,000 for students from low-income families. We are also very proud of this measure.

We also announced a student loan repayment exemption for students who earn less than \$25,000 when they enter the labour market. In other words, students will not have to repay their student loan until they are earning at least \$25,000 a year. That is an increase of \$5,000. It is very important for them to have a small financial cushion before they have to start paying off their student debt.

The Budget

We announced the creation of many student jobs under the Canada summer jobs program. We committed to increasing the number of jobs in the regions. We estimate that this could represent 350 more jobs for students in my riding. We are very proud of that.

Obviously, we did not forget about our seniors. These individuals are proud, active members of our community who do volunteer work. We announced a 10% increase in the guaranteed income supplement for single seniors. Our government's excellent approach in this regard seeks to recognize the financial difficulty that some members of our population are experiencing. These are practical measures that will affect our communities.

• (1110)

Other measures have also been put in place, including improvements to the employment insurance program. That is important in my riding. Unfortunately, people sometimes may need to rely on employment insurance, whether it be on a temporary or a periodic basis. Significant improvements have been made to the program, including the reduction of the two-week waiting period to one week and a decrease in the number of hours required to be eligible for EI benefits. New entrants and re-entrants to the labour market had to accumulate up to 910 hours of employment to be eligible for EI benefits. We recognized that that was a problem and now, in our region, they will have to accumulate only 420 hours to qualify. We are very proud of that measure.

We are eliminating the requirements that forced claimants to accept jobs at lower rates of pay and with longer commuting times. That was a very obvious problem in my riding. These sorts of measures, which were brought in by the Conservatives in 2012, have been eliminated. That is a promise that we made during the election campaign, and I am proud to see it in the budget. The people in my riding are very happy that these types of changes have been made.

We have also undertaken to extend the working while on claim pilot project to August 2018. That is very important to us. We have also decided to continue and increase investments in skills training, and we have increased that budget to \$675 million. Obviously, I am also very proud of the fact that we are reinstating the 15% tax credit for labour-sponsored funds. That is another important element of our platform that is being implemented with this budget.

There has been a lot of talk about infrastructure. We believe these investments are important because they can benefit our communities. For example, we have allocated \$1.5 billion over two years for affordable housing. It is very important to be able to access such housing in our communities. Another example is the \$342-million investment over two years for cultural and recreational infrastructure. It is important for our communities to have cultural and recreational infrastructure.

We will be investing \$2 billion over four years to immediately improve water treatment and distribution infrastructure. We are even committing to paying 50% of eligible costs.

Different measures for infrastructure are very important to us. Once again, we are very proud and we believe that investments in Quebec could total up to or over \$700 million.

There were some big announcements in the budget for arts and culture, such as increased funding for CBC/Radio-Canada. There

was also more funding for the Canada Council for the Arts, Telefilm Canada, the National Film Board of Canada, and Showcasing Canada's Cultural Industries to the World. Cultural organizations in our region welcomed these reinvestments in arts and culture. We are very proud that these measures are in the budget.

We have heard a lot about SMEs. We obviously want to support them with technology and help them improve and modernize their organizations and businesses. These SMEs also want contracts, to help keep their businesses going. By investing in infrastructure, we think we will be in a position to create jobs that will generate economic spinoffs in our regions and encourage people there to spend and invest. For example, they may buy a pair of skis or a bike this summer, which will have a direct impact on our regional businesses.

We also promised to invest \$197 million over five years in Fisheries and Oceans Canada to increase monitoring and research activities. That is very important to us. The Maurice Lamontagne Institute is in my riding and is one of the top francophone research centres in the world. We are very proud of this institute, and we obviously hope that this measure will benefit the Maurice Lamontagne Institute.

In conclusion, I am very proud of the budget that was presented. This budget will help my community and our municipalities develop economically and create jobs. Once again, this is a step forward for us.

• (1115)

[English]

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member across the way provided a laundry list of measures in the budget for employment insurance, not all of which will come into effect until 2017. Despite those measures, the budget projects keeping spending on EI benefits below EI premium revenues for four of the next five years. Therefore, I would ask the member whether there is enough money there to make some further improvements to EI, such as including oil and gas-producing regions like Edmonton, Regina, and southern Saskatchewan in the temporary extension of EI benefits, which was supposedly intended as a response to the downturn in oil and gas.

The Budget

[Translation]

Mr. Rémi Massé: Mr. Speaker, what our workers need is jobs. They want to work 52 weeks a year. People in my region need that. They do not want to resort to employment insurance, but they have to periodically or temporarily because they lose their jobs or their industry is seasonal. Once again, we are very proud of the improvements we announced, such as investments to speed up employment insurance claims processing.

When I was campaigning, people told me that getting their first cheque took a long time. I am very proud that, in this budget, our government decided to invest in speeding up employment insurance claims processing.

[English]

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like my colleague, I have had the opportunity over the past number of weeks to discuss the budget with stakeholders in my area of London, and I was pleased with the response. We had a number of round table discussions with employment groups, high-tech companies, and aboriginal citizens, who feel that we are on the right track.

Would the member agree that the reception in his constituency has been as positive as I have found it to be?

[Translation]

Mr. Rémi Massé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. I would say the response has been extremely positive. I met with a number of stakeholders and elected officials during the two weeks I spent in my riding. Once again, the response was very positive. Some of the people I talked to called our measures historic. We have covered a whole range of important issues, including employment insurance, infrastructure, arts and culture, and our indigenous communities.

I have three indigenous communities in my riding, and they are delighted with the investments we are making to help them. They were satisfied with the way we handled consultations both before and after the budget to arrive at the major initiatives we announced. The response has been very positive.

● (1120)

[English]

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals campaigned on a number of promises that have been broken over the last six months. Could my colleague tell me if they misled Canadians or if they simply do not have a plan?

[Translation]

Mr. Rémi Massé: Mr. Speaker, I am always surprised to hear this kind of negative attitude from the other side of the House. As I said, the people I met were extremely proud of the budget presented to them. They see the concrete measures that will help them make ends meet.

We talked about the Canada child benefit. That is a promise we made during the election campaign and a promise kept. This promise will give families in our respective regions extra money that they can use to make ends meet. That is the kind of promise we made and what we committed to Canadians. I am very proud of that.

[English]

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to budget 2016. This budget aims to help Canadians put themselves on the best footing to build for the future.

We talk a great deal about building infrastructure, but this budget goes further. It is about building communities and a strong base for the future of our country.

It will be no surprise to many of those assembled today to hear me say that I am an advocate for better food policy. I am going to talk about how this budget would impact food security and families across our country.

Food policy covers a wide range of issues. It concerns agriculture and how we maintain and sustain our local agriculture. It also concerns the impact of climate change on agriculture. Food policy considers how we process our food and the impact of processed foods on our health.

I have asked questions in the House about reducing sodium and eliminating trans fats in our processed foods. These are important health issues. Another issue related to that is how we label our foods so that consumers can make proper decisions about the foods they eat.

Perhaps most importantly, we need to consider food security as a part of food policy. We need to ensure that people have access to healthy food, because we all need healthy food to thrive.

Budget 2016 takes many important steps forward on the food policy issues that I have mentioned.

[Translation]

Children do better in school when they are properly nourished, and people work harder and get sick less often when they eat fresh, nutritious, unprocessed food.

Our local farmers and the economy as a whole do better when Canadians purchase locally grown food. This budget will bring us closer to achieving these objectives.

[English]

I would like to begin by addressing food security, because this issue comes up a lot in discussions with people in my riding.

A key issue when we discuss access to healthy food is poverty. We have many food banks and nutrition programs in my riding. The reason we have them is poverty.

On the occasion of National Volunteer Week, I would like to thank the people who work so hard to run these food banks and nutrition programs. They do tremendous work in our community, and we need to take a moment to thank them.

The Budget

However, budget 2016 will take steps to help people so they may be able to move beyond dependence upon such nutrition programs and food banks. That is important.

The most significant impact for families with children will come from the Canada child benefit. During the election campaign, I spoke with parents across my riding. The common issue for many of these families is the high cost of raising happy, healthy children in Toronto. The Canada child benefit will help families with children who have the greatest need.

The previous system treated all families alike, but we know that not all families are alike. They do not all have the same needs. Our government believes in helping those Canadians who need the help the most. The effect of the Canada child benefit is to raise over 300,000 children out of poverty. It will increase benefits to nine out of 10 families. It is akin to creating a guaranteed annual income for children. When we raise children out of poverty, we increase their food security.

• (1125)

[*Translation*]

That is what the benefit will do. Its impact on family budgets will be almost immediate. It will be tax-free, unlike benefits under the previous regime. Canadian parents will therefore be able to plan their finances without having to worry about paying taxes on the money they receive for their family.

This targeted benefit will enable those less fortunate to provide their children with the same opportunities as wealthier families. This program will have a huge impact. Not only will it help poor children and their families, but it will also help make our society fairer and more prosperous, which is what we all want.

[*English*]

Another part of the budget that will provide help for families and people in need is the guaranteed income supplement.

Single seniors are nearly three times more likely to live with lower incomes than seniors generally across the population. Our elders have contributed so much to our country, and we need to support them when they need it.

Budget 2016 more than doubles the current maximum GIS top-up benefit. It is expected that this initiative alone will improve the financial security of almost one million single seniors.

Increased financial security, as I mentioned when I was talking about the Canada child benefit, means increased food security. This measure will help our most vulnerable seniors get access to healthy food.

This benefit will have a direct impact in my riding, where many seniors make their home and struggle against the rising costs of living in downtown Toronto. As I meet them in coffee shops across the riding or talk with them at their doorsteps to discuss the work we are doing in Ottawa, I hear about their difficulties. Now that we have released this budget, they are telling me that they appreciate the GIS increase. They believe there will be a felt benefit, that it will improve their lives.

In talking about access to healthy food, I am mindful of the needs of the people who live in our far north.

[*Translation*]

The budget also proposes another important investment: \$64.5 million over five years to enhance nutrition north Canada, a program that helps northern and isolated communities obtain nutritious and perishable foods at a reduced cost.

We must support that program. I do not need to tell members how costly it is to ship fresh food to those communities.

[*English*]

In my own riding of Toronto—Danforth, another issue that impacts good security is housing. Being in downtown Toronto, residents of my riding feel acutely the impact of high housing costs. Too many people need to make a choice between having a roof over their heads or food on their table.

Budget 2016 invests in affordable housing. The government will develop a national housing strategy. The budget sets out measures to invest in the construction of new affordable housing units, the renovation and repair of existing affordable housing, and measures to support housing affordability. The measures include designing an affordable rental housing financing initiative. I am personally particularly happy to see included in the budget specific funding proposed for the construction and renovation of shelters and transition homes for victims of domestic violence.

These are all important steps to address helping people in need by giving them the building blocks to build their future.

I have spent most of my time talking about food security and the budget's impact on this issue, but at the beginning, I raised the question about food processing and labelling. The budget supports a strengthening of the food safety system. It also sets out that the government will take steps over the next year to improve food labels to give more information on added sugars and artificial dyes in processed foods.

What Canadians eat is an important aspect of health outcomes in the short term and the long term. The ongoing conversation Canadians are having regarding sugar, obesity, and diet-linked illnesses like diabetes is indicative of the very serious health consequences of not being able to get healthy fresh food on the table.

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

My constituents often talk to me about food insecurity and the associated health risks. They are concerned, as are most Canadians, about the amount of sugar and artificial substances found in the processed foods that fill the shelves and freezers of our supermarkets.

[*English*]

The budget's commitment that the government take steps over the next year to improve food labels is very important.

As well, this morning I had breakfast with members of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. They were so happy to hear about the investments we will be making in science for agriculture.

The Budget

All of these aspects are covered in the budget. I believe it is a great step toward better food policy.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to the debt clock that has been running on my desk, since the member started speaking the Liberals have managed to add at least \$500,000 on to the debt.

She mentioned the children's benefit. In annex 1 on page 240 of the budget under "Outlook For Program Expenses", it shows that they would be spending less on child benefits starting in 2017-18. It actually starts going down. Are they planning to start cutting the child benefit? If so, why did they not provide further fiscal information on the next page where it explains what is happening with the numbers, except for the child benefit plan, for which there is no explanation? I would like the member to comment on why the government chose not to provide that information in the budget document.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for expressing concern and interest in the Canada child benefit and the need to support our families across the country, because that is what the budget is about.

We have been quite clear about the fact that the Canada child benefit is going to be a steady source of money for families in greater need. Indeed, what we will see is some people will be receiving less, but they are the people who have less need for it. What we have created is a targeted benefit that will have the best impact on families who truly need it to help put food on their tables.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that the Liberals' budget is full of half-measures. We are disappointed at how many election promises were broken.

For example, my colleague across the way talked about buying local and agriculture. However, with this budget, even the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food had little to say about investments. There is no mention in the budget of compensation for farmers whose livelihood is being threatened by trade agreements.

Farmers in my riding are quite upset to see no mention of the diafiltered milk that goes through the U.S. before it enters Canada. As far as job creation and public transit are concerned, the budget has only half the money that was previously announced.

In Salaberry—Suroît, small municipalities are waiting to find out whether they will have guaranteed access to their fair share of infrastructure. There is a public transit problem. People want to go to work, but do not know how to go about getting to town to access quality, lasting jobs. They are a bit stuck because they live in rural areas. They want to find jobs so they can feed their families. The budget offers only half-measures for public transit.

I could go on about small businesses. The Liberals promised to lower the tax rate from 11% to 9%, but that did not happen in the budget. Small and medium-sized businesses are the biggest job creators in the country. People are very disappointed.

What does my colleague have to say about that?

• (1135)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her very detailed question.

She asked me what we are going to do for farmers. I spoke a little about this already. This morning, when I spoke with Ontario and Quebec farmers, they were very pleased to see that we have taken steps to invest in science in order to support them. They, too, have noticed how climate change is affecting agriculture.

We are prepared to help them respond to this situation. Personally, what I see is that we have supports for farmers.

In terms of infrastructure, we are investing in broadband Internet service across the country. People living in rural areas will have access to it.

[*English*]

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to share my time with the hon. member for Haldimand—Norfolk.

I am pleased to rise to speak to budget 2016 presented by the Liberal government. However, I would like to waste no time at all though and express my opposition to the direction of this budget and particularly where the Prime Minister is taking the country.

I am here on behalf of my constituents in Edmonton Riverbend, and I owe it to them to represent our views and our vision for the future. I have pledged to view every decision made in the House through that very lens, but this budget makes it so very easy to feel like we have been let down in Edmonton and in Alberta.

This budget took away what hope struggling Canadians had left and failed to explicitly do what Liberals promised Canadians during the 2015 election campaign. The Liberal candidates in Edmonton paraded around the city saying, "Don't worry, it's only a \$10-billion deficit," and "Don't worry, we have a plan to ensure people don't lose their jobs." These are words that perhaps every Liberal candidate in my city believed, and perhaps even some Liberals in this House still believe. However, this budget is something that should make every member of that caucus go back to his or her riding, particularly in Edmonton, and feel embarrassed. The messages of "don't worry" are certainly worrying Albertans more and more each day.

The unemployment situation in western Canada is dire. Families are struggling to pay their bills, and some are even foreclosing on their homes. Their hardships are made even worse when many are facing layoffs, and the ones who are wondering when it will be their turn cannot simply, as the Prime Minister put it, "hang in there", nor should they be forced to. These hard-working Canadians deserve a budget that gets them back to work.

The Budget

The Liberals said, “Don't worry, we'll build bridges, roads, green transit.” However, the infrastructure announcements in the budget go absolutely nowhere to help those in the energy sector. My constituency office phone is ringing off the hook with not only my constituents but those from the ridings of Edmonton Centre and Edmonton Mill Woods asking for my help and if I can talk any sense into the Liberal government, the Liberal members, and the Prime Minister. They want to know where the Liberal government's claim that its spending will create 143,000 jobs over the next two years and boost the GDP by 0.5% in 2016 and 1% in 2017 came from. Bank economists have said that the Liberal budget as delivered vastly overestimates the jobs that will be created, and will only increase GDP by 0.1% to 0.3%. This is a “real” change.

I cannot ignore the major focus of Edmontonians over the past two weeks without addressing the impact of leaving Edmonton out of the EI expansion. Edmonton and area residents were the only region in Alberta that were left out of the expansion and left without any sort of financial relief, even though Edmonton is a region that is uniquely positioned within our country.

It is easy to look at the cold, hard mathematics, as the Prime Minister said, and determine that Edmonton is a very small percentage, below the arbitrary number selected by the Prime Minister for this expansion. However, that is not understanding Edmonton; that is not understanding Alberta, and that certainly is not understanding the energy sector.

Edmonton and the Edmonton area have an immense impact on the energy sector in our province. For example, in my riding I have a number of workers who live in Edmonton Riverbend; however, they commute weeks on and weeks off to Fort McMurray. These people are counted in the Fort McMurray mathematics and not the Edmonton mathematics.

Another example, and a place I had the honour of touring over the last week is Nisku. Nisku, if members have ever visited, is a hub of activity for heavy machinery and industrial work specifically related to the oil sands. This region has been hit hard, so hard that a major company like PCL Industrial does not know where its next job will come from six months from now. That is scary. Denying these workers and these companies the expansion of EI benefits like the rest of the province shows a serious lack of understanding of how our province operates.

When the Prime Minister did come to Edmonton, flanked by two very uncomfortable MPs for that matter, and proceeded to tell us that we should be, and I quote, “thankful”, I was shocked. The previous day I was asked by a number of media outlets to comment on the visit by the Prime Minister. To be completely honest, I was expecting the Prime Minister to adjust his thinking, show up in Edmonton, and say that Edmonton is now included, what a terrible oversight that was, and offer an apology to Edmontonians. I was ready to commend the Prime Minister and tell him he did the right thing, but he did not say what I had hoped he would say, and we are still fighting with his office to have him reconsider the unique situation Edmonton is in.

• (1140)

To further drive home the point of how out of touch the Prime Minister really is, even the provincial New Democrats pulled

themselves away from their latest attack on Alberta workers and jobs in the province, to raise alarms on what the decision to exclude Edmonton from the extended EI benefit means to the Edmonton region. Granted, they did it a day too late, as the Prime Minister had already left town, but at least they were making an effort.

Setting this aside, I wonder why there was an EI expansion package plan but no formal road map to get unemployed Canadians back to work. It seems that the Prime Minister would prefer to grasp at the low-hanging fruit and spend money giving a few more weeks of EI rather than providing a necessary job growth plan that would allow workers to be financially independent and generate revenue for the government. Getting hard-working Canadians back to work, not in a decade but right away, should have been the primary objective of this budget. It is jobs that are ultimately going to put money in Canadians' pockets and help to balance the budget without raising taxes.

I am proud of the previous Conservative government's record of prioritizing jobs. Under the Conservative government, 1.3 million net new jobs were created, the most per capita in the G7. These were high-quality jobs, with 80% of them full time and in the private sector. The budget presented by the Liberals is a failed budget attempt and has let down hard-working Canadians who are struggling to pay their bills and seeing their savings dwindle away. It is obvious that the Prime Minister and the finance minister do not truly understand what is happening in western Canada.

However, to be honest, I am mostly disappointed with the Liberal MPs from the west who, in caucus, had a real opportunity to raise these issues on behalf of their constituents and did not. That is something that these MPs will have to live with back home. Perhaps some of them have been too busy over the past few weeks attending JUNO celebrations, hockey games, farewells to arenas, and hosting the Prime Minister in his riding. I can tell those MPs' constituents that on this side of the House, we listen to our constituents. We are here for them, and we will not let hard-working Canadians down.

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

Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat amazed at the member's speech, in the sense that he has forgotten what is important to the Prairies, in particular Edmonton, which is pipelines. For over 10 years, the Conservative government, which he gloats about, failed miserably at developing one inch of pipeline to tidewater. That had a devastating impact on the province of Alberta. Edmontonians are not going to be fooled by this or any member of the Conservative caucus saying that they understand Alberta's problems when the former government failed so miserably in delivering progress.

The Budget

I can talk about the pipelines; I can talk about the Wheat Board and what the Conservative government did. The previous Conservative government failed western Canada, and that is why Liberals won as many seats as they did. I think the potential in the future is going to be greater because of this budget. Manitobans, Albertans, and people in the Prairies understand that this is a budget that is progressive, that is going to invest in Canada and Alberta. It is going to employ more Canadians, including those on the Prairies.

My question to the member is this. Would he not recognize that the Conservative government failed at delivering the important jobs related to the pipeline industry for over 10 years?

• (1145)

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Mr. Speaker, I appear to have caused the member for Winnipeg North to get worked up over there, which is fine.

Quite honestly, I thought it had been determined in the House that four pipelines were approved during the tenure of the previous government. He keeps spouting off about there being zero. I guess we will agree to disagree on that point.

However, the point he brought up about how Liberals are supporting western Canada, I find laughable. He mentioned that he was amazed at my speech. I was amazed by watching Liberal after Liberal vote against the energy east motion that the Conservatives brought before the House, which explicitly asked members to show support for western Canada. They stood en masse and voted against it.

The most shocking part, getting back to my speech, is the four Liberal members of Parliament from Alberta who stood one after the other and voted against the energy east pipeline. If winning four seats in Alberta is the record number that he is so excited about, then I would encourage him to keep working.

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was somewhat disappointed that the member for Edmonton Riverbend used his speech to take a shot at the Alberta NDP government for allegedly being a day or two late in critiquing the fact that the federal budget EI extension omitted Edmonton.

That strikes me as very interesting. In the question period following the budget, not a single one of the Conservative MPs who represent Edmonton, Regina, or southern Saskatchewan said anything at all about our regions being left out of this extension of EI benefits that were supposedly targeted to areas hit by the downturn in oil and gas. In fact, it was only the NDP that raised this issue and called for the inclusion of Edmonton, Regina, and southern Saskatchewan in this extension.

My question for the member would be this. Does he recognize that the previous Conservative government's cuts to employment insurance are a major part of what led to this situation in which a majority of unemployed Canadians, including in Alberta and Saskatchewan, are not receiving EI benefits at all?

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Mr. Speaker, it is rich coming from the NDP, which time and time again in Alberta has devastated our job market, has devastated our workers. People are losing jobs en masse, largely because of what has happened not only at the federal level but also at

the provincial level. To stand up in the House and defend what the provincial NDP is doing is borderline laughable.

However, the member does bring up a good point. It is making sure that all of us together are standing up for Edmonton, for southern Saskatchewan, because quite frankly, it is not being done by the government. If that member is willing to stand up and fight for Edmonton, I support him 100%.

When I go—

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

Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on March 22, the Liberal government released its 2016 federal budget, and I stand here today deeply disappointed with the many broken promises in that document.

The Prime Minister made promises to support the middle class while keeping the annual deficit at no more than \$10 billion a year for three years. This is what Canadians were led to expect, but the Liberal's own deficit forecast has come in much higher than that, and over many more years. Indeed, over the term of the current government, there is no end in sight to deficit financing.

It is so bad that the Liberals are actually repealing the Federal Balanced Budget Act, because, as the budget itself says, the current legislation is “inconsistent with the Government’s plan”. In other words, the law is an inconvenience. This is a plan that is reckless. It is ineffective, and it is one that gives little consideration to the future financial health of our families, or indeed our country.

The budget confirmed that the Liberals are raising taxes on honest hard-working families, eager young students, and on enterprising small businesses, which will only hurt the people in my home of Haldimand—Norfolk.

Members know, and I know, and every responsible Canadian knows, that borrowed money has to be paid back. That is why I guess the Liberals are already raising taxes. In fact, personal income taxes are set to go up by \$1.3 billion this year and \$2.4 billion next year. Yet, despite promising support for middle-class families, the Liberal government is going to repeal many tax programs that were brought in by our last Conservative government, especially to help families. These are programs such as the family income splitting, the child tax benefit, and the universal child care benefit, of which I am particularly fond. Over 9.4 million families in Canada will be directly affected by these changes, including 32,000 families in my home riding.

The new Canada child benefit claims to boost payments to some families, but it comes at the expense of existing child benefits. At least 10% of families will be losing support altogether, and mark my words, that 10% number could go a whole lot higher.

The Budget

The Liberal government is also taking away the children's fitness and arts tax credits. In Haldimand—Norfolk alone, the parents of some 21,000 children under the age of 16 have been eligible for these tax credits up until now. These are tax credits totalling \$1,500 each year. Unfortunately, these families will no longer be eligible.

Conservatives have always understood that Canadians work hard, and we support policies that put more money where it belongs, back in the pockets of Canadians.

One of the things I was pleased to see in the budget is that there will be an increase to the guaranteed income supplement for seniors. However, I was disappointed in the Liberal's changes to the Canada student loan program. Despite what they said, their own numbers show that only one in five students will benefit. That is certainly not the way that they are promoting it. This becomes even more disturbing when we realize that they are also taking away the tax credits introduced by Conservatives for text books and tuition, which were available not just to a few but to all post-secondary students.

Another huge hit is going to be to Canadian small businesses through higher payroll taxes. The government will not be lowering the business tax rate to 9% as it promised. Instead, the government will hold it at 10.5% and introduce new conditions around eligibility.

Many small businesses describe this broken promise as a shock. Here is what the Canadian Federation of Independent Business had to say:

In its platform, in a written letter to CFIB members, and in campaign stops across the country, the new government promised to reduce the small business corporate tax rate to nine per cent by 2019. That promise was broken today...

This was said by Dan Kelly, the president of CFIB.

This decision alone will cost firms almost \$1 billion per year, starting in 2019.

● (1150)

This broken promise comes as no surprise, considering that the Prime Minister himself called small businesses tax havens for the rich. Canadians know that this is simply not true. Small business owners devote countless hours to their businesses, with a 51% survival rate over five years. There are some 1.2 million SMEs in Canada with the average worker taking home just \$750 a week before taxes, which is \$100 lower than the average of \$850.

The government has to do better for small businesses because small businesses are the backbone of the Canadian economy. Small businesses are indeed a key to a thriving Canadian economy because they make up 98% of all Canadian companies and employ 70% of the private sector labour force.

The Liberal budget did not renew the tax credit for EI premiums paid by small businesses, and over \$1 billion in new EI expenditures points only to higher premiums for all employers in the near future.

Another disappointment was that there was nothing new in the budget that offered support for our agricultural producers such as I have in Haldimand—Norfolk, or indeed anywhere else in Canada, despite the agrifood sector accounting for over \$100 billion in economic activity and employing more than two million Canadians. There was no direct commitment to this key part of our economy.

Conservative MPs have always supported infrastructure, investing more than any federal government in history, to the point that we ranked second among the G7 in 2014. Infrastructure spending needs to be prioritized in a way that creates both short-term and long-term jobs and makes Canada an attractive place for a business to invest.

Most people envision infrastructure as building roads and bridges. They think of investments that reduce gridlock, thereby making it easier for people to get to work, to get home, and to get their goods to market.

To the Liberals, infrastructure is divided into three main project pots: transit, green initiatives, and what they refer to as social infrastructure.

For transit, the budget allocates \$3.4 billion over three years, which does nothing to help rural ridings like Haldimand—Norfolk. Their green infrastructure fund accounts for \$5 billion over five years, but only \$650 million is to be spent this year.

The Liberals also claim that they will spend \$3.4 billion on social infrastructure over the next five years. Now we have to wonder if that will be put off until after the next election too. Also, will it too focus only on the cities?

If we add it all up, infrastructure spending is far less than what the Liberals promised Canadians in order to get elected. In fact, by 2019, only one-fifth of the promised funding will be available to create jobs.

It is a fact that roads, highways, ports, and rail infrastructure will get their funding from existing funds that our previous Conservative government already committed under our new building Canada plan.

The bottom line is that, over the next five years, the Liberal government will borrow billions of dollars with little to show for it. Budget 2016 contains undisciplined spending, has no plan to balance the books, will fail to boost economic growth, and will raise taxes on families, on individuals, and on small businesses, taxes they cannot afford to pay if they are to not only grow but thrive.

Therefore, that is why the Conservative Party of Canada and I as a member of it cannot support the budget.

● (1155)

Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Haldimand—Norfolk especially for her approval of the increases to GIS and the old age security, and also the priorities we put on infrastructure spending. These are also important to the people of St. John's East.

The Budget

What I find a little unusual is the member's feelings on the idea of balancing budgets and that the balanced budget scheme the Conservatives passed is something that the current government needs to follow. However, the previous Conservative government added \$130 billion of new debt that Canada will have to pay for. Over the past year in the election campaign, the Liberal Party campaigned long and hard on the idea of using deficit spending to finance growth. This is exactly what we have done.

Therefore, while the member would say the Conservatives are going to balance the budget at all costs, it was a promise they could hardly ever deliver upon, whereas the Liberal government's plan has achieved the confidence of Canadians using deficit spending to finance growth. Why can the member not look to the House and say that deficit spending is something Canadians support and voted for in the previous election, and it is exactly what the government is delivering?

•(1200)

Hon. Diane Finley: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member was not here in the day, but during the worst global recession since the 1930s, our government made a reluctant but responsible decision to invest in the economy, to invest in programs that would create jobs right away, things like the home renovation tax credit.

That is one of the reasons that our country went into the great recession later and more shallowly and came out stronger and faster than almost any other country in the world. It was necessary under those conditions, but we also made a promise to balance the budget.

The difference between our government and the Liberal government is that we kept our promise. The Liberals, in the election, promised a deficit, but they have far exceeded everyone's expectations by multiple factors. As well, they have no plan and have made no promise to balance the budget.

In fact, that is why they are throwing out the balanced budget legislation, so they do not ever have to balance it. That is not a responsible course. No family can survive that way, no business can survive that way, and no country is going to be healthier that way.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was astounded to find out that, with the \$113 billion deficit the government is going to create, the Bank of Canada will charge us about \$10 billion of interest every year, ongoing. That is on top of the almost \$2 billion from this non-tax neutral middle-class income tax cut.

It makes it increasingly difficult for the government to ever balance the budget and work its way out. That is \$12 billion before it starts doing anything else. At the end of the day, if I read the numbers right, it is only going to reduce unemployment by 0.3%.

I am extremely concerned. In my riding of Sarnia—Lambton, we have a project for an oversize load corridor. For \$12 million of infrastructure investment, we could create 3,000 jobs. However, it was totally ignored in the budget.

I wonder if the member could comment on the deficit and how it is really going to help.

Hon. Diane Finley: Mr. Speaker, there is no question that paying interest on burgeoning debt loads does not create jobs, certainly not in the private sector and not in the Canadian economy.

That is where the Liberal budget fails. The Liberals think that by borrowing more money they can create jobs, and yet their infrastructure investments are all slated to be pushed off, with a very small fraction of them happening this year, when they say it is needed. The Liberals are planning to spend it later, in fact most of it after the next election. That is not going to create jobs.

Meanwhile, they are burdening Canadian taxpayers with extra debt, which means taxes will have to go up. That \$12 billion that my colleague cited is money that is not going into job creation programs nor is it going into things like health care, transfers to the provinces, or social programs that would help look after Canadians, when it should.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be brief.

The Conservatives brought the HST to British Columbia and Ontario, and they borrowed \$2 billion for British Columbia and they borrowed \$4 billion for Ontario. An independent study analysis showed that if they balanced the budget right away, the interest to pay that off was actually going to be between \$8 billion and \$10 billion.

How does the member justify borrowing money from Canadians to bring in a new tax on them and having to pay interest for that in perpetuity?

Hon. Diane Finley: Mr. Speaker, the member should know that, when the HST was introduced in those provinces, it was at the request of those provinces. We did not impose it upon them; it was not our choice. We worked with the provinces to do this.

My real fear when it comes to the GST is that the Liberals, somewhere along the way over the next four years, probably sooner rather than later, are going to feel compelled to raise the GST. That is a tax on everyone. There are very few ways that the Liberals can raise as much money as would pay for these programs and pay for that \$12 billion a year in extra debt, just the interest on it, without doing that.

Canadians deserve better than that, because we know, we believe, and we have seen evidence that, if Canadians have more money in their pockets, they will save it, they will invest it, and they will invest in their children's education and in projects that stimulate the local economy, which stimulates the national economy, and the whole country is better off for it.

•(1205)

[Translation]

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for York South—Weston.

The Budget

First, I would like to point out how honoured I am to be able to talk about the historic budget tabled by the government on March 22. I am proud that this budget reflects the hopes and expectations not just of the people in my riding of Vaudreuil—Soulanges, but of many Canadians across the country.

When I was elected to represent Vaudreuil—Soulanges, I promised to help seniors, because they played a part in building our great nation. I promised to help the middle class because theirs is the typical Canadian success story. Finally, I promised to help all families who are working hard to become part of the middle class.

As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister for Youth, and especially as a father, I made a commitment to our youth because they are our future and our legacy. They represent our hopes for the country.

In Vaudreuil—Soulanges, too many seniors need help. Even though they worked hard all their lives to contribute to the success of our country by building our cities and communities brick by brick, business by business, many of them cannot live with dignity and are not proud of their current standard of living.

Given the contributions they have made to Canada's prosperity, we recognized in the budget that we must guarantee that seniors no longer need to lie awake at night worrying about whether their retirement plan is viable.

[English]

I am proud of the fact that we are responding to the needs of our seniors in numerous ways. First, as promised during the election campaign, we would increase the guaranteed income supplement of our most vulnerable seniors by 10%, ensuring that those who worry for their future may no longer have to do so. However, we did not stop there. We realize that increasing income every two, four, or even six years may not always be adequate, as staples for seniors, such as medications, certain foods, and other expenses including transportation are subject to rising costs and fluctuations in the global market. This poses an unnecessary risk to the security of our seniors.

Our government is committed to ensuring that old age security and guaranteed income supplement benefits keep pace with the actual cost of living faced by seniors. The government is therefore looking at how a new seniors price index that reflects the cost of living faced by seniors could be developed. If deemed viable, this idea could ensure that, when seniors receive their monthly support, they would no longer have to ask if it will be enough.

We have also kept our promise to ensure that income splitting for seniors is kept in place. We recognize this as a valuable financial tool for countless seniors across our country. Further, this budget would significantly increase investment for social and affordable housing as part of the new infrastructure investment strategy. After Canada's seniors built this country, I believe this budget recognizes that they are owed a life of dignity and a life they deserve.

All of these investments would benefit the seniors all across Canada as well as in my riding, and so I am proud to support them in this budget.

[Translation]

In Vaudreuil—Soulanges, from Île-Perrot to Rigaud, and from Vaudreuil to Saint-Lazare and Hudson, I see small business owners, teachers from many schools in the region, firefighters, aerospace workers, public servants, and particularly parents, who are working harder than ever to build a good life for themselves and their children.

They are our country's middle class. However, many of them worry that they will never manage to make ends meet. I am therefore proud that we have taken the first steps toward changing that.

Just 35 days after we took office, we lowered taxes for nine million Canadians. Along with that, there is the new and more progressive Canada child tax benefit, which will put more money in the pockets of nine out of 10 Canadian families.

According to the parliamentary budget officer, this measure will lift 300,000 young people out of poverty. One in five Canadian children lives in poverty. That is unacceptable, and I am proud that we are taking action.

In my riding alone, hundreds of children go to school in the morning on an empty stomach.

● (1210)

Some needs are being met thanks to the extraordinary work of community organizations, but these organizations cannot do it alone. They need a government ally, and this budget ensures they have found one. We have helped the middle class and those working hard to join it. We are giving Canadians the financial security they need to raise their families, help grow our economy, and build their lives.

Although Canadian parents are working harder than ever these days, government assistance no longer takes into account the needs of our young people. It is becoming more and more difficult for them to find work. Today, I can finally confirm with pride that our government is going to help young people to find their path.

We are increasing Canada student grant amounts for low-income students. This investment will give thousands of students access to the classrooms of our best universities and colleges and help them build a real future for themselves.

Furthermore, in order to lessen the impact of student debt, we will ensure that recent graduates will not have to repay their loan until they are earning at least \$25,000 per year. To give our young people the professional experience they need to break into the job market, we are investing more than \$300 million in the Canada summer jobs program. This will create an additional 35,000 summer jobs for young people, every year, for the next three years.

Although these investments show a clear commitment to our young people, they also show that we are committed to all Canadians. All young people have a chance to succeed, and their success will strengthen the new middle class; this will in turn help our seniors and make Canada stronger for everyone.

The Budget

[English]

Our budget also considers the Canada we are going to leave behind. With new and historic investments in infrastructure and in Canada's environment, this budget shows the commitment that this government has to the literal foundations of our country and to our long-term prosperity. Our infrastructure investment strategy will serve to work with provinces and local communities to build and develop new projects where they are needed most.

In my riding, one of the main concerns raised with me is that our current public transportation infrastructure is insufficient to keep up with the fast growing pace of our community. This echoes the concerns of far too many Canadians in communities across the country. Through consultation and input from people who are affected by our decisions in Ottawa, federal funding will be less of a roadblock to action in increasing our collective potential for growth, development, and long-term success. Through unprecedented investment in infrastructure, including public transportation, much-needed and overdue projects that will improve the lives of Canadians will finally be realized.

Finally, I would like to speak to what the budget would do to ensure a cleaner, healthier environment and to protect the rightful legacy of future generations.

As part of our plan to modernize the way we go to work and move around our communities while also reducing emissions, we have announced \$3.4 billion over the next three years in public transit.

To ensure that we are building the communities of tomorrow that are smarter, more efficient, and more sustainable, we are investing \$5 billion over the next five years in green infrastructure, including investments in water infrastructure and electric vehicle charging stations.

Further, my constituents have worried for years about the potential hazards posed by oil being transported through their neighbourhoods and backyards without a well-funded, thorough, and transparent environmental impact assessment process in place. Modernizing the National Energy Board and following through on our pledge to strengthen and reform the environmental assessment process with an investment of \$30 million is something that is strongly supported by my constituents.

Budget 2016 is also about investing in new technologies that will take key steps toward our country playing a leading role in efficient and clean innovation. With our investment of \$400 million over two years, we will create strong Canadian green tech companies and create good paying jobs for Canadians.

● (1215)

[Translation]

I took this opportunity to rise in the House and speak to the budget, on behalf of the people of Vaudreuil—Soulanges. With this budget, this government has expressed loud and clear that Canada's greatest asset is, without a doubt, its people: our seniors, our young people, our middle class, and those who are working hard to join the middle class. By investing in them, in our communities, and in our future, we are ensuring that our country will flourish.

[English]

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is throwing around words, saying that it has followed through with its promises. What we see is a string of broken promises. It misled Canadians during its campaign by saying that it had a plan.

The Liberals like to point out the promises they think they have followed through on, but going through their budget, some key areas are missing, some of the things that resonate for Canadians from coast to coast. One is that the government campaigned on a promise to invest \$3 billion over the next four years to deliver more and better home care services for all Canadians, palliative care for all Canadians who are facing terminal illnesses and challenges within their end of days and, indeed, some of our seniors.

Is this something that was merely overlooked, or is this not important for the government?

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Mr. Speaker, when we looked at the budget, we considered how we could help the most vulnerable seniors living across the country. We felt strongly about ensuring money was in the budget to invest in social housing for those seniors who needed it most.

Over a quarter of a million Canadians took part in our budget consultations across the country. They made their priorities very clear to us and we incorporated those priorities into this budget.

We are very confident with this budget, and we are doing right by our seniors.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague, who represents the riding next to mine, and whose path crosses mine from time to time, said that the Liberal budget included a lot of investments for seniors.

However, in the budget that was tabled, there is next to nothing for home care. The Liberals announced that they would spend \$3 billion to help seniors, but that is not reflected in the budget. There is nothing about federal transfers either, which is what would help the aging population in Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Salaberry—Suroît, and across Canada.

However, it looks like there will be \$36 billion less in our health system, which means that it will be harder for seniors and everyone else to access the health care system.

I am the NDP youth critic, and all of the youth groups that come to see me want to talk about unpaid internships. There are 150,000 to 300,000 unpaid internships across Canada, which means that unpaid internships will affect this generation more than any other. These are good jobs that young people cannot really benefit from because they are unpaid. The Liberals are not tackling this problem either.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Salaberry—Suroît.

The Budget

To answer her question regarding what we are doing, we are investing in the future of our young people to help them find jobs. We want to invest so that young people who are struggling to go to school because of their financial needs or because they have no money can actually go to school. We are increasing the student grants available to young people so that they can attend college or university and find a job in order to fulfill their dreams.

We also invested an extra \$300 million to double the number of positions available through the Canada summer jobs program, in order to ensure that young people can find work and avoid being forced into an unpaid position because they cannot find a paying job.

We are investing in our young people. That is precisely what we are doing with this budget.

• (1220)

[English]

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have spoken. When a budget is viewed over 70% favourable, that should tell the party opposite something.

Do cuts lead to prosperity? No, they do not. We have seen what cuts over the past 10 years have done to our country. They have hurt our families and people living in poverty, first nations, veterans.

Canadians were ready for a budget that delivered for all Canadians. I am particularly proud of the Canada child benefit, which is transformational. What does my colleague think about the Canada child benefit and how will it be transformational for his riding?

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Mr. Speaker, the Canada child benefit will be transformational in what it will do for young people and their future in our country.

My hon. colleague asked me what it would do for young people. I stand here today as the son of a single mom who raised my brother and I on a secretary's salary for 24 years. The reason I am here today is because our social system, the Government of Canada, the governments of various provinces across the country, gives young people with little or no hope, the ones who are at the bottom, who dream of better things, that foundation from which to grow their lives. I used that to go to university, get an education and find a good job. I am now sitting in this chair, coming from where I came.

That is the kind of future I hope for every single young Canadian who is thinking about a better life, and every parent who is hoping for a better life. They will benefit from this program.

Mr. Ahmed Hussien (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking the people of York—South Weston for the trust and support they have shown me. I intend to honour that trust with hard work and a commitment to be the voice of the community in Ottawa and the champion for all the issues that matter to them.

I also want to thank my family, my campaign team, and supporters for all their hard work and support, as well as their belief in my vision of bringing a new generation of leadership to York—South Weston. I remain deeply grateful to all of them.

Our government recently tabled the federal budget 2016, restoring hope for the middle class. The budget puts people first. People in

communities such as York—South Weston will benefit from our government's investments to boost the economy and create jobs. By carrying out these investments, the budget will deliver the help Canadians need right now. It is also about our government's sustained and strategic effort to restore optimism and prosperity to our country. Our government believes that we must do more to help Canadians prosper.

I am proud of the fact that we have cut taxes for the middle class. Since January 1, 2016, roughly nine million Canadians have seen more money in their pockets. In addition to this, our government has introduced the new Canada child benefit, a plan to help families and lift hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty. For example, a single mother earning \$30,000 a year with one child under the age of six will receive an annual benefit of \$6,400 tax-free. A family earning \$90,000 with two children will receive \$5,650, an increase of \$2,500 from the current system. The Canada child benefit will be simpler, tax-free, better targeted to those who need it the most, and much more generous.

Budget 2016 has a big role for infrastructure. Our plan to invest in new roads and bridges will help Canadians move goods and services faster. Investing in waste-water treatment plants, sewers, and water mains ensures the safety and integrity of our water system. Our plan to invest in social housing will ensure that Canadians have access to affordable homes. Our record investment in mass transit will ensure that there is much less congestion in communities like York—South Weston, and will allow Canadians to spend less time commuting to school or work.

Budget 2016 includes a historic plan to invest more than \$120 billion in infrastructure over the next 10 years. Phase one of the plan includes \$3.4 billion over three years for a public transit infrastructure fund, and \$5 billion over five years to invest in water, waste-water, and green infrastructure projects across Canada. Phase two of our plan will deliver on the remaining eight years of the government's long-term infrastructure plan to invest more than \$120 billion over 10 years in transit, green, and social infrastructure.

In addition to this new funding announced in 2016, our government will continue to make available approximately \$3 billion each year in dedicated funding for municipal governments and infrastructure projects through the gas tax fund and the incremental goods and services tax rebate for municipalities.

The Budget

Budget 2016 is also about stronger communities. My government will make significant investments totalling \$1.5 billion over two years in order to create access to safe, adequate, and affordable housing, including shelters for victims of violence. My government will also support the construction of up to 4,000 new affordable housing rental units through an investment of \$208.3 million over five years. The government will also provide up to \$500 million in loans each year for five years.

Finally, for stronger communities, our government will support the establishment of a national framework on early learning and child care through a proposed initial investment of \$500 million in 2017-18, recognizing the deep connection between child care and the economic security of families.

• (1225)

When it comes to young people, as I continue my work in York South—Weston, I have been approached by many young people who are worried about access to jobs and the affordability of post-secondary education. I am proud to say that our government has listened to these concerns by raising the Canada student grant by 50%, from \$2,000 to \$3,000 per year for students from low-income families, and from \$800 to \$1,200 per year for students from middle-income families. These measures will provide assistance of \$1.53 billion over five years, starting this year. To help these students gain valuable work experience, we will create up to 35,000 additional jobs for young Canadians in each of the next three years under the Canada summer jobs program.

Young people will have access to a regime of expanded eligibility for Canada student grants to help even more students receive non-repayable assistance through an investment of \$790 million over four years starting in 2017-18. We will increase the loan repayment threshold under the current Canada student loans program's repayment assistance plan to ensure that no students will have to repay their Canada student loans until they are earning at least \$25,000 per year. This measure will provide assistance of \$131.4 million over five years starting this year.

In addition to this, budget 2016 is about creating employment opportunities for youth through an investment of an additional \$165.4 million this year for the youth employment strategy. Budget 2016 also helps young Canadians to gain valuable work and life experience through an investment of \$105 million over five years to support youth services.

I am proud to say that our budget includes support for new co-op placements and work-integrated learning opportunities for young Canadians through an investment of \$73 million over four years starting in 2016-17 for the post-secondary industry partnership and co-operative placement initiative.

Seniors in communities such as York South—Weston have been concerned about their living costs. To address this, I am proud to say that our government will increase the guaranteed income supplement top-up benefit for single seniors to help lift low-income seniors out of poverty. The government will also provide support for low-income seniors by introducing legislative changes so that couples who receive GIS and allowance benefits and have to live apart for reasons beyond their control will receive higher benefits based on their individual incomes.

In conclusion, I know that the people of York South—Weston will benefit greatly from our government's budget 2016, which contains investments to help Canadians now by boosting the economy and creating jobs, as well as making the necessary long-term investments to ensure prosperity for all. Our middle-class tax cut has already ensured that roughly nine million people have already seen more money in their pockets. Our Canada child benefit will mean that nine out of ten families will get more help than they do under existing programs. Our infrastructure plan will invest in new roads and bridges to enable Canadians to move goods and services faster. Our record investment in mass transit will ensure that there is much less congestion in communities like York South—Weston. We will help students and seniors and we will ensure that Canadians can prosper today and tomorrow.

• (1230)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many members have spoken already, and on that side of the House they have focused on the spending side of things, how much they are spending and what they are spending on. It is easy because they are spending so much they can pick and choose what they would like to talk about.

However, I want to talk about fiscal anchors and how important they are to public budgeting. On page 53 of the budget, it says, "Repealing the Federal Balanced Budget Act". In fact, the government does not talk about amending it. The Liberals are going full out and eliminating any fiscal anchors that we used to have.

Fiscal anchors ensure that when budgeting, the government is going to return to a balanced budget some day to pay off that debt and it is planning for it. In this budget document, there is no such section and the government does not talk about it at all. All the Liberals really talk about is how much they are spending.

I would like the member to comment on that. Does his government have a plan to reduce the deficit to zero and start paying down the national debt, and if so, when?

Mr. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by saying that our government understands one key point: Canadians need help now. Canadians need their government to step forward and assist them, and that is what we have done. We have listened to Canadians and we have put together a plan that makes the necessary investments for prosperity today and tomorrow. We are investing in infrastructure and innovation, making sure that families have more money in their pockets and students have better access to post-secondary education, making the necessary long-term investments in the environment and moving toward clean technologies. These are necessary things to do, and they are what Canadians have asked our government to do.

The Budget

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what really shocked me in the budget was the lack of mention of the importance of health care, particularly the issue of palliative care. The current Prime Minister stood in the House and voted for a national palliative care strategy, and then did not deliver.

We are on the eve of the Liberal government bringing in right-to-die legislation so that people will be able to terminate their lives in any jurisdiction in the country, but they will not have access to quality palliative care. That is an oversight and a lack of willingness to ensure that the most vulnerable in society are given the support they need.

I want to ask my colleague why the government has not followed through on the call from Parliament to work with the provinces and territories to establish a proper palliative care strategy and to ensure that people who require health care in the federal system, such as veterans, the military, prisoners, and particularly indigenous people, have access to quality palliative care. There are zero dollars for that. How can the Liberals justify overlooking that important issue for Canadians?

Mr. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond by stating that our government intends to take the lead on health care and exercise the traditional role of the federal government to provide that leadership. We are committed to having discussions with provincial and territorial governments on all aspects of health care, which includes palliative care. I am proud to say that this is a government that will move forward on health care and all aspects related to it in conjunction and consultation with the provinces and territories. We will provide the necessary leadership that the federal government traditionally does with respect to health care.

• (1235)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask the member to comment on the Canada child benefit program.

Many in the House are saying that one could almost draw a comparison between this program and what Liberal administrations have done previously with regard to health care services. This is a policy shift which I believe ultimately will lift literally hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty and allow for a better quality of life for them. In the long term, if we continue in the direction we are going, this will, in fact, become a treasured program, something that was initiated in this budget, a commitment to children in every region of this country.

I wonder if the member would comment on the significance of this particular program and what the Prime Minister and the government have been able to accomplish for children in such a short period of time.

Mr. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the Canada child benefit that our government has instituted. It really simplifies life for families.

First, it is one benefit as opposed to three, so families will receive one payment every month. Second, it is tax-free, which means there will be more money in the pockets of families. Third, it is better targeted toward those who need it the most. This means that those

who are very well off and do not need this benefit will not get cheques in the mail. The savings from that will be better targeted to those who need it the most.

Finally, the Canada child benefit is much more generous than existing programs. This benefit, in and of itself, will ensure that hundreds of thousands of children will be lifted out of poverty.

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Minister of Science, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Lac-Saint-Louis.

I am happy to participate in the debate on budget 2016.

Our government believes in the importance of scientific knowledge to create a better society. Science plays a central role in a thriving clean economy and in providing evidence for sound policy decisions.

[*Translation*]

Support for science is an essential pillar in the Canadian government's strategy to create sustainable economic growth.

[*English*]

Science, both fundamental and applied, delivers economic, environmental, health, and social benefits. It creates jobs and opportunities and is at the heart of an innovation economy, but we know science is so much more than that.

Scientists work for a better tomorrow by making exciting discoveries, from aerospace to astronomy, from biotech to clean tech. I would argue that science matters more than ever before, because the challenges we face, such as climate change and shrinking biodiversity, are ever greater.

The government is committed to fostering scientific research and supporting the scientists who carry it out. We are committed to ensuring that sound evidence forms the basis of our investment and policy decisions.

The Prime Minister has asked me to make the creation of a chief science officer position one of my top priorities. This position will be key to ensuring that scientific analyses are considered when government makes decisions, that scientific communication is sustained across government in an effective way, and that the Canadian public has access to the science behind our decisions.

Consultations are now finished with chief science advisers in other countries, the broader scientific community, and all parliamentarians to seek input on what shape this position should take.

• (1240)

[*Translation*]

We will take the time we need to make sure that we put the appropriate mechanisms in place to do this right.

The Budget

[English]

As Minister of Science, I work diligently to support science promotion and activities to inspire the next generation of leading Canadian researchers while ensuring young Canadians have the science, technology, engineering, and math skills required for rewarding careers in the modern Canadian economy.

I will now turn to budget 2016.

I will start by underlining that this budget is very different from those of the previous decade. The government has defined a new vision in 2016: to build Canada as a centre of global innovation renowned for its science, technology, creative and entrepreneurial citizens, and globally competitive companies offering high-quality products and services. Through 2016 and 2017, the government will define a bold new plan, its innovation agenda, to achieve the vision of Canada as a centre of global innovation.

To become the innovation leaders of tomorrow, we must equip Canadians today with the skills they will need to succeed. Post-secondary and other research institutions are front-line agents in fostering science and research excellence. To ensure these facilities continue to develop highly skilled workers, scientists, and researchers and support the growth of innovative firms, budget 2016 will invest up to \$2 billion over three years in a new post-secondary institutions strategic investment fund.

Work is already under way, in consultation with partners, to begin projects quickly. Not only must we invest in spaces that enhance our innovative potential, but we must also invest in Canadian researchers themselves, particularly those on the cusp of new discoveries.

In Canada, this funding typically flows through the three federal granting councils. This year we will provide an additional \$95 million for these councils to support discovery research, the highest amount of new annual funding for this purpose in over a decade, and to make sure that federal support for research, including through the granting councils, is strategic and effective, we will undertake a comprehensive review of federal support for fundamental science.

[Translation]

We also want to ensure that we make the most of all the new areas of research in which Canada could excel.

[English]

For example, we will provide \$237 million to support the pan-Canadian activities of Genome Canada, \$50 million to support the world-class Perimeter Institute, and up to \$12 million for the stem cell network.

We will also support the Canadian agriculture and agri-food sector. A century of farmers and ranchers have together helped feed the nation and today help feed the world. My colleague, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, will deliver on this commitment through investments of \$30 million to support advanced research in agricultural genomics in priority areas, including on climate change, and the identification and prevention of biological threats to agriculture.

As a former scientist, I am aware of the risks posed to the health and well-being of Canadians and people around the world by a

rapidly changing climate. In the interests of preserving our natural environment, I am pleased to be working with my colleagues in the review and reform of Canada's environmental assessment process to ensure that these decisions are based on science, facts, and evidence. Budget 2016 commits \$16.5 million over three years to implementing an interim approach to a federal environmental assessment for major projects until a broader review can be undertaken.

Further to our goal of better understanding the impacts of climate change and improving our capacity to adapt to these changes, I have been mandated to work with the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard to examine the implications of climate change on Arctic marine ecosystems. Budget 2016 provides \$19 million to gather existing research and traditional knowledge of the Arctic environment and conduct new research where gaps in knowledge exist.

In order to lay the foundation for new technologies and approaches that will help Canada become a low-carbon economy, budget 2016 provides \$20 million to create two additional Canada excellence research chairs in fields related to clean and sustainable technology.

We aim to foster the emergence of a strong culture of science and innovation in Canada, one that recognizes the key role of scientific evidence in the important decisions our government makes. The measures proposed in budget 2016 will enable Canada to build upon its science and technology strengths in genomics, stem cells, brain research, and physics to support discoveries that will help to fuel economic growth and position Canada to succeed in the knowledge-based global economy.

The announced funding will flow as quickly as possible in order to reach our post-secondary institutions, researchers, and innovators.

To close, I would like to say that this is an exciting time for science and research in Canada. We are returning science to its rightful place, a place where science and scientists are respected and scientific evidence and advice are given the careful consideration they deserve.

● (1245)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the minister on her speech and on the collaborative way in which we work together on the science file so far.

The Budget

I applaud the maintaining of the funding for applied research from the granting councils, which our government put in place, and the conversion of the knowledge infrastructure fund to support post-secondary infrastructure with a view to increasing innovation and increasing jobs and I agree that we need to get better as Canadians at commercializing our innovations to create jobs, so I wonder if the minister can explain how the \$100 million announced for commercialization will be used.

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, it has been a pleasure to work with my hon. colleague.

This is really about building an innovation agenda. We will see increased support for incubators, accelerators, the emerging national network of business innovation and cluster programs, and the industrial research assistance program, IRAP. It will be \$100 million in the future. There was an \$800 million investment announced in budget 2016.

I look forward to maintaining this close working relationship. This is about working with all sides of the House and building a stronger science and innovation culture in Canada.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am curious with regard to the value of supporting research science and our research chairs and our universities when at the same time the government is cancelling a program called Auto21, which worked with the University of Windsor to provide excellent input and value-added contributions of up to \$1 billion in the auto industry and had over a decade of significant contributions for the environment, our ecosystem, and our manufacturing sector.

It is also providing a facility that is, right now, structured to provide students with the greatest opportunity in everything from greenhouse gas emissions to safety for baby seats in cars. It was a few million dollars for this program, which has contributed over \$1 billion in value-added resources and contributions. Why would the minister cancel this program?

• (1250)

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I will begin by saying that it was a pleasure to teach at the University of Windsor for seven years. I loved teaching at that university. I taught climate change, meteorology, and environment. These are very important issues to me.

I will talk a bit about some of the investments we have made in clean tech.

As I said, there will be two research chairs coming forward in clean and sustainable technology. Some of the other investments made in the budget are \$379 million for the Canadian Space Agency, \$237 million for Genome Canada, \$95 million for the granting councils, and \$50 million for the Perimeter Institute, one of the top three theoretical physics institutes in the world. We have made significant investments in universities, colleges, and polytechnics.

I will remind all members of the House that there is a strategic infrastructure program, and they should let their institutions know that the due date is May 9.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. minister for her intervention and for all the work that her department is doing on behalf of science for Canada.

As chair of the post-secondary education and innovation caucus, I am very encouraged to see the renewed focus on science and research in this budget. I wonder whether the hon. minister could comment on how these investments might contribute to Canadian scientists attending international conferences, publishing their work, sharing their work among their peers, and regaining a position that Canada had for many years up until recently.

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for co-chairing this important caucus.

This investment, particularly in the three federal granting councils, is unfettered money. Under the previous administration, we often saw that the money was tied, but this type of investment is going to allow our researchers to build bigger teams, to take on new projects, and to publish, which is so important.

I will finish by talking about the strategic infrastructure fund. This is available for the universities, colleges, and polytechnics in our ridings. The due date is May 9, and we hope the members will share this good information with the institutions in their ridings, because \$2 billion is available.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the budget is a document that is both nuanced and comprehensive. It implements many election promises that, taken together, constitute the economic vision that the Liberal Party laid out during the election campaign and that earned the confidence of Canadians on October 19.

In fact, the budget plays a dual role. It focuses on the immediate needs of today's economy, as well as the challenges that we must address in the longer term if we want to make a better future for our children and our grandchildren.

The budget addresses the needs of our times, this economic period where growth has been slow for far too long. It addresses the increasingly pressing need to lay the foundation to increase the longer-term productivity of our Canadian industries. Without that, we will not really be able to support and encourage the strong growth we need in the coming years to create the necessary tax revenue for funding the social programs that are so dear to us and are often at the very heart of our Canadian identity.

In addition to the temporal aspect of the budget, there is the fact that it is multifaceted because of an insightful and wise acknowledgement that the economy is complex and composed of diverse and related elements and that we must act on different fronts simultaneously to create the growth that will allow each and every one of us to prosper with dignity and to have a good quality of life.

The Budget

The budget recognizes, for example, that we must look after the economy and the environment at the same time. We have to ensure that our businesses are healthy and also protect the well-being of our children. We need major infrastructure, such as efficient public transit networks, but also meeting places where people can get together for socialization and recreation and to talk to, support, and help one another.

We have to innovate with new technologies and products brought to market, but we must also provide our university researchers with the means to explore these concepts that are sometimes still in the early stages and whose practical application and economic viability are still unknown.

In short, its comprehensive vision truly makes this a Liberal budget.

• (1255)

[English]

There has been much talk about the deficit. No one really wants deficits as a matter of ideology, at least not on this side of the House. In fact, as Liberals, we have been in the past elected to wrestle deficits to the ground.

However, there is a time when deficits are helpful on a short-term basis to stabilize the economy, build the confidence of consumers, businesses and investors and sow the seeds of future growth, and Canadians have determined that this time is now.

The need to invest in Canada's future, even at the cost of modest deficits, was not only endorsed by Canadians in the last election. The idea is reverberating in other developed nations as they come to realize that monetary policy has come up against its limitations, and cannot by itself move the economy out of its current doldrums.

No lesser a Canadian business leader than Michael Sabia, hardly a promoter of socialist economic fantasies, has said that it is time "to focus on the real economy", as opposed to the monetary economy only.

Bank of Canada Governor Stephen Poloz has recently said that he is putting off further monetary easing, namely through further interest rate cuts, until he evaluates the extent of the fiscal stimulus coming from the federal government.

David Watt, chief economist at HSBC Canada, as per an article in *The Globe and Mail* of March 12, said:

What we need is more of a change in perception of where we want the economy to go and set the stage for not just government, but for the private sector to start creating jobs...The private sector doesn't have confidence to start adding jobs and that's what we need.

What he is saying is that the previous government after 10 years did not create that confidence.

This budget, both subtle in design and forward-looking and comprehensive in scope, will achieve dual results. It will create jobs in the short term by investing in projects to renew Canada's social, green, and public transit infrastructures and it will also spur confidence in the future by acting today to create the conditions needed to support growth in the years ahead.

According to *The Economist* in its February 20 issue:

The good news is that...Plenty of policies are left, and all can pack a punch. The bad news is that central banks will need help from governments. Until now, central bankers have had to do the heavy lifting because politicians have been...reluctant to share the burden. At least some of them have failed to grasp the need to have fiscal and monetary policy operating in concert. Indeed, many governments actively worked against monetary stimulus by embracing austerity.

I would add that the previous government was repeatedly criticized specifically for pursuing an inherently self-contradictory economic policy.

The Economist goes on to say:

Bond markets and rating agencies will look more kindly on the increase in public debt if there are fresh and productive assets on the other side of the balance sheet. Above all, such assets should involve infrastructure...

In line with this prediction by one of the world's most reputable publications read by leaders and finance ministers around the world, on March 30 *The Globe and Mail* ran the following heading, "Investors, rating agencies see Liberal deficit plan as manageable".

The Conservatives believe in markets and market signals. They sometimes even elevate markets to the status of religion and attribute magical powers to markets to solve a whole range of problems that are not necessarily economic in nature.

The financial markets are speaking to the Conservatives right now. Moody's Investors Service's vice-president Steven Hess has said that the deficit is not large as a share of the economy and that the federal debt-to-GDP ratio is low by international standards.

David Madani of Capital Economics has said, "the market's 'shrug' is hardly a surprise because the risk that the budget's projected deficits would trigger a surge in Ottawa's borrowing costs 'is practically zero'."

To the foregoing I would reference another headline in *The Globe and Mail*, on March 3, "Big banks urge Ottawa to spend \$20-billion in rapid stimulus".

This is a finely designed budget that focuses on real problems. That is what Canadians wanted and that is what Canadians were expecting.

One of my policy interests is water. I am proud to say that for the first time in as long as I can remember in this House a budget is giving a specific priority to water namely, water filtration and waste water infrastructure. As announced in the budget, there will be \$5 billion for green infrastructure of which a large amount will be for water and waste water infrastructure.

Water is becoming a greater priority for Canadians not only because of the impact of climate change on water supplies, but because Canadians are becoming more concerned with the quality of the water in their ecosystem. We have seen this repeatedly with a number of issues. This budget takes a step in the right direction in making water a priority of public policy at the federal level.

The budget is a step in the right direction. There will be more to come in the years to come throughout this mandate. This Liberal government acted quickly to implement a good number of the promises that were discussed in the election campaign and that Canadians resoundingly supported.

The Budget

• (1300)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned *The Globe and Mail*, so I am happy to bring up an editorial of March 22 in which the editorial board said, “It’s not building roads or bridges or public transit. It’s ongoing program spending, locked-in and permanent...it’s mostly about writing cheques to seniors, parents, aboriginal Canadians, the unemployed and provincial governments”, which will inevitably lead to higher debt.

In fact, the government, on page 242 annex 1 of the budget, says, “Public debt charges are projected to increase from \$25.7 billion in 2015-16 to \$35.5 billion in 2020-21...”. It also says that this reflects an increase in borrowing requirements due to a projected rise in interest rates over the forecast horizon.

The government is even admitting that it is expecting interest rates to go up. It is expecting the cost of borrowing to go up. In fact, according to its budget documents, probably the fourth-highest spending element on the program side will be debt financing.

What does the member have to say to this, that his government is basically increasing our national debt with absolutely no plan to pay it down?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, first, when we run a deficit, we increase debt. This is a truism. There is nothing surprising in that. However, it is important to look at certain important ratios, like the projected ratio of the deficit to GDP. If we look at 2015-16, it will be under 1%. If we look at 2016-17, it will be under 2%. Then by 2019-20, it will be under 1% again.

I would like the hon. member to look at the period in history that saw Conservative governments in power in Ottawa. In 1984-85, the budget deficit, as a percentage of GDP, was 8%; then 7%; then 6%. If we look at the most recent Conservative government, the deficit as a proportion of GDP was higher than we are expecting for the next few years.

I think the figures speak for themselves. Yes, when we have a deficit, we have to borrow. However, long-term interest rates are dropping, and that is a good sign for future interest payments.

• (1305)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will let the Liberals and the Conservatives decide who outspent each other and put us into more deficit and debt. However, the member made some interesting comments. One of them was that the central banks had done the heavy lifting, which is certainly not the case in the United States. In Canada, I remember the days of John Manley, then finance minister, when he tried to bring us toward Americanization of our banks and the New Democrats advocated to keep our banks from doing that. It was a very lonely battle at that.

However, I want to specifically deal with the member's comments with regard to water treatment facilities and improving our fresh water drinking supply, and I commend him for that.

Yesterday I asked a question in the House of Commons which was very germane to this issue. I mentioned that 40 million water drinkers and the ecosystem were at risk because the Liberal government was considering allowing nuclear waste to be stored for up to 100,000 years within less than a kilometre of the Great

Lakes. This is opposed by a number of different Democrats and Republicans in the Congress and also in the Senate where they have legislation against this. We also have a letter from our then foreign affairs minister, Mr. Joe Clark, who was an excellent Canadian contributor to all political respects. He opposed the U.S. doing this and it agreed with those terms.

Does the member support putting nuclear waste within a kilometre if the Great Lakes system when there have only been tests done three times in history, with the most recent resulting in a fire and spewing radiation?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, the question is not really about the budget, but I appreciate the hon. member's interest in water issues as well.

I have been speaking to people in that community and learning about the issue. I know evaluations and studies have been done. I also know that the Minister of Environment and Climate Change is looking at the issue. It is a big decision, and I have faith in her ability to do the right thing.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix.

I rise in the House today to speak to the Liberal government's proposed budget or, as I like to call it, the government's line of credit plan, which aims to withdraw a whopping \$113 billion, using the future of hard-working Canadians as collateral.

Members probably realize that I am no big fan of the budget. I would like to take a few minutes to explain in detail the various problems in budget 2016, which is mislabelled as “Growing the Middle Class”.

For starters, it is clear the budget does not grow the middle class; it only grows the debt of the middle class. Why is that? It is because the budget is the Liberal's plan to run a projected \$29.4 billion deficit this year alone. That is right, nearly \$30 billion. That is \$20 billion more than the Liberal's campaign promise of running, in the wise words of a certain hon. member of the House, “a teeny-tiny little deficit of \$10 billion”.

The budget contains undisciplined spending, has no plan to balance the books, will fail to boost economic growth, and will raise taxes on families, individuals, and corporations. The Conservative Party of Canada does not stand for this, and neither do I.

The bottom line is that over the next five years, Canada will borrow \$113 billion, with little to show for it except a raging debt hangover. That is \$4,300 for every taxpaying Canadian. The only good thing about having so many Liberals on that side of the floor is that they will be on the hook for a larger percentage of this than our side.

The Budget

The government is quickly becoming known as one that has misled Canadians on many election promises. These are promises that it obviously had no intention of keeping. It is not just the modest \$10-billion deficit promise that the Liberal government has broken with the budget. It has broken its promise to return to a balanced budget within a term, and it has broken the promise to reduce the debt-to-GDP ratio to below current levels in this term.

The Liberal government is selling the new budget as a plan to boost and grow the economy. Unfortunately, budget 2016 has zero plans to make this sales pitch a reality. I would like to point to the most infamous part of the budget, something that the Prime Minister himself tried to sell during the previous election: infrastructure.

The budget allocates \$11.9 billion towards what the government calls infrastructure. Unfortunately, only a small minority, \$3.4 billion, over 3 years no less, is allocated to improving transit systems across Canada, the hallmark infrastructure investment that the government promised in the recent election. That is \$3.4 billion over three years across the entire country, to build subways, LRT lines, and expand and improve other modes of transportation. What a shame, especially when we consider that much of this funding had already been promised under our previous government. The cost of the proposed 32-kilometre expansion of the Toronto subway system, for example, rings in at \$9 billion. Even if the government were to fund only one-third of the cost, not the half that it was promising, it would deplete nearly all of the funds allocated for public transit expansion infrastructure. The rest of the country would see virtually nothing for their transit systems.

Staying on the topic of infrastructure fairness for Canadians, it disappoints me to see the allocation of infrastructure spending across the country in budget 2016. My home province of Alberta is only set to receive \$347 million for public transit expansion over the next two years, which is 10% of the amount of funds available. Yet, Alberta holds 12% of Canada's population, leaving Alberta underfunded 13% on a per capita basis. I shudder to think what would happen if we were not fortunate enough to have the Minister of Infrastructure himself in Alberta.

Meanwhile, Ontario is set to receive \$1.5 billion for public transit expansion. That is 44% of the total funds available, yet it has 38% of the country's population. Quebec is to receive 27% of the funds, yet it holds just 23% of the population.

This means that Albertans will see significant delays in projects like the Edmonton LRT extension and the Calgary CTrain long-term extension, as federal funding for these projects will fall far short of the needed financing. Clearly, fairness is not of importance to the Liberal government. In fact, I brought up this exact point a couple of weeks ago, right after this very budget was tabled in the House.

The budget claims to extend employment insurance benefits to areas across the country that are facing economic hardship. However, the problem with the EI extension plan is that the Liberal government is omitting certain areas of the country that are being significantly impacted by an economic downturn. Take, for example, my hometown of Edmonton. It is a well known that the entire province of Alberta is currently facing a severe economic downturn, a slowdown made worse by the government's poisoned attitude towards pipelines.

●(1310)

As members know, the energy sector is what drives Alberta's economy and many other industries throughout the province. Construction, mechanics, tourism, housing, and the service industry all rely on the wealth and growth of the energy sector. They are industries that are under stress right now.

Yet, as the energy sector has largely slowed down, leading to thousands of layoffs in Alberta, the city of Edmonton has been excluded from this government's EI extension plan. Why? It is because the government says that the statistical unemployment rate in Edmonton capital region is too low for the government's standards. However, what the government does not seem to understand is that the Edmonton region employment sector is dominated by government employment, and this artificially lowers the region's unemployment number in comparison to other regions. While it is great to see that the unemployment rate in the Edmonton capital region is lower than the rest of Alberta, it does not mean that there are not thousands of laid-off employees in an area that has been hit hard by the collapse in the energy sector.

Our own Edmonton Liberal MPs have been missing in action when it comes to speaking up for unemployed people in Edmonton. Tellingly, the Liberal member for Edmonton Centre himself commented that Edmonton was snubbed because it has not felt the same dramatic jump in unemployment as other parts of Canada.

In April of 2015, unemployment in Edmonton was 5.8%. Today Edmonton's unemployment rate is 6.9%, which is a 19% jump in one year. Yet the Liberal government is waiting for a dramatic increase to happen before assisting laid-off Edmontonians. A 19% increase in unemployment in one year is the cold hard mathematics that the Prime Minister speaks of but does not seem to understand. However, what is not cold hard math is that these are real people who are suffering. They are not mere numbers but real people. I guess the Liberal mantra of "a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian" does not apply if one is from Edmonton or has the wrong postal code.

I wrote to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour about this issue, voicing the concerns of our constituents. While I hope the minister will take this into consideration, I also hope that the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister will take into consideration the grave consequences of the debt of this budget.

The fact remains that the Liberals are on a spending spree, with absolutely no plan for paying back the tens of billions of borrowed dollars. However, what is clear is that today's debt will have to be paid by tomorrow's taxpayers, which means our children, grandchildren, and their children will have to pay for the spending being proposed in this budget.

I, as a responsible individual, cannot in good conscience support a budget that does this. I cannot agree to indebting our children. It is unjust, unfair, and simply un-Canadian. We ought to be paving the way forward for the next generation, making life better for them, and not indebting them with billions upon billions of dollars of debt.

It is for these reasons that I will not be supporting this budget.

The Budget

• (1315)

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his passionate speech, but again I need to point out that the party opposite has a twisted view of economics and of the last 10 years.

This is a party that ran seven straight deficits. This is a party that came forth with a smokescreen surplus in the last year of its mandate by throwing in EI funds, GM stock sale funds, and then the rainy-day fund. Let me be very clear. The rainy-day fund maybe could have been used to help the province of Alberta, but the Conservatives did not.

Alberta's problems did not happen in the last five or six months; they happened over the last 10 years. Therefore, the party opposite is very responsible for the same economic position that we see today.

The member talked about mortgaging our future for our children and our grandchildren. Was it not the Conservative's former finance minister who said that Mr. Harper's grandchildren were going to have to pay for the tax-free savings account?

The Deputy Speaker: I would remind the hon. member that the right hon. member for the riding of Calgary Heritage remains a member of this House, and we do not use the proper names of other hon. members.

The hon. member for Edmonton West.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, it is important to revisit the member's comments.

If you go back in time, I think you will remember that it was your party that teamed up with the separatist Bloc Québécois and the NDP, and the coalition demanded an immediate \$50-billion deficit. This was during the worst economic period since the Great Depression. We are not in a great economic recession. The economy is actually growing now. It is mind-boggling that the member would compare massive irresponsible deficit spending during a time of economic growth with a time of great collapse.

With regard to your comment about Alberta, I would point out the Conservative's support for the province of Alberta. In the last 10 years of a Conservative government, there was \$3.4 billion of infrastructure spending. Let us go back 10 years to the Liberal era. I have to put my reading glasses on because the number is so small. There was \$351 million for Alberta. Therefore, do not sit over there and lecture me on supporting my home province.

The Deputy Speaker: I would remind the hon. member to address his comments and responses, all remarks in fact in the House, to the Chair.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan.

• (1320)

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Edmonton West for his remarks. It has been a pleasure working with him on the government operations committee.

He is quite right to point to the hard economic times in Edmonton and that his city is very deserving of being included in the budget's extension of employment insurance benefits. Things are even worse

in my province of Saskatchewan, which is not benefiting from the progressive policies of Rachel Notley's government. The last labour force survey from Statistics Canada showed that full-time employment in Saskatchewan had fallen by 2.4% over the past year, the largest drop of any province west of Prince Edward Island.

I wonder if the member for Edmonton West would agree that Regina and southern Saskatchewan also need to be included in the budget's extension of employment insurance benefits.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Regina—Lewvan for his question. I hope he enjoyed a wonderful week in Edmonton, my hometown, recently.

I agree with him that the EI policy needs to be reviewed for Regina as well. The region includes a lot of hard-hit oil areas, and it is disgraceful that the Liberal government is not addressing this issue.

I will take offence to his comments about our colleague Rachel Notley. I think she is more of a hindrance than a help in Alberta, but I fully agree with my colleague that there needs to be more for Regina and the hard-hit people in that region as well.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege of rising in the House to speak to the budget.

On March 22, I listened carefully as the Minister of Finance presented this government's budget. The Liberals are using a line of credit without worrying about the limit. This is a far cry from their election promise to borrow a modest sum of \$10 billion a year, which was completely ridiculous, in my opinion. That amount was set aside and replaced with an amount of no less than \$30 billion for this year alone.

I am wondering whether Canadians think that a deficit of over \$100 billion over four years is a modest deficit.

What is more, I was not at all surprised to learn that the Liberals had no plan to return to a balanced budget. That term has been deleted from the Liberal dictionary. The Liberals are promising to put our country into debt, but they have not presented any sort of plan or approach for putting an end to this spending spree.

Since we are debating the budget, I would like to remind the House that government budgets involve spending other people's money. The government members, on the other side of the House, seem to have all too easily forgotten that.

It seems as though the Minister of Finance closed his eyes, took a shot, and hoped to hit as many targets as possible. This is an unfocused, directionless budget.

The budget does not have a plan for how and when to return to a balanced budget. However, the government will make up the difference by increasing taxes for families, young people, and businesses.

This government should take some more time to think about the families in our ridings that are having a hard time making ends meet, paying their mortgages, and paying their grocery and other bills.

The Budget

Families are already footing the bill for the Liberals' spending promises through increases in the costs associated with enrolling children in sports, arts programs, and post-secondary studies.

The Liberals abolished income splitting, the children's fitness tax credit, the children's arts tax credit, and the post-secondary education and textbook tax credits. While the Liberals are busy spending other people's money, it is easy for them to forget that they have access to all of this money as a result of the former Conservative government's policies, not their own.

We implemented targeted stimulus programs to help create and maintain about 200,000 jobs. We kept our promise to balance the budget, and we left the Liberals a \$3.2-billion surplus. We lowered taxes to the lowest rates in 50 years and we put more money back into Canadians' pockets, while at the same time balancing the budget.

Unfortunately, instead of focusing on lowering taxes for Canadian families, this government is playing politics with family benefits. On top of that, the Liberal government will force the provinces to charge a national carbon tax that will cost Canadian families about \$1,000 a year. This government is not helping to grow the middle class, and Canadian families will once again pay the price.

I also noticed that this reckless budget plan will only make government bigger and will do nothing to create jobs. There is nothing to help unemployed Canadians get back to work.

Small and medium-sized businesses are the pillars of our society and our economy, but there are no measures here to help them diversify or grow. These are the businesses that create jobs, and that is what Canadians really need right now. Those same businesses will have to foot the bill for the Liberals' spending spree.

• (1325)

During the campaign, the Liberals promised to cut small business taxes from 11% to 9%. Unfortunately, they got rid of that tax cut. The Minister of Small Business and Tourism even said that she would work closely with the Minister of Finance to keep their promise to reduce the small business tax burden.

The small business tax cut was undeniably a Liberal election platform promise in 2015. That promise was broken, as was the promise to cap the deficit at \$10 billion.

Stability enables businesses to prosper. Budget 2016 means that the only thing businesses can be sure of is fiscal uncertainty. These businesses are important to our regions. It is clear to me that the government has completely abandoned them in this budget. There are precious few measures to foster job creation and development.

The government decided to build on the work of the previous government, our government, to renew the broadband connection program to promote digital access, but that is the only ray of hope here for our regions.

Here is an example of an initiative currently under way in my area. It is critical for the survival of our small businesses to make citizens aware of the impact of choosing to do their shopping close to home.

In my riding, in the Charlevoix area, there is currently a buy-local campaign, aimed at supporting our small and large businesses. I strongly support this campaign, because its goal is to boost our businesses with small, concrete measures, in order to preserve our stores close to home. It is this kind of initiative that we should encourage, in order to promote regional development. This is a good example to give the Liberal government.

The government has done away with aid to the regions of Quebec and Canada. It has failed to make the necessary effort to ensure the vitality of our regions, which are the economic heart of our country.

Unfortunately, it is not the only sector that the government has abandoned. With regard to official languages and la Francophonie, I am very disappointed in the government's budget. There are no concrete measures to strengthen francophone and anglophone minority communities. In a country like ours, promoting bilingualism is important. I am disappointed that the government has turned its back on many of those communities.

In addition, as official opposition critic for la Francophonie, I was dumbfounded to see that there was no reference to Canada's francophone partners in the budget.

At the last meeting of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie in Dakar, the partners adopted a resolution recognizing the important role that the private sector must play in implementing the economic strategy for La Francophonie, especially its components dealing with promoting French as a language of work and a driver of economic growth.

It is also important to strengthen co-operation with francophone regional economic communities in order to boost regional integration, which is a driver of market expansion, economic vitality and job creation. The government's budget is a missed opportunity to pursue our commitment to la Francophonie. In my opinion, it was a good opportunity to do so.

To conclude, I would like to say that the budget ignores a number of sectors of our society, including families, small and medium-sized businesses, and official languages, despite the lovely promise of a deficit of more than \$100 billion over four years.

• (1330)

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, could my colleague tell us where she gets the idea that the Conservatives were able to generate a \$3.4-billion surplus between 2015 and 2016? If we look at the monthly figures instead of the annual figures, we can interpret them in all sorts of creative ways, but the reality is that the Conservative government's balanced budget contained a deficit of more than \$5 billion for the fiscal year. Indeed, there is only one Conservative prime minister who succeeded in eliminating a deficit and generating a surplus, and that dates back to the 19th century.

Would my colleague care to admit that, historically, the Conservatives have been chronically incapable of managing a budget?

The Budget

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Historically, the biggest spenders have always been the Liberals. We succeeded in balancing a budget, and in Mr. Flaherty, God rest his soul, we had the best minister of finance.

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech. We work together on the Standing Committee on Official Languages, and it is truly disappointing that the Liberal government did not take this opportunity to reinvest in official languages. As you know, unfortunately, the budget for the roadmap has not been indexed for more than 12 years. Funding is frozen, and it was badly needed. The organizations need it; they are hurting at the moment. It is regrettable.

I would like to speak about something else that is very important in my constituency, and that is social housing. The employees of the municipal housing authority in Drummondville came to see me and told me that there were serious needs, particularly for new social housing units for single seniors. We were expecting more than a token gesture from the government; we were expecting concrete measures. Unfortunately, there is very little information about the \$520 million over four years that was announced for the construction of new affordable rental units.

I would like to know whether the same is true in my colleague's constituency. Would she agree that social housing needs are enormous and that it is necessary to invest to improve the living conditions of the people most in need?

• (1335)

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I represent a rural constituency, but there is certainly a great need for social housing in the urban part. However, as we have seen, despite the \$30-billion deficit promised by the Liberals, nothing has been done on this issue. Families are being ignored. Our regions are being ignored. We are asking the Liberal Party, the government, not to accept the budget, because it does not measure up to what Canadians were expecting.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix. That is a long riding name.

I would like her to comment on one subject in particular. According to the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the Liberal government has saddled every Canadian with a debt of \$17,222. At the moment, the national debt is growing by about \$1 million every 30 minutes or so. The parliamentary budget officer has had difficulty getting information from this government so that he can tell us what the estimates are for the future.

What does my colleague think of the national debt that we are going to leave our children?

What does she think about the fact that the parliamentary budget officer, Jean-Denis Fréchette, has been unable to obtain information from day one on the contents of the budget to determine whether what the Liberals printed in their budget was true?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for that excellent question.

Obviously, as a grandmother, I find this debt absolutely horrendous. This is not the Canada I want to leave to my grandchildren. With the Liberal budget that was recently tabled, all of the promised transparency is nowhere to be found either.

The Liberals are mortgaging future generations without considering the fact that tomorrow it is they who will have to pay for this government's unbridled spending. Quite simply, I will be voting against this budget, because for me as a grandmother, this is not the Canada that I want for my grandson.

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to share my time with my colleague from Brampton East.

On March 22, Canadians witnessed real change with the tabling of the budget by my colleague, the Minister of Finance. As a member, a businesswoman and a person involved in my community, I can only be delighted at a budget that leaves no one behind. Seniors, families, workers, entrepreneurs, and job creators all have been presented with a budget of opportunities and above all a budget of compromise and openness. I say compromise because there is one thing we Liberals understand. We have two ears and just one mouth. As a mother of four, this is something I have often said to my children. The logic goes something like this: you have to listen twice as much as you talk. In other words, we have understood that we have to engage citizens in public affairs and listen with one ear to their concerns, but with the other to their ambitions, their dreams, and their goals for both themselves and their community. That is why the finance minister and his parliamentary secretary toured Canada from sea to sea to listen to Canadians. I want to underscore this leadership and this openness.

The choice that our government made on March 22 is thus perfectly in line with the concerns of Canadians. For my part, together with my parliamentary colleague from Thérèse-De Blainville, I held a pre-budget consultation with some 50 local stakeholders who let us know their concerns and their ambitions for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles. We welcomed their ideas and we recognize that interest rates are really low. The time has come to invest in our infrastructure, in the environment, and above all in our people.

During the election campaign, we proposed to Canadians that we invest in them. As a result, we form a majority government that knows for a fact how Canada's economic wheel turns. Its gears are the middle class. That is why we brought in a middle-class tax cut that will benefit nine million people. That is how to walk the talk. It is also important to point out that when the middle class has more money in its pockets, all the players in our economy benefit, including our small and medium-sized businesses that work hard all year long.

In my introduction, I raised a concept that is important to Canadians, just as it is to the people of Rivière-des-Mille-Îles. That is the concept of opportunity.

• (1340)

[English]

Better is always possible.

The Budget

[Translation]

That is why we are proposing a massive investment in infrastructure: \$3.4 billion in public transit and roads, \$5 billion in green infrastructure, and \$3.4 billion in social infrastructure, including affordable housing and seniors' housing.

I can confirm that this money is being very well received by the people in my riding, even though Rivière-des-Mille-Îles already has affordable housing, especially in Saint-Eustache and Deux-Montagnes. Municipal officials now feel as though they are being heard. Their concerns have been heard, and now they will have dedicated funds for the renovation and construction of social and community infrastructure. Furthermore, this infrastructure plan will enable me to complete, in co-operation with my counterparts in the Quebec National Assembly, the work on highways 13 and 19, as well as the broadening of highway 15 to include a public transit lane from Blainville to the Montmorency subway in Laval.

[English]

As a government, we note that a strong economy can go along with a better environment.

[Translation]

As I was saying, as a mother of four, I want to leave a clean environment for future generations. Therefore, starting in 2016-17, \$62.5 million will be made available to support the deployment of infrastructure for alternative transportation fuels, including charging infrastructure for electric vehicles. This measure is fully responsive to a recommendation made in the pre-budget consultation in my constituency on January 29, when local economic stakeholders made us aware of the cost of charging stations.

This is a direct measure that allows us to move forward on the electrification of transportation. After all, this is 2016.

[English]

Yes, Canada is back.

[Translation]

People will remember 2016 as the year when our colleague, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, proposed a real reform for families in Rivière-des-Mille-Îles and Canada. Budget 2016 will lift 300,000 children out of poverty thanks to a universal Canada child benefit.

It is therefore quite correct to say that this is not only a sizeable reform, but also the biggest federal social measure in a generation. In tangible terms, it will provide an average of \$2,300 more per family per year. What is more, this money will now be non-taxable.

When Canadian families have resources, the entire country does better. It is therefore not abnormal to see another major measure for seniors in budget 2016. We know that seniors were worried in the weeks leading up to the tabling of the budget.

I was able to sound out the seniors in Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, not just during the pre-budget consultations, but also when I went to meet with them. However we are proving once again that no one is being left behind in this budget. It is our responsibility to ensure that

a quality retirement is available for our seniors, who worked hard to build the Canada we have today.

I am therefore very pleased about the increase in guaranteed income supplement benefits for our seniors. Not only have we lowered the retirement age from 67 to 65, but a senior citizen living alone will receive an average of \$947 more each year. This is an important measure to ensure the financial well-being of elderly people.

I am proud of the measures in budget 2016. I am certain it will benefit the Lower Laurentians region and my constituency of Rivière-des-Mille-Îles. The families, seniors, and middle-class workers in my riding have been heard, and the budget provisions not only address their concerns, but will also restore their self-confidence.

I am very hopeful and confident regarding the people of my region, their aspirations, and their dreams. Together, we will build the Canada of tomorrow.

• (1345)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign, the Liberal Party told Canadians that a Liberal government would run a deficit of \$10 billion, but that was not true, since the deficit projected in this budget is nearly \$30 billion.

How does the government explain this large difference to the Canadian people?

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague.

Concerning the deficit, it is in fact what we were left by the Conservatives that is putting us in a difficult position with regard to our planned spending.

At present, interest rates are extremely low. Now is the time to kick-start the economy, invest in our roads, infrastructure, and affordable social housing, and help the middle class. Everyone will benefit.

[English]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the infrastructure spending that was announced, I was disappointed to see not much money for the rail infrastructure that is needed in the Windsor-Quebec corridor. There was also nothing for trade corridors and ports, like what I need in my riding of Sarnia—Lambton.

In addition, with respect to the rural Internet funding that was given, there was no detail for that. Why did this budget leave the rural and small communities out?

[Translation]

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague.

The investments that we plan to make in the regions include putting \$500 million into connectivity. Everyone will benefit, both in some parts of urban areas, which includes me, and in rural areas. In 2016, it is unacceptable for some regions not to have access to cellphone service or a high-speed Internet connection.

The Budget

If we want to help the middle class and small and medium-sized business, it is important for the entire country to have cellphone service and connectivity.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question to the member is reflecting on infrastructure in Canada.

This budget is history in the making in the sense that never before have we seen a budget that has made so much of a commitment to invest in Canada's infrastructure. By investing in Canada's infrastructure, we are adding value to the economy, not only for today but well into the future, for future generations of Canadians.

I wonder if the member might want to provide her thoughts on how important it is that government invest in infrastructure. By doing that, we are giving strength to the Canadian economy. Would the member not agree with that statement?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Clearly, this massive investment in infrastructure is a major step, especially since, as we know, interest rates are low. Some things were ignored. All levels of government need the federal government to reinvest in both municipal and provincial infrastructure. I believe the time has come to do that. It is incredible how much needs to be done in the area of green infrastructure. Affordable housing was on the back burner. It is truly an exceptional time to do that. At the same time, with regard to the electrification of transportation, it is important to act immediately, if we want to go ahead with these new energy sources.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to resuming debate, I will let the hon. member for Brampton East know that there are only about eight minutes remaining in the time provided for debate on the subamendment. We are a little short of his 10 minutes, but I will give him the usual signal, and we will need to wrap up just before two o'clock.

• (1350)

Mr. Raj Grewal (Brampton East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak to the government's first federal budget. Just last Friday, I had the opportunity to speak at a budget breakfast hosted by the Brampton Board of Trade. I got to hear first-hand from employers, innovators, and leaders in Brampton about the budget provisions that would help them most.

The residents of Brampton consistently tell me they are appreciative and supportive of the investments our government is going to make that would help middle-class Canadians succeed. These are investments that would not just help them and their families today but lay the groundwork for the success of future generations of hard-working Canadians.

My constituents elected me to serve as part of a government that would help the middle class and those who are working hard to join it. To be able to represent these priorities on behalf of the people of Brampton East is a true privilege.

I am lucky to be a member of the Standing Committee on Finance, which has kept me quite busy thus far. Recently, prior to the presentation of budget 2016, the Standing Committee on Finance undertook pre-budget consultations that were different from most, due to the timing of the fall election. With a very short timeline, over four long days, we heard from more than 92 witnesses, which included individuals, businesses, NGOs, first nation advocates, and other valued groups. We also received 172 submissions online from individuals and groups. The responses we received varied in topic, but the committee concluded its work with a report that offered 56 recommendations, many of which were included in this year's budget.

Last fall, we offered Canadians an ambitious new plan for a strong middle class and promised we would do all we could to help every Canadian succeed from coast to coast to coast. Budget 2016 is an important part of fulfilling that promise. It offers immediate help to those who need it most and lays the groundwork for sustained, inclusive, economic growth that would benefit Canada's middle class and those working hard to join it. In particular, the budget is about Canadian families. We met with them, we heard their stories, and we share their concerns. The budget is about the things that matter to them most. The net result is that, even though there has been some economic growth in the past three decades, too often the benefits have been felt only by the wealthiest Canadians, while the middle class and those working hard to join it continue to struggle.

Here at home and across the world, dramatic shifts are taking place that represent both challenges to and opportunities for Canada's economy. Managing Canada's ongoing demographic shift means that we must do more to invest in young Canadians, in post-secondary education, in training, and in innovation.

This is a time to invest. We have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio of all G7 nations, which gives us room to make strategic investments now that will grow the economy well into the future. Interest rates remain at historic lows, making now the ideal time to invest in our highly educated workforce, and low business tax costs mean that Canada is well positioned to compete globally.

I would like to touch upon the investments in budget 2016 that would benefit the riding of Brampton East. Canada has the potential to be a global leader when it comes to innovation. I have seen first-hand the tremendous talent and work ethic of Brampton's business and innovation community. Budget 2016 would support Canada's innovators and entrepreneurs and give them the help they need to access expertise, identify new markets, and scale up for future growth.

To accelerate economic growth, budget 2016 would make available up to \$800 million over four years, starting in 2017-2018, to support innovation networks and clusters as part of the government's upcoming innovation agenda. To increase the number of innovative small and medium-sized enterprises receiving technical advice and product financing through the industrial research assistance program, budget 2016 proposes to provide the program with a further \$50 million in 2016-2017. The program supports innovative and growth-oriented small and medium-sized companies through adversarial services, research and development, product funding, and networking.

•(1355)

It is also vital for Canada to compete on the global stage in order to create economic growth, which is why, to help high-impact firms grow, budget 2016 proposes to launch a new initiative focused on helping high-impact firms to scale up and further their global competitiveness. The initiative aims to target 1,000 firms in the first few years and expand to more firms thereafter.

To support an innovative automotive sector, budget 2016 announces the extension of the automotive innovation fund, which is currently scheduled to sunset in 2017-18. We will extend it through 2020-21.

I have had the opportunity to attend some of the best post-secondary institutions in this country. The power and importance of education is limitless. It can give kids from Brampton an opportunity to make their way to Parliament Hill. Thus, I am a strong believer in the power of education and training for our young people to be the leaders of not just tomorrow but also today. We must invest in this generation of young people in order to support our aging population and create economic growth to last generations.

Budget 2016 proposes a package of reforms to the Canada student loans program that will make post-secondary education more affordable for more students from low- and middle-income families and ensure that student debt loads remain manageable. These measures will also simplify the application process for financial assistance, making the Canada student loans program more transparent and more predictable.

Budget 2016 also includes an increase in the loan payment thresholds, to ensure that no students will have to repay a Canada student loan until they earn at least \$25,000 per year. This measure will provide \$131 million over four years starting in 2016-17.

Employment opportunities will be available for young Canadians through the investment of an additional \$165 million for the youth employment strategy starting in 2016-17. We are also creating an expert panel on youth employment to guide future investments in labour market programming.

Brampton is one of the most growing and dynamic cities in this country. It is growing quickly, and infrastructure investments are vital during this mandate because people are counting on them to expand their businesses. The economic potential of cities like Brampton is limited by inadequate infrastructure systems.

I thank the House for its time. I will continue this evening.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 1:59 p.m., pursuant to order made on Monday, April 11, 2016, the question on the amendment to the amendment is deemed put and a recorded division is deemed requested and deferred until later this day at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

BOMBARDIER

Mr. Simon Marciel (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since the Liberals are not defending Quebec's aerospace industry, politicians from English Canada have free rein to spew their venom and say that Bombardier is a spoiled child that lives on handouts from the rest of Canada.

This morning, in *The Globe and Mail*, a Bombardier vice-president set the record straight. After investing \$586 million, Ottawa pocketed \$733 million in royalties from the sale of Bombardier aircraft. In comparison, the federal government absorbed a net loss of \$3.5 billion after having invested \$10 billion to save GM.

Quebec's aerospace industry provides 41,000 good jobs, 10,000 of which are directly in research and development. It is the cornerstone of our leading-edge industry.

Here we have 40 Liberal MPs keeping mum while the Minister of Transport is working on dismantling Air Canada's bases, the Minister of Industry is trying to bury Bombardier, and the Minister of Finance is abandoning this leading-edge sector.

Quebec is paying a high price for the subservience of the Liberal MPs from Quebec.

* * *

[English]

FRAUD PREVENTION MONTH

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Competition Bureau of Canada for a successful Fraud Prevention Month. This is its 12th annual event.

Throughout the month of March, Canadians were educated on how to recognize fraud and take steps to protect themselves. Any one of us can be a target of fraud. Some of my constituents in Don Valley East have been targeted by fraudsters posing as either CRA or CSIS agents.

Senior citizens are often targets of this insidious and criminal activity. There are three ways by which senior citizens fall victim to financial fraud: identity theft, credit or debit card fraud, and the grandparent scam.

All Canadians need to be educated about fraud, so that they can recognize and report it to local law enforcement. I applaud the Competition Bureau for its work on fraud prevention and for raising awareness for all Canadians.

Statements by Members

●(1400)

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week marks National Volunteer Week, an opportunity to recognize the millions of volunteers across Canada who give of their time to enrich our communities. I would like to recognize the thousands of volunteers in Wellington—Halton Hills who comfort the ill, encourage the young, hearten the lonely, feed the hungry, promote the arts, conserve our environment, and fundraise for countless local charities.

[Translation]

In Canada, volunteers contribute nearly two billion hours every year. A study by Volunteer Canada reported that the vast majority of volunteers would prefer to be recognized with a simple thank you.

[English]

To the great volunteers, both in Wellington—Halton Hills and across Canada, I would like to extend a sincere thanks for all they do for our communities and for our country.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNOR GENERAL'S AWARDS IN VISUAL AND MEDIA ARTS

Mr. Seamus O'Regan (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on March 23, 2016, eight Canadian artists were honoured at Rideau Hall. They are the recipients of this year's Governor General's Awards in Visual and Media Arts.

Administered by the Canada Council for the Arts, these awards are meant to celebrate Canada's vibrant arts community and recognize outstanding careers in visual and media arts.

I wish to congratulate Edward Burtynsky, Marnie Fleming, Philip Hoffman, Jane Kidd, Wanda Koop, Suzy Lake, Mark Lewis, and Bill Vazan. We thank you for your contribution to a vibrant and creative Canada.

I invite all Canadians to learn more about these extraordinary artists by visiting the Canada Council for the Arts website or the exhibition dedicated to them at the National Gallery of Canada.

* * *

[English]

UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak of an issue of great significance to every one of us who advocates on behalf of persons living with disabilities. Canada ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities way back in 2010.

However, this convention has an optional protocol, which Canada has yet to ratify. This protocol provides for a complaints mechanism allowing groups or individuals to take a claim before the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. If they are not able to obtain justice within their own national jurisdictions, this is where they would go. It is a very important protocol that provides a

real mechanism for ensuring that the convention itself is implemented properly within the signatory country.

If the signatory country is genuine about implementing the convention, then it will ratify this protocol. It is as simple as that.

Before members, I urge that Canada immediately sign and—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Sydney—Victoria.

* * *

EAST COAST MUSIC AWARDS

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise as we celebrate the 2016 East Coast Music Awards proudly being hosted in my riding all week long. The East Coast Music Association has been going for 28 years, with over 1,000 members dedicated to the music industry in Atlantic Canada. This five-day non-stop musical celebration will showcase the best music and talent the east coast has to offer, all happening in Cape Breton.

The East Coast Music Awards is an internationally recognized event bringing together people in the music industry from all over the world to the east coast to discover musical talent and culture. Fans' Choice voting is now open. Visit ecma.com for all the festival details and support local music.

I ask all members to rise with me to honour the 2016 East Coast Music Awards and the talented east coast musicians, agents, and volunteers who work so hard to keep Atlantic music thriving well.

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●(1405)

CHASE MARTENS

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on March 22, tragedy hit southern Manitoba and captured the attention of many Canadians. It was on this day that little Chase Martens wandered away from his home and did not return. Like so many others, I prayed that Chase would come home to his parents, Destiny Turner and Thomas Martens, and his siblings, safe and sound. Sadly, this did not happen and his body was discovered in a creek four days after he went missing.

All of our hearts go out to his family and the community of Austin and the surrounding areas. I know we are all grateful to the police officers and firefighters who were first on the scene. It was so amazing to see hundreds of Manitobans from Portage la Prairie and across the province who came to look for little Chase. Although many of them did not know him, they felt like Chase could have been their own son or grandson.

There is no silver lining in the loss of Chase Martens, only the reminder to hold our own children a little closer and treasure the short time that we have together.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

QUEBEC BREAST CANCER FOUNDATION EVENTS

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I want to draw attention to an event that was held on the weekend in my riding of La Prairie.

I am referring to the seventh edition of the Soirée Victoire, held in Candiac, which raised the tidy sum of \$116,000. As in past years, this money will be donated to the Quebec Breast Cancer Foundation and used mainly for research, different programs to support women, and prevention and awareness programs.

Over the past 20 years, more than \$26 million has been raised for research and more than \$10.5 million to support women in their fight against breast cancer.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the organizing committee and all the partners that helped make the evening happen. I would especially like to thank Danielle Simard, the chair of Les Événements Victoire in Candiac, for her wonderful work. Her commitment to supporting women deserves to be recognized.

* * *

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last night, as part of National Volunteer Week, my colleague from Hull—Aylmer and I were honoured to attend the fifth annual volunteer recognition ceremony at the Buffet des Continents in Gatineau.

Volunteers were lauded for taking action and getting involved in organizing social, cultural, community, and sports activities for young people, adults, seniors, persons with disabilities, and people in need.

I want to congratulate the nine 2016 honourees: Diane Dupont-Cyr, Dan Mupendwa Shekanena, Yolande Gravel, Marie-Claude Giasson, Gabriel Ladouceur, Robert Cuillierier, Suzanne Fullwood, France Gaudreau, and Jocelyne Barbeau.

Volunteering is what helps Gatineau grow. Without the dedication of these volunteers, who knows what would happen to our communities or who would help the most vulnerable. We owe our volunteers a debt of gratitude.

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[English]

DAFFODIL MONTH

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, April is Daffodil Month, which is a time to raise awareness for those living with cancer. Money raised during Daffodil Month will help people living with cancer and their families. Donations fund life-saving research, information and support services.

My wife Kelly has survived melanoma skin cancer on a number of occasions. In the 40th Canadian Parliament, I tabled my private member's bill to strengthen warning labels on tanning beds on the carcinogenic risks from radiation caused by artificial tanning equipment.

I am proud that the previous Conservative government strengthened the labelling requirements for tanning beds to better inform consumers about the health risks associated with the use of these dangerous devices. I want to urge people, especially youth and young women, to stay out of tanning beds. Indoor tanning is out.

The daffodil is a symbol of strength and courage in the fight against cancer. I encourage all Canadians to buy a daffodil pin and wear it in April to show their support for Canadians living with cancer.

* * *

VAISAKHI

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize April 13, 2016, the festival of Vaisakhi and Khalsa Day. It is the 317th anniversary of the birth of Khalsa, which is the first time Sikhs were baptized.

On April 23, like every year, Surrey—Newton will be home to the largest Khalsa Day celebration and parade, which will bring together hundreds of thousands of Canadians of all backgrounds. I invite everyone to attend.

I, along with my western Canadian colleagues, am proud to represent Sikh communities throughout western Canada, and we wish everyone a happy Vaisakhi and joyous Khalsa Day.

* * *

● (1410)

[Translation]

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this morning, I had the honour of attending the ceremony where Monique Venne from Mont-Laurier was awarded the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers.

Since it is National Volunteer Week, I would like to sincerely thank her for the 25 years that she has spent helping people in need through the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

That is why I would also like to recognize the inspiring attitude of many other volunteers who were recently awarded the Quebec Lieutenant Governor's medal at a ceremony that I attended on Saturday in Sainte-Agathe-des-Monts.

I would like to congratulate and thank Mathieu Desmarais, Mélissa Campeau, Vincent Mailloux, Alexandre Milette-Gagnon, Robert Ardoin, Ernest Boyer, Denise Comtois-Lalongé, Francine Doré-Paquette, Micheline Drainville, Jacqueline Dumas, Huguette Dumay, Monique Guénette, Rose-Amande Houle, Claire Lalonde, and Yolande Véronneau.

Our communities would not be the same without volunteers like Ms. Venne and the commitment of these other leaders in our region. Keep up the good work.

Statements by Members

[English]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the Liberals introduced their first budget, the news was not good for Canadians. Despite their election promise, the Liberals have blown through the surplus they inherited from the Conservatives and have racked up a massive \$29-billion shortfall.

Members can imagine giving their credit card to their children to go and buy groceries. They give them permission to spend up to \$100, but when they come home and show the receipt, they find that the bill came to \$3,000. What did they bring home? Nineteen bags of marshmallows, a case of chocolate bars, bags and bags of chips, and a whole lot of pop, but no eggs, no meat, no milk, not even a loaf of bread. Where is the beef? This is how the Prime Minister has spent our money.

Canadians were looking for a real plan to get the unemployed back to work, real investments in infrastructure, and a plan to avoid taxes, but the Liberals' budget failed to deliver on any of that. Instead, we have a government that is blocking private sector job creation, like energy east and northern gateway, and the Liberal tradition of raising taxes is back.

This is not the budget Canadians were looking for.

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CLAIRE KIRKLAND-CASGRAIN

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a woman who was a pioneer in a time of change. Claire Kirkland-Casgrain was the first woman elected to the National Assembly of Quebec and became the province's first female cabinet minister.

As a member of Jean Lesage's Quiet Revolution government, she helped shape a new and progressive Quebec by, among other initiatives, introducing legislation to further gender equality.

[Translation]

Before Bill 16 was passed, a woman could not open a bank account or sign a lease in Quebec without her husband's consent. According to Ms. Kirkland-Casgrain, the passing of this bill was her greatest achievement.

Following her very successful political career, Claire Kirkland-Casgrain was the first woman to be appointed as a judge in the Quebec provincial court.

[English]

I had the honour of knowing Claire Kirkland-Casgrain. She was a warm and compassionate person with a disarming sense of humour who loved life and people.

To her husband, Wyndham, and children, Lynne, Kirkland, and Marc, we offer our deepest condolences as we salute a remarkable woman whose determination to move society forward changed the lives of so many for the better.

[Translation]

LAURIE-ÈVE RHÉAUME

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate nine-year-old Laurie-Ève Rhéaume on her desire to make a difference.

I have a meeting scheduled with this young lady from my riding on Earth Day so that she can tell me about her concerns regarding the environment and poverty reduction.

Laurie-Ève also asked me to visit her elementary school. Her teacher, Dominique Provost, has made arrangements for me to meet with more than 125 children aged nine to 12 to discuss the environment, citizen engagement, and fighting inequality.

I would like to thank Laurie-Ève for taking this initiative. Although she is young, we can all look to her as a model of personal involvement in our democracy.

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● (1415)

WOUNDED WARRIORS CANADA

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I want to talk about an exceptional group that has helped many of our veterans. The group is called Wounded Warriors Canada and is a national leader in funding innovative mental health programs that help support our soldiers and veterans of the Canadian Armed Forces, their families, and first responders in the community.

Wounded Warriors Canada is able to offer programs thanks to the care, compassion, and generosity of Canadians and Canadian businesses. I therefore want to thank all Canadians for supporting our women and men in uniform when they need it most.

As the official opposition critic for veterans affairs, I want to thank Wounded Warriors Canada for the important work it does in order to help our veterans.

* * *

[English]

CONSTABLE SARAH BECKETT

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Constable Sarah Beckett of the West Shore detachment of the RCMP, who was killed last week while on patrol in Langford, British Columbia.

I know I speak for all members of this House in offering our heartfelt condolences to her family, her friends, her colleagues, her community, the community she loved and worked so hard to protect and serve.

No words can describe the loss this tragedy represents. Each day in communities in Canada, police officers put themselves in harm's way and put their lives on the line to keep us safe. Each day we owe them a debt of gratitude for the safety they work to ensure.

Today, a grieving and grateful community says goodbye to one of its heroes. Today, we thank Constable Sarah Beckett for her service and acknowledge the sacrifice she made for us.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

THE BUDGET

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, experts agree on three things: the Liberals are borrowing way more money than they promised, they are already raising taxes, and none of the spending will create the jobs and growth that they promised. In addition, this budget is the least transparent budget in 15 years. Now we also know that the budget numbers do not add up.

Let me repeat that: the federal budget numbers do not add up.

When the numbers do not add up, how can Canadians trust them with their jobs?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, budget 2016 puts forward significant, real help by putting money into the pockets of the middle class and by helping grow the economy in ways that, quite frankly, we have not had for 10 years. The reality is that by investing in public transit, in social infrastructure, in green infrastructure, in university and research infrastructure, we are creating the kinds of good jobs now, the growth for tomorrow, and the long-term prosperity that Canadians right across this country need.

That is what budget 2016 is all about, and that is a promise delivered.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first the Prime Minister refused to give the parliamentary budget officer the information that he needs to do his work. Since then, we have seen a former deputy minister of finance conclude that this budget has no transparency. Even the CBC, believe it or not, declared that the numbers do not add up and called it “a shell game”. We have made-up numbers, hidden numbers, and numbers pulled from thin air, so why should Canadians trust the Prime Minister to run our economy?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after 10 years of the kind of secrecy, of number-twisting, of obfuscation that Canadians got all too used to under the previous government, we put forward an open and transparent budget that actually talks about investing in the kind of growth and opportunities for Canadians that Canadians voted for and that Canadians need.

We are establishing investments in infrastructure. We are establishing a strategy for innovation that is going to demonstrate the kind of opportunities that Canadians can innovate and create in the coming years. This is exactly the kind of budget that Canadians were asking for with their ballot box choices last year.

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EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if we cannot trust the numbers, how can we trust that the economy is in good hands?

Oral Questions

In Alberta, the Prime Minister told oil and gas workers that they should be pleased they were not harder hit, when all they needed to hear was a commitment to build pipelines. Will the Prime Minister finally tell the 100,000 unemployed oil and gas workers today that if the Trans Mountain pipeline and the energy east pipeline are approved, he will also approve them?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for 10 years the previous government did everything it could to try and shout those pipelines into being. What that resulted in was delivering no pipelines to tidewater.

One of the fundamental responsibilities of any prime minister is to get our resources to market. However, in the 21st century, getting those resources to market means doing it responsibly for communities, for indigenous peoples, and for the environment. That is why we are combining both environment and economy as we build for a stronger future, and basing our decisions on evidence.

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[Translation]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we now know that the Liberal government is going to borrow \$30 billion, money that will be paid back by Canadians who are not yet born.

During the last election campaign, at a photo op in a crane, the Prime Minister promised a lot of money for infrastructure. In this budget, very little money will go to roads, highways, or public transit.

How can the Prime Minister say that he will run a \$30-billion deficit on infrastructure, when there is only \$2.9 billion in new money for infrastructure in this budget?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign, we promised to invest \$60 billion over 10 years in infrastructure, and that is exactly what we are doing.

Last week, I was in Montreal to announce that \$775 million will be going directly to public transit in order to provide better service for Montrealers. We are doing this across the country. Canadians want a government that has confidence in them and is prepared to invest in their future. That is exactly what we are doing because the other party dropped the ball for the past 10 years.

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we delivered the largest infrastructure plan in Canadian history on two separate occasions. We increased and doubled investments while still balancing the budget, not borrowing from the future.

Oral Questions

The money that will be invested this year is money from the program we put in place, because we respect provincial jurisdictions. As for the funding announced for public transit and social housing, I will come back to that later. However, those are exclusively under provincial jurisdiction. The parliamentary budget officer said that he was missing some information that prevented him from completing and having accurate figures on the economy.

How can the Prime Minister claim that he is being transparent, when he is not providing all the information—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the official opposition party keeps repeating the same arguments that clearly failed to convince Canadians last fall.

The Conservatives are talking about their investments in the Canadian economy, but Canadians got nothing out of them. On the contrary, the Conservatives kept giving the benefits to those at the top, rather than helping the middle class and those working hard to join it and investing in the infrastructure that would help them in their communities. That is what we are doing and what we will continue to do.

* * *

[English]

ETHICS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after years of ethically challenged Conservative rule, the Liberals promised to do things differently.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: It is hard to hear the question. The hon. member for Outremont has the floor. Let us try to calm down, everybody. We are all excited.

The hon. member for Outremont.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, after years of ethically challenged Conservative rule, the Liberals promised to do things differently.

The Minister of Justice is doing certain things differently. When Conservative minister Shelly Glover was caught holding a dodgy fundraiser in 2013, she promptly gave the money back, but this minister refuses to do the same.

Will the Prime Minister ask his Minister of Justice to simply give the money back?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, indeed, after 10 years of ethical failings on behalf of the government, the Liberal Party got elected to government on a platform of openness and transparency and promises that we are keeping.

We have always followed all the rules around fundraising. We have always demonstrated openness and transparency and accountability. Union and corporate donations are banned. There are very strict limits on donations to the parties.

We are following all rules, unlike the previous government.

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, she should never have been there.

[Translation]

Canadians who follow the rules and pay their taxes find the Panama papers scandal disgusting. This week we learned that a former senior Revenue Canada official left the agency and went to work for KPMG when the firm was being investigated by Revenue Canada for using tax havens.

Will the Prime Minister finally conduct an investigation and lock the revolving door at Revenue Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect that no one should be able to avoid paying their fair share of taxes by giving money or doing favours.

For that reason, our budget includes a \$440-million investment so that the Canada Revenue Agency can recover money lost as a result of tax avoidance and evasion. The reality is that we must support the Canada Revenue Agency as it works to ensure that everyone pays their fair share of taxes.

[English]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have a Minister of Justice attending a sketchy fundraiser, a Minister of Finance with companies registered in tax havens like the Bahamas, and a Minister of National Revenue who is defending sweetheart deals for millionaire tax cheats. The Liberals swore they would be different, but they keep finding novel ways of being the Liberals.

Will the Prime Minister show he is serious about cracking down on tax havens by ordering an investigation into KPMG's secret deal?

He just talked about what is in the budget. Let us see some action now.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, \$440 million to the Canada Revenue Agency, in terms of going after tax evasion and avoidance, is significant action.

We have committed to make sure that nobody gets to avoid taxes by paying a little money on the side. We need to make sure that we have an open, fair, responsible system of taxation that is properly enforced. That is what Canadians expect of their government. That is the kind of openness, transparency, and rigour that this government is delivering.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): A little money on the side, Mr. Speaker?

[Translation]

The government used complex mathematical formulas to deprive thousands of people of their employment insurance. Saskatchewan's unemployment rate has increased by 40% in the past year, whereas in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean the number of unemployed has increased by 7,000. Even with the budget, 800,000 unemployed workers are not eligible for employment insurance.

Will the Prime Minister keep his promise and help all unemployed workers in Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign, we promised to improve the employment insurance system so that people who need EI have better access to it, and that is what we have done. We have reduced the waiting period from two weeks to one. We have made sure that there are better employment programs for those receiving employment insurance in order to encourage people to succeed. We promised to improve the employment insurance system and that is what we are doing across the country.

* * *

[English]

ETHICS

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a partner at Torys LLP was registered to lobby the justice minister. Conveniently, the night before the pay-to-play fundraiser that his law firm was hosting, he deregistered as a lobbyist.

The justice minister was told by the Prime Minister not to target departmental stakeholders while soliciting political contributions. Would the minister explain how attending a private fundraiser with high-priced Toronto lawyers who have been registered to lobby her department is consistent with anybody's ethical code?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice and all ministers in the government have, at all times, followed our obligations under the ethics code and under the Conflict of Interest Act. The Liberal Party respects the Canada Elections Act. All of this fundraising was done according to law. All of the donations are transparent and disclosed, according to law. It is something that every member of this House has done in order to win a seat in this House, and continues to do.

Ministers in the previous government also raised money for the Conservative Party and used to brag about it one day not so long ago.

• (1430)

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the justice minister claimed she attended the high-priced pay-to-play fundraiser in Toronto as a regular MP. Later she said she was there as the Minister of Justice. The invitation to the event highlighted her new role and extraordinary mandate. It also told attendees this would be the minister's first private event in Toronto.

Was she there as the justice minister or as a regular MP? If she wants to be a regular MP, it is simple. All she has to do is resign as the justice minister.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the only part of that question with which we agree is the incredible mandate that the Minister of Justice has been given by the Prime Minister: to reform our justice system and to clean up a number of messes left to this government by the previous government in terms of justice law and justice policy.

As I said, this fundraiser was done entirely according to the rules. All of the applicable Conflict of Interest Code ethical obligations and

Canada Elections Act measures were followed. We will continue to do that.

The hon. member is trying to create a scandal where none exists.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice claimed that the focus of the pay-to-play fundraiser was in her role as an MP, this after the event was advertised as an opportunity for attendees to engage the minister on matters that pertained directly to the minister's responsibilities. Yesterday the minister admitted that she attended as Minister of Justice after all.

Will the minister end the charade, take responsibility, and return the pay-to-play cash?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the cute phrases and the play on words do not change the basic facts.

All members of the House of Commons raise money according to law. All members on this side of the House respect the Canada Elections Act and the appropriate fundraising rules that apply. It is something that my colleague's party has had considerable trouble doing in the past. They, in fact, pleaded guilty and had to pay a \$250,000 fine for a pay-to-play scheme to launder money in and out of riding associations. We have never done that on this side of the House.

The Speaker: I would remind members that the time to speak is when they have the floor, and that is the only time to speak.

Now we will listen to the member for St. Albert—Edmonton.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the independence of the Minister of Justice has been compromised and her credibility is in tatters as she tries to justify her attendance at the pay-to-play fundraiser.

If everything is above board and the minister has nothing to hide, will she release the list of attendees, yes or no?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the only thing that hurts the credibility of members of the House is that kind of feigned indignation where a member tries to create a scandal where none exists.

On this side of the House, we are extremely proud to serve with the Minister of Justice. We are proud of her record of public service, her ethics, and her integrity. We will always stand with her.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us bring this back to what Canadians are seeing and what they are saying. They see \$20 million going to an organization that the Minister of Justice used to chair. They see the minister's husband lobbying the Liberals on behalf of the organization for funding. This has nothing to do with the FNFA and first nations. Canadians see this as unethical, yet the minister continues to deny any wrongdoing.

Oral Questions

When will the Prime Minister hold his ministers accountable for their unethical behaviour?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I explained and as all members opposite who participated on the aboriginal affairs committee in the last Parliament would know, the First Nations Finance Authority is an exemplary organization, with a proven track record, that maximizes a small amount of money such that first nations from coast to coast to coast have access to capital for much needed infrastructure.

For heaven's sake, I wish the other side would stop this. This kind of stuff is really disruptive.

• (1435)

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in the House, the Minister of Justice confirmed that she went to Toronto to attend a fundraising activity simply as the member for Vancouver Granville.

She also said that she cleared it with the Ethics Commissioner to ensure that she complied with all the rules.

Did the member seek this clarification in her role as Minister of Justice or as member of Parliament for Vancouver Granville? How can she dissociate herself from these two roles, as she sees fit, when she is in a law firm?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have good news for my friend opposite.

The Ethics Commissioner advises ministers in both their roles as minister and as member of Parliament. That has always been the case. The minister spoke to the commissioner about both roles.

Furthermore, she complied with all the relevant rules. My colleague opposite wants to repeat the same accusations, hoping to create a scandal, but there is no scandal on this side of the House.

We will always abide by the law when it comes to election financing.

[English]

The Speaker: I want to remind members again, including the member for St. Albert—Edmonton, that the time to speak is when they have the floor.

The hon. member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou.

* * *

[Translation]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this evening, we are going to debate how we can put an end to the crisis in Attawapiskat.

The community had been trying for months to alert the federal government before it finally received emergency mental health services.

However, other communities, such as Cross Lake, Manitoba, are also facing similar crises, and my thoughts are with the young people in Kuujjuaq, Nunavik, who are also having a very difficult time. I think everyone will agree that this is a national concern.

Can the minister tell us what the government plans to do to finally put an end to this tragedy once and for all?

[English]

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has raised an important question and I thank him for his advocacy on this incredibly important matter.

The conditions that first nations and Inuit communities are facing are absolutely unacceptable. The mental health of young people in particular in these communities is devastating.

Our department and our government are ensuring that all the necessary services and programs are in place. We are currently investing over \$300 million per year in mental wellness programs in these communities. We will continue to work with indigenous leaders. I will continue to work with the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs to ensure all appropriate resources are available.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the youth suicide crisis has shocked the world and people are asking how a country as rich as Canada can leave so many children and young people behind.

What the people in Attawapiskat are facing is the same systemic negligence that is robbing the hopes of young people in communities like La Loche, Cross Lake and Neskantaga. Yet there were no new mental health dollars in the budget to help indigenous children.

Enough with the band-aids and the emergency flights. Will the minister commit to a total overhaul to ensure that every child in our country has the mental health supports he or she needs to have hope and a positive future?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has worked hard in his community to advocate for the mental health needs in that community. I agree with him that it is completely unacceptable in a country as rich in resources as Canada that young people should get to the point that their lives seem worthless and that they would want to end them.

We must respond to this. I have already indicated what we are doing so far. I will be working with my colleagues across the country to ensure that mental health services are included and improved, and ensure that we get that mental health care to the people who need it.

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JUSTICE

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the most important responsibilities of the Minister of Justice is to recommend the appointments to the superior courts because Canadians deserve to have access to timely judicial proceedings.

We have been hearing alarming reports of continuing and increasing vacancies in our courts. It is not enough to be fundraising. What is the problem with appointing judges? We all want to know that.

Oral Questions

● (1440)

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, leaving aside the fundraising, the judiciaries appointments are fundamentally important and we are moving forward with a new process, renovating the process, ensuring that the appointment of Superior Court judges across the country is not only based on merit but that it is based on diversity, and that we will be open and transparent. I have had the opportunity to speak to many of the justices across the country and we will be advancing appointments in the very near future.

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are reports that the minister has yet to hire a judicial affairs adviser. However, she has hired a director of political operations.

According to Treasury Board guidelines, a director of political operations requires the written concurrence of both the Prime Minister and the President of the Treasury Board. Did the Prime Minister provide written concurrence to his Minister of Justice for hiring a director of political operations? I know this might help with fundraisers, but what is the problem with hiring a judicial affairs adviser?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are moving forward with appointments, not only to the superior courts across the country but certainly, in the impending retirement of an honoured justice out of the Supreme Court of Canada, moving forward with the process to appoint a new Supreme Court of Canada justice.

We are looking at this process and renovating the process to ensure that it is open and transparent. We will engage with members of the House in ensuring that the appointments are based on merit and that the appointments are diversified in terms of reflecting a judiciary that has the face of this great and diversified country.

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SMALL BUSINESS

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the Liberals' job-killing budget, they are raising taxes on small businesses and their workers. They reversed the Conservative tax cut for small businesses, raised payroll taxes, and now the top tax bracket in over half of our provinces will be more than 50%.

When will the Liberals stop raising taxes on workers and job creators?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the member opposite to read our budget. If she goes back to January, when I believe she was in the House, she will see that we lowered taxes on nine million Canadians. What she will find is that this year small business taxes actually have gone down. What the member will also find is that the nine out of ten families with children who will get the Canada child benefit will have an average of \$2,300 more. This will help small businesses.

This is a budget that will help Canadians and Canadian businesses to be more successful.

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals claimed to consult with businesses and workers, but as we saw in the budget, they broke that promise too. The Liberals even ignored their own members on the finance committee by raising

taxes on small businesses. This should come as no surprise after the Minister of International Trade said, "Amen to raising taxes".

How can Canadians trust the tax-and-spend Liberals when they break promises to their own members?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us start with understanding that we had more pre-budget consultations than in the history of the country will ever have.

Let us move forward with a very clear understanding that we reduced taxes on nine million Canadians. Let us move forward one more step by understanding that we helped small businesses across the country by helping their customers and clients.

This is a budget that will help Canadians, families and businesses. It will grow our economy over the long run.

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INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the trade committee is finally hitting the road next week to study the TPP, yet it still has no impact study to guide its work. The Liberals promised a full, public consultation, but now they are trying to pass off the committee's work as their own.

When it comes to what Joseph Stiglitz called, "the worst trade deal ever", that just does not cut it. Why is the government refusing to live up to its promise of full, public consultation for all Canadians?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the NDP that condemns this deal without even reading it, we are keeping our election promise. We promised to consult, and we are.

I would also like to point out that we learned something interesting about the New Democrats on Sunday. We learned they want to shut down our natural resource industry and we learned they want to say no to Canada trading in the world.

That is not good for Canada's middle class, including the union members the hon. member claims to represent.

● (1445)

[Translation]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, the Government of Quebec and dairy producers and processors stood shoulder to shoulder on the diafiltered milk issue.

The Liberal government has been saying for months that it is working on this issue, but it has not done anything yet. The industry has had enough. Farmers are losing thousands of dollars a week. However, there is nothing complicated about this. All the government has to do is enforce the cheese compositional standards.

What is the Prime Minister waiting for? When will he keep his election promise to solve the diafiltered milk problem here in Canada?

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague is fully aware that I met many stakeholders in the agricultural sector, including supply management and the dairy industry in particular.

This issue was inherited from the previous government, and we are working with the industry to resolve the issue.

* * *

FISCAL STABILIZATION

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to extend my thoughts and prayers to the people of Bay de Verde in light of yesterday's fire at the Quinlan Brothers fish processing facility. Our hearts are with the workers and the community today.

The Newfoundland and Labrador throne speech confirmed what many in our home province have been worried about. The recent downturn in oil prices has decreased revenue at a time when unemployment is on the rise.

Will the Minister of Finance provide an update to the House about what our government is doing to help the people of Newfoundland and Labrador during these difficult times?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Avalon, his caucus colleagues from Newfoundland and Labrador and the Minister of Public Services and Procurement for their tireless work on behalf of Newfoundland and Labrador.

When that province came to us with a fiscal stabilization request, I directed the Department of Finance officials to move forward expeditiously on this request.

I am pleased to say that we have moved forward with an advance payment of \$32 million of fiscal stabilization for the province of Newfoundland and Labrador in these difficult times.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is no secret the Prime Minister surrounds himself with anti-oil activists, people like Zoe Caron who believes fossil fuels must stay in the ground, or his principal secretary who compares supporting oil to encouraging children to smoke.

Well, the Liberals have their way. Alberta investment is down 62%. In fact, oil is staying in the ground and the entire country is suffering because of it.

Is the Prime Minister ready to abandon his anti-pipeline advice and stand up publicly for Canadian oil and gas?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the House the member for Grande Prairie—Mackenzie urged the government to approve a pipeline project before it even had been registered with the regulator. He asked the government to approve a pipeline project before one community had been consulted, before one indigenous leader had been phoned.

This is not the way to get projects approved. This is why we will do it a different way. We will not take for granted that people agree with us before we even ask them.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the people in Alberta are looking for a government that will proudly stand up for Canadian oil and gas, not act coy and shy when it becomes convenient for it.

If that is not bad enough, the Minister of Environment says that over time they are going to block development in the oil sands. In other words, that is the end of the oil and gas industry in Canada. How can the oil patch expect investment when one of the Liberal's most prominent ministers is suggesting that the government has a plan to shut them down?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has said that there is no contradiction between building wind turbines and pipelines. He has said it is a principal responsibility of the Government of Canada to move our natural resources to market sustainably. That is why we are following a process that will consult with Canadians and give people the chance to understand that in this day and age we develop the economy sustainably, with one eye on the environment and the other on job creation. That is the way we will move forward sustainably.

• (1450)

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve a straight answer from the Liberals. The Prime Minister creates instability and uncertainty in the energy sector. He appointed the justice minister who has opposed pipeline projects. His senior advisors are against Alberta's responsibly developed oil sands. He ignores Albertans who just want to get back to work.

A strong Alberta means a strong Canada. Will the Prime Minister finally support Canadian energy through crucial infrastructure projects like trans mountain and energy east?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand that the natural resource sector in Canada accounts for 20% of the GDP. We know that Canada's economic future depends on a healthy energy sector. We also understand that in order to ensure that our natural resources move to markets sustainably, we need a regulatory process that has the confidence of Canadians. That is why we have established a set of principles that we are confident will much more likely get us to that place than what happened with the previous government.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to anonymous sources, the Prime Minister is supposedly now in favour of building certain pipelines. Really? In reality, the Liberals are standing in the way of proponents who are trying to develop the economy. That is not surprising since the Prime Minister's entourage is full of activists who want to block energy sector projects.

Will the Prime Minister rise in the House and say that he supports the workers and families who depend on the energy sector?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our budget demonstrates in real terms how we support workers who are suffering from low commodity prices. This is true in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

We also understand that Canada is poised to become an international leader in green technology, which is why the budget invests many millions of dollars on the next wave of energy development in Canada, while we understand that we will move fossil fuels to market sustainably.

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

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today at the Standing Committee on Finance, the Liberals rejected the NDP motion to call the Minister of National Revenue to testify about the KPMG affair. We know that the Liberals promised Canadians a responsible, accountable, transparent government, but they looked like a bunch of Conservatives in committee today.

Canadians are angry about the KPMG affair and the Panama papers, and the Minister of National Revenue owes them an explanation.

Why is the minister refusing to step up and explain to Canadians and the committee the difference between her statements in the House and the KPMG affair and the facts that have been revealed?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to reassure the House.

All Canadian taxpayers are treated fairly. Regardless of income, our \$440-million announcement in the latest budget is proof of that. I would like to be clear about KPMG. The fact is that the Canada Revenue Agency exposed the scheme. The agency audited taxpayers and took legal action. Yesterday's announcement confirms our commitment to preventing entities from promoting such schemes.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is not what we want to know. We want to know whether she will appear before the Standing Committee on Finance.

[English]

My question is for the chair of the finance committee. This morning, the Liberal members of the committee voted down my motion to have the Minister of National Revenue appear to answer questions regarding the amnesty given to tax cheats in the KPMG affair. She said in the House on March 10 that there is no such amnesty, and we believe that she has to explain herself.

Could the chair of the finance committee confirm that there are currently no plans to have the minister appear on this very important issue to Canadians?

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there was a discussion at committee this morning. There were two motions before the committee, and the meeting had to adjourn before the second one was completely discussed. I would make a point that one of our members on committee suggested that most all of this activity

happened under the previous government in terms of the way that it operated. This minister does not hold responsibility for those discussions, but the committee would consider bringing this minister before the committee after we hold the initial hearings on KPMG and CRA.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, industry has said that investment in Alberta's oil sands will be down more than \$60 billion over the past two years, a 63% decrease since 2014. Hundreds of thousands of Albertans have lost their jobs, and they are losing their homes. The Prime Minister has told Albertans that they should hang in there and they should be thankful that things are not worse.

We cannot wait for things to get worse. When is the Liberal government finally going to make an investment in Canada's national energy program?

● (1455)

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have had the pleasure of representing Canada at a number of international meetings and to talk with those who are looking at investments in the energy sector. They all agree that Canada has been and will continue to be a very important international market for energy. It is our goal as the government to develop these energy sources, particularly in Alberta and Saskatchewan, which will make Canada, after these low commodity prices pass, again a major place of investment and confidence internationally.

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*[Translation]***SMALL BUSINESS**

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, clearly the communications specialists working for the Liberal Party have taken over the budget. When there is no content, they simply step up the rhetoric and press repeat. The truth behind the empty rhetoric is that they have no plan and are incapable of creating one.

Small businesses have been betrayed by this government, which has repeatedly broken its promise to reduce the corporate tax rate. In my region, the president of the chamber of commerce is publicly asking whether the government realizes that small business is crucial to economic recovery.

Will the Minister of Economic Development stop the broken record and finally give a real answer?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

We have a plan that will work very well for Canadians and small businesses.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

We have a budget and we encourage members opposite to read the budget. They can make hand gestures all they want, but we know that we have a plan. Canadians know that we have a plan, and that is what they elected us to do. Our government is making very important investments directly in helping small businesses.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Bardish Chagger: If they would like to listen, I can give them some details that they are welcome to read as well. Five hundred—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton Riverbend.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Liberals in Edmonton campaigned on deficits and told us, “Don’t worry, we got this, and it will only cost you \$10 billion a year”. It is now three times that much. They also told Albertans, “Don’t worry; we know what’s best for your region”. Edmonton’s economy has been seriously impacted and we were completely left out of the EI expansion. We are told that we should be thankful and pleased at the work of the Prime Minister. Honestly, how can the Liberals be so out of touch with what is happening in western Canada?

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that we are hardly not relating to the situation in Edmonton. As I was previously involved in the geological sciences, I know exactly what many people are facing. In fact, the folks in Edmonton are going to benefit from the over \$2-billion investment that we made in supports for all workers in all regions, including Edmonton, Quebec, and Newfoundland. There are many benefits that will help those in Edmonton.

* * *

*[Translation]***SCIENCE**

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, scientific research plays an important role in growing a clean economy. I see that every day in my riding through the work done by the researchers, professors, and students at the Longueuil campus of the Université de Sherbrooke.

Can the Minister of Science tell the House about the initiatives proposed in the budget to promote research and innovation?

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Minister of Science, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. The government is committed to supporting discovery-based science.

[English]

Budget 2016 provides \$95 million per year to the granting councils to support discovery research, which is the largest investment in more than a decade.

According to the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, these investments demonstrate the government’s commit-

ment to making Canada a leader in knowledge production and innovation.

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INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): The Liberal budget showed a complete neglect for Canadian agriculture, and it is a slap in the face to the 2.2 million Canadians who rely on the industry. However, there is one thing the government can do to help Canadian farmers and farm families: ratify the trans-Pacific partnership. Farmers support it. Small businesses support it. The energy sector supports it. The only one we do not know about is the Liberal government.

Can the minister stand in her place today and commit to bringing the TPP to this House for ratification?

● (1500)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the daughter of a farmer, I am proud of the support by our government for farmers. That has been manifested in our success with getting the discriminatory COOL legislation repealed, which is something that the previous government opposite failed to do.

Our commitment to free trade is manifested in our hard work on CETA, which legal scrub we have completed. Again, that is something the party opposite failed to do.

We are consulting on TPP, and that is the right thing to do as well.

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SEARCH AND RESCUE

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): We have now learned that the Liberal government is looking at privatizing search and rescue as part of the defence review. This was an idea that was first raised by the Conservatives five years ago, and finally abandoned only after a public outcry. At that time, the current Minister of Public Services said she was “appalled by the government’s notice to companies that the government would be exploring the privatization of search-and-rescue operations”.

Privatizing search and rescue would clearly put Canadian lives at risk. Will the government do the right thing and abandon this plan?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the previous government might have been looking at privatizing search and rescue, but I can assure the member that this government is not, because the Canadian Armed Forces play a critical role in search and rescue.

*Oral Questions***ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last month I had the opportunity to announce \$4.84 million for the Bioenterprise Corporation in Guelph. Could the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development please inform the House about this exciting new investment?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Guelph for his question and his continued effort to raise the business needs of his riding.

Guelph and the surrounding region is a hub of innovation and entrepreneurship, and this investment of \$4.84 million to Bioenterprise is a prime example of our commitment to cultivating and encouraging creativity, invention, and collaboration.

I am proud to say that budget 2016 focuses on expanding our start-ups and strengthening our innovation clusters to help create opportunities for long-term development and sustainable economic growth.

It is about growing the economy and creating jobs.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, troubling reports out of the United Kingdom indicate that a Canadian terror suspect is being pursued with respect to possible risks to the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge travelling in India.

I ask that the Minister of Public Safety update the House and confirm that CSIS and all of our security agencies are providing co-operation in this international investigation.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously I would not comment on any specific operational matter, but I can also confirm what the hon. gentleman implied in his question, that in circumstances where international co-operation is required, most certainly CSIS, the RCMP, the CBSA, and every agency under the authority of the Government of Canada, co-operate fully with our international partners.

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[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change has lost her battle: her colleague, the Minister of Finance, has convinced the Prime Minister to move forward with the energy east pipeline. The Prime Minister has given up on refereeing. He has asked for a strategy, a plan, I imagine, to impose this pipeline on Quebec. Never mind social licence, never mind the Paris commitments, never mind the green shift.

Is that the kind of influence the 40 members from Quebec have within this government?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a regulatory strategy. Our government wants to work with the provinces and territories to

reduce carbon pollution no matter what the energy system looks like in the different jurisdictions. This is about reducing carbon pollution, which is fuelling climate change, and not about closing or keeping anything in the ground, as some are suggesting. We have a transition process for all projects, and we will look at every project individually to be sure that it is something that makes sense for the environment and—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Montcalm.

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ETHICS

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government wants to fight climate change, but not at the expense of western oil companies. It wants to believe in the rule of law, but it changes the law to accommodate Air Canada. It wants to stand up for social justice, but it will not deprive its friends on Bay Street of their tax haven in Barbados. It wants to defend human rights, as long as that does not affect its business dealings with Saudi Arabia.

At what price does this government sell out its principles?

• (1505)

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, ours is a principled government. With respect to the issues he mentioned, I would like to remind my colleague that our amendment to the Air Canada Public Participation Act will result in the creation of maintenance jobs in Quebec, Manitoba, and Ontario. Air Canada will also help establish two centres of excellence in Quebec and Manitoba. I would like to add that Bombardier will purchase 45 to 75 planes and that maintenance of these planes will be done in Quebec for 20 years.

[*English*]

Mr. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, on March 22, when the finance minister tabled the various budget documents associated with his budget, he failed to table the January “Fiscal Monitor”, which shows a Conservative surplus left to the Liberals. They did not like December and they did not like November. Maybe they will like January. Could I get unanimous consent to table this document?

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to table the document?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to bring to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of His Excellency Sami Al-Araji, chairman of the National Investment Commission of Iraq, and His Excellency Ali Sindi, acting Minister of Industry and Trade of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Budget

The Speaker: I would also like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Right Honourable Tricia Marwick, M.S.P., Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government, of the amendment, and of the amendment to the amendment.

The Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Monday, April 11, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the subamendment of Motion No. 2 under Ways and Means proceedings.

Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Speaker: The question is as follows. May I dispense?

● (1510)

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[*Chair read text of amendment to the amendment to House*]

● (1515)

(The House divided on the amendment to the amendment, which was negatived on the following division:)

(*Division No. 34*)

YEAS

Members

Angus	Ashton
Aubin	Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu	Benson
Blaikie	Boudrias
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau	Cannings
Caron	Choquette
Christopherson	Cullen
Davies	Donnelly
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dusseau	Duvall
Fortin	Garrison
Gill	Harcastle
Johns	Jolibois
Julian	Kwan
Laverdière	MacGregor
Malcolmson	Marcel
Masse (Windsor West)	Mathyssen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Moore
Mulcair	Nantel
Paucé	Plamondon
Quach	Ramsey
Rankin	Saganash
Sansoucy	Ste-Marie
Stetski	Stewart
Thériault	Trudel
Weir— 53	

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Aldag
Alghabra	Alleslev
Allison	Ambrose
Amos	Anandasangaree
Anderson	Arnold
Arseneault	Arya
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Barlow	Baylis
Beech	Bennett
Bergen	Bernier
Berthold	Bezan
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Boissonnault
Bossio	Boucher
Brassard	Bratina
Breton	Brisson
Caesar-Chavannes	Calkins
Carr	Carrie
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chan	Chen
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Cooper
Cormier	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
DeCoursey	Deltell
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Dion
Diotte	Doherty
Dreeshen	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Easter
Eglinski	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyking
Eyolfson	Falk
Fast	Fergus
Fillmore	Finley
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Foote
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Freeland
Fry	Fuhr
Gallant	Garneau
Généreux	Genuis
Gerretsen	Gladu
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale
Gould	Gourde
Graham	Grewal
Hajdu	Harder
Hardie	Harper
Harvey	Hehr
Hoback	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Jeneroux
Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Kang	Kelly
Kenney	Kent
Khalid	Khera
Kitchen	Kmieć
Lake	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lebel	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Lemieux	Leslie
Levitt	Liepert
Lightbound	Lobb
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
Lukiwski	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKenzie	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maguire	Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
May (Cambridge)	

The Budget

McCallum	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinty
McKay	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Medicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	
Monsef	
Morneau	Morrissey
Murray	Nassif
Nater	Nault
Nicholson	Nuttall
Obhrai	O'Connell
Oliphant	Oliver
O'Regan	O'Toole
Ouellette	Paradis
Paul-Hus	Peschisolido
Peterson	Petitpas Taylor
Philpott	Picard
Poilievre	Poissant
Qualtrough	Raitt
Ratansi	Rayes
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rioux
Ritz	Robillard
Rodriguez	Romanado
Rudd	Ruimy
Rusnak	Sahota
Saini	Sajjan
Sangha	Sarai
Saroya	Scarpaleggia
Scheer	Schiefke
Schmale	Schulte
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Shields	Shiple
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sikand	Sohi
Sopuck	Sorbara
Sorenson	Spengemann
Stanton	Strahl
Stubbs	Sweet
Tabbara	Tan
Tassi	Tilson
Tootoo	Trost
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 — 272

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the subamendment defeated.

I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded division, government orders will be extended by 10 minutes.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Outremont.

● (1520)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, governing is about priorities, and there is no better indicator of a government's true priorities than its budget choices.

[*English*]

Governing is about priorities and it is really in the budget choices that we see what a government is all about. After having promised to take care of the middle class, the very first budgetary measure

brought in by the new Liberal government provided the highest tax break for families earning \$200,000 a year and provided exactly zero dollars and zero cents for families earning \$45,000 a year. What is interesting is that in many provinces across Canada, \$45,000 a year is about the average of what a family earns, so it is a bit mystifying for most people to try to understand how the Liberals claim to have helped the middle class when in fact they were helping the richest.

Budgets are also part of the institutional life of this place. Unlike our American colleagues to the south who have endless additions once a budget is tabled, we have a system where a government's budget is presumed to be adopted. That is why we have a principle of budget secrecy, which is not very well respected by the new government by the way. I remember in particular the Minister of Small Business and Tourism standing up and quite excitedly announcing that there was going to be great news for small businesses in the budget, but we learned that in the budget, the government was cutting the tax break that had been scheduled for small businesses which are the job creators in this country.

There is also part of the institutional life of this Parliament which is reflected in the fact that all-party budget consultations have always been a tradition. I was Jack Layton's finance critic for many years and these consultations were very important. I and my colleagues would have a chance to listen to people and groups in different regions of Canada about their priorities and what they were hoping to see in the budget. The fact that it was all-party showed that the budget in and of itself often has to be half a notch above the usual partisanship here because it is going to have to be adopted and we are supposed to be listening to what Canadians' priorities are.

I was surprised, not to say shocked, when in January I heard that the new finance minister had taken it upon himself to hold his own budget consultations. It is not bad that a finance minister has consultations, but the tradition is to include the other parties. When that was pointed out to him, he just said that there was not enough time. That was pure bafflelegab. That simply was false. He was making that up. He was not respecting tradition. Sunny ways have always promised us that it is going to be better, that the government is going to be more open, more transparent, but all of a sudden, we learned that sunny ways and sunny days also mean that the government does not have to listen to anybody else and it certainly does not have to bring the other recognized parties in Parliament to the consultations.

If we thought that was a one-off, we soon learned that the other budget tradition in the House, which is that the finance minister always addresses a letter to the leaders of the other parties asking them about their priorities, was not respected. We were getting so close to the budget; it was about 72 hours before the budget presentation when I took it upon myself to write that letter with our priorities to the finance minister, because he had not respected that parliamentary tradition either.

Both of those events pointed to something quite troubling for me: a new government that talks a good game, but we really have to watch what it actually does. It is not only about promising to help the middle class but instead doing nothing for the middle class and helping the wealthiest, it is also about important parliamentary traditions that allowed us in the past to get together to build budgets.

The Budget

I took it upon myself to carry out my own tour, from Halifax to Victoria, from southwestern Ontario to northern Saskatchewan. I met with hard-hit resource workers in western Canada who worry that the employment insurance they thought they were going to get is not there. The Liberals will talk, as the Prime Minister did again today, about the changes to employment insurance in the budget, but all that changed was the number of unemployed people who are not eligible for EI from 850,000 to 800,000. Members heard that number right. Eight hundred thousand Canadians who have lost their jobs are not eligible for EI, despite a promise from the Liberals during the election campaign to bring in the 360-hour rule and to get rid of the unfair changes wrought by the Conservatives.

• (1525)

There is nothing in here to help families buried in household debt. Canadians have the highest household debt of the G20. Skyrocketing child care costs are not addressed either. It still costs over \$2,000 a month to have an infant in child care in Toronto. That makes no sense, and of course, it is women who pay the price.

I listened attentively when the Prime Minister described himself as a feminist. Well, someone who is a feminist would be trying to put in place programs to help women. It is in fact women who often have to make the tough choices and the sacrifices in their careers when affordable quality child care is not available.

I will never forget Kathleen Wynne chiming in to fight affordable, quality child care during the last election campaign. If she ever again tries to style herself as a progressive, I will be there, front and centre, to remind Ontarians that she fought quality, affordable child care.

That would be the same Kathleen Wynne with the big progressive budget, where she is now proposing to privatize Ontario's Hydro One. She just forgot to mention that when she was selling herself as a progressive during the last campaign.

I also met call centre and airport workers who work their full 40 hours a week and still live in poverty because we do not have a decent federal minimum wage. We wanted to bring the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour. I will never forget the current Prime Minister during the campaign saying it does not apply to people in big box stores. No, the federal government does not regulate big box stores, but it does regulate airport workers, call centre workers, and hundreds of thousands of Canadians could have gotten a raise with a \$15 an hour federal minimum wage.

I listened to those indigenous communities that suffer boil water advisories, systematically underfunded schools and health, and a mental health crisis few can imagine, and that we will be debating on an emergency basis here in the House tonight. I am so proud of my colleagues who brought that forward so we can finally have a full airing of the issue here.

Many Canadians get a sense that the deck is stacked against them, and they want their government to be there to help them. We in the NDP have always considered that as social democrats our prime responsibility is to reduce inequality in our society. We have always understood that the best way to assure perennity of anything that the government does is to make sure that we have fully funded universal social programs, like child care and pharmacare. We will continue to

reduce inequality in our society by proposing that we bring in universal, fair, social programs across the country.

I remember, the signals came very early. The new families minister gave an interview very early and warned people that things were going to have to wait. However, what did not have to wait was for CEOs to keep their stock option tax loophole.

During the campaign, the Liberals many a time mimicked NDP undertakings, so when we said that we simply could not accept that in a country as wealthy as Canada one million children were going to school hungry, and we were going to do away with the \$800 million gift we were making to CEOs who do not pay their fair share of taxes because they are allowed to have stock options tax loopholes, the Liberals imitated that promise word for word. They said they were going to do away with it. Then about eight weeks before the budget, they started backing away from it. That is their new theme song, like a truck backing up. We can hear the beep, beep, beep.

There it was. All of a sudden, for what was promised, they said maybe they would do half in this budget. Lo and behold, the budget arrived and there was not a single line on removing the CEO stock option tax loophole.

• (1530)

[*Translation*]

Canada's economy has grown by 50% in the past 30 years. It was workers who were responsible for this 50% increase in a single generation. However, these workers' incomes are stagnating, and many of their jobs are being outsourced.

Inequality is growing faster in Canada than in any other G20 country. Today, the 100 richest Canadians, at the upper end of the scale, have more wealth than the 10 million Canadians at the lower end of the scale. That is unacceptable.

In Canada, the average CEO earns 200 times more than a worker. The rich are earning more and more, while middle-class workers are losing their good jobs. The number of precarious, part-time, and temporary jobs is on the rise.

I want to get back to the progressive Ontario government, whose members have come up with my favourite euphemisms.

The Budget

• (1535)

[English]

The euphemism factory that is the Kathleen Wynne Ontario Liberal government came up with my favourite. Instead of talking about part-time, precarious, temporary jobs, it calls them CMEs, contemporary mobile employment—what normal people would call lousy jobs. In fact, the CIBC put out a study recently that proved that these are the worst-quality jobs that we have seen in a full generation.

So it has been promise after promise.

Sixty billion dollars in tax giveaways provided nothing to stimulate the economy. Last year the banks made \$35 billion in profit and paid their directors \$12 billion in bonuses while at the same time shipping thousands of good-paying Canadian jobs out of the country.

The stock option tax loophole should have been gotten rid of. Small businesses should have been given a break because they do create the majority of jobs in this country, but we know that when the Liberals talk about helping workers, they are most often helping the richest.

[Translation]

With respect to employment insurance, the Liberals and Conservatives managed to divert more than \$55 billion from the employment insurance fund. Workers and their employers contribute to this fund so that they have access to assistance when the economy is struggling and more people lose their jobs, as is the case right now.

The Liberals called out the Conservatives when they locked the EI fund up tight, but the Liberals are the ones who invented the idea of dipping into the EI fund. Imagine our surprise when the government proposed taking another \$7 billion from the fund in this budget. Canadians and first nations communities deserve better.

On the weekend, Cindy Blackstock explained that in light of the Human Rights Tribunal's decision, \$230 million was missing from the budget.

[English]

That is worth explaining.

We have a decision of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal requiring the government to stop racial discrimination against first nations youth. There is \$130 million missing in the budget for child welfare and \$230 million missing for education. This is not a question of personal choice. This is not a question of opinion. The courts have ruled this is a case of racial discrimination. When it is a case of racial discrimination, we have to remove the discrimination. The Liberals did not do that. It is shameful.

There is not a single mention of the 94 recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the budget.

For anybody who thought there might be a little bit of breathing room given when the Liberals promised to reinvest \$3 billion in home care, there was not one dollar. That would have taken some pressure off our severely taxed health and social service system—notably, the hospitals across this country.

Only half of the promised money was there for transit. More and more, we are going to see tolls and user fees coming in.

Now I have to spend a minute talking about my favourite broken promise on the part of the Liberals.

Members might recall that I asked the Prime Minister if he was going to respect his personal solemn promise to restore door-to-door mail delivery. I hope members remember his answer, because I will never forget it. He said the seniors, the mobility-reduced seniors living in our downtown cores who believed him when he promised to restore door-to-door mail delivery, should have actually gone online, and if they had consulted the platform of the Liberal Party, they would have noticed that it was slightly different from what he promised when he was standing beside Mayor Coderre of Montreal when he wanted to win some votes.

There is a message there from the Prime Minister, the same person who always laments how cynical it has become in politics. What could be more cynical than looking at that mobility-reduced senior and saying, “Sorry, sucker. You should have read the fine print. You should never have believed a word I said”?

• (1540)

[Translation]

If we took the money needed to pay for the life cycle of one F-35, we could pay the tuition of 100,000 young people.

[English]

Members heard that right.

Over the life cycle of each F-35—the ones they cancelled in the middle of the campaign but are sort of not really cancelled anymore—each one is going to cost well over \$1 billion. We know how much that is: it is enough to help pay the tuition for 100,000 Canadian youth. We find that is also shameful. The Liberals are spending money on F-35s when we have the greatest student indebtedness ever in the history of Canada.

There is also a total lack of any credible climate change program. It is mind-boggling. I get to sit here in front of the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, and her answers on greenhouse gas reductions in Canada are so spectacularly vapid that it defies understanding. She stands day after day and talks about a regulatory approach in which somehow the province is responsible. It was Canada that signed. Remember “Canada is back”? Unfortunately, Canada came back with the Conservatives' timelines and their program.

The Liberals have no plan whatsoever. It is a complete and utter fraud when the Liberals talk about reducing greenhouse gases in Canada. Yes, it is 2016; unfortunately, in 2017 we are going to produce more greenhouse gases, and when it is 2018, we are going to produce even more. We have no plan whatsoever from our federal government to reduce greenhouse gases. Canada is not doing its share to combat global warming.

That is why New Democrats were clear. The only way to judge this budget is not on what the Liberals said but what they have actually done.

The Budget

[Translation]

Did they take practical steps to reduce inequality in Canada, yes or no? They did nothing.

[English]

When the Liberals refuse to ask big banks, profitable corporations, and wealthy CEOs to pay their fair share of taxes, we are left without the fiscal capacity to invest responsibly. As usual in tough economic times, struggling Canadians and the most vulnerable, like first nations youth, are told they have to wait for help, wait for improved employment insurance, wait for a more secure retirement, wait for better health care, and wait for more affordable child care. Canadians have waited long enough.

As the progressive opposition, our New Democrat team will keep fighting to ensure everyone pays their fair share, everyone is taken care of, and no one is left behind.

Thank you. *Merci. On continue.*

[Translation]

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Outremont for his passion for democracy.

[English]

This is a historic budget for investment in children. In 2011 there were 392,105 indigenous children in Canada. The child benefit would do a lot to ensure that these families and single mothers and single fathers will have the means to support and look after their children. Six thousand dollars a year would be going to young mothers who are going to school and living in a one-bedroom apartment, like my friend Melanie. I am proud of Melanie and I hope this child benefit will allow her to complete her education and support her young son.

There is a problem. We need to ensure, though, that provincial governments do not roll back these supports, especially for families on social assistance. Is the NDP willing to work to ensure that provinces make a difference in the lives of our most vulnerable citizens and do not claw back these benefits?

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

[Translation]

I thank him, but I do not understand why he referred to me as “membre” in French. However, I will proceed.

[English]

He knows that the suicide rates among indigenous youth are many times higher than the national average, and so are levels of unemployment. That is why I am disappointed that the Liberals have failed to live up to their promises to first nations youth.

Despite a ruling from the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ordering the government to end its discriminatory underfunding of child welfare services on reserves, this budget would shortchange first nations education by \$230 million and first nations child welfare by \$130 million this year alone.

Instead of asking us what provinces are doing, why does the member not assume the responsibilities of his government at the federal level, which is to meet the requirements set down by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal?

The Liberals are all talk and no action.

• (1545)

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, allow me to express my respect for the dignified conduct of the leader of the second opposition party on Sunday in Edmonton. He is truly an inspiration to everyone in politics.

I have had the pleasure of knowing the leader of the second opposition party for years. Many issues divide us. However, during the last election campaign, one thing that united our two parties, the Conservative Party and the NDP, was the fact that we did not want Canada to end up with another deficit.

This government was voted in on an election promise that it would run a very small deficit of \$10 billion. Now reality is catching up to the government. The deficit is three times greater than planned.

I would like to hear what the hon. member for Outremont has to say about that situation. Is he pleased to see that this government, which was elected on a promise to run a small deficit, is now planning to run a deficit that is three times greater?

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, with thanks to my colleague, I would like to say that the biggest deficit lies in their credibility. They spoke a great deal during the election campaign about helping people out. That is what I find myself focusing on every time I speak on this issue.

It is not as if we had a narrow vision on this subject. We have always said that in times of economic difficulty, it is necessary to spend to avoid chaos. I said so during the campaign, and we were the first to say so in 2008. If people are going to be suffering, people who have lost their jobs, the government has to help them out, instead of stealing \$7 billion from the employment insurance fund.

That is what we would have done, and that is what is sadly missing with the Liberals, who tend to leave people out in the cold, instead of reducing the inequalities in our society.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to thank the hon. member for Outremont and leader of the NDP for the tireless work he has done and all the energy he has invested since becoming party leader after the death of Jack Layton.

I am happy that he talked about the credibility deficit, because the government has given ample evidence of this on the employment insurance issue, as was mentioned by the leader of the NDP. While there are a few satisfactory measures that we support, the budget falls short on reversing the employment insurance reform that was implemented by the previous government in 2012.

The Budget

The current government promised to reverse that reform, not just some parts of it. Among other things, it is talking about extending benefits by five weeks for certain regions, not for the whole country. The previous government eliminated what was called the pilot project, which put an end to the black-hole period between the end of benefits and the start of employment income for seasonal workers. Benefit extensions are being granted for 12 regions of the country, but there is nothing for Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and the parts of Quebec and Ontario that are suffering.

I would like to hear the comments of the hon. member for Outremont on the Liberal government's double standard.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Indeed, we have only to consider the hon. member for Beauséjour, who is today the House leader of the new Liberal government, to see all the promises that were made and the gap that has opened up when it comes to keeping those promises.

He is a member from New Brunswick, where people are suffering a great deal. Not only is there a real, endemic budgetary problem in that province, but the difficulties in western Canada have had a boomerang effect, because a great many New Brunswickers earned their salary out there and then brought it back home to their families in New Brunswick.

This is an extremely serious problem, and the Liberals have managed to invent a system where, even in places with a huge increase in unemployment, they are doing nothing for people because people are not recognized as being part of a specific category. It is all pure theory. Everyone who loses a job has an equal need for assistance. It is absurd to start dividing things up as they are doing.

Instead of defending ministers who are scheming for their funding, I want to hear him stand up one day and tell us that, finally, the Liberals are going to keep their promises on employment insurance. In saying this I am thinking of my friend and former colleague, Yvon Godin. Employment insurance should be there for everyone when they lose their job.

• (1550)

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I also want to begin by telling my hon. colleague, the leader of the New Democratic Party, how much I respect his dignity, his perseverance, and his being in the House today to present a very important speech on this budget.

I find the budget deeply disappointing and perplexing. I know the hon. leader dedicated much of his speech to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the important priorities and promises that were made to first nations. It is too easy to condemn what is in the budget. There are \$8.4 billion for first nations, but there is, undoubtedly, a failure to meet the requirements for the care and protection of first nations children. That part is still a gap.

I want to ask a question for the member. There is a gap on environmental protection. In this place, all opposition parties in 2012 fought hard against the omnibus budget bill, Bill C-38, which

destroyed habitat protection under the Fisheries Act and destroyed the Environmental Assessment Act. Those devastating changes are not being reversed.

Will the hon. leader of the New Democratic Party agree with me and join in a call that the current Liberal government reverse immediately the destruction of habitat protection for our fisheries?

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, I will also add that the Navigable Waters Protection Act, a piece of legislation that is over 100 years old, was a precursor for the world in how to protect the environment. It was also gutted by the Conservatives, and the Liberals have not given the slightest indication that they are going to bring it back, despite the fact that they promised 25 times that they would do just that.

I was with the member in Paris, so she knows as well as I do that the Liberals perpetrated a fraud on Canadians when they claimed they were doing something about climate change. It is completely false. They have no plan whatsoever. Canada is going to be increasing its greenhouse gas emissions every single year of the current government. That is a failure. It is a failure for future generations. It is a failure to follow through on a key promise it was making.

Therefore, yes, I could not agree more with my colleague from the Green Party that, on matters of the environment, like many other areas, the Liberals talk a good game; but actions speak louder than words, and they completely fall short on these crucial issues. There is nothing more important for the future of the planet than for us to start doing something about climate change.

In Canada, for 20 years, there have been successive Liberal and Conservative governments. The Liberals signed it the last time and went on to have one of the worst records in the world. The Conservatives were climate change deniers. Now the Liberals are back in power, arms wide open in Paris, saying Canada is back. Yes, we are back with the Conservative plan, the Conservative timeline, the Conservative targets, and they will not even meet those.

Mr. John Oliver (Oakville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the member for Scarborough Centre.

It is an honour to rise in the House today and speak in favour of budget 2016. During the last election and through extensive pre-budget consultations, I heard personally from many people in Oakville. Oakvillians shared their concerns about jobs and job security. Many felt trapped in poor-quality jobs or had family members who were struggling in a sluggish economy.

Young families expressed concerns about the cost of day care and their struggles to make ends meet. Many seniors and young Canadians said they also were having difficulty making ends meet. The root causes were different, and different solutions will be required, but if we do not act to help, the outcome is the same: people trapped in poverty or people trapped in underemployment.

The Budget

The Town of Oakville, Halton Region, and many business owners talked about failing infrastructure and problems with road congestion. Owners of small and medium-sized businesses spoke about their concerns with access to trained workforces and support for the innovation and entrepreneurship that has been a staple of the Canadian economy. They are also worried about the slow economy and the need for revitalization and stimulus.

Social agencies expressed concerns about housing, poverty, inadequate shelters from violence, and care for the elderly. Green advocates like the Halton Environmental Network and Oakvillegreen raised concerns about reliance on greenhouse gases and the need to move our economy from a carbon dependency.

Many residents of Oakville were concerned about the loss of federal investments in arts and culture, and particularly the reduction in funding to the CBC.

The reason I am so honoured to rise and speak today is my confidence that this budget will begin to address these myriad concerns and many others that I have not specifically addressed. Let me speak to some of the specific budget provisions.

For young families, budget 2016 would introduce the Canada child benefit. This would provide families with a maximum benefit of up to \$6,400 per child under the age of six, and up to \$5,400 per child aged six through 17. With the Canada child benefit, more than three million families would receive more benefits than before—on average, \$2,300 more per year, tax-free. This would lift almost 300,000 children out of poverty.

For young Canadians, budget 2016 would ensure that students graduating from college or university would not have to start paying back their student loans until they make at least \$25,000 in annual income. Budget 2016 would boost grants to low- and middle-income college and university students by as much as \$1,000 per year. This measure would put more money in the pockets of 360,000 students a year.

The introduction of a flat-rate student contribution to determine eligibility for Canada student grants and loans would encourage students to work and gain valuable labour market experience while studying. This measure would provide assistance of \$268 million over four years. Employment opportunities for youth are also planned through an investment of an additional \$165 million in 2016-17 for the youth employment strategy, and \$300 million over three years for the Canada summer jobs program to create 35,000 additional youth jobs each year.

When I met with young Canadians who were progressing after post-secondary education with jobs and low debt, many had benefited from co-op placements. Co-op placements provide essential networks and in-year funding to help with educational costs. Support for new co-op placements and work-integrated learning opportunities for young Canadians is planned in the budget through an investment of \$73 million over four years for the post-secondary partnership and co-op placement initiative.

To help universities and colleges develop highly skilled workers, to act as engines of discovery and support the growth of innovative firms, budget 2016 would provide up to \$2 billion over three years

for strategic projects to improve research and innovation infrastructure.

For seniors, the budget would increase the guaranteed income supplement benefit for single seniors up to \$947 annually to help lift low-income single seniors out of poverty. This measure represents an investment of \$670 million per year and would improve the financial security of about 900,000 single seniors across Canada.

The government would restore the eligibility age for old age security and guaranteed income supplement benefits to 65, which would put thousands of dollars back in the pockets of Canadians as they become seniors.

● (1555)

Budget 2016 provides infrastructure support for the construction, repair and adaptation of affordable housing for seniors through an investment of \$201 million over two years to help the many seniors facing challenges in accessing affordable housing.

To improve the retirement income security for all working Canadians, the government has begun discussions with the provinces and territories to enhance the Canada pension plan, a portable, low-cost and defined benefit pension.

To grow the economy and create jobs, phase 1 of the infrastructure plan invests \$11.9 billion to build roads, bridges, improve public transit, improve water and waste water facilities, and refurbish affordable housing. This will create tens of thousands of jobs and boost the economy. Specifically, the government will invest \$3.4 billion over the next three years to upgrade and improve public transit; \$5 billion over five years for investments in water, waste water, and green infrastructure projects; and \$3.4 billion over five years for social infrastructure, including affordable housing, early learning and child care, and cultural and recreational infrastructure.

In addition to the new funding announced in budget 2016, the government will continue to make available approximately \$3 billion each year in dedicated funding for municipal infrastructure projects through the gas tax fund and incremental goods and service tax rebates for municipalities.

To help businesses and manufacturers of all sizes, budget 2016 makes available up to \$800 million over four years, starting in 2017-18, to support innovation, networks and clusters.

The Budget

To support an innovative automotive sector, budget 2016 announces the extension of the automotive innovation fund through to the end of 2021. The government will also examine approaches to maximize the impact of federal support offered to the automotive sector, including assessing the terms of the fund.

To assist the transition to lower carbon transportation fuels, budget 2016 provides \$62 million over two years to support the deployment of electric vehicles and alternative transportation fuels infrastructure.

Building on Canada's proud history in space and to create employment opportunities for the space industry sector, budget 2016 proposes to provide up to \$379 million over eight years for the Canadian Space Agency to extend Canada's participation in the international space station to 2024.

For small and medium-sized enterprises that are receiving advice and project financing through the industrial research assistance program, budget 2016 proposes to provide the program with a further \$50 million in 2016-17.

Budget 2016 invests in the Canadian cultural sector to create jobs and ensure that our unique Canadian perspective is shared with the world. Included in this allocation are \$1.3 billion in support for long-standing arts and cultural organizations, such as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Radio-Canada, the Canada Council for the Arts, Telefilm Canada, and the National Film Board.

Canada will also be able to showcase Canadian artists and cultural industries abroad with an investment of \$35 million over two years, which will immediately help Canadian foreign missions promote Canadian culture and creativity on the world stage, particularly in the lead-up to the Canada 150 celebrations.

As I said at the outset, I am proud to rise and speak to the benefits of this budget for the people of Oakville, for Canadians and for our economy. This budget specifically addresses the concerns I have heard in my community. It puts us on a course for economic growth, expands opportunities for the middle class, and for those striving to be in the middle class.

Finally, this budget allows the government to reach out with help for those most in need in our communities.

• (1600)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I have to admit that I am more torn than I want to be with respect to this budget. I was expecting so much more. I really did believe we would see the kinds of investments into infrastructure that would stimulate our economy, thus justifying the deep deficit. I find myself so deeply disappointed that the \$120 billion for infrastructure spending is 90% tilted to after the next election. We see \$11.9 billion in infrastructure, but that is for phase one, which is five years long. The other 90% of what is promised for infrastructure is supposed to come mostly in years seven, eight, nine and ten.

As a Liberal member of Parliament, does he believe this budget is like training wheels on a bike and next year we will see the real budget? This falls so far short of what we had been led to believe we would see for the environment, for first nations, and for infrastructure. I feel as though there is another shoe about to drop somewhere.

Mr. John Oliver: Mr. Speaker, this budget is about an inclusive and fair Canada. It is about families, and I did not mention the tax cut for the middle class. It is about supporting families through the Canada child benefit. It is about growing a robust economy.

The infrastructure investments that I recited are there, and they are significant investments. What I like best about them is that those dollars go directly to the communities to make decisions on what is most important to their communities. Therefore, we have spending decisions being made very close to where the dollars are needed, and that maximizes the federal investment.

I am very proud of this budget. I believe it fulfills the commitments that were made during the election period.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during question period today, I asked about what the government is really doing to help small and medium-sized businesses, which are the real job creators in Canada. The government broke another one of its promises, the one about cutting the small business tax rate from 11% to 9%.

That drew a reaction from the president of the local chamber of commerce in my region. He was concerned about the size of the deficit in the latest budget and the fact that our grandchildren will be forced to foot the bill.

The government is making all kinds of announcements and promising to do all kinds of things, but it is not really creating jobs and it does not really have a plan for economic growth. Basically, this budget is more about putting out press releases than actually doing something.

When will we find out what the government really plans to do? I would like the member to comment on that.

What will this budget do for small and medium-sized businesses? It is clear to us and to regional stakeholders that this budget contains nothing for them.

• (1605)

[*English*]

Mr. John Oliver: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the member was not listening during my 10-minute address, but I recited many examples of the investments that we were making in small and medium-sized businesses to ensure they prospered in Canada. I will not recite them again. Most important, we are investing in the middle class, in families, and in infrastructure to create thousands of new jobs.

Small and medium-sized businesses need customers. We need a strong and robust middle class to ensure this economy grows and supports those businesses to which the member referred.

The Budget

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on a point that the member made reference to, which is the tax break for our middle class.

We need to realize that a major platform issue for the Liberal Party was to give strength to the middle class. We have seen the tax cut incorporated in the budget and whether one is a firefighter, or teacher, or an industry worker, or whatever profession, part of that middle class is getting a substantial tax break. By doing this, we are giving more disposal income to Canada's middle class. Ultimately, we are allowing for more spending, which helps small businesses, families, and the economy.

Would the member agree that by doing this we are getting a healthier middle class and thereby a healthier Canadian economy? Would he agree that this is a good thing?

Mr. John Oliver: Mr. Speaker, as was mentioned, this budget lowered taxes for nine million people. Nine out of ten Canadians are receiving on average \$2,300 more in the Canada child benefit. This is how to grow the middle class, and with growth in the middle class, we are supporting the economy.

Therefore, I absolutely support the comments that were made by my colleague through his question. I believe we are setting Canada back on the right track for growth in the economy, growth in the middle class, and a fair and equitable country.

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): It is a new day for Canadian families, Mr. Speaker, and it is a true privilege to rise in the House to speak in favour of the government's budget. This is a budget that finally gives middle-class families and those working hard to join them a long overdue helping hand.

My riding of Scarborough Centre is a community of hard-working middle-class families. We are a diverse community hailing from all corners of the world, all proud Canadians working hard to provide a better life for our children.

We are not afraid of hard work in Scarborough. We know that to put in an honest day's work to provide for our families is a noble thing. It is the responsibility our parents taught us and we are working hard to instill that in our children.

For far too long middle-class families have gone without a raise. They have watched their rent go up and groceries get more expensive, while their paycheques never keep up.

We value hope and hard work, but we also believe that hard-working middle-class families deserve a little help from their government. After a decade in the dark, finally middle-class families have a government that is listening.

The first thing this government did was to lower taxes for nine million middle-class families, and budget 2016 builds on that investment in our middle class by introducing the Canada child benefit.

Unlike the program of the previous government, which sent cheques to millionaires who did not need the help, this government's Canada child benefit is targeted to those families that need help the most. Low and middle-income families will receive more benefits under this program and it will not be clawed back when they file

their taxes. The program is simpler with families able to count on a single payment every month and it is more generous with eligible families seeing an average annual increase of \$2,300.

Families that earn less than \$30,000 will receive the maximum benefit and nine out of ten families will see an increase in benefits. Best of all, thanks to this investment, 300,000 fewer children will be living in poverty by 2016-17 compared to 2014-15.

For the many families in my riding where both parents are working just to keep up with the cost of living, the Canada child benefit provides much needed relief. Combined with this budget's infrastructure investments in early learning and child care, parents can sleep more soundly at night knowing their children's futures are a little more secure.

Invariably though, our children grow up. As a mother, I unfortunately see this myself. It is sometimes hard to accept my two boys are now teenagers getting ready to go to university. Soon after that they will be entering the workforce. I worry about the opportunities that will be there for them and if they will have the chance to succeed to their potential.

My husband and I have been saving for our sons' education and I am lucky to have a job that will make it a little easier to send them off to school. However, not all families have that opportunity. The cost of post-secondary education has been escalating dramatically for years. We are saddling our children with crippling debt just as they try to begin their adult lives.

I believe there is no better investment a government can make than in our young people. The dollars we invest in post-secondary education will come back to the public coffers many times over as today's confident and dynamic students become tomorrow's innovators and job creators.

First, we need to give our youth a fair chance at success. With budget 2016, we are giving Canada's youth that opportunity. The budget increases the size of Canada's student grants to help students from low and middle-income families cope with the rising costs of post-secondary education. With assistance of \$1.53 billion over five years, students from low-income families will now be eligible for non-repayable grants of up to \$3,000 annually, an increase of 50%.

The government is also expanding eligibility for the Canada student grants program to help even more students receive non-repayable assistance.

Also, to not unfairly burden recent graduates just beginning their careers or looking for that important first job just out of school, the budget would raise the loan repayment threshold under the Canada student loans program repayment assistance plan to ensure that no student would have to begin repaying their Canada student loans until they earned at least \$25,000 per year.

The Budget

●(1610)

Helping with post-secondary education is only part of the process. Canada has a youth unemployment rate that is stubbornly above the national average. Too many young people are graduating from university and having trouble finding that all-important first job, or indeed any job. They are staying in or returning to their parents' homes longer, and delaying beginning their own families as they struggle to begin their professional lives.

Our government recognizes this challenge, and with budget 2016, we are taking concrete action. We are investing an additional \$165.4 million in 2016-17 for the youth employment strategy, and another \$105 million over five years in youth services to help young Canadians gain valuable work and life experience.

As well, with the support of \$73 million over four years for the post-secondary industry partnership and co-operative placement initiative, more young Canadians will have access to co-op placement and work-integrated learning opportunities to help them land that important first career-oriented job even sooner.

We must give our youth the skills to compete in the economy of the future, but we must also ensure that our economy is built on a solid foundation. That means investing in our infrastructure. Businesses will not grow and invest in Canada and hire Canadians if we do not have the infrastructure to ensure their employees can get to work and their goods can get to the market.

When we talk about deficits, and I know we will in this debate, we cannot forget the infrastructure deficit. This is the delayed investment in our crumbling infrastructure, from highways and transit to ports and sewers, that according to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, had reached \$123 billion by 2014. We cannot afford to pass this debt on to our future generation. Failing to address it puts our future economic prosperity at risk.

This government is not afraid to act. With budget 2016, our government is tackling this infrastructure deficit with an historic investment of more than \$120 billion over 10 years.

The investment includes \$3.4 billion to upgrade and improve public transit systems in Canada. My own community of Scarborough is underserved by higher order transit, and this investment will allow my constituents to get to work more quickly and then back home to their families.

With \$3.4 billion over five years for social infrastructure, our government is finally moving to address the affordable housing crisis in this country. Too many people in Toronto are seeing most of their paycheques going to rent, leaving them to make hard choices when it comes to putting food on the table and investing in their children's future. Affordable housing must become a priority in this country.

Lastly, but certainly not least, please allow me to talk about Canada's seniors. These are citizens who have worked hard all their lives. They helped to build Canada into one of the greatest countries in the world. We owe it to them to ensure that they have the opportunity to retire with the dignity and security they have earned and deserve.

However, I know too many seniors in my riding for whom that dream of a secure and dignified retirement is just that, a dream. Too

many seniors are finding it more and more difficult to cope with the rising cost of living on a fixed income. More and more seniors are living in poverty. This is a shame that should not be acceptable in a country like Canada.

This budget takes immediate action to help our most vulnerable seniors by increasing the guaranteed income supplement top-up benefit for single seniors to up to \$947 annually to help lift low-income single seniors out of poverty. This is an investment of some \$670 million that will provide improved financial security to about 900,000 single seniors across Canada.

We will also restore the eligibility age for old age security and guaranteed income supplement benefits to age 65, a move that will put thousands of dollars back in the pockets of Canadians as they become seniors.

●(1615)

As part of our investment in social infrastructure, budget 2016 includes an investment of \$200.7 million over two years to support the construction, repair, and adaptation of affordable housing for seniors to help the many seniors facing challenges in accessible affordable housing.

There are many more good things in budget 2016, but by investing in our youth, our seniors, and in middle-class families, this budget presents a blueprint for a better Canada, a Canada where we reward hard work, help those who need a hand, and work to ensure that every Canadian has the opportunity to achieve his or her potential.

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the remarks of the member for Scarborough Centre and, as always, I listened very attentively to the question posed by the member for Winnipeg North to the previous speaker. I continue to hear about this middle-income tax cut.

This morning we had finance officials at the finance committee, and we broke down the numbers. The hard numbers are this. For single income earners in that so-called middle class, it is a \$330 increase in their pockets annually. For couples, on average it is \$540 annually. When we do the math, it comes out to about 90¢ a day.

I am sure that this member has a number of Tim Hortons in her particular riding. I would like to ask the member for Scarborough Centre how many cups of coffee she could buy for 90¢ on a daily basis, because that is what the middle-income tax cut actually works out to be. What will 90¢ a day buy and thereby enhance this consumer spending that these folks keep talking about?

The Budget

• (1620)

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Mr. Speaker, after 10 years of weak growth, Canadians have voted for a change. We ran on a commitment to reinvest in Canada's infrastructure and middle-class families, after many years of neglect by the previous government. We were clear that this will mean several years of budgetary deficits, but invest we must. Canadians understand this. We will invest in our middle-class families. Our middle-class tax breaks have already benefited nine million Canadians since January.

[Translation]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, our colleague said that families can now sleep soundly because they will be getting a child benefit. I doubt that the 1.4 million unemployed Canadians are sleeping soundly or that the 900,000 Canadians who are working part-time but not by choice can sleep soundly. Given the sky-high cost of child care, I doubt that families are sleeping soundly.

I would like my colleague to explain how parents can sleep soundly when there is no money for child care this year and just \$500 million next year.

[English]

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Mr. Speaker, our plan to strengthen the middle class and grow the economy would lead to a country where people who work hard can look forward to a good standard of living, a secure retirement, and better prospects for their children. Our Canada child benefit will lift 300,000 children out of poverty. That speaks for itself. Nine out of ten families would benefit from the Canada child benefit.

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank the member for an important contribution to the debate in the House on the budget. I wonder if she can elaborate for the members what sort of benefits she is going to see in her riding for her constituents and how important this budget would be for them.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Mr. Speaker, we are investing in Canada's economy. I had one constituent in the summer tell me at the doorstep that when the pipes in the house are leaking we do not rush to pay the mortgage off early; we take out a home improvement loan and we fix the pipes. Well, Canada's pipes are leaking, and we are going to fix them by investing in Canada's economy and lifting 300,000 children out of poverty.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to say that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Calgary Shepard.

We have now been exposed to the finance minister's first budget. It contains no surprises. We all knew that the budget would not balance itself. We all knew that the Prime Minister's campaign promise of a \$10-billion deficit was, to use parliamentary language, wishful thinking. Now we know the truth. The Liberals are in favour of undisciplined spending, have no plan to balance the books, will fail to boost economic growth, and are raising taxes on families, individuals, and small businesses.

Take, for example, how this budget treats families. Half of all couples with children are at risk of being financially worse off under this new Liberal plan. The new Liberal child benefit plan will

support fewer middle-class families than the previous universal child care benefit. Personal income tax is going up, as the government has eliminated income splitting for families. They have cancelled the plan to expand the tax-free savings account, the tax credit for fitness and arts, and tax credits for post-secondary education and textbooks.

This budget does nothing to help small businesses. In fact, it appears designed to hurt them. Keeping the small business tax rate at 10.5% instead of lowering it to the scheduled 9% and ending the hiring credit for small businesses does nothing to support entrepreneurs or the 1.7 million Canadians employed in the manufacturing sector.

By increasing income taxes, the Liberals are making it harder to keep talented workers and innovators in Canada. Raising taxes on businesses will not help the 100,000 Canadians who have recently been laid off in the oil and gas industry. The Liberals are raising taxes on job-creating businesses. The previous Conservative government created a low-tax competitive business environment to drive investment and create hundreds of thousands of private sector jobs.

Let us look at the philosophy behind this budget. Canadians need jobs in these uncertain times to allow for a bit of security. Do the Liberals understand this? Apparently, they do not. Despite the rhetoric about investing in infrastructure and innovation, the budget does little to build infrastructure and invest in innovation. It is really about growing the size of government. Hiring more civil servants is not the best way to grow Canada's economy. When the government spends taxpayers' money, it needs to do so with a purpose. It needs to ensure fiscal responsibility and results. This budget provides for neither.

The Liberals are borrowing four times more money than they promised they would. They are borrowing \$30 billion this year alone, and \$100 billion over four years combined. The Liberals have no plan to balance the books. They promised that they would balance the budget by 2019. Now they plan to borrow more money every year, with no end in sight. The promise of a small deficit has been replaced by the promise of a colossal deficit, and they hope that the Canadian people will not notice.

Even more disturbing than this huge deficit is the lack of a long-range plan. It is not enough for the government to say it intends to balance the budget at some hypothetical date in the future. Where is the plan to pay back the money that it is borrowing right now, next year, and the year after that to support its reckless spending agenda?

The Budget

The Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister seem proud to tell us that they will not balance the budget in four years. They hope we will not notice that during that time they will add \$150 billion to the national debt, with no plan to pay the money back. That means there will be almost \$1 billion more debt in interest alone every year, just to satisfy their urge to spend, spend, spend.

The Prime Minister is very good at saying the Liberals are therefore the middle class, even if he cannot define who is in the middle class. With his budget, his gift to each and every Canadian in the middle class, upper class, or lower class is an additional \$818.03 in debt, and that is not counting the interest payments.

•(1625)

With an even larger amount to be added next year, the Liberals are bribing Canadians with their own money and hoping no one will notice when it comes time to pay the bills.

Once again, the government has lost the opportunity to do more than offer political platitudes to unemployed Canadians. It has missed the opportunity to offer support to our energy industry, support that would not cost a dime, by endorsing the energy east pipeline project.

The Prime Minister apparently thinks this is a good time for government to borrow money. The Liberals are going into debt because they can. With no regard to fiscal prudence, they have no idea how to pay the money back. That will be someone else's problem after this government is gone.

Almost all Canadians can agree that getting into debt is easy. Getting out of it is hard. Sadly, there are at least two who do not understand that: the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister. They are determined to crush the country with debt.

How does the budget help individual Canadians? Personal income taxes would be set to go up by \$1.3 billion this year and \$2.4 billion next year, due to the elimination of income splitting and higher rates on incomes over \$200,000. The new Canada child benefit would come at the expense of existing child benefits. At least 10% of families would be losing such support altogether.

Once again, the Liberal record is one of broken promises, whether it is increased spending on palliative care or the elimination of community mailboxes.

When it comes to spending taxpayers' money, the Liberals just cannot help themselves. This debt would need to be paid back by future generations. The government thinks that is fair. After all, our generation is still paying off the deficit spending of previous Liberal governments, so why should our children not be in debt?

At the end of last year, the Liberals had more than \$3 billion in the bank. They have blown through that money and now need to break their election promise and borrow even more. Economists say that the Liberals will rack up more than \$150 billion in debt over the next four years. This is not a one-year operation. This is the beginning of years of deficits, a mortgage on our country's future.

At some point the Liberals will reluctantly come to the conclusion that budgets really do not balance themselves. Such statements are either wishful thinking or fiscal ignorance. How would they deal

with this deficit? How would they pay for their spending schemes? The Liberals would raise taxes even more for hard-working Canadian families and job-creating businesses.

Job-creating businesses will not invest in Canada if they do not know the cost of doing business. Saddling businesses with higher taxes, changing the rules of the game when they are not looking, and handing borrowed money from one politician to another will not create jobs.

More than 100,000 Canadians from across the country are out of work in the oil and gas industry alone. The budget offers them no hope for their future, no admission that our energy industry is key to our overall economic health. We know the recipe for job creation. It is low taxes, low red tape, open competition, free trade, successful businesses, and responsible spending of taxpayers' money. That is what the government should focus on. Instead, what we have is platitudes and promises. That is not good enough, unless one is a Liberal.

•(1630)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to double-check if the member is really sure he wants to reinstate the lower taxes for the one-tenth of Canadians. It is over a fifth of a million dollars for one-tenth of families, which he said.

That money, \$6,400, would go to a single mother with a child. She may have had trouble feeding that child nutritious food. She would be able to clothe that child and send him or her to sports and arts, buy school supplies, and send the child on school trips with other children.

That money goes to the poorest of poor seniors in the country—

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Who cancelled the arts credit? Who cancelled the sports credit?

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Yes, Mr. Speaker, that was \$150. This person gets \$6,400. What is the choice?

I want to double-check if the member is really serious about giving that back to the one-tenth of richest Canadians, over a fifth of a million dollars. They are not complaining actually, because they are generous, as part of Canada. Is he opposed to providing that money for children who have a hard time eating, or being clothed, or going on school trips, or to seniors who have to choose between heat and food?

The Budget

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, basically, the Liberals were very successful with their rhetoric. They put in big words. They talked about small families. They talked about taking away from the rich. They talked about all kinds of things. They are taking away more from Canadian families than they are giving to them. I would urge members opposite to read the budget and go through it carefully. The Liberals are proposing to eliminate income support for families, cancel the TFSA, cancel credits for post-secondary education, and cancel credits for textbooks. All of that is not going to help Canadians. It is going to add more burden and more taxes onto Canadian taxpayers. We will see what will happen. The Liberals are going to increase taxes and they are going to dig deeper into the pockets of Canadian taxpayers.

• (1635)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am also surprised to hear the hon. member refer favourably to the previous government's record on debt. Although Conservatives generally have a reputation for being concerned about debt, I watched closely as the former prime minister took our national debt from \$482 billion, the year before he took office, to \$612 billion, an increase of \$130 billion. That is a substantially large portion of the entire federal debt since Confederation.

While I agree that we want to see a plan to get out of deficit from the current Liberal government, I would advise the hon. member that he is in a pretty glass house, and a lot of people around here have stones.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, I hope that is not a threat from an environmental advocate in the House.

I would like to point out that the issue of how much debt we left the country with has been going back and forth for some time. The debt service was \$23 million a year from the previous Liberal government, which we had to maintain for nine years. If we left a \$150 billion deficit, we had already paid from that previous debt another \$50 billion, while managing the economy and being fiscally responsible throughout the nine years that we were governing this great country.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in short, there is always a problem. We just went through this budget. One of the big issues is that we gave the current government a surplus of \$3.4 billion. It has blown through that, and now it is projecting a deficit of \$30 billion. The Liberals' platform was that we would have a moderate deficit of \$10 billion, pay off the balance, and have a balanced budget in three years. By the way, Liberals would take money from rich people and give it to the middle class.

We have to understand that the middle class in Canada under the Conservative Party is the wealthiest it has ever been. Canada is the second most preferable country in which to do business. However, who will benefit most? It is people who make just under \$200,000 a year. Now the Liberals are 300% out on their budget. The tax break was neutral, but it would now cost \$2 billion per year.

Could the member give us an idea of how Canadians can trust the budget and the Liberals' accountability?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, two things are flying all over the place. First of all is the misunderstanding, or pretense of

misunderstanding, of the definition of the middle class by the Liberal government members throughout their campaign; and they still seem to be on the campaign trail. Second, if we have any understanding of economic indices and economic formulas, we see that the Liberals are going to put the country in debt and increase taxes. Liberals are spending Canadians' money out of their pockets and telling them they are doing this for them, but asking them to give them their mortgages, money, and savings. That does not serve Canada or Canadians.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, "You cannot pay a debt with a noble pedigree"; so says a Yiddish proverb. Paying down a debt takes fiscal prudence. A famous name or the performance of past governments is no replacement.

Last month I attended a financial help session aimed at laid-off professionals and skilled trades workers from the energy sector. The highlight was a presentation by the Credit Counselling Society that offered four steps for dealing with reduced incomes, budget drainers, and impulse spending.

After looking at this budget, I see the government needs to sit down and take credit counselling advice from the Calgary Credit Counselling Society. On its behalf, I am going to invite the government caucus to join me as I walk through the four steps to a sunnier tomorrow. The first step is finding sources of income that are available; it is pretty good at that. The second is finding ways to reduce expenses; not so good. Third is managing credit; equally not very good. Fourth is dealing with debts immediately; not very good.

On the first part, namely finding sources of income, the Liberals deserve a gold star. They are masters at squeezing Canadians out of just about \$20 billion in tax hikes in this budget and, for business, \$2 billion per year in higher taxes by 2019, and renegeing on the planned tax cut for the latter and eliminating a series of tax credits for the former.

"Other sources of income" in this case, of course, is new borrowing. The aggregate principal amount of money to be borrowed by the government from financial markets in 2016-17 is projected to be \$278 billion, over \$100 billion of new debt before the next election.

The result, calculated by Generation Screwed, an advocacy group for Canadian youth, is an annual interest bill of \$25.7 billion in this fiscal year alone, or 8.8% of tax dollars spent on interest.

The Budget

The Credit Counselling Society of Calgary also gave advice on how to temporarily increase income, from temporary work to part-time work to snow removal and bottle collection. I am not recommending that the government put its MPs to work collecting bottles to pay down the national debt, but I am also not saying that it would not help.

On page 211, the government lays out a plan to eliminate poorly targeted and inefficient measures, but if it is anything like what it did to the education and textbook tax credits or income splitting or the small business tax rate reduction or the slashing of the tax-free savings account maximum, the Liberals are looking in all the wrong places for this temporary new income.

The second step offered by the Credit Counselling Society toward financial freedom is to find ways to reduce expenses. I am afraid the counselling society would sit the government down and give it heartbreaking news. It is failing and doing it all wrong.

The Liberals have thrown caution to the wind, undoing much of the spending controls put in place by the previous government and ending this past fiscal year \$5.4 billion in deficit. The Liberal government has presented us with a proposed \$29.4 billion budget deficit for 2016 and \$113 billion in new debt over the next four years.

The election pitch put forward by members on that side of the House was to run modest deficits of \$10 billion. Now we find out that the numbers are triple that, closer to \$30 billion. The money is not going towards infrastructure in the vast quantities it promised. Half of the \$120 billion total the government promotes is rehashed spending from the previous government.

A paltry 13.5% of the \$29.4 billion in this fiscal year, or less than \$4 billion, is actually designated for infrastructure. The Calgary Green Line LRT alone is estimated to cost \$1.5 billion, and the construction start date is 2017. The previous Conservative government committed the funding, so will the government commit to it too? We do not know; it does not appear in the budget.

In fact, Calgary gets only one mention, for its ring road project completion. It is nice to see the government living up to the smart spending promises of the previous Conservative government.

Now the Credit Counselling Society says to use accurate numbers to work with, evaluate habits, and identify where changes can be made.

We learned these past few days that the parliamentary budget office had to publicly force the government to release further documents that were standard in past budgets, with information request IR0217.

The PBO also revised downwards the employment impact numbers, for not one but two fiscal years. In 2016-17, it was down to 26,000 jobs from Finance Canada's 43,000 jobs. For 2017-18, it was down to 60,000 from 100,000 jobs.

Many tools exist to make budget tracking easier. I am going to recommend the smart phone apps Mint or TrackIt from the Alberta Treasury Branches. I am happy to sit down with the Minister of Finance, download it to his phone, and get it working so that he can begin tracking his government's spending habits. We could identify

some of those budget drainers the credit counsellors keep warning against.

● (1640)

The budget is littered with half measures with expensive price tags. For example, on page 257 of the budget document, under "Other spending measures", there is a subheading that also reads "Other measures", and there is a whopping \$620 million this fiscal year and \$292 million in the next. Out of the 10 line items in there, it happens to be the biggest one, so the other of the other is actually the most expensive thing that the Liberals are spending on.

Just as Canadians track their expenses, the Liberals too should focus on what is straining their budget by asking themselves where the money is going.

Here is a question a credit counsellor might ask: "Are you helping out someone, such as family or friends, when you cannot afford it?"

I have noticed that on almost every single international visit, the Liberals come bearing gifts. For example, in their first 100 days in power, they made \$5.3 billion in spending commitments. There was just \$997 million for projects inside Canada, and the rest, \$4.3 billion, is to be spent outside the country.

Now, the logic and accounting here are pretty darn simple. Do we want to get into financial trouble? If not, then we either have to start making more money, cut back on expenses, or both. It is a simple principle that credit counsellors apply and one that would not hurt the Liberals to adopt.

This budget is especially troubling for families like the McAllisters in my riding: Maja and Darcy, and their kids Liam and Veronica. Darcy makes his living in the oil and gas industry, like thousands of others in my riding, and they are seeing a government completely undermining the source of their prosperity.

The third part of Calgary's Credit Counselling Society's strategy is to deal with one's debt. The government misses the mark here yet again. We see on page 53 a mention that they will repeal the Federal Balanced Budget Act. There will not be amendments, but a complete and entire repeal, a full elimination of the act. Not only do the Liberals have a spending problem, but they will not admit that they need to be put on a debt diet.

To deal with government, we typically see a series of fiscal anchors—legislative and policy measures—that help guide the government's overall efforts to control spending. However, the Liberals do not have these here. In fact, they have dropped the only anchor straight into an abyss of perpetual debt.

The Budget

As an Albertan, I look to the former example of Premier Ralph Klein and his deficit- and debt-fighting battle. He won because he created strong legislative anchors. He and his ministers fixed strong policy measures as well. Most of all, he provided fixed, strong leadership on what he needed and wanted to achieve. Ralph Klein, Jim Dinning, Steve West, Stockwell Day, and many others provided leadership provincially and knew when to drop anchor and balance Alberta's budget.

However, the current government offers us annex 3 on page 259, the debt management strategy, which is more concerned with where new debt will be acquired rather than with how it will be paid down. Credit counsellors point out that among the top reasons for financial struggle among Canadians is the excessive use of credit for living expenses. What the Liberals are proposing is the same principle.

Let us not forget that there is an interest cost for borrowing such huge amounts of money, so let us look at what happens when government increases debt. The Ontario Liberal government spent \$11.4 billion a year just to make interest payments on its debt. If debt were a government department, it would be the third largest in that province. Let us ask ourselves what future generations could do instead of paying interest on that debt.

However, it does not stop there.

We know that key interest rates have already gone up in the United States and that the Bank of Canada will eventually follow suit at some point in the near future. This will affect not only indebted consumers but also the amount of financial resources directed to debt servicing costs.

What will the Liberals do when interest rates rise or double? Are they saying it will not happen over the next decade or so? They have no plan.

Let us talk about impulse spending. Credit counsellors ask people if they have ever bought something and then regretted it. The acronym is TEMPO: time, environment, mood, place, and occasion. Credit counsellors offer some strategies to deal with this impulse spending, and I want to recommend a few things here.

The government should stop international trips, because those seem to be quite expensive. The Liberals should pay attention to details. They call it "stress fog" when someone buys on impulse. It would have helped the Liberals avoid the embarrassment of ending income splitting for couples with children and saying that it would be offset by raising taxes on the 1%, because the parliamentary budget officer said that no, that is actually not the case.

Is it possible that question period is stressing out the ministers responsible for the finances of our country? They would be less stressed if they brought real answers to the questions from this side of the House, and the truth is a great stress reliever.

The government needs to focus on prudence. The 1970s fiscal and economic policy led by another famous prime minister is of no help here. A famous name cannot save them here.

With this budget, the Liberals have thrown caution to the wind, betrayed the middle class, and placed Canada on a path of structural deficit. They have irresponsibly endangered our financial stability, meaning that in the next recession, with record spending and record

low interest rates, there will be no space for a future government to respond.

• (1645)

However, I bring good news: it is not too late to stop. I would be happy to share the presentation from the Credit Counselling Society, its contact information, and its flagship website, www.nomoredebts.org. Its advice is confidential. Good news: no-cost credit and budget counselling from the consumer experts is only a call away.

• (1650)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague mentioned that the budget is producing tax increases. Perhaps the hon. member has not actually seen the budget or reviewed it. There are actually \$3.4 billion in tax reductions for nine million Canadians in the budget.

The Conservative Party does not support our reduction of the TFSA limits. There were only approximately two million Canadians who actually maximized those contributions, yet that program would cost over \$210 million, and those who maximized their TFSAs were actually the highest-earning income earners in this country.

Is that prudent governance? Is it prudent governance to provide a costly program to a comparatively small number of Canadians, a program that actually does not help the majority of Canadians, the middle class, specifically?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, actually I have read the budget intently. It is highlighted, and I have Post-it Notes in it.

Let us talk about the numbers in the budget on pages 234 and 235 of Annex 1. Let us talk about the personal income tax numbers the Liberals have here, because what I see in this document is that over the next five years, they expect almost a 24% increase in personal income taxes. In fact, between the fiscal years 2016-17 and 2017-18, they expect to get \$10 billion more in personal income taxes from the taxpayers of this country.

When we talk about numbers, it is right here in black and white. Their expectations are completely offside and they really do not know what they are doing.

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that contribution from the member for Calgary Shepard. Frankly, he is being quite generous with his unsolicited credit counselling services.

I have a quick question for him. Where were these services in 2007? Where were these services in 2008? Where were these services in 2009? Where were these services in 2010? Where were these services in 2011? Where were these services in 2012? Where were these services in 2013? Where were these services in 2014?

I wonder why he was not willing to avail the former government of his wonderful credit counselling services during that decade of darkness.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for the question and for the passionate way he delivered it as well.

The Budget

As he knows, I am a rookie member of this House and I have just joined the floor here, but I have been an attentive spectator. As I remember it, it was that party when it was in opposition that demanded more spending. It wanted more spending. Actually, the Liberals aligned themselves with the New Democrats and the separatists in order to create a coalition government, demanding even more spending.

The Credit Counselling Society in Calgary has been there for decades. Any time they would like to call them, I am more than happy to provide the PowerPoint presentation. I will even provide the phone number. They can come to my riding and we can sit down together and have a great meeting over this document.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Calgary Shepard for his presentation. I very much enjoyed the allegory and the way he colourfully expressed the shortcomings of budget 2016. It was an excellent presentation.

At the very end of his presentation, he mentioned the difficulties around the challenges when we get into structural deficit. Perhaps the credit counsellors might say that capital deficit is one thing, but that when we get into structural deficit, the financing of day-to-day expenses through borrowing, it is a treadmill that is very difficult to get off and is extremely destructive as public policy.

Would he comment on the difference and on how the government is leading us directly down the road to structural deficit?

•(1655)

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, the member and I are both from Calgary. He is a great champion for the taxpayer.

What I would say on that is that on page 53 of the budget, we see that the government intends to repeal the Federal Balanced Budget Act, thereby getting rid of the last fiscal anchor that would have prevented structural deficits.

Also, 13.5% of the Liberals' spending plan is with respect to infrastructure, which means the rest of it is simply program spending. That is how structural deficits are created over time. It is by having no fiscal anchors.

Unfortunately, Alberta has gone through this before. Alberta is an example of legislative and policy measures being eliminated over time, causing future deficits to be created that became the structural deficits that governments have struggled to deal with.

The current government can learn a lot by not repeating the mistakes of the past. There are a lot of examples out there, and it can do better.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Saint-Jean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

Budget 2016 proposes a new approach. In recent years, fewer and fewer Canadians have reaped the benefits of economic growth.

Although household spending continues to grow, most families have seen virtually no increase in their income over the past 30

years. As a result, it is increasingly difficult for families to make ends meet.

With Canadians' decreasing ability to pay for their children's education, care needed for their aging parents, and their own retirement, they are wondering whether there is still any reality to the promise of progress in Canada.

In electing a new government, millions of Canadians expressed their desire for change. We have offered Canadians an ambitious new plan to create long-term economic growth by increasing people's disposable income and stimulating infrastructure projects.

Canada's financial situation is quite solid. We have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio of any G7 country, and that gives us the necessary flexibility to make strategic investments today that will grow tomorrow's economy. Now is the ideal time to invest: interest rates have never been so low.

This budget targets the middle class and Canadian families. It also offers immediate assistance to those most in need of it: seniors, youth, the unemployed, veterans, and indigenous peoples.

Overall, this budget increases the disposable income of the entire population by reducing taxes on the middle class, and the Canada child benefit will lift almost 300,000 children out of poverty.

We will be raising the guaranteed income supplement for 900,000 low-income seniors. In addition, to grow the economy and create jobs, the government will be investing \$11.9 billion in infrastructure.

We believe that a healthy environment and a strong economy go hand in hand. The budget proposes strategic investments in clean technologies and concrete measures to mitigate the causes and effects of climate change.

This budget has three major impacts for Quebec. First, the major transfers will total \$21.4 billion in 2016-17, an increase of \$1 billion over the previous fiscal year; there is \$10 billion through equalization payments, an increase of \$509 million over the previous fiscal year; there is \$8.3 billion through the Canada health transfer, an increase of \$456 million over the previous fiscal year; there is \$3.1 billion through the Canada social transfer, an increase of \$84 million over the previous fiscal year; and all that is for Quebec.

Second, it promotes French culture. The government will support major national institutions to protect the two official languages, and it will promote industries that showcase Canadian culture. As part of this effort to fulfill CBC/Radio-Canada's mandate, there is an additional \$675 million over five years.

Third, the budget restores the labour-sponsored venture capital corporation tax credit to 15% for stock purchases.

It also contains opportunities that may apply to the riding of Saint-Jean. For cities and municipalities, the budget continues to provide about \$3 billion a year in funding for municipal infrastructure projects through the gas tax fund and the incremental GST rebate for municipalities.

The Budget

For the Saint-Jean CEGEP and the Royal Military College Saint-Jean, it helps universities and colleges to train highly skilled workers, serve as engines of discovery, and support the growth of innovative businesses.

• (1700)

Budget 2016 provides up to \$2 billion over three years for strategic projects to improve research and innovation infrastructure. For the Horticulture Research and Development Centre, it includes an investment of \$70 million to expand agricultural research and upgrade agricultural research laboratories.

For highway 35 and federal infrastructure, the budget provides \$3.4 billion over five years to support the construction, repair, and reconditioning of federal infrastructure assets across the country, including investments in transportation and border infrastructure. This last point is directly related to highway 35.

For the Centre d'aide aux entreprises Haute-Montérégie, the budget enhances the mentoring services, networking opportunities, and business development advice provided by business accelerators and incubators. Budget 2016 states that the government will work with stakeholders to develop a performance measurement framework for business accelerators and incubators in Canada.

With regard to the Internet, the budget includes \$500 million to extend high-speed Internet access to hundreds of rural and remote communities. This is what the Minister of Finance came to Saint-Valentin, the village of love, in the riding of Saint-Jean, to announce.

To manage flooding, the budget proposes to provide up to \$19.5 million over five years to the International Joint Commission, to enable Canada to match U.S. funding to study the flooding and the variable water levels and water quality that affect Lake Champlain and the Richelieu River.

With regard to the International de montgolifières de Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, the budget allocates \$50 million over two years to Destination Canada to strengthen marketing initiatives in important international markets, such as the United States and China.

For management of the canal promenade in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu and enhancement of Fort Lennox in Saint-Paul-de-l'Île-aux-Noix, the budget provides for new investment to support the expansion and enhancement of Canada's protected areas, including national parks and national tourist waterways.

For the churches of Saint-Blaise-sur-Richelieu and L'Acadie, the budget enhances the national historic sites cost-sharing program by providing \$20 million over two years to Parks Canada.

In conclusion, our plan is reasonable and affordable. Yes, we are going to close the fiscal year with a deficit. Part of that deficit, \$16 billion, derives from the situation we inherited before making our decisions on this budget, and we have invested \$13 billion in order to meet our election commitments.

By the end of our first mandate, Canada's debt-to-GDP ratio will be lower than it is today. This budget gives priority to people and offers Canadians the support they need right now. However we are not talking about the present only, far from it. This is an essential

stage that is part of a sustained, strategic effort to restore prosperity and optimism in Canada.

We are looking to the future with confidence, because we are putting in place today the policies that will enable the vast majority of Canadians to benefit from more opportunities in the future, better jobs, communities that are better connected and more environmentally friendly, and more money, which they will be free to use as they see fit.

The people of the riding of Saint-Jean have already begun to reap the benefits of our budget commitments. In the months ahead, we will continue to improve the daily lives of the people there.

We promised to do everything we can to help every Canadian succeed. Budget 2016 is a crucial part of fulfilling our commitments.

• (1705)

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the first comments my colleague made was about care for elderly parents. In the election campaign the Liberals promised \$3 billion in funding for home care for seniors. Where are those funds? They are absolutely nowhere to be seen in this budget.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I think that my colleague missed part of my speech and part of the budget, because we are going to provide seniors with a guaranteed income supplement that will be increased by 10%. This will affect 900,000 seniors in Canada. This is an important step that will provide more disposable income for this whole group of people.

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for Saint-Jean on his speech. I am aware of his affection for Saint-Jean and the Royal Military College Saint-Jean. I encourage him to pursue his efforts, and I would like to assure him of my support in this regard.

Clearly, the excellent Conservative government left public finances in a surplus situation. The Liberals promised us a modest deficit of \$10 billion. We left them a surplus, and now, we are going to end up with a deficit of \$30 billion.

How did we go from a \$10-billion deficit to a \$30-billion deficit? Basically, why are Canadians being cheated, when the people who voted for the Conservatives did not want a deficit and those who voted for the New Democrats this time did not want a deficit? People wanted a small deficit, and now we have a big one.

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend and colleague for his question, which I was awaiting impatiently.

The Budget

If I may, I would like to go back a bit and remind him that in 1997, when the Liberals came to power, we had had deficits. Finance minister Martin, whom I can name, since it is in the past, was able to pay off \$81 billion. With the Liberals, when it comes to paying off deficits, we apply the Keynesian method. When things are going well, we pay it off. When things are not going so well, Keynes says we have to spend. It is important to keep in mind that during the last election campaign, we were in a recession, and Keynes, I repeat, says that we have to spend when that is the case.

We should also keep in mind perhaps that after the era of Liberal finance minister Martin, we had an average deficit of \$20 billion under the Conservative government, as the Green Party member pointed out earlier. That is a great deal of money. After that, we had a so-called balanced budget. However, we see that we ended the year with a \$16-billion deficit. It is important to remember that to achieve the so-called balanced budget, the government took \$3 billion from the reserve fund and sold off the GM shares at the fire sale price of \$2.5 billion.

There are no lessons to be learned. We have a plan to create long-term economic growth and pay off the deficit when the economy is back on its feet. We have given ourselves the tools to do so.

• (1710)

[*English*]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are all sorts of assistance for heritage in the budget. The member does a great job representing a wonderful, historic part of Canada. Could he tell us how this increase in heritage and other projects is helpful for that and how that will go into small business?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

We are very proud to be reinvesting in culture. The cultural industry is important. Someone mentioned investments in small business and large corporations. That is an important sector, but there is more to it than that. The cultural industry is our identity. It belongs to us and makes our country what it is. This gives hope to all Canadians that our culture will continue to thrive.

For Quebeckers in particular, it is important that we promote French all across Canada, which will also help ensure our survival. We need the two million francophones who live outside Quebec, because they help us promote our language and ensure our survival. That is the best means we have. I have always said that after Bill 101, CBC/Radio-Canada is the vehicle that ensures our survival.

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak to budget 2016. This being my first speech in the House, I would like to thank the great people of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for placing their trust in me as their representative. It is an absolute honour, and one that I take extremely seriously. I thank the many folks who worked tirelessly through the long nomination campaign, and of course the 78-day election campaign.

I also want to thank my incredible staff, both here in Ottawa and at home in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour. I also need to thank my

amazing family, my wife Anne, Bruen, Ava, and our puppy dog Tobey. We are still learning and adjusting to working in Ottawa while living in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour. It has been a challenge. I cannot thank them nearly enough for their patience, understanding, and day-to-day perseverance while dad tries to fit as much as he can into his day. The next step in the learning curve will be scheduling some time in the gym.

I was also pleased to join my friend, the member for Halifax, in welcoming the Minister of Finance when he made Halifax his first stop on his cross-country consultation for this budget. A group of Nova Scotia MPs were fortunate to join him at the Halifax Chamber of Commerce and at Dalhousie University where, at both venues, the minister engaged with stakeholders, students, and the community.

This budget is not just about money. This budget is about people. We are seeing a transformative plan for investments in our families, communities, veterans, and clean sustainable infrastructure. Nova Scotia will be far better off than it has been in many years, thanks to budget 2016. With this budget, Nova Scotia will see a total of \$3.1 billion in major federal transfers in 2016-17. As a province, it will receive \$1.7 billion through equalization, \$943 million through the Canada health transfer, and \$349 million through the Canada social transfer.

Before becoming a member of Parliament, I spent six years on city council. I was well aware of how desperate my region was for a partnership with the federal government. Long-stalled projects like the Burnside expressway need a voice in the House, and I will be that voice.

This budget delivers \$32 million to Nova Scotia municipalities for public transit. As the mayor and my friend Mike Savage said about the budget, “The government is very well aware of municipal needs, and have been very supportive” and “investing in infrastructure is good news for our economy”.

During the campaign, I did my best to knock on every door in my riding. Repeatedly, parents told me that they need more money in their pockets, more money for kids' recreation, such as hockey, baseball, soccer, and paddling on Dartmouth's amazing Lake Banook.

This budget builds on our campaign promise to strengthen the middle class. When we have a solid middle class working and contributing to our economy and communities, everyone benefits. We are putting money back into the pockets of middle-class Canadians. We are making it so that more parents can afford to put their kids in sports and arts through the middle-class tax cut and the Canada child benefit.

The Budget

With the Canada child benefit, families in Nova Scotia will receive \$255 million more in child benefits between 2016 and 2018. That is a significant investment in our families. It will help to lift thousands of children in my area out of poverty, and it is tax-free, more help for those who need help more.

In Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, there are numerous veterans and military families. Veterans deserve the long-term financial stability that our budget will provide. I am proud to say that we are working to remove the red tape that makes it hard for veterans to obtain proper in-person government services. As a member of the national defence committee, I recently had the opportunity to question the defence minister about transitioning our servicemen and women to veterans, and how we can better care for them. The defence minister assured everyone that he is collaborating closely with the Minister of Veterans Affairs to achieve a seamless transition from service to veteran. It is about working together, and that collaboration is something I am seeing between our caucus and cabinet every day.

• (1715)

This budget provides Nova Scotia with over \$78 million in new funding over five years for our veterans.

As someone who has served as a member of the environment committee federally and municipally, I am heartened to see an investment of \$5 billion nationally for green infrastructure spending, for clean water and waste water infrastructure, electric vehicle charging stations, and other clean technology. I am proud to say that we are also making admission to Canada's national parks free in 2017.

We have a high number of seniors who are finding it harder each year to make ends meet. Our government will follow through on its pledge to roll back the age in which seniors can access their OAS and GIS from 67 to 65. We will boost that GIS for thousands of low-income seniors, Nova Scotian seniors, many of whom are women.

Dartmouth—Cole Harbour will see investments in social infrastructure funding for seniors homes, affordable housing, and child care centres, much needed and way overdue.

I want to touch on what our government has committed to for small business. Budget 2016 supports Canada's innovators and entrepreneurs. It gives them the help they need to access expertise, identify new markets, and scale up for future growth.

I want members to come to downtown Dartmouth and see how local small business entrepreneurs have revitalized our downtown Dartmouth core. If an individual walks down to the Alderney Market on Saturday morning, they will pass numerous new businesses: Bodega Boutique, Sugar Shok, Two If By Sea, The Dart Gallery, New Scotland Clothing Company, and many, many more.

Small businesses are the backbone of our community, and I spent over 20 years in the family business. When I was in business, the number one thing that small business owners needed was customers with money in their pockets. This is what will drive our economy. Budget 2016 does just that for Canadians.

I have thrown a lot of figures out there, but I want to re-emphasize the point that this budget is more about people than numbers. Budget 2016 puts people first, and delivers the help that Canadians need

now. It is an essential step to restoring prosperity to the middle class. It reflects a new approach for the government, one that offers immediate help to those who need it most, and sets the course for growth for all Canadians.

Like all members of this House, I am extremely proud of my community. I am proud of its successes, from Sidney Crosby and Nathan MacKinnon, to Craig Blake, who gave his life for his country.

I am proud of our amazing waterfront and our beautiful Shubenacadie Canal system, miles and miles of trails in Shubie Park, and the saltmarsh trails in Cole Harbour.

I could not be more proud of our young entrepreneurs opening shops on every corner, our festivals, and our events. I am proud of events like the Epic Canadian road race, and the International SEDMHA hockey tournament, the largest hockey tournament in Atlantic Canada. These are true Dartmouth success stories.

I am proud that our citizens have named two of our most recent newest harbour ferries after soldiers who died serving their country.

Budget 2016 is an ambitious, long-term plan to strengthen the heart of Canada's economy, the middle class.

• (1720)

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will start with more of a comment.

In the last election, the Liberals promised to accumulate no more \$25 billion in debt over the next four years. Yet, this budget completely blows that out of the water, by a magnitude of some 300%, by proposing to borrow some \$100 billion over the next four years.

Can the member opposite explain such a huge discrepancy, in light of the fact that in the last six months we have not had a radical change in our economic outlook?

Mr. Darren Fisher: Mr. Speaker, if nothing changed but the price of a barrel of oil going from \$104 to \$40, there is \$15 billion in the coffers gone right there.

The member has a lot more experience than I do, and I will fully admit I have a lot to learn, but what I learned by knocking on 22,000 doors was that the good folks of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour wanted change. They were tired of cuts to things like CBC, to social programs, and to our cities. They wanted to see an investment in their people, in their youth, in their country, and that is what they voted for in October.

The Budget

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his speech. He has much to be proud of in his riding. However, I would like to bring him back to October 13, 2015 during the election. His party stated:

To help close the funding gap and improve outcomes for First Nations students, we will invest new funding each year in core funding for kindergarten through grade 12 programs. This will include money committed by Stephen Harper that has yet to flow, plus an additional \$300 million per year in incremental funding, totalling \$750 million per year by the end of our first mandate. Over the next four years, this represents a \$2.6 billion new investment in helping First Nations students learn and succeed.

How does the member reconcile the fact that his government extended the funding timeline by an extra year for first nations, to five years, resulting in an \$800-million shortfall in comparison to the party's initial promise?

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to the hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, I will remind hon. members that even when another hon. member's name is included in a quote or citation, it is still in the realm of mentioning another hon. member's name. We try to avoid that by switching up the quote and substituting the hon. member for whatever riding.

The hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Mr. Speaker, as I said, before I was an MP, I was a regional councillor for six years. I was one vote. I had to work with people across the room. All of the folks in that room wanted the best things for their communities. They knew there was hard work to be done, that there were lots of things to be done.

There are lots of things to be done in this House. We are going to work together to do these things and make Canada a better place.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member touched on a number of very important investments by the government. I share his opinion. I thought it was a tremendous budget, and key investments have been made in many different areas.

He sells himself short. He has had a distinguished career as a councillor in the Halifax region representing the people of Dartmouth. I was proud of the fact that the people of Dartmouth showed support for him when he put his name forward federally. I know he is going to make a great contribution to this place.

Beyond the numbers of the budget, what he indicated during his speech was that key investments were made, with veterans, municipalities, first nations community. You only have to pick an area. I believe it comes back to the fact that now Canadians have a government that is willing to engage. It is willing to talk about the priorities.

When he is out and about and meeting with community groups, is he getting that same sense that after 10 long, dark years, there is finally a government representing the people of the country who is willing to listen to the views, the problems, the concerns, and the potential solutions?

• (1725)

Mr. Darren Fisher: Mr. Speaker, it is heartwarming to talk to a mother from Dartmouth north or east who has two children who have never been in organized sport. These are kids who are unable to

do much more than shoot hoops in the local park. The Canada child benefit is going to put money in the pockets of these families that will allow them to do that for the first time.

An hon. member: What about the sports and fitness credit?

Mr. Darren Fisher: Mr. Speaker, we can talk about boutique tax credits, but if they do not have \$680 to pay for novice hockey in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia today, that \$90 tax credit means nothing. This child benefit will put the money in the pockets of those folks, who will be able to put their kids in soccer, or baseball, or hockey. They will be able to spend based on the priorities of that family, and that is something that is resonating with constituents in my riding.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will begin by saying that I will be sharing my time with the member for Brampton Centre. I am very pleased to rise in the House to take part in this important debate on budget 2016, a historic budget for Canadians. I rise to speak not only in my capacity as Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, but above all as the member of Parliament for Québec.

I want to take a moment to thank some key people in my personal life and in my journey to the Parliament of Canada. I want to begin by thanking my family, whose support is crucial to me in this wonderful adventure that is my political life. I want to thank Marie-Chantal, Étienne, Clémence, and Antoine for their love and support day in and day out.

I also want to thank the voters in my riding of Québec who placed their trust in me on October 19. Over the years this riding has seen some great names in Canadian politics. I am thinking of some of my predecessors who were members for the current riding of Québec: the Right Hon. Wilfrid Laurier, who was the Liberal member from 1877 to 1911, the Right Hon. Louis St-Laurent, who was the Liberal member from 1941 to 1958, and more recently the Hon. Jean Marchand, who was the Liberal member from 1965 to 1983. I also want to salute the Hon. Gilles Lamontagne, the Liberal member from 1977 to 1983. I am particularly grateful for his invaluable advice, and I want to wish him, a little in advance since the occasion is next Sunday, a very enjoyable 97th birthday with his family and friends. It is my sincere hope that I shall be equal to the honour bestowed upon me by my constituents and that I will be a good representative of their interests in the House.

Budget 2016 has numerous positive impacts on many aspects of my portfolio as Minister of Families, Children and Social Development. For example, putting off to 67 the age of eligibility for federal pensions was a decision that unfortunately was imposed by the previous government without proper study. This lack of scientific and social sensitivity was one of my biggest motivations for making the leap into active political life.

On this subject, together with my former colleagues Nicolas-James Clavet, Steve Marchand, and Bernard Fortin, I had the opportunity to produce a study that was published last fall in the *Canadian Tax Journal*. I want to emphasize the excellent work done by my former colleagues and assure them that they have been heard.

The Budget

That study drew three main conclusions. The first was that putting off the eligibility age to 67 would have caused the most vulnerable seniors in our society to lose up to \$13,000 because of the reform. The second was that this reform would have caused 20% of the poorest seniors concerned to lose 35% of their income and 20% of the richest seniors to lose 5% of their income. The third conclusion was that 100,000 seniors would have been plunged into poverty, raising the poverty rate of seniors aged 65 and 66 from 6% to 17%. In other words, this reform would have most penalized those seniors least able to adapt to these kinds of cuts.

The Government of Canada has to support middle-class Canadians and Canadians who are working very hard to join the middle class. To do this, budget 2016 provides for total funding of \$3.4 billion over two years for social infrastructure, that is, affordable housing, early learning and child care, cultural and recreational infrastructure, and community health care facilities on reserves. To increase access to affordable housing, budget 2016 proposes specifically to invest \$2.3 billion over two years starting in 2016-17. Furthermore, nearly \$740 million will be invested in housing in indigenous, Inuit, and northern communities.

● (1730)

To address the high demand for affordable housing across the country, we need to double federal investments under the investment in affordable housing initiative, which represents an additional amount of more than \$500 million over two years.

Moreover, budget 2016 includes, first, nearly \$200 million over two years in support for the construction, repair, and adaptation of affordable housing for our seniors, which should improve living and housing conditions for more than 5,000 low-income households. Second, the budget includes nearly \$575 million over two years in funding for energy improvement, water saving, and social housing renovation projects. Third, nearly \$90 million over the next two years is allocated to the construction and renovation of shelters and transition houses for victims of family violence. This unprecedented investment will lead to the creation and renovation of more than 3,000 spaces in off-reserve shelters.

Budget 2016 also includes \$30 million over two years to help non-profit housing providers and federally administered housing co-ops maintain rent geared to income for households living in social housing at the end of their operating agreements.

We are also making new investments of more than \$550 million over two years to meet immediate housing needs in first nations communities and to renovate and upgrade existing housing units.

An additional amount of more than \$10 million will be provided over three years to support the construction of new shelters for women and children who are victims of violence in first nations communities.

Meeting the substantial housing needs and challenges in the north is another important facet of our new social infrastructure fund. Building and renovating housing units is more complex and more expensive in the north than in other parts of Canada. Budget 2016 reflects that reality. It provides funding of nearly \$180 million over two years to improve access to suitable, affordable housing for northern residents.

To encourage the construction of affordable rental housing, we will also provide Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation with nearly \$210 million over five years to establish an affordable rental housing innovation fund.

The innovation fund will be used to test innovative approaches to reduce the costs and risks of financing affordable rental housing projects. This funding is expected to help create up to 4,000 affordable rental housing units.

Canadian homeowners want to protect their investment. Unfortunately, over the past few years, families in some regions of Quebec have run into serious structural problems because of the presence of pyrrhotite in the foundation of their home. To help those families, the Canadian government is providing up to \$30 million over three years, starting in 2016-17.

● (1735)

[*English*]

Homelessness is a reality for too many Canadians and a serious challenge for too many communities. To help homeless Canadians find stable housing, we would invest an additional \$110 million over two years in the homelessness partnering strategy. This represents an increase of 50% in that strategy, which is the first increase since 1999. This investment would give communities the support they need to prevent and reduce homelessness, develop better emergency response services, and offer enhanced support to youth, women fleeing violence, and veterans.

High-quality affordable child care is not just a priority but a necessity for many Canadian families. The time has come to work collaboratively with provinces, territories, and indigenous peoples on a new national framework on early learning and childcare.

Budget 2016 would provide \$500 million in 2017-18 to deliver on this framework, of which \$100 million would be for indigenous early learning and child care on and off reserve.

[*Translation*]

Budget 2016 proposes to provide \$29 million over the next year for urgent repairs and renovations of the facilities used by the aboriginal head start on reserve program and the first nations and Inuit child care initiative.

In conclusion, our government has chosen to take real action now, by making investments that will have a quick and significant impact on Canadian families.

I want to take this opportunity to encourage my colleagues on both sides of the House to support our government's budget 2016 and thereby support the middle class and the families who are working hard to join the middle class.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister and hon. member for Québec, which is next to my riding, Louis-Saint-Laurent.

I listened closely to what he had to say. On this side of the House, we have no problem with the government giving money to parents. That is what we did, especially with the UCCB. However, the difference is that we provided this benefit at no cost; in other words, there was no deficit. This is very important, because this comes from two different visions. The budget gives families money that we do not have. There is a \$30-billion deficit. We are giving money to help our children, but they are the ones who are going to have to pay that money back one day.

How does the government explain that it is being very generous to families, but that our children and grandchildren will have to pay the bill, because we do not have the money right now?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent for his question, comments, and advice. He has given us a lot of advice, which the members on this side of the House appreciate, particularly those who have less experience than he does.

I would like to say two things. Budget 2016 focuses on economic growth and support for the middle class. That is exactly what the measures in the budget do. They provide immediate assistance and will have a significant long-term impact on the future of Canadians, particularly the future of our young people, who, over the past few years, have been having a lot of difficulty entering the workforce, raising a family, and supporting their children.

Not only does the budget give quick, immediate, and significant help to families, particularly those in the middle class, but it also helps us to move forward toward an economy of innovation, science, and development, or in other words, a sustainable economy.

• (1740)

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5:41 p.m., pursuant to an order made on Monday, April 11, the question on the amendment is deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Wednesday, April 13, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

The House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP) moved that Bill C-234, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (replacement workers), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Private Members' Business

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to begin the debate on the bill to amend the Canada Labour Code.

This enactment amends the Canada Labour Code to make it an offence for employers to hire replacement workers to perform the duties of employees who are on strike or locked out.

In other words, the bill seeks to prohibit replacement workers, commonly known as scabs, at the federal level. Passing this bill would send a clear message to workers across the country that they have the right to bargain collectively as equals.

The NDP thinks it is important to promote workers' rights. I am introducing this long-overdue bill in my role as the deputy labour critic and on behalf of the progressive opposition.

In Canada, over 12,000 businesses and 820,000 workers are governed by the Canada Labour Code. We have been putting this measure forward for the past 10 years.

However, workers were clearly not a priority for the previous government. We were therefore not surprised that it rejected this measure. Today, we sincerely hope that the Liberal government will be open to this measure.

This bill will amend and modernize the Canada Labour Code in order to prohibit employers from hiring strikebreakers to do the work of employees in the event of a strike or lockout.

In other words, we want to put in place, at the federal level, the same types of provisions that already exist in some provinces, such as Quebec and British Columbia.

We also included a "Québecor clause" in the changes to the Canada Labour Code. Members will recall the events that occurred in Quebec during a *Journal de Québec* lockout, when the company took advantage of a loophole in the regrettable Quebec law on strikebreakers and continued to print the paper during the lockout.

The Court of Appeal sided with Québecor and ruled that the Quebec law did not prohibit telework. It is important to modernize the Canada Labour Code in order to prevent the use of replacement workers through telework.

We also added the use of other establishments to do the work of the bargaining unit that is on strike or locked out.

In my riding, Jonquière, I have seen a number of labour disputes. In a given year, there are labour conflicts right across Canada, but in my former capacity, I saw some in the riding of Jonquière.

It is tough to see workers who want to negotiate with their employer, because it is truly difficult. Renewing a collective agreement can create tension on both sides.

However, when the legal provisions ensure that we negotiate as equals, that establishes a balance of power. This ensures that both the employer and the workers can negotiate in good faith, and that is critically important.

Many stakeholders are calling for and supporting this bill.

Mark Hancock, the president of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, said:

Private Members' Business

CUPE welcomes this legislation, which would give employers more incentive to sit down and negotiate with workers and could lead to fewer and shorter strikes and lockouts.

● (1745)

In recent years, since we are seeing fewer strikes and more lockouts, it has become more common, during the course of negotiations, for employers to no longer want to negotiate while the employees are locked out. This legislation would help prompt employers to negotiate, because they can no longer hire other workers while the employees are locked out. It is therefore extremely important to negotiating as equals.

Another union president, Mike Palecek, president of CUPW, joined us at our press conference to support the bill. During the presentation, he pointed out the importance of promoting free collective bargaining and the fact that using replacement workers undermines labour relations.

Ken Neumann, the national director of the United Steelworkers, issued a press release on February 25 that states, "The Steelworkers union welcomes these changes to the Canada Labour Code. If passed, this law will stop the unfairness of employers using replacement workers during strikes and lockouts. Thanks to the NDP for once again introducing this bill that will benefit workers and employers and contribute to our nation's productivity".

It is important to know that this change to the Canada Labour Code, regarding both teleworking and preventing the use of replacement workers inside as well as outside the facility, is important to bargaining. This does not poison the debate, but can at least help to ensure negotiations occur on an equal footing.

I always enjoy giving a little reminder to anyone who still does not see the reason for the union movement. I want to point out a few things.

It is thanks to unions and the labour movement that we now have a minimum wage, paid overtime, occupational safety standards, parental and maternity leave, paid vacation, and protection from discrimination and sexual harassment.

Unions work hard every day to stand up for those hard-fought rights and to continue winning new rights for all workers.

Our unions are social unions that focus not only on the benefits that can be gained from collective bargaining, but also on the victories that can be achieved in the interest of society as a whole. For example, they fight to put an end to child labour or to ensure that an employee injured at work gets compensation through workers' compensation. They fight for public pensions and social programs that help people contribute to work, such as health care and child care services.

Although workers have made progress in the past few decades, a great deal of injustice remains. That is why starting with a small step and changing and updating the Canada Labour Code is important to me and the NDP.

We voted on a pay equity motion moved here in the House by the NDP not so long ago.

I thank all parties here in the House for supporting that motion, but I am disappointed that we are still fighting for pay equity in 2016.

At this time of economic slowdown, I think it is worth mentioning that the World Bank has found that a high rate of unionization leads to greater income equality, lower unemployment and inflation, higher productivity, and a quicker response to economic downturns.

Speaking of equality, or rather inequality, I believe it is important to point out that there is a major problem in our society when the wealthiest 1% now possess more wealth than the rest of the world put together and the wealthiest 62 people on earth own as much as the poorest 3.6 billion people.

● (1750)

The Panama papers also reveal a strategy for massive tax avoidance.

In the end, it is not up to workers to pay the government back for all the money taken by major corporations, money that belonged to Canadians.

If I were asked whether we could better protect workers' right to negotiate their collective agreement and working conditions in a fair manner and as equals, I believe that the answer would be "yes".

Not only can we protect workers' rights, but we can look to those who belong to the 1% to pay what is owed to the government in taxes. Protecting the right to negotiate is one aspect of the notion that we can build a fairer and more equal society. That is good for the economy, workers, and their families.

In my riding, one labour conflict went on for three years. During that time, families wound up homeless and broken. There were many separations, and we saw people who were completely lost and did not know where to turn. No one wants those kinds of conflicts. That is why we have to amend the Canada Labour Code so that we have a fair and equitable negotiation process.

The labour code can be improved based on the standards set in Quebec and British Columbia. We can ensure that people who are put out on the streets because of a lockout or strike during a period of negotiations will not have to worry. They will know that if the employer locks them out, no one will be hired to do the work in their place, often for lower wages.

The NDP knows that it is essential that both parties are respected when negotiations are taking place. The company and the workers must both be respected. We want to ensure that the parties meet as equals during negotiations.

It is simply unfair for employers to hire replacement workers to undermine workers' ability to exercise their rights, since the company continues to produce and make money. That is unfair to the workers who have been locked out.

We believe that the bargaining rights of workers who are on strike or have been locked out should not be undermined. That is really important. I hope that members of the House will understand the importance of modernizing the Canada Labour Code. It is 2016. We can and must do something for both companies and workers.

Private Members' Business

The option to use telework if more than one establishment is on strike or lockout does not allow for negotiation between equals. I hope that my colleagues here in the House will understand that it is vitally important to amend the Canada Labour Code.

I hope that my colleagues will support this bill, since over the past 14 years, some of them have introduced similar bills to amend the Canada Labour Code. I hope that the bill will make it to second reading, that we will examine it in committee, and that we will be able to modernize the Canada Labour Code.

• (1755)

[English]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I respect my colleague's passionate plea for the modernization of the Canada Labour Code. It is important that the code reflect a modern workforce in the situation in which we find ourselves here in this country.

The member asked for the support of the House, but the House has learned especially over the course of the last four years under Conservative rule that if we are going to change the Canada Labour Code, it has to be done under a tripartite, consensus-building process, one that has been accepted over the years. In the last four years we have heard loud and clear from the two major stakeholders in the labour code, the CLC and FETCO.

I would like to read into the record comments from Hassan Yussuff, the president of the CLC under testimony against C-377 and C-525. He said, "We urge the federal government to stop the introduction of one-off changes to the Canada Labour Code. Amendments should not be made through private members' bills."

John Farrell of FETCO said, "This critical consultation process is completely bypassed when changes to the labour relations regime are proposed through a mechanism of one-off private members' bills."

The member's own colleague, Wayne Marston, the former member from Hamilton, said that he believes it is irresponsible for a government to allow private members' bills to amend the Canada Labour Code, and that amendments should actually be done by a government bill, not by a private member's bill.

Could I get comments from my colleague on that?

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague. What he said is true.

In 2006, the government carried out a study of the Canada Labour Code, but there was no follow-up. It is important to study the bill at second reading so that we can make amendments.

I agree that we should not be introducing piecemeal bills, and that instead we should be doing a study, since many changes are needed. However, my only option right now is to propose piecemeal changes by introducing bills.

I hope that we can continue with this study, since it is time to modernize the Canada Labour Code. Nothing has been done in the past 10 years.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from Jonquière. The member was elected just a few months ago, and she has already introduced an important bill in the House. I want to congratulate her.

I also want to salute the courage of her party, since it is no secret that this is not the first time it has introduced a similar bill. I think it is clear how we will react, but I cannot wait to see how government members will react.

The member mentioned a 2006 study, which was conducted by the department then known as Human Resources and Social Development and now known as Employment and Social Development.

The report indicated, and I quote, "There is no evidence that a law to prohibit the use of replacement workers reduces the number or length of work stoppages. On the contrary, such laws are associated with more frequent and longer strikes."

Is that what the member is proposing in her bill? I do not think so, but how does she explain her proposal, in light of the analysis by Employment and Social Development?

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

There is no increase in the number of strikes or lockouts, depending on the study and those conducting it, of course.

When locked out or striking workers are in the streets not earning a paycheque and they see replacement workers going to do their work in their place, under the working conditions that they negotiated and work in day and night thanks to an established organization, that stokes frustration, anger, and violence.

That is what we are trying to avoid. We want to enable negotiations between the parties as equals, and we want clear provisions so that there is no room for interpretation in the Canada Labour Code.

• (1800)

[English]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to rise today to speak to this particular piece of legislation on behalf of the party.

I would like to provide some perspective on a private member's bill that touches on a key component of the Canada Labour Code and one that would have a serious impact on federal labour relations in this country. Bill C-234 proposes to change the legislative provisions relating to whether federally regulated employers should be able to hire replacement workers during strikes or lockouts.

Private Members' Business

While most labour relations in Canada are regulated by the provinces, it must be underscored that part I of the Canada Labour Code governs labour relations in the federal private sector. It applies to some key industries in our economy, for example, sectors including international and interprovincial railway and road transportation, maritime and air transportation, as well as telecommunications and banking. Some crown corporations, such as Canada Post Corporation, are also covered under the code.

There is a lot of history behind this particular issue. For example, in 1995, the then minister of labour established a task force that did extensive public consultations on part I, which is the industrial relations part of the Canada Labour Code. Those consultations included labour, employer, and government stakeholders, as well as academics and others. The issue of replacement workers was part of those discussions.

Labour and employer stakeholders held then, and hold now, very different views on the issue. In fact, the task force report, entitled "Seeking a Balance", noted, "No issue divides the submissions we received more than the issue of replacement workers."

That report formed the basis of the comprehensive amendments to part I of the Canada Labour Code that came into force in 1999. It is important to note that the provision that exists now was recommended by the task force as a reasonable compromise between the competing views of employers and unions. That had been decided in 1999.

The provision of part I of the Canada Labour Code already limits the use of replacement workers in federal private sector industries. The code balances the union's right to strike with the employer's right to attempt to continue operating during a work stoppage. As the report recommends, "There should be no general prohibition on the use of replacement workers." However, the report identified using replacement workers in an attempt to remove the union from the workplace as an unfair labour practice, and rightfully so. This is known as undermining the union representative capacity.

At the time of the task force report, the current provision in the code was considered to be an acceptable middle ground between the position of the federally regulated employers and the unions that represent employees. This provision is considered a compromise and a balance between union and employer interests.

While Bill C-234 may intend to improve labour relations, it has the potential to upset the carefully crafted balance of rights and responsibilities between unions and employers under the code.

It is not only the content of Bill C-234 with which I take issue, but I would also like to underline a flaw in how we have been asked to consider such an important change for federally regulated employees and employers.

Consideration of such a measure should take into account the perspectives of all stakeholders who are regulated by the Canada Labour Code as this requires the views of those who stand to be affected by it. To be clear, a private member's bill does not allow for the proper consultations, and it does not provide sufficient opportunity for all stakeholders to express their views.

In the past, both labour and employer organizations have been highly critical of changes being made to federal labour relations legislation through the use of private members' bills without prior consultation with the stakeholders. Members will no doubt remember that the government recently took bold steps to correct inequities introduced in Bill C-377 and Bill C-525, which upset the balance of rights and responsibilities between federally regulated employers and unions.

• (1805)

Trade unions play a fundamental role in the relations between employers and employees. Unions work to ensure that their members receive fair wages and good working conditions in fair, healthy, and safe work environments. These bills put unions at a disadvantage and we believe they must be repealed.

Just like the current Bill C-234, Bill C-377 and Bill C-525 were private members' bills that were not subject to rigorous consultations. This is not the right way to approach such matters. We should not be looking at amending part I of the Canada Labour Code on a piecemeal basis. We believe in an open and transparent approach to labour relations, one that promotes stability and fairness.

Major changes to labour relations legislation have always been preceded by consultation between government, unions, and employers. I referred previously to the 1995 task force, which included an extensive consultative process, which was followed by ministerial consultations on the recommendations included in the task force report. However, this has not happened in the case of Bill C-234, and any changes on such a divisive issue would certainly need consultations with all stakeholders.

We cannot support Bill C-234 because it does not match our standards of openness and transparency in labour relations in this country. As I pointed out before, the code ensures balance between a union's right to strike and that of an employer to attempt to continue operating during a work stoppage. It is part of the balance between rights and responsibilities of employers and unions under the code.

Good labour relations are key elements of an economic system and indeed to the prosperity of this country. We have a long tradition in this country of labour legislation and policy designed to promote the common well-being by encouraging free collective bargaining and constructive dispute settlement. We believe in the strength of co-operation to develop good relations between employers and workers. If legislative changes are to be considered for part I of the code, let us do it the right way, through real and meaningful consultation and engagement with unions, employers, and stakeholders.

I know that in the member's comments reference was made to support from United Steelworkers. Let me read into the record the statement made by Ken Neumann when he was testifying before committee on Bill C-525. Mr. Neumann is the national director of United Steelworkers. He said, speaking about the past Conservative government:

We've seen this government operate in this way before - introducing major changes to the hallmarks of our democratic society through backdoor private member's bills. The Canadian Labour Congress rightly asks why tamper with a system that's working? The federal system is respected and supported, as a result of a consultative process that's been followed for decades for amending the Labour Code.

That comes from Ken Neumann from United Steelworkers. That is his opinion.

We have long recognized this in this country. Again, I would like to underline the fact that in the last four years we have seen it even more so. Labour legislation in this country has to be referred to a tripartite system, one that is consultative and is built through consensus. That is what we are committed to, to ensure that our labour laws are fair and balanced and that they represent the needs of employers and the rights and best interest of employees. That is what we are committed to and that is what we intend to deliver as a government.

• (1810)

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise at this point in our study of the bill, which we will oppose for various reasons.

First of all, this bill covers workplaces under federal jurisdiction, which tend to be key sectors for our economy such as railroads, air transportation, ports, and telecommunications. These are key sectors not only for our economy, but also for our security.

Imagine a labour conflict in the communications sector that prevents a company from operating. How could people use 911?

Imagine a labour conflict in the air transportation sector that shuts down an airport. What would happen? The whole community would suffer, and the repercussions would reach near-global proportions in the transportation sector.

Since this affects key sectors, the situation is much too delicate for a measure like this. If the bill goes through, the House of Commons could end up spending its time passing back-to-work legislation, and nobody wants that.

We think that the current Canada Labour Code strikes the right balance and that the balance of power between employees and employers is fair. If we pass this bill, it would prevent companies, mainly SMEs, from hiring replacement workers during disputes and upset the balance of power at the negotiating table. Let us not forget that striking workers can always go work somewhere else. However, under the bill, SMEs would not be able to hire people from outside.

In our opinion, this disrupts the balance of power that must exist between workers and employers.

As the Coalition of BC Businesses said during an appearance here in Parliament in 2007:

...[the] options a small-business owner faces in this so-called level playing field are essentially three: to shut down; to give in to union demands to avoid a strike that it knows it cannot withstand; or thirdly, in the event of a strike, to seek a quick settlement rather than a settlement that serves the long-term viability of the enterprise and the jobs it supports.

This imbalance could ultimately be harmful to the workers because if the business closes its doors, everyone loses. That would also be harmful to the Canadian economy.

Private Members' Business

Earlier, when referring to studies, the hon. member mentioned that it is always tricky to quote studies because it depends on who conducted them.

I would like to talk about four studies commissioned by the Government of Canada, including the 1968 Woods commission. That goes back a long way, but it shows that this is not the first time that we have talked about this issue. In 1968, the Liberal government created the Woods commission, which found that these sorts of changes should not be made to the Canada Labour Code because the balance was being respected.

In 1996, the Sims task force, set up by the Right Hon. Jean Chrétien's Liberal government, found that the measure proposed by the NDP would not be good for the economy and would disrupt the balance of power between employees and employers.

In 1999, Cramton conducted a statistical study that analyzed 4,340 labour contracts in Canada from 1967 to 1993. The study found that in provinces that had this type of legislation, labour disputes lasted an average of 54 days longer than in provinces that did not have such legislation. Strikes therefore lasted 86 days. The same study found that this type of legislation increased the probability of a strike by 15% to 27%, depending on the industry.

Finally, in 2007, a study conducted by the department of employment and labour found that there was no evidence to show that a law prohibiting employers from hiring replacement workers reduced the number or length of work stoppages. On the contrary, this type of legislation was linked to an increase in the number and length of strikes.

I spoke about four studies, one conducted in 1968, one conducted in 1996, one conducted in 1999, and one conducted in 2007. The studies commissioned by the Government of Canada found that this sort of legislation is not a good thing. We need to keep that in mind.

Quebec has this type of legislation. It was implemented about 30 years ago. According to a study conducted by the Canadian Bankers Association, which compares Quebec and Ontario, this situation led to 90% more labour disputes in Quebec, and in 87% of cases, those disputes lasted longer in Quebec than in Ontario.

• (1815)

Unfortunately, the numbers speak for themselves. We do not think that this policy, this proposal, is good, which is why we will vote against the bill. We must not forget that this could have a devastating effect, or perhaps more of a very negative effect, on the Canadian economy. In the context of globalization, in which the economies of our cities are not competing against each other, but are competing with the economies of foreign countries, if we unfortunately pass this law that weakens our balance of power in the foreign market, we will only hurt ourselves.

This law exists in Quebec, and I can say that no one has died as a result. However, I am a member of Parliament from Quebec and I wish this were not true, but the Montreal Economic Institute conducted a study, which showed that, sadly, private investment rates in Quebec were 25% lower than in other Canadian provinces.

Private Members' Business

Therefore, we must be very careful for reasons linked to key sectors, Canadian economic security, and also goods and people, because we already have measures that strike a balance and four studies conducted over the past 50 years arrived at the exact same conclusion, namely, that we must not touch this sector. In fact, the Quebec experience shows us that this can be worthwhile in some respects. However, it can cause more and longer labour disputes.

In closing, I would like to sincerely congratulate and thank the member for Jonquière for introducing this bill. She is a new MP. She has been in the House for only a few months and she has already introduced an important piece of legislation. I salute her. We should remember that this is not the first time. I see some veteran MPs. I will not say that their hair is greyer than mine, but they have more experience than I do, and they can attest to the fact that this is not the first time that such a bill has been introduced. More than 15 such bills have been introduced, the fact that we do not agree with them does not mean that we do not respect them.

That being said, I heard people on the government side earlier arguing their point of view. What did the governing party say? It said that it would vote against the bill because it believes that bills like these should come through what it calls the front door. Bills like these regarding labour relations should not be private members' bills. They need to come through the front door, as government bills.

That party keeps going on and on about its lofty principles regarding labour relations, protecting workers, protecting widows and orphans, and protecting unions. If the Liberals are willing to walk the talk, I encourage them to introduce a bill, and not a private member's bill, but a government bill that gets to the bottom of the issue. Those people believe in this and I respect them. I do not share their point of view, but they were duly elected by Canadians and I respect them. Clearly, the people who form the government are saying that they will not touch the bill because it is a private bill, although they are using the wrong term. It is a back door bill.

[*English*]

I want to make this clear. As far as I am concerned, everyone here is equal and everyone has the right to table a bill. I do respect them, whatever they want to do or say. I respect the fact that we are all members from the front door, not the back door. I remind members of that.

I respect you and I hope that one day you will table a bill. I will never call your bill a back door bill. You are a front door member. It will be a front door bill.

[*Translation*]

I really salute my NDP colleagues. Although I do not share their point of view, I have to commend them. I have seen the work they do. We will be voting against the bill because we have convictions. It seems to me that they do not really want to talk about the matter.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before resuming debate, I want to remind members that I will not be putting any bill forward. Usually one talks through the Speaker to put it forward.

The hon. member for Regina—Lewvan.

• (1820)

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to rise as a seconder of this private member's bill, Bill C-234.

In the debate about a previous government bill, Bill C-4, government members often spoke about restoring balance to Canadian workplaces. We in the NDP were happy to support that legislation, because Bill C-4 did restore balance to certification and decertification. However, we need to be concerned not only about the right to join a union, but also about the right to bargain collectively.

An essential component of balance in collective bargaining is that in the rarer cases where this process breaks down, both sides bear a cost. Employers do without labour while employees must do without their wages. That puts pressure on both sides to keep negotiating to try to find a solution.

The use of replacement workers, or scabs, destroys that balance by allowing the employer to continue functioning as though there is no labour dispute. We have had far too many cases in Canada of employers demanding severe concessions, locking out workers or provoking a strike and then using scabs rather than negotiating in good faith. One problem with replacement workers is that they can be used to prolong labour disputes.

Another problem with replacement workers is that they increase the likelihood of violence. The process of moving scabs across a picket line into the workplace inevitably puts the employer's security forces in confrontation with the picketers. That is a recipe for bad things. However, even where replacement workers are not actually used, the implicit threat of scabs gives management an unfair advantage in bargaining.

There is a very simple solution to all of these problems: to prohibit replacement workers during legal strikes and lockouts. This is not a new or theoretical solution. Two provinces already have anti-scab legislation and the longevity of anti-scab legislation in those jurisdictions is a testament to its success and to its workability. Quebec has had anti-scab legislation for nearly 40 years. British Columbia has had anti-scab legislation for nearly a quarter century. In both of these provinces, anti-scab legislation was introduced by social democratic governments, but importantly, it has been continued by subsequent right-wing governments. At the provincial level, parties of both the left and the right have accepted anti-scab legislation.

What about at the federal level? What did we hear from the Liberal Party? The member for Cape Breton—Canso tried to tell us that the existing provisions in the Canada Labour Code, which do not actually prohibit replacement workers, constituted some kind of appropriate balance. However, I have already explained why the real balance involves pressure on both sides during a strike or lockout. The real way to achieve balance is not to have replacement workers in the equation at all.

Private Members' Business

The sense in which the member for Cape Breton—Canso considers this a balance is that we have two sides, unions and employers. Unions obviously would like to have anti-scab legislation and employers would not want to have it. He does not think we can make a change without consensus.

That is kind of a disingenuous argument, because the current situation confers a huge advantage to employers, so of course employers will never voluntarily agree to give that up. It is for parliamentarians to make a balanced assessment, and that is exactly what this private member's bill proposes.

We have also heard the argument from the member for Cape Breton—Canso that this is the wrong process, that we do not want to look at one little element of the Canada Labour Code, that we need to do a big tripartite review of the whole thing. Well I say, bring it on. There has not been a review of the Canada Labour Code since 2006.

The member for Cape Breton—Canso kept saying that we could not do this without a big review of the Canada Labour Code. Let us have that review of the Canada Labour Code. I think that would be very much welcomed on this side of the House. That is not really a good argument not to adopt this legislation. Let us go ahead with the review.

• (1825)

I think the main argument, though, from the member for Cape Breton—Canso is this notion that it is somehow inappropriate to put forward this proposal as a private member's bill. Leave it to the Liberal Party to turn a question of principle into a question of process.

The grain of truth in this argument is the idea that the previous Conservative government did abuse private members' bills to make changes to labour legislation without the same sort of scrutiny that would have been applied to government legislation. That is a criticism that one can make of a government; and if the present government wanted to put forward legislation to implement a ban on replacement workers, obviously, we in the NDP would support that legislation. The reason we are putting it forward as a private member's bill is that the Liberal government has not put it forward on the order paper. It missed the opportunity to do so in Bill C-4. The only way we have to put forward legislation is through private members' bills.

We heard the statement from the member for Cape Breton—Canso that this is introducing a change by the back door. It is not the back door. It is the only door to which the NDP has access. Therefore, yes, from a process point of view, one could criticize a government for sneaking things through with a private member's bill. One cannot criticize the third party for introducing legislation through a private member's bill, because that is the only way it can happen.

What did we hear from the Conservative Party in this debate?

The member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, first, suggested that anti-scab legislation was inappropriate in the federal sector because the federal sector includes these strategic industries, these kinds of essential services.

The way to protect essential services is not to allow replacement workers. If there are specialized people off the job in telecommunications and that is causing a national emergency, the solution is not to bring in scabs. The solution is, hopefully, to negotiate some sort of essential service protocol with the union. If that is not possible, there is the possibility of back-to-work legislation under the Canada Labour Code.

The member for Louis-Saint-Laurent said, well, we don't want to spend all our time in Parliament passing back-to-work legislation, which is kind of a funny statement because the Conservatives were content to spend all kinds of time doing that in the last Parliament when they were in power. Every major strike or lockout in the federal sector during the previous Conservative government attracted back-to-work legislation from that party. Therefore, I do believe that comment is a little out of context.

One of the concerns that the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent raised was that anti-scab legislation could force employers to settle labour disputes quickly.

I would suggest that is a feature, not a bug, of this private member's bill, that we actually want to bring these disputes to a quick resolution. One of the problems with replacement workers is that they drag things out, and one of the benefits of this legislation is that it would speed things up.

We also heard an argument from the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent that there were more labour disputes in Quebec versus Ontario and that this is all the fault of anti-scab legislation.

I would suggest there is a whole bunch of other differences between Quebec and Ontario, including the higher rate of unionization in Quebec. I think the better comparison is what happened within Quebec when anti-scab legislation was passed, because actually it was passed in response to an extremely high level of very disruptive labour disputes in that province, and the introduction of anti-scab legislation led to a great reduction in the number of strikes and the amount of picket-line violence in Quebec. Therefore, I actually see this as a good model for the federal sector.

In conclusion, I urge members to support this private member's bill, which they are free to do because it is a private member's bill. They do not have to vote on party lines. This legislation would strengthen the right to strike while, at the same time, producing fewer, shorter, and less violent labour disputes.

• (1830)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise today to address this piece of legislation.

I am taking a different approach to this in the sense that I used to be the labour critic in the Province of Manitoba. I was first elected to the Manitoba legislature in 1988. At the time, controversial legislation called "final offer selection" was being proposed. *Hansard* will demonstrate that even back then I was afforded the opportunity to give my thoughts and views on labour legislation. I found out early in the game how important it was for government not to use political IOUs in order to please one group over another.

Private Members' Business

The Liberal government introduced Bill C-4 because we passionately believe that the previous Conservative government used the back door through private members' legislation, Bill C-377 and Bill C-525. Many interest groups and stakeholders from both sides acknowledged that. Our government, through Bill C-4, is rectifying a wrong made by the previous Conservative government.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour commented on the New Democratic Party using a private member's bill. I understand and appreciate the arguments put forward by the previous speaker, but I am suspicious of New Democrats when it comes to labour legislation. Like all Liberal members, I believe in the important role that unions play and we do what we can to support our union brothers and sisters as much as possible, but we believe in fair play.

Let me go back to the provincial election in 1988. It is important that we recognize that industries regulated for labour are primarily at the provincial level and the federal level deals with regulations. Howard Pawley hoped to become the premier of Manitoba at that time. He sat down with a number of union representatives and said that, if the NDP formed government, it would bring in anti-scab legislation. He and the NDP made that commitment. The NDP became government, but it did not bring in anti-scab legislation because the then NDP premier argued that it would not be fair after all. Instead, the government brought in final offer selection legislation in its place. That is when I was elected, in that 1988 provincial election, and when the Conservatives took office they repealed the legislation. We sat until two o'clock in the morning in committee debating this. Many union and non-union members made presentations about the benefits of final offer selection. We often heard about the NDP compromising itself by promising to bring in anti-scab legislation but not doing that and instead coming in with final offer selection. Final offer selection was disposed of because the numbers were not there for the Liberals and the NDP back then.

In 1999 the NDP regained power. One would have thought it would have brought back final offer selection or anti-scab legislation, but it did neither.

The reason I say this is that I believe we have to be more honest with our union brothers and sisters. We have to look at what is in the best interests of Canada as a whole and look at the worker and how we can enhance our workforce. We need to not only look at how we can protect workers but look at the different sides sitting at the table. That is what is being proposed by the Government of Canada today. The NDP and Conservatives have used labour relations as a wedge issue time and time again at the cost of union workers. I have witnessed it.

I did not tell the House about an amendment that was put forward by the Liberal Party in 1990, which would have improved final offer selection, but back then New Democrats voted with the Conservatives to get rid of it.

I am familiar with the games that are played between the Conservatives and the NDP with respect to labour. We in the Liberal Party are saying enough is enough. We need to do what is in the best interests of the worker and the—

● (1835)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order, please. I just want to remind hon. members that, if they want to wait until another time, they can ask questions, but at this point there is one person speaking alone in the House.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, we need to recognize that there are competing interests and that those competing interests are best dealt with in a tripartite fashion. It is not just the Liberals who are saying this. As has been quoted, union leaders and other stakeholders have said that we should not bring one-off, piecemeal legislation to try to change the Canada Labour Code. We believe that to be the case. If there are mechanisms through which we can move forward, then we are open to that.

If we look at Bill C-4, we see it is important to this Liberal government. It was one of the first pieces of legislation we introduced shortly after our tax break to the middle class, if I can give that an extra plug. That was our first piece and our first priority. We saw how important labour and unions are to our great nation and introduced Bill C-4 to rectify a wrong.

I passionately believe in the importance of our union movement through which great strides have been made not only in terms of better working conditions, better hours, and better rates of pay and benefits but also with respect to the many different social causes they have played a critical role in developing.

My door is always open, as are the doors of my colleagues. We are more than willing to meet with and do what we can to protect our workers. Over the years, I have had the opportunity to work with many individual members of the union movement. I have also worked with private business. I have had the opportunity to walk on picket lines in support of many workers who were constituents of mine and had to go on those picket lines.

I understand the importance of negotiations. People do not want a strike, whether they be employees or employers, because I would argue that we all lose. However, at times it is necessary. Until we can come up with a better way to deal with these issues, such as through a tripartite mechanism, we must continue to rely on the system that has done us so well over the years. Unlike the Conservatives or the NDP, if we take the politics out of the picture, I think we would have more harmony between labour and management, and that is good for Canada.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order, please. The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

EMERGENCY DEBATE

[Translation]

SITUATION IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The House will now proceed to the consideration of a motion to adjourn the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter requiring urgent consideration, namely the situation in indigenous communities.

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP) moved:

That the House do now adjourn.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River.

[Translation]

I would like to begin by thanking my colleagues for participating in this very important emergency debate.

As parliamentarians, we are responsible for keeping indigenous youth in Canada and all Canadian youth safe. We are also responsible for working together to find a solution to this tragic crisis and working with communities, leaders, youth, and their families. Canada's Parliament must make the necessary resources available to support the communities and help them find long-term solutions.

● (1840)

[English]

I want to thank my colleagues for being here. At the beginning I would like to pause and particularly thank Chief Bruce Shisheesh, the council in Attawapiskat, the teachers, the front-line workers, the police, the leadership in the region from Grand Chief Jonathon Solomon, and our Nishnawbe Aski nation.

This is not just about Attawapiskat particularly. This is about who we are as Canadians and our whole nation.

I want to particularly thank the young people. We see the image of these helpless communities and these lost children, but if we travel in these communities and see their faces and see the potential, we see that the greatest tragedy in this nation is that we would waste a generation of children and squander their potential.

I think of Shannen Koostachin, the woman who inspired me more than anybody except my wife, who had to lead a national fight at age 13 just to get a school. I think of Chelsea Edwards, who took her fight to the United Nations when she was living in boarding houses far from her home.

I think of all the young people who leave home at 13 to live in boarding houses in Sioux Lookout and Timmins because they believe there is a better future, and we fail them, and it has to stop.

Tonight might be the beginning of a change in our country. That is what I am asking us all to come together to do.

What do we need in the short term? We have to end the Band-Aids, the emergency flights and the hand-wringing.

Standing Order 52

This is not new. A 1999 coroner's jury for Selena Sakanee in Neskantaga had 41 jury recommendations. What happened?

In 2008, after the horrific Kashechewan fire and inquest, there were 80 recommendations. What happened to them? They are still sitting on the shelf.

After the 2011 Pikangikum suicide crisis that was so devastating, the coroner's report had 100 recommendations. What happened to them? They are still sitting there.

Now it is up to us. It is no longer possible to say that we did not know or we do not know and we will find out. We know what the problem is. From a parliamentary point of view, we have to end the nickel-and-diming of services. When we say to a young person in crisis that we will medevac them out on a flight, that is an extreme. Most times they are left on their own. However, if we do medevac them out, we send them back two days later because nobody in government will pay for the treatment centre they need.

We have to end the culture of deniability whereby children and young people are denied mental health services on a routine basis, as a matter of course, by the federal government.

Cindy Blackstock points out that in this budget the children are being failed because of child welfare issues. We have to close that gap. That is an issue of political will that we could change tonight.

We have to ask where the health care dollars are, because we know this crisis has been happening, and there are no new augmented funds.

We have to work with our front-line workers. I talked to the incredible police officers at NAPS, the Nishnawbe-Aski Police Service, who suffer from PTSD because they are the ones who go in to deal with the children. We have to augment them and give them support so that we can keep drugs out of the communities and build communities at the grassroots.

What are our long-term solutions? The solutions come from the communities, from their culture, from their incredible relationship to the land, and most Canadians have no concept of how deep that goes. The solutions will not be from outsiders who come in. We need to put the resources there to help, because they know where the solutions are.

We need to get a mobile crisis unit in Mushkegowuk territory so that the communities can start to deal with this themselves.

We need healing centres and treatment centres. We actually have lots of them across the country, and they are just sitting empty, because governments built them but never put a dime in to fund the resources so that they could actually staff them. Among the ones that we have sitting empty, there is one in Attawapiskat. Where are the resources, the mental health dollars, to have those local healing and treatment centres for the young people when they need them?

We also have to talk to the youth. Maybe this is a moment to think outside the box. When the body of little Alan Kurdi was found on the shores, it shocked the world and it shamed Canadians. Canadians stood up and said that they would do whatever. All of civil society came together. Well, this is our moment.

Standing Order 52

I am thinking tonight of young Sarah Hookimaw who has left home to go to school in Timmins. She wrote me a message. She said, “I wish I could be there with the young back home, my cousins and my peers. I can't right now, but I am seeing the leaders standing up and I'm proud to be who I am, even though it is not easy. I want us to build a relationship with the government.”

This is the voice of the youth speaking.

Abigail Mattinas of Constance Lake First Nation wrote me a message tonight. She said, “I want to be part of the teams that will bring light in the dark time. Let me know how I can help so we can plan an assessment to end the suicides in our communities.”

Where is the will to take from the youth and start regional and national teams and empower youth to come to this Parliament and tell us what change should look like? The days of Indian Affairs and Health Canada dictating to them how their resources are going to be spent is a failed model, and it has to end.

I want to thank my colleagues in the House for their goodwill on this, because this is not a partisan issue. As parents, as adults, this is our primary responsibility. It is the fundamental responsibility, and we cannot use this in any cheap partisan manner.

There have been mistakes. There has been a 150-year system of systemic discrimination and racist denial, but by coming together, we can change that, and that is what I am asking for tonight. I want to see political will, because what I am hearing in the communities is that they do not want another declaration of emergency. We have lost count of the declarations of emergency that were lip service or were ignored or were denied. They are tired of that.

They want a nation-to-nation relationship, and it begins when we get past the talk. It begins when we get past the rhetoric and say that we will commit and put that money into the health services that have been regularly denied. We will stop fighting children when they need access to proper mental health services. We will deal with the crisis in education that still makes the children in my communities like Kashechewan go to school in rotten, broken-down portables.

We have to end that, because the greatest resource we have in this country is not the gold and it is not the oil; it is the children. The day we recognize that is the day that we will be the nation we were meant to be.

We will have this journey together for as long as the rivers run, as long as the grass grows, and as long as the sun shines. That is our commitment to each other, and I am asking everyone tonight to follow through and make it true.

● (1845)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Timmins—James Bay for his comments and for making this debate happen. This is extremely important.

[*English*]

I had the opportunity of going to Cross Lake just a few short weeks ago with a gentleman by the name of Robb Nash. Robb Nash

is a gentleman who gives motivational speeches through rock and roll, trying to connect with youth in order to stop suicide.

At the end of his concert and motivational talk, nine students went up to him and presented him their suicide notes. It is an absolutely incredible thing to witness. We often just read about it in the newspapers, but for people to actually see it with our own eyes not only touches our hearts but really drives us to action. I know members feel the same way.

I know there are things we can be doing in this country to make a difference in the lives of our fellow citizens. I know there are many people who care about this issue very deeply. The House, even though this is a special debate, is relatively full, and I think that is a testimony to our commitment to ensure that all citizens have the opportunity to make sure they are not forgotten, that they are important, that they can have hope, and that their voices will be heard even though those voices might be in the wilderness of our country.

I am very thankful for this debate and I hope we can have it with great respect and try to understand some of the consequences of what is going on. Hopefully, somehow we will come to a conclusion so that we can move forward in some way.

I would ask the member of Parliament for Timmins—James Bay if there is a solution he sees that we could carry into the future, something concrete that will actually make a difference.

● (1850)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, there are concrete steps that parliamentarians can take.

Number one, we have to close the gap on child welfare. As Cindy Blackstock said, kids cannot be left behind. Let us dedicate that money and let us do it now. We need to close the gaps in terms of health care dollars, the lack of services, and the culture that exists deep within the federal government of denying the basic needs of indigenous children.

My colleague mentioned a rock and roll tour. We need to be looking to all the departments of the federal government to play a role in a national youth vision. For example, I remember the days when the Debajehmujig Theatre Company used to go into the isolated communities. Those actors transformed lives. They had young people who felt hopeless who were learning to act and grow, but it costs money to tour. Fifteen or 20 actors cannot go into isolated communities. The government wanted them to do it on the cheap and they could not do it.

Where is the health care? Where is Indian and Northern Affairs? Where is the justice department? Where is arts and culture? If we talk about a national youth vision that we are going to commit to with a road map for it, they all have to be there.

We can start to do this now. Just talking is the beginning, but we can do this.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Timmins—James Bay for what was clearly a very passionate speech. His speech indicated what an incredible amount of concern he has on this very tragic issue.

Standing Order 52

I appreciated his first question, which asked what the next steps are. I think there are both long-term and short-term answers. I also represent a rural area, so I would like the member to talk about acute indigenous service provisions as well as general concerns about the provisions of rural psychological services, which are both important issues, and speak to the whole issue of how to deliver critical health care services to both indigenous rural communities and rural communities in general.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question. In the rural regions in the north and in all our communities, we see a crisis in health care, in particular a lack of access to mental health services. However, up in the far north, in indigenous country, the disparities grow exponentially. That is why we are two months into a health state of emergency in Treaty 9 territory. We can look at the crisis in rural Canada and then see how magnified it is.

If we put the resources in, it will save us money. We will not be bringing young people out by medevac, we will not be dealing with suicides, we will not be dealing with the traumas. Let us put the resources in now for front-line services, and then we can start to build the kind of future that we all believe in as parliamentarians.

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is very important for me to stand up in the House today and take part in this debate, not only to speak for Attawapiskat, but also to highlight the challenges being met by the residents in my riding.

Before I begin, though, I want to share a personal story. Suicide has affected me and my family. My brother has had the challenge of losing three of his children to suicide in the past eight years.

Over the years, I have seen how both levels of government fail communities like La Loche by not providing services in mental health and other programs. This is a very touching, sensitive issue.

I have received many stories to share in this House and, before I begin, I want to thank everyone who has shared their stories with me so that I could share them in the House of Commons. The personal stories are very sensitive, heartbreaking, and very sad. These stories also show the resilience and hope that exists in our communities and reserves across Canada.

The personal stories indicate that the first nations and Métis children, young people, and their families require immediate help and support. They need immediate help now and help in years to come. The personal stories indicate that first nations and Métis children across Canada are looking for us to give them hope. They are looking to the Canadian government for hope, and to industry, service providers, and all levels of government.

This first story comes from a health care provider in northern Saskatchewan. This health care provider had to travel 600 kilometres to Saskatoon from her community to seek help for her daughter, who had tried to kill herself in the previous few days. She could not find help in her own community because the existing health care services are inadequate and insufficient.

She, as a health care provider, struggled with getting a referral for a mental health specialist. I can just imagine how hard it is for people who do not have access to medical and other services. Not all

families in northern Saskatchewan, Attawapiskat, and other communities have the resources to take their children to see specialists.

Reports from northern Saskatchewan, the far north, and other northern communities, indicate the lack of services and how poor these communities are.

Let me share another story, from a member of the Gitksan community in B.C. This person knows of over 100 suicide attempts in their community alone, and some were successful. The community was seeking to build a new arena so that the children could find a place to gather and play, without having to bargain with major companies to have it done.

This past weekend alone, I am very sad to say that there were more suicide attempts in La Loche. Since the shooting on January 22, 2016, I have stood before House of Commons parliamentarians requesting additional services from both levels of government. Unfortunately, help has not come from the many government levels.

Children and youth in La Loche and surrounding communities are showing signs of PTSD. They have no one to turn to and nowhere to go. The schools are doing what they can to provide services, sports, and recreational programs, but that is not enough. Families are left to fend for themselves and to try to take care of their problems, with no help from the health centre and no help from anywhere else.

Today another person wrote to me that the suicides and the attempted suicides across the country are a symptom of systemic failure, and I could not agree more.

Parents feel hopeless as they try to do their best to provide for their children. We live in Canada. We should not feel hopeless, and yet our first nations and Métis communities across Canada feel hopeless. We can speak to the issues of a lack of cultural and recreational facilities and programs, the high rate of unemployment and poverty, poor housing, poor infrastructure, the high cost of food, high cost of living, and no mental health supports or other services.

Communities like La Loche, Attawapiskat, Cross Lake, Gitksan, and others across Canada, require help, not band-aid solutions. It is nice to get visits, but that is not good enough. We need concrete help. We need more funding to assist our communities across Canada to make sure we are helping our young people and their families deal with the problems at hand.

● (1855)

Some examples by the residents who shared their stories include language immersion programs and retention programs, in Dene, Cree, Michif, and other first nation languages. Other suggestions are for more cultural and recreational facilities to keep young people and their families busy.

Standing Order 52

Cindy Blackstock has a dream for Canada's birthday: a country where first nations children no longer have to fight for equality. I share her dream, but we cannot wait until next year. We have to fight for them now. We cannot lose any more of our children to suicide in Attawapiskat, Le Loche, and beyond.

The government promised to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations in its entirety. This is the time to act because it is 2015. Oh, I forgot; it is now 2016.

•(1900)

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her attention to this very serious issue across Canada. I come from the Northwest Territories, and suicide is also a very big issue there.

The suicide rates in the Northwest Territories are double that of the national average, and they are not restricted only to aboriginal people. However, it is the leading cause of death among first nations, Métis, and Inuit people across Canada.

Suicide is the ninth-leading cause of mortality in all ages and genders. The government of the Northwest Territories did a study in 2014 and concluded that there were 121 suicides within a 15-year period. They were highest among the Inuit, three times the territorial rate. The non-aboriginal population made up 27% of the suicides.

Of the suicides, 79% were male and 21% were female. There are many risk factors that we can point to for this. Alcohol and drug use, depression, emotional stress, housing, poverty, education, and trauma are all issues that contribute to this issue.

We need to be able to prevent suicides. We need to have people connect to the families and the culture. We need clinical care for mental, physical, and substance abuse disorders.

There are many other things we can point to, but we have to conclude that people who are committing suicide usually feel overwhelmed, hopeless, helpless, desperate, and alone. We need programs and preventive strategies that target specific high-risk people.

I would like to ask the member how a nation-to-nation relationship would help on this issue.

Ms. Georgina Jolibois: Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe that my friend is asking this question. I am a Dene-speaking person, and he comes from the Northwest Territories.

Nation-to-nation first of all means to me language retention. I speak Dene, and I want to be able to have our first nation communities teach Dene to continue our language, and across Canada, with other first nations and Métis.

Nation-to-nation also means spirituality being acknowledged. These are practices of sweetgrass burning; medicine smudging; having access to an elder, a priest, a pastor of any kind, for the ability to pray.

Nation-to-nation means that I feel respected and welcomed. As an aboriginal woman, it means I do not have to feel scared in Canada, because statistics prove that as an aboriginal woman I run the risk of being murdered or going missing.

Nation-to-nation means for me, and for all first nations and Métis people across Canada, feeling safe and valued .

•(1905)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for a very powerful speech. She talked about how La Loche did not get the services it required. I wonder if she could elaborate, both in the short term and the long term, but mostly the short term, on what she was hoping would be there in terms of support and what is missing.

Ms. Georgina Jolibois: Mr. Speaker, young people, children, and their families, when they are feeling the effects of PTSD, need to go to the health centre or the band office clinic and say that they need to speak to someone because they are feeling stressed and overwhelmed. They go in, and there is no one to talk to them. That is the immediate help needed in the area of mental health, counselling, and other areas.

I have heard, and I have read over and over again, how when young people, children, and their families have access to programs and services, they are kept busy and have other things to do in their lives. They feel important and valued. That is one area.

Another area for families, children, youth, moms and dads across Canada, is that we have heard in the House over and over again about the importance of employment. Yet, when we turn to statistics, unemployment is very high in northern Canada among first nations and reserves. To feel that important level of nation-to-nation, there must be opportunities in our communities for employment. It is not there. Therefore, a number of areas of help, from all levels of government, is required.

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be dividing my time with the member for Toronto—St. Paul's.

I want to start by thanking the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay for the care and compassion he has shown to his constituents, to first nations communities throughout Canada, and from all of us here, the leadership he has shown in calling for this emergency debate. I want to thank him for his willingness to work with fellow parliamentarians to draw attention to this crisis, to address it, and to find a way to bring help and hope to these communities.

[*Translation*]

I would also like to thank all of my colleagues for being here to participate in this important debate. Despite our many different points of view and perspectives on the best way to govern the country, our common denominator is that we are working to serve the people in the best interest of all Canadians.

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[English]

I think we can all agree that we as a government we must act quickly and compassionately to ensure that we address the ongoing mental health crisis in indigenous communities.

Suicide rates among aboriginal youth are among the highest in the world, and even domestically, as the members here well know, the gaps between indigenous and non-indigenous groups are staggering.

When I use the term “youth”, I mean someone up to the age of 19.

A first nations male youth is 10 times more likely to commit suicide than a male non-indigenous youth. Worse still, suicide rates among first nations female youth are over 21 times higher than their non-first nations Canadian counterparts.

The numbers are no more encouraging for Inuit youth. In fact, they are worse. The rate of suicide by Inuit in Inuit Nunangat, the Inuit homeland, is more than 10 times the rate for Canada as a whole. Suicides among Inuit male youth are 35 times higher than their Canadian non-Inuit counterparts. Among Inuit female youth, it is 27 times higher than comparable Canadian females.

I want to pause for a moment to ensure that we have reflected on what I have just said: 35 times higher than the average should be. It is a staggering reality, and it is completely unacceptable.

I am a family doctor. As I have been sitting here tonight, I have been reflecting upon patients of mine who have either taken their own lives, or more commonly, have had someone in their families have who taken their own lives. There is nothing more devastating than realizing that some people have reached the point of no hope, that they think there is no possible way that they can go any further, and that the only solution to end the pain is to put an end to their lives.

When I think that there are communities in our country where young people, as young as my 15-year-old daughter and even younger, in groups are deciding that there is no hope for their future, we must do better. We have to find a way to go forward. I agree with the member for Timmins—James Bay that tonight has to be a turning point for us as a country to decide together that we will do better.

I have been listening to the words of despair out of many of the youth in Attawapiskat. They talk about bullying, low self-esteem, and not thinking their lives are worth anything. They talk about a lack of things to do, overcrowding, and so many other reasons why they and their peers are turning to suicide or other forms of self-harm.

Something must be done to stem the tide and reverse these disturbing trends. If the people in this House are not the people who will take a stand and commit to doing something, then who else will?

We cannot do it on our own. It is going to be a project with the entire nation. It is going to be working hand in hand with our counterparts at all levels of government, with our counterparts in first nations, Inuit, and the Métis nation, to find a way forward.

There is no doubt in our minds that the health conditions of these communities across Canada are deplorable. They must be fixed. The health outcome gaps are real and unacceptable. These are issues that

move well beyond the scope of health care, and yet they have a devastating impact on health nonetheless.

• (1910)

In January, I personally visited the community of La Loche. I also visited other communities in Saskatchewan, including Standing Buffalo First Nation. I have had some opportunities to see the challenges that are faced in respect to social conditions, health, mental health, and health care.

Recently, we have been hearing pleas repeatedly for improved access to quality care from first nations in Ontario, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and the list goes on. We all would agree that these problems are complex, that they will not be solved overnight, but we know that our response in return has to be broad, multifaceted, and interconnected. I agree with the member opposite that this is not a time for partisan gamesmanship; this is a time for us to work together as Canadians, one and all, to find solutions.

We need to be transformative in our work. We need to address the socio-economic conditions that will improve indigenous people's wellness in addition to ensuring that first nations and Inuit have the health care they need and deserve. If we are to truly succeed in placing these communities on the path to renewed and sustained health equity, we will need to focus less on treating symptoms and focus more on finding and fixing the causes.

A serious discussion about suicide prevention in first nations and Inuit communities must be informed by understanding the social, political, and other health inequities that exist and the way these inequities work together to negatively influence the environment in which many of these young people grow up. Every parent here would agree that we want our children to have the best chance in life. We know that best chance means getting a good education and access to nutritious food and being able to have clean water, a good solid roof over their head, and access to quality care. These are the basics.

I find it so troubling that in a country as affluent as ours there are citizens who struggle to achieve these very basics. Unfortunately, I am no stranger to these types of inequalities. In fact, this was one of the reasons why I chose to pursue politics.

I lived and worked for almost 10 years in the country of Niger, one of the poorest countries in the world. It was there that I came to truly understand the social determinants of health and the way that the good things of life were so unevenly divided across this world, so unevenly divided from one country to another, from one ethnicity to another, and that this uneven distribution of resources could converge to make one community prone to sickness and disease while another community, sometimes very close by, enjoyed good health and prosperity. We know this is not right.

I also know there is only so much doctors and nurses can do to respond to improving these conditions. It is that realization that brought me to enter into politics and to this noble profession that we share in the House, where we have a responsibility to close these inequalities and to directly influence the social determinants of health that are at work in these communities.

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To that end, we need to enter a new era of federal, provincial, territorial, and indigenous co-operation. I intend to work with the members of the House. We are committed to change. We are committed to not only respond to the needs of these communities in the short term, but to ensure that the actions are sustained over the long term.

It is known in the House that in the recent budget our government laid out a comprehensive plan to invest that will go a considerable way to addressing these health gaps. It includes \$8.4 billion that will help provide better schools, housing and clean water. It will provide better nursing stations where nurses will want to stay and work, where young people will feel comfortable and can go to have their needs taken care of.

These are some of the immediate measures, but I know the House is aware that we need to take long-term measures. I look forward to doing that and to hearing the members' questions. I look forward to working on this with all the members. With each of us working together, along with indigenous partners, we will find a way forward, we will find hope.

• (1915)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on January 22, there was a horrific tragedy in La Loche. A lot of people went to the communities and expressed their concerns over what was happening.

As a physician, the Minister of Health would be very aware that PTSD would be significant. There was a trauma to the community.

Tonight the member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River has told us that people do not even have someone to whom they can talk. People cannot pick up a phone. There is no one for them.

Two months later, have they been forgotten? Is there nothing there for those people with PTSD who have suffered significant trauma from this event?

Hon. Jane Philpott: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's question draws to mind a very important reality. Crises such as we have seen in recent weeks are very important because they draw attention to a situation. The media is paying attention to this as are Canadians. As well, we are having this debate in the House of Commons.

However, these things have not just happened recently. They have been going on for a considerable period of time. All of us in the House can agree that there are generations of wrongs that have led to the situation we face today.

It is for that reason that Health Canada's first nations and Inuit health branch continues to work in communities. I know it has been working with colleagues in the provincial government in Saskatchewan to continue to provide support in La Loche. I will certainly look into ensuring that those supports continue to be there. It is my understanding that they are. I look forward to talking to the member opposite and ensuring that those supports are in place.

This has not been easy, but I want to acknowledge that, clearly, we have not done enough. However, there are mental health services across the country, to the extent that we are investing \$300 million this year in mental health and wellness programs in indigenous

communities. We will continue to address this. I will continue to work to find the mental health resources these communities need.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for the work she is willing to do with her teams in the communities I am honoured to represent.

The minister talks about dealing with this long term, because we are dealing with historic wrongs. The historic wrongs are built into the operational policies of the government. The task the minister has is to deconstruct those discriminatory and racist policies. Those policies prefer to destroy indigenous families by taking their children away, rather than supporting the families in their home environment.

The Human Rights Tribunal ruling said that the department routinely denied access to drugs that were prescribed by pediatricians, and to medically necessary devices. We heard the story raised at the Human Rights Tribunal of the four-year-old child who suffered severe cardiac arrest and an anoxic brain injury. The federal government would not pay for a lifesaving bed for her to return home. That is a systemic problem.

We need to implement Jordan's principle and stop talking about it, but I do not see the money for it. We need to close the gap so the child welfare shortfall ends once and for all, so children can stop living in the hotels away from their families. However, I do not see the money for that.

I know there is existing money for health care, but we know the shortfalls and the crisis. How will the minister come into line with the Human Rights Tribunal and start to dismantle the system that she has inherited and that she must oversee, so the doors are finally blown open and so "no means no" suddenly becomes "yes" for the children whenever they need it?

• (1920)

Hon. Jane Philpott: Mr. Speaker, I want to point out a couple of things that the member may find interesting.

First, in terms of Jordan's principle, obviously it is something to which we must adhere. In that regard, we had a meeting just a week or so ago in Ontario, where the chiefs of Ontario met with the provincial health minister and myself. It was at that meeting where we said that there was no longer any excuse for arguing whose jurisdiction it was. We have to work side by side, the federal government, the provinces, the territories, and indigenous leaders, to ensure people get the care they need.

It is unacceptable to have multiple tiers of health access. We would agree that all Canadians, regardless of where they live, what their ethnicity may be, or what language they speak, need to have access to the medical care they require based on that need, not based on where they live or whether they can pay for it. This is a fundamental principle that I will uphold.

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Along that line, I will be working, as I work toward a new health accord, to ensure that the accord is reached in co-operation with first nations and Inuit leaders across the country. We will be looking at the health gaps, finding out what it will take, what kinds of investments are required to ensure that all Canadians enjoy the health they deserve.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to acknowledge that we are here on the traditional territory of the Algonquin people.

I particularly want to commend the member for Timmins—James Bay for his unwavering commitment to the health and well-being of northern Ontario indigenous communities, particularly the young people.

As I heard him speak, I was thinking of my trip to Attawapiskat and one of those terrible homes and seeing this 10-month-old baby on the bed and thinking that baby cannot pay for whatever else is going on around it. That baby deserves a chance.

[*Translation*]

We are deeply concerned about the number of suicide attempts recently in Attawapiskat and other first nation and Inuit communities all over Canada. I want to offer my condolences to the families and to the communities that are dealing with these tragedies.

[*English*]

We join these communities in their grief and healing, and we know it is not just Attawapiskat. While adequate health and mental health supports are essential to dealing with the current situation, as the member for Timmins—James Bay reminds us, these communities need hope.

The children need to know they are valued and have value, and that we as a larger community support them. Tonight as we speak, I hope that the member will convey that to the community. Everyone here, and we are hoping by tonight all Canadians, will let these children know they have value. They need to know there is hope for them and we will be with them on this journey.

The Minister of Health has explained how we have been working with the Province of Ontario and how Chief Shisheesh and Grand Chief Fiddler have been working together at this particular time.

Those who know me know that the difference between health and health care is very much part of what my job is as the minister of social determinants of health, but also as the minister of reconciliation. We actually know that suicide is not just a consequence of individual vulnerability. It is about the causes of the causes. It is the numerous historical, structural, and societal determinants impacting mental health. This is racism, colonialism, the legacy of residential schools, child abuse, inadequate child welfare, lack of educational opportunities, overcrowded and unsafe housing, lack of access to healthy food and clean water, and limited access to health care services.

It was my friend, Bill Mussell, from the Native Mental Health Association of Canada, who a long time ago taught me that resilience comes when young people are grounded by a secure personal and cultural identity, when they are proud of who they are, when self-esteem and a sense of control over their life provides them

with hope and vision. That results in good health, education, and positive economic outcomes. These are hugely important aspects of the overall picture of healthy communities.

There is no single answer to addressing this. We have all been clear that it will take a whole-of-government approach, as the member for Timmins—James Bay pointed out. It must be collaborative and co-operative, spanning a wide range of policies and programs in order to deal with the root causes of what we see going on in Attawapiskat, and what I know I will see on Friday in Pikangikum when I go there with Grand Chief Fiddler.

It is also so important that respect for community autonomy and self-determination, respect and recognition for rights and self-government are there.

We know from the very important research of Chandler and Lalonde in British Columbia that when communities have their language, as the member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River spoke of, that is huge, as is control over their health care, education, doing their ceremonies. That is how suicide rates went down to zero in some of the communities that were studied.

● (1925)

[*Translation*]

In budget 2016, we committed to making historic investments.

[*English*]

We know that these investments have to be transformational for indigenous communities and that we will work nation to nation to actually set the goals for those communities and support indigenous-led initiatives.

I want to focus on two things. One is on education in kindergarten to grade 12 and what we are learning about what happens when a kid does not make the transition from learning to read to reading to learn. If kids in grade 3 cannot make that transition, they end up faking it for the next number of years, until grade 8 and grade 9. As Dr. Stan Kutcher says, they are not stupid; they know they are not going to be able to cope and it is because the education system let them down.

The other piece I want to talk about is the effect of a staggeringly horrible child welfare system. We have more children in care than we did at the height of residential schools. This actually has to stop. Children are taken from their families, their language and culture and they do not see their place or any pride in who they are.

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That includes the effect that child abuse has in that high-risk situation. Eighty per cent of people with addictions and 80% of people in prison are victims of child abuse. We have to talk out loud about that now. We have to talk about Attawapiskat, where Ralph Rowe abused over 500 kids as an Anglican priest and a boy scout leader, the people that Grand Chief Fiddler is trying to help. There are 20 years of abuse in that region. It was not difficult to understand and make the links as we heard that testimony in the TRC of what happens when a child is abused and then ends up in trouble with drugs, alcohol, violence, and often incarceration.

That region has an amazing program called Feathers of Hope. I would hope that any member here would listen to the children who have been in care, to hear what happens when a child gets put in a home with people who do not respect the child's religion but expect the child to respect theirs, or a child who is brought to a farm, or pulled away from his or her sibling and the child runs away to try to find the sibling. This is just unacceptable.

We are very keen to work with all members to change this child welfare system with the provinces and territories and to get on with dealing with the kind of distinctions-based approach that means that we will deal with first nations, Inuit, and Métis differently. This cannot be a pan-aboriginal approach. As the Minister of Health said, in Inuit Nunangat, the Inuit homeland, the suicide rate is 10 times the rate for Canada as a whole. We need an evidence-based approach that is Inuit specific in nature, but globally informed.

Tonight is about ensuring hope and a brighter future in partnership with all indigenous communities. It is our shared responsibility. We know that doing it top-down will not work. We know we have to listen to the communities that know what they need and then help them get what they need.

I want to thank the member for Timmins—James Bay and all the members who are participating tonight. This is a night about getting all Canadians onside and turning this around.

• (1930)

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are all gathered here today because of a state of emergency and we all need to step away from our speaking points for a moment. We have two communities that are facing difficult times in the ridings of our hon. colleague from La Loche and our hon. colleague from Timmins—James Bay. The communities are facing grievous emergencies. It has been two months since the incident in La Loche and it is still waiting for services.

Let us step away from our speaking points. I know that both ministers have great passion for this file, there is no two ways about it, and I commend them for that. However, as leaders within our communities, as leaders within our nation, as leaders in the House, let us step away from our speaking points and talk about what we are going to do for these two communities that are facing emergencies today. I implore the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs and the Minister of Health to please tell us what we can do to help now.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Mr. Speaker, I wish it were only two communities.

I think that the community the member comes from has been through a terrible time, and ended up with an abusing judge, with the

youngest-ever serial killer, and a medical examiner that had to be fired because the answers were not forthcoming in an honest way. I think all of us know what it is like, and I think that we are going to put in place the kinds of things that will offer prevention.

The member representing La Loche had asked us to look into things like Project Venture, which can take 100 kids in the summer out on the land. If we could ramp that up to 250 kids, I would like to help her do it. We know that getting out on the land and being back in touch with one's history, culture, and skills can prevent this. I do not want to wait until those kids are having trouble with addictions or are in trouble with the law. I think that we can work on programs that communities know have worked for them. We have to work together to make that happen.

• (1935)

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate both ministers in the Liberal government for their understanding and the level of compassion that they have.

I thank the minister for bringing up Project Venture. I have a question around that which is coming from residents in my community.

In the budget, there was no mention of Project Venture or dollars to support it. Am I hearing correctly that, at least for my community, the Project Venture initiative will receive funding?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Mr. Speaker, because it had been funded through crime prevention and the budget of the Minister of Public Safety, it is something that we are working on together in terms of reinstating that program.

I look forward to working with the member. I do not know the details of the minister's budget in the same way, but I hope that we can find the money.

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was elected 28 years ago, and one of the first debates we had was the debate that we are having tonight about the plight of aboriginals.

I remember exactly what the prime minister of the day said at the time in this building. He said that we could all go home that weekend and try to think of a way to harm our aboriginals, because we could not do any worse than what we had done over the last 100 years.

It was 28 years ago that we had that debate, and we are here now having the same debate again. I believe we have an opportunity, and every single one of us has to be committed to this. Every single one of us has to help the ministers involved.

I believe we have the right ministers. I believe our Minister of Health is committed and able to do this. I believe our Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs is the most passionate in the House.

My question is for every one of us. Are we ready to help? Are we ready to do something so that we do not do this in another 28 years, so that we do not have this debate in another eight years? That is my question for all of us, and not for the ministers.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Mr. Speaker, I think the challenge was put to all of us. On behalf of all of us, I hope that we can rise to the task that the member has set for us.

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Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to note that I will be sharing my time with the member for Oshawa.

Certainly as we look at the current situation that has prompted the emergency debate, we see it is horrifying, tragic, and to be quite frank, a very sad reflection on what is a shared failure by all levels of government and Canadians. I do appreciate the comment from the member for Timmins—James Bay and also the more recent question of whether this will be an Alan Kurdi moment, when we take what is a very tragic situation and finally start to see what are some significant and important improvements.

It is a deeply personal debate, and many of us have talked about our stories tonight and how suicide has impacted us or how we have intersected with it in our careers. I reflect back, and as a nurse I had maybe a year or two of experience under my belt when I ended up in an aboriginal community with not a lot of community experience. I was pretty good in a hospital, but I sure was not ready to be thrust into a community as a solo nurse. During that first week there were three suicides. I can just remember thinking, “Oh, my goodness”. The community was reeling and I actually did not have the capacity or the skills to deal with it, nor were the resources there. That was in the 1980s, and it does not sound as if things have changed all that much since that time.

First I want to look at the nurses, the community health workers, and the drug and alcohol workers who are in Attawapiskat or in communities across this country, who are doing yeoman's duty in terms of dealing with very difficult situations, often situations that are really beyond their skill level. Everyone in this House should acknowledge the very difficult situation that the people, including the RCMP, are having to deal with right now.

How are we going to make a difference, and how are we going to make a difference forever? First I want to say that in this debate we are there in terms of making positive movements to go forward. I want to say that, unlike the H1N1 crisis, where it was leveraged for some political points with some very difficult literature that was sent out, we are there with them. However, we also are going to say this. What is happening in La Loche if two months later people are saying they cannot get help on the phone? That is not good enough. We know that has to be changed. There are people struggling with PTSD, and suicide rates are going up.

I have to go back to the whole framework that health care providers take to some of these issues. First, I have to say that solutions need to be within the community and in partnership with the community. However, we are always looking at a number of different levels of dealing with these emergency crises in communities, and certainly we would go back to tertiary, secondary, and primary prevention. We perhaps need to reflect on what we as the Government of Canada are doing in partnership with our provinces and within a partnership with our indigenous communities and indigenous leaders in every single one of those areas. We cannot just say that we have sent in some counsellors.

I do want to give the Minister of Health credit. From what I have heard of the current situation in Attawapiskat, it sounds as if there are some great resources there in a tertiary kind of model, people who are there supporting the community, whether psychologists,

psychiatrists, or nurses. It sounds as if the government has deployed a relatively rapid response to that current situation. I do commend the government on that piece, but I am concerned to hear that two months later in La Loche that support is not there anymore. That sort of tertiary kind of prevention is not just a week, not a couple of days, but it is something that goes into a few months.

I am sure both the ministers have that same kind of framework when they look at how we are going to approach the secondary prevention element of it. There was a very intriguing photograph that I saw, and apparently it was done by the children of Attawapiskat, depicting what they need to help them in their community.

● (1940)

There were simple measures the children of the community asked for, recognizing that there was a crisis. They asked for recreation programs and things that many of our children take for granted. There was a board with three photographs that were powerful because they showed what the children said they needed to help life in their community become a little better.

We can call it many things, but what is most important is primary prevention, a new relationship, how we are going to solve the problems of 150 years. I hear that 28 years ago there was the same debate. Frankly, the progress we have made is not what anyone should be proud of.

However, I hope we do not look at everything as doom and gloom, because I look at some of the things that I was watchful for in the 1980s and I have seen some important progress. I will take mental health as an example.

Mental health used to be in the dark, but look at Bell Let's Talk or the Mental Health Commission of Canada. We have resources out there that now have structure in place, and we need to take those resources like the Mental Health Commission of Canada because it has expertise in mental health. We have communities with expertise in who their communities are and what those communities need. We need to start to marry them.

However, more important is the fundamental issue of poverty and economic opportunity. At the end of the day, perhaps these other areas have to be dealt with, but we need to create that future that is so important.

I am going to focus in on that particular piece. The government has some plans, and where the plans make sense, we do support it. I have to say that moving back from the First Nations Financial Transparency Act is a terrible disservice to band members and community members, because that is one way they can hold their leadership to account when dollars come to the communities for recreation and education. The Department of Indian Affairs cares, but the parents of the children care more. They want to see that the money for health care and education is going where it is supposed to. That is a critical step in how we shine the light for communities to look at their leadership and what it is doing.

In the budget, the government focused on education because it is critical. An area I thought was lacking was economic opportunity and equity partnerships. In British Columbia there is a group saying to please backstop a loan so that they can actually become a partner in some of the natural resource opportunities.

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In conclusion, I believe everyone's heart is in the right place. We commit to working toward solutions and, if those solutions are not there, everyone will be hearing from us.

• (1945)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it seems clear from the commentary so far that we have a really good grasp of the symptoms. I do not know, personally, if we know enough about the malaise, certainly not about the cure. As we approach this, the will that we hear from all sides of the House is that we have to do something, so let us get something done.

It occurs to me that Bobby Kennedy a long time echoed this quote, “Some people see things as they are and say why? I dream things that never were and say, why not?” Maybe there is a germ of something in there that we should be thinking about.

Can we not ask the people right in the centre of this, the first nations people themselves, community by community, what their vision is of a good world, a good life, and work with them to reverse engineer that? As we understand what the end should look like, the steps that we take, which might have to be unique from community to community, will all of a sudden start to reveal themselves.

I was on the radio in northern B.C. playing rock and roll for the kids in Neskonlith, Greenville, and Kincolith. I was also in Kenora. I saw the grinding misery of the Whitedog and Grassy Narrows First Nation reserves.

Does the member from my old area of Kamloops think that this is a good place to start? Can we say, one day, the future is wonderful, and live up to it?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, as my remarks indicated, there was some work done today, as I understand, in Attawapiskat. The children were saying what they needed in terms of perhaps giving them some opportunity and hope.

I really think the government needs to come up with a structure and a way to move forward on what is a tragedy and an issue. If I were looking at the horrifying circumstances of 1980 that were still there today, I would have to go back and say it is a sheer failure.

• (1950)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her very heartfelt speech. I get the impression that the speech was very much because of her background as a nurse, and it is very much appreciated.

I have to go back to the response by Cindy Blackstock, the head of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, who said that she was very disappointed with the budget. Her statement was, “Children only get one childhood and they can't wait for a government to treat them equally”.

Have the member and her colleagues rethought the previous position? We obviously want a lot more immediate and direct support for the mental health of the entire aboriginal community whose members are suffering this distress and committing suicide.

We need to look at the root causes. As my colleague raised earlier, one of them is the lack of basic facilities, even for the education of the children. In many cases they have to leave their own home and family to get a basic education.

I am wondering if the member could speak to whether or not, as a result of these mounting crises for aboriginal children in Canada, she and her colleagues have rethought the previous decision to withhold the funding to provide schooling for all aboriginal children in Canada.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, money is important, but sometimes how things are organized and structured is also critically important.

I understand that in response to the tribunal's report, the government does not have a lot of time but it is going to take a little time because it has to make sure it is done right. Money is important. We had a solution in terms of a piece of legislation that we thought would actually create some structure that was going to improve results for the students. Obviously that piece of legislation has not gone through.

We anticipate that there is going to be, and there should be, some equal work, in terms not only of money but in creating a system and a structure that will achieve the results we intend to achieve.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank you for allowing us to participate in this debate, and to thank all members in the House for being here this evening.

My heart goes out to all those who have lost friends and loved ones to suicide, and those individuals who have been affected by the recent crisis that has unfolded in our northern communities, such as Attawapiskat.

In response to the state of emergency, I think everyone in this House understands the tragedy of suicide and the need for all of us to do more. However, to understand what we need to do in the future, we need to understand what was done in the past. Therefore, I would like to bring to the attention of those here tonight some of the things that have been done in the past, so that we can understand what we need to do in the future.

I will talk a bit about the commitments that were made under previous governments with the co-operation of Health Canada, aboriginal communities, and additional stakeholders. That will be to better understand suicide and mental health to aid those who feel the internal pain that leads them to believe there is no other option.

With initiatives such as the ones made by previous governments, Canada is becoming better equipped to help those who need it, and to renew hope. Obviously there are still significant gaps, particularly with our aboriginal communities. However, these initiatives are in part helpful aids to the current government to help it continue the work that needs to be done on mental health research and suicide prevention in Canada. As we all realize, even though Canada invests significantly more now than ever before in mental health initiatives, more can and needs to be done.

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The previous government had taken a strong stance, for example, on innovative research related to suicide and its prevention. We recognized the very real impact that mental health conditions have on families. We all have a role to play to improving the mental health of all Canadians.

Since 2006, our past Conservative government had invested over \$32 million to support over 130 aboriginal community-based suicide prevention projects. These are the projects that we work in a partnership that is necessary to get to the root causes.

There has been \$1 billion invested in mental health and neuroscience research since 2006. We helped to establish the Canada brain research fund, which provides matching funds to complement funds that have been raised by private contributions for research in brain disease and mental disorders.

Additionally, our government had increased health transfers to the provinces to unprecedented levels, by 70%, accounting for close to 25% of the federal government's total spending. Ontario alone received increases, from approximately \$10 billion a year in transfers, to close to \$21 billion.

Furthermore, I was very proud that our government, during our mandate, had the opportunity to help establish the Mental Health Commission of Canada in 2006. The commission has been able to help communities work together and find solutions for mental health and suicide prevention.

The commission has proudly trained 100,000 individuals to support good mental health, in addition to the following initiatives:

1. Promote mental health across the lifespan of Canadians in homes, schools, and workplaces, and prevent mental illness and suicide wherever possible.
2. Foster recovery and well-being for people of all ages living with mental health problems and illnesses, and uphold their rights.
3. Provide access to the right combination of services, treatments and supports, when and where people need them [across our country].
4. Reduce disparities in risk factors and access to mental health services, and strengthen the response to the needs of diverse communities and Northerners.
5. Work with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis to address their mental health needs, acknowledging their distinct circumstances, rights and cultures.
6. [And, of course] mobilize leadership, improve knowledge, and foster collaboration at all levels [of government].

The Mental Health Commission of Canada continues to advocate for opportunities to establish initiatives of suicide prevention. In response to the Prime Minister's wishes for his ministry to focus on suicide prevention as a top national health priority, a proposal was made and presented to the finance committee that had detailed a community-based suicide prevention program. Unfortunately, the national suicide prevention project did not receive funding in the 2016 budget.

● (1955)

The national suicide prevention project would have focused on specialized support, including a range of prevention and crisis services, such as crisis lines, support groups, and coordinating, planning and access. It would have provided training and networks to better equip community gatekeepers, such as physicians, first responders, nurses, human resource staff and managers, and teachers, by providing access to training and ongoing learning

opportunities. Public awareness campaigns in each community via posters, brochures, and social media would have been included.

It recommended means restriction, by helping communities to identify hot spots, the methods or places where a high number of suicides occur, and restricting access to them by building barriers on bridges or railway crossings; and protocols for medication access.

Also recommended was research, to increase the suicide prevention evidence base. This would have included setting research priorities and evaluating the model itself.

I hope that the current Liberal government takes the wise advice of the Mental Health Commission as it continues to address this state of emergency and starts moving forward to come up with a more permanent solution. At the end of the day, it is about a permanent solution.

Further initiatives that were moved forward by the previous government include an act respecting a federal framework for suicide prevention, which was introduced by my colleague, the member for Kitchener—Conestoga. He will have the opportunity to speak during this debate on his private member's bill, which achieved royal assent in 2012. The member has been committed to addressing the difficult issue of suicide, and I welcome his experience and insight during the debate this evening.

I am proud to have been part of a government that saw no reductions in aboriginal mental health services. Indeed, they were at an all-time high. Over \$200 million had been invested annually for aboriginal mental health services. As a matter of fact, since 2006, we invested over \$2 billion to improve mental health and wellness of aboriginals across Canada. These included building communities; developing community-based mental health programming; the brighter futures program, which supports mental health and illness prevention programs; and 10 mental health and wellness teams for aboriginal communities, increasing access to services.

However, we all know that money cannot do it alone. Additionally, we did work to increase the flexibility for Canadian student loan forgiveness for doctors and nurses who work in remote areas. The nurse recruitment and retention strategy recruits nurses from schools and supports graduate integration. There were investments of over \$25 million into the pathways to health equity for aboriginal peoples project. This innovative research has ensured that primary health issues are addressed.

In the wake of this recent crisis, I would like to mention that a timely response is essential when handling a state of emergency, especially to preserve the lives and well-being of a community. We applaud those who have moved forward in this approach.

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The minister has confirmed the commitment of \$300 million in funding that is aimed toward the health and well-being of aboriginal communities, enabling the continuation of health and wellness of aboriginal communities like Attawapiskat. However, there is more that has to be done. In addition to an emergency response, there is a need for the government to develop a long-term prevention strategy that will help communities receive the necessary tools that a national framework for suicide prevention can deliver.

Again, I applaud the efforts of all my colleagues in the House, especially my colleague from Kitchener—Conestoga, whose private member's bill received royal assent. I ask the government to table a framework to avoid further states of emergency related to suicide.

• (2000)

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are systematic issues in the communities. One of the major issues is child and family services. These are the departments in the provinces that are responsible for children. In my riding, we do not just deal with immigration issues; I deal with child and family services issues, especially among first nations children.

In Manitoba alone, 11,000 children are in care of the state, which would work out to over 100,000 children in Ontario, or 90,000 in Quebec. Out of that, 10,000 are indigenous children, and 8,000 are first nations children. In fact, in the province of Manitoba, before the age of 15, around 22% to 23% of first nations children will be in the care of the state at some point. Is this any way to raise a child, or to love a child? Is this a way to produce good, long-term outcomes?

We often talk about suicide, but when I was on my trip to Cross Lake, I discovered that some of the children who had committed suicide, unfortunately had been in the care of the state. They had been taken from their families. In this House, in 2008, we made an apology in order to ensure we would not repeat the mistakes of the past with residential schools, yet we have been unable to do so.

Unfortunately, I do not have enough time to do this, but my comment would be to look at customary adoption. We do not seem to be going toward the area of a very simple solution, to allow indigenous families to make choices themselves.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Winnipeg Centre for his comments. I also want to thank him for his advocacy for children in his community and communities across Canada. He brings forward a very important point, in that the way we have been doing things has not been working.

My wife had a friend whose young child committed suicide. I cannot imagine the feelings of a mom and a dad who have lost a child, someone who had their entire future ahead of them, a child who thought there was no future and no hope.

I think all of us present in the House realize that we cannot continue doing what we have been doing in the past and that we need to work together. It is comments such as the comments from my colleague, the member for Winnipeg Centre, which add to the knowledge of the House and help us work together to develop programs. They will help us work with local communities to come up with programs so that we can prove we are committed to doing better. I thank him for his comments.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for taking the time to participate in this debate. For people back home, when they hear numbers being thrown around, they do sound very impressive: \$200 million in health; \$300 million in the present, which has been stabilized funding. However, the issue happening on the ground is a crisis in community after community.

We have some great programs, such as brighter futures, the community health and well-being program, which do some really good work. We have suicide posters in all the communities. However, I go into communities where they have the posters on the wall, and when a child is in need, the wait times to get seen are extraordinarily long. What happens is that indigenous affairs will turn down that child for counselling, and then the child will have to go to Health Canada and it will turn them down. By the time they finish that back and forth, that child has either gone to ground or we have lost him.

I think it is important in the discussion tonight that we get our heads outside of Ottawa. The bureaucrats, the ministers, and politicians will make it all sound great. However, on the ground, those dollars are not helping in the way they need to help. That is what I am asking my colleagues to work toward. Can we find a way to break through that, so that the people who need it are getting the services required to save the children and give them the help?

• (2005)

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for the question. We all realize that he is on the ground. I think his participation tonight, and also asking for this debate and allowing us to discuss it, helps to bring this issue to the forefront.

I know, being a health care professional, that he is absolutely right. We have to ensure that the dollars are being utilized properly on the ground, and we have to be open to looking at things in a different way.

I know from my travels to remote first nation communities that what is important is that we start to put forward the importance of respecting culture and historical ways of moving these communities forward. I think with the understanding and compassion of learning what has been done in the past and what has worked successfully, we maybe have to take a step back so we can embrace these things moving forward into the future. I thank my colleague for that.

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member across the way for Timmins—James Bay for providing us with this very important opportunity to have this substantive discussion. I certainly want to acknowledge all members who are in the House to participate in this debate.

I am very proud to come from the small community of We Wai Kai, off the west coast of British Columbia. I am proud to be an indigenous person standing in this honourable House to speak to this important subject, the issues of indigenous peoples in our country, and to participate in the debate.

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I add my name to the many names of people who have spoken with respect to the incredibly sad situation that exists in Attawapiskat, and in communities like La Loche and so many indigenous communities across the country, where we see conditions of poverty, despair and lack of hope. As an indigenous person who was raised to be proud of who I am and where I come from, when I look at indigenous communities across the country, I want to ensure that we collectively create that sense of hope and that sense that if they work hard, they can achieve anything they want to in our country.

I want to applaud all of the members who have spoken to this issue and who recognize that immediate measures need to take place within the community of Attawapiskat, and other communities.

I am here today as the Minister of Justice and a member of this honourable House, and I would like to speak to the critical work that is ahead of us all.

I thank my colleagues, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, for recognizing the importance of not only addressing the immediate needs and the situation that exists, but for understanding the need for meaningful and systemic change. We, in the House, must not lose sight of the role this change will have in ensuring the health and safety of communities like Attawapiskat. Collectively, we must chart a path forward.

The Prime Minister has tasked us to work with indigenous peoples to establish a nation-to-nation relationship that is based on recognition. A relationship based on recognition is transformative. It is a relationship based on respect, co-operation, and partnership. In doing so, we can make real progress.

As the former regional chief of the BC Assembly of First Nations, I had the great fortune and opportunity to work with the chiefs and community leaders in British Columbia to develop mechanisms and to build institutions of government to assist first nations in the transition. I did this as well as a council member in my home community of We Wai Kai.

Indigenous peoples from across the country are at an important juncture in our history as they seek to deconstruct their colonial legacy and rebuild their communities. We all have a role to play. Even with political will, support and resources, only the colonized can decolonize themselves.

Change is not easy. It is not easy to remove the shackles of 140 years of life under the Indian Act. Our government, and I hope all members of this honourable House, is committed to ensuring that we work in partnership with indigenous peoples to do just that. Relationships with indigenous peoples in Canada are of paramount importance, and we are committed to renewed relationships that recognize that solutions to one of the biggest outstanding public policy issues in our country need to be addressed in a substantive way.

For Attawapiskat, and for all first nations, the Indian Act is not a suitable system of government. It is not consistent with the rights enshrined in our Constitution, the principles as set out in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, or the calls to action in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report.

●(2010)

In addition to the need for social and economic support urgently needed in Attawapiskat, all first nations, all indigenous peoples, need to be empowered to take back control of their own lives in partnership and with the full support of all Canadians. The good news is there are examples of how this can happen. There are successes in indigenous communities across the country, and we need to build on those successes.

The problem is that those successes are few and far between. Change has not happened quickly enough nor evenly throughout our great country, and Attawapiskat is one of those places. Our government is committed to establishing a nation-to-nation relationship, one, as the hon. member across the way said a moment ago, that respects an approach that will lay the framework for true reconciliation with indigenous peoples.

I have a few more words to say, Mr. Speaker, but I am pleased to share my time with the member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River.

For indigenous peoples, the challenge is not easy. It is complex. Indeed, for far too long it has been ignored as a task, as too difficult and monumental. However, we can and must do better. This work, as has been said, is non-partisan. It is broader than the Department of Justice and it does not fall only to the Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs.

A nation-to-nation relationship is one of the most challenging public policy issues of our time, and I challenge all members of the House to work with us in building this relationship. There are no quick fixes to these issues. A substantive nation-to-nation discussion with indigenous peoples is needed. We need to sit down and work jointly to ensure that indigenous communities are strong and healthy, and in charge and in control of their own destiny. We need to bring life to and move beyond the scattered programs and initiatives. Reconciliation is a national project that requires full engagement and commitment at the highest levels of government.

This transformative work in Canada is far from complete. Some positive steps have been made. There have been positive steps made in the budget but more needs to be done. We need to develop a national reconciliation framework in partnership with indigenous communities, and that requires the support of all parties and all members in the House. That reconciliation framework needs to survive the life of one government.

We have incredible challenges to meet with respect to our relationship with our indigenous peoples. We have incredible opportunities to gain from engaging substantively. As the Minister of Justice and as one of the members in this honourable House, I look to international minimum standards that are articulated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We need to ensure that we look at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations. We need to ensure, with respect to our relationship with indigenous peoples in the country, that we put it in place in terms of the constitutional relationship that is required with respect to section 35. We need to ensure that we breathe life into section 35 and that we complete the unfinished business of Confederation.

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In doing so, we will have strong and appropriate governance in first nations communities wherein they have moved beyond the Indian Act. We can ensure that they are benefiting from the economy, that they are playing a substantive role in our country, ensuring the ultimate objective that I believe every Canadian wants to achieve, which is to improve his or her quality of life. In assisting indigenous communities to improve their quality of life, we can ensure that the amazing cultures, languages, traditions and the pride that I felt and was taught, rooted in the potlatch which is our governing system, is felt in indigenous communities and within indigenous youth. This is our national project of reconciliation. I look forward to every member of the House standing with us and ensuring we can achieve that.

Gilakas'la.

• (2015)

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are all passionate about this, but unfortunately it has been brought up in the House that it has been 28 years. I would say we have been dealing with this issue for over a century.

One of the things that surprised me when I came to the House was the issue of education on reserves. I know the discrepancy of what first nations get from the federal government and what each jurisdiction and each province gives first nations. It is the value of education. We have been told many times that education is a way out of poverty. We have overstepped our boundaries because we have no accountability here.

I was a school board trustee for 10 years in Saskatchewan. For the first time ever we had a premier gather all 28 school divisions together because we had been doing things the same way for centuries and we were failing. It was Premier Brad Wall. He wanted to see accountability from the school boards, from the teachers, from the parents, and from the students. He said that we needed education and we needed graduation rates to increase by 50% by 2020.

Could we have accountability in education? I am shocked that we do not have an education minister on that side dealing with this. We need accountability—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada.

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould: Mr. Speaker, I share the member's comments with respect to the importance of education. I recognize that education is the means to unlocking the potential in indigenous people as well as all people.

In terms of education and moving forward, I am pleased to be part of a government that is investing in education. We are not only just investing in education, such as flowing money to indigenous communities, but we are looking to indigenous communities for the solutions they have developed. We are looking to indigenous communities to ensure that we can approach and embrace first nations control of first nations education. There are examples right across the country of indigenous communities stepping up, and we are working with those communities. I will continue to work with my colleague the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs and government.

On the issue of accountability, indigenous communities have developed their own accountability mechanisms from first nations administration laws through education programs. We need to embrace their solutions.

• (2020)

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have been following indigenous politics for the last 35 years, but I have not had the opportunity to hear that kind of speech on indigenous relations.

The minister referred to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. She rightly pointed out that the standards that were provided for under UNDRIP were effectively the minimum standards for the survival, dignity, and well-being of indigenous peoples.

I recall when we negotiated and drafted this UN declaration for a period of 23 years. We tried to think about every possible situation in the indigenous world when we drafted those articles. There are a couple of articles in the declaration that refer to health, articles 21.1, 21.2, and 24.

I want to ask the minister a simple question. I have been listening carefully to the Prime Minister. I have read carefully the mandate letters to the ministers and they all refer to the implementation of UNDRIP. Call to action 43 of the TRC refers to adopting and implementing the declaration. Does the minister make that distinction? Is that a simple oversight? If we adopt legislation and we—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould: Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the hon. member across the way and thank him for his ongoing efforts and his commitment to ensuring the advancement of indigenous peoples in this country through such mechanisms as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We have been very clear that we will embrace the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and ensure that the minimum standards that are articulated in the declaration are brought home here to Canada to ensure that we take declarations and mechanisms as such and translate them to form practical and meaningful benefits on the ground in communities here in Canada.

Under section 35, we have an opportunity with the minimum standards articulated in the declaration to ensure that we work together to define exactly what that means and how we can translate those into practical standards on the ground.

Mr. Don Rusnak (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there can be no question that the high suicide rates experienced in first nation communities are a national tragedy. Every suicide attempt and every life lost is one too many, and there are definitely far too many, as the staggering statistics underline.

There can also be no question that the Government of Canada is determined to work with first nations and their leadership to turn these distressing numbers around. We will do everything possible to support communities like Attawapiskat to prevent further suicides.

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While much of the attention in the past few days has focused on the situation in Attawapiskat, we all know that it is not an isolated case. The recent work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission underscored the extent of the social breakdown in many communities, often the result of the residential school experience that damaged so many individuals and families. Suicide is the most alarming manifestation of these serious social challenges.

The loss of life to suicide and feelings of despair affect us all. They reinforce how important it is to work with first nations and indigenous peoples across the country to address the very real challenges facing many communities. It is vital to our country's future that the government work in genuine partnership with indigenous communities and provinces to ensure better social and economic outcomes for indigenous peoples, especially youth.

The government is currently working with all partners to design an engagement strategy for developing a national reconciliation framework. This reconciliation framework will be informed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations, calls to action, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Through our work on reconciliation, we commit to do important work where mental wellness, intergenerational trauma, poverty, child welfare, justice, and discrimination intersect. Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada and Health Canada are collaborating with other federal departments, provinces and territories, and other partners to look at long-term needs in mental health, child welfare, education, infrastructure, and employment in indigenous communities.

Specific to mental health challenges, "Changing Directions Changing Lives", Canada's mental health strategy, has placed a priority on working with first nations, Inuit, and Métis to address their distinct mental health needs. Priorities for action have been developed through dialogue between the Mental Health Commission of Canada and indigenous organizations.

Following discussions with Mr. Justice Murray Sinclair, chair of the TRC, the Mental Health Commission of Canada pledged to bring a greater depth of understanding to indigenous issues through activities and capacity-building related to cultural competencies. It has created the position of senior adviser of indigenous affairs and is providing indigenous cultural competency training to all staff.

Of course, making real change also requires a new fiscal relationship with first nations, a relationship that provides sufficient, predictable, and sustained funding for communities, and that is what budget 2016 delivers, because there is no relationship more important to this government than the one with indigenous peoples.

We know first nations, Inuit, Métis, and northern communities need urgent action now. That is why budget 2016 invests a historic \$8.4 billion over five years to improve the socio-economic conditions of indigenous peoples and their communities.

As the chief of Attawapiskat First Nation told reporters this week, indigenous suicide is not just a mental health problem. Unemployment, lack of access to education, and substandard infrastructure are contributing factors. Economic hardships and the legacy of colonialism are key factors in high suicide rates also.

Understanding this, the Government of Canada is taking a comprehensive approach to social investments, from repairing and constructing homes and schools on reserve to providing early childhood development programs, from increasing supports for child and family services to boosting funds for skills development and job training.

We are keeping our promises for a renewed relationship with indigenous peoples, one based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership—in short, reconciliation—a relationship that provides sufficient, predictable, and sustained funding to first nations and indigenous communities, a relationship based on the understanding that unilateral decision-making and top-down solutions do not reflect the needs of indigenous peoples, and a relationship that understands that a secure personal and cultural identity is the bedrock of success for their communities.

● (2025)

The budget and our efforts to date demonstrate this government's commitment to closing the gaps and ensuring social justice.

As we move forward together in a spirit of reconciliation, honouring and respecting the cultural identity of indigenous people, we will sow the seeds for a more promising future to give youth both hope and opportunity to create a better country for us all.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate this opportunity we have tonight to discuss this issue. The comments from the leadership on the other side of the House as well as here have been really encouraging to me.

As a member of Parliament who has three reserves in my riding, I want to say that we need to work together and that I need the help of hon. members.

When I hear that we need to be empowering the people in their bands, I fully support that idea. As the minister knows, I have individuals coming to my office who are dealing with an incredible amount of loss of hope, partially because of what we discussed in this room tonight—our responsibilities as a country for colonialism and government—and partly because they are people who are not getting the support they need from their band leadership.

Politics exists at every level, and when I was running for office, I studied reserves and found that there are reserves in this country that, as the minister said, are doing phenomenally well. I believe they are doing really well because they have strong leadership on the ground in reserves where they value their people.

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I am a new member of Parliament. I am at an age when I am really not interested in pretending or playing politics. I want results for the people living on reserves in my riding who, quite frankly, live in fear and do not know where the money is or where it has gone, and they want that education. However, we have very complex issues here.

● (2030)

Mr. Don Rusnak: Mr. Speaker, I have been dealing with and working with first nations communities in Alberta, British Columbia, and northern Ontario, and I can tell the hon. member that all members of first nations governments want to see the best for their communities. No one wants to see the horrible tragedy that occurred in Attawapiskat or the other tragedies that have occurred across the country.

To lump all first nations communities into the same category, the pan-aboriginal approach, is not productive. We need to talk to each individual first nations community and have them develop their own solutions. We as a government, with our provincial partners, need to work with them to solve the problems in the communities.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to follow up on my colleague's comments about solutions being at the grassroots level.

We are talking great things tonight, but the worst thing that can come out of this would be a program that would fail.

No offence to the Department of Indigenous Affairs or Health Canada, but they come up with a program and they announce it. Then every single community in the country has to try to fit the criteria. Then they are denied by bureaucrats. That is not useful.

I would like to see a commitment come out of tonight's debate. When ITK and the Inuit have a mental health strategy, if it is a qualified plan, they implement it themselves. In the Nishnawbe Aski Nation territory, if they have a plan for mental health that works for their communities, they implement it. It is no longer the hamster wheel of programs running in these various departments, because they are programs that fail.

In terms of mental health services, I would like to hear my colleagues say that we will take the funds here and put them into the regions so that they can do what needs to be done, culturally and correctly.

Mr. Don Rusnak: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, we sit on the indigenous affairs committee together. We will be studying a lot of important issues as we move forward.

I know the departments are reacting right now to serious crises, but we need to come up with solutions that are long term and that will help communities get out of the cycle of dependency and despair.

The hon. member well knows that we work collegially at the committee, and we hope to have answers and solutions for the government going forward so that we do not spin our wheels as we move forward.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Cariboo—Prince George.

I want to thank my colleague from Timmins—James Bay for opening up this opportunity to discuss this important issue tonight.

I rise in the House this evening to lend a voice to a topic which lies heavily on my heart and I know the hearts of all my colleagues on both sides of this chamber. This is not the time to debate what could have been done or what should have been done, but rather, we need to come together with a solution to the issue we are currently facing. There is no time to waste on partisanship when lives are at stake.

Canadians need us to lead by example by coming together and rallying around this hurting community to help them in every possible way. In that spirit, I use the word “discussion” rather than “debate” because I am convinced that the House is eager to take action on the national tragedy that suicide represents.

This is an epidemic that is larger than Attawapiskat and unfortunately, it is growing. It is not okay that the leading causes of death for first nations people under the age of 44 are suicide and self-inflicted injuries. It is not okay that first nations youth die by suicide five to six times more often than non-aboriginal youth. It is not okay that suicide rates for Inuit youth are among the highest in the whole world. This issue needs to light a fire inside all of us to do all that we can to not allow this epidemic to continue.

There are many views on how this is best done, and I share my view from some of the experiences I have accumulated over the past 10 years serving as a member of Parliament. There have been many good steps taken to address this tragic issue of suicide, but much more needs to be done.

As co-chair of the all-party Parliamentary Committee on Palliative and Compassionate Care, I, along with NDP and Liberal colleagues, conducted a study on the complex issue of suicide prevention and our findings are recorded in the report called “Not to be Forgotten”.

What became clear is that suicide is a complex phenomenon with multiple, often intertwining and overlapping causes. The complexity of suicide makes it obvious that solutions cannot be reduced to a mental health approach alone, but must take all aspects of the person into account, including physical, social, cultural, and spiritual factors.

One witness who appeared before our parliamentary committee was Dr. Antoon Leenaars, a psychologist and suicide researcher. He shared with the committee:

Suicide is multi-determined. The common psychological factors...are unbearable pain, cognitive constriction or tunnel vision, ambiguities about life and death, a mental health disorder, a weakened ego, a disturbance in a relationship or some other ideal like one's health or youth, rejection-aggression, and a desire to escape. This complexity calls for diverse suicide prevention strategies. This is necessary to not only solve what is sometimes assumed to be primarily a “medical problem”, but also to address the deep taboo and its stigma, and to address the problem with specific vulnerable groups, such as First Nations and Inuit people, armed services personnel, youth, and elderly (especially those facing end of life issues). The complexity of suicide dictates the necessity of a parallel complexity of solutions. There is never the solution. Therefore not only a mental health approach, but a public health approach, is urgently needed.

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Research done by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, as recorded in our committee report, found that the culture of first nations peoples was thrown into turmoil by the policies of colonialism. In this report it was clear that the whole complex of relationships, knowledge, languages, social institutions, beliefs, values and ethical rules that bind people together and give a collection of people and its individual members a sense of who they are and where they belong plays a profound role in mental health and well-being.

Prior to the breakdown of their culture, suicide was rare among first nations people. However, as I previously stated, today, suicide among first nations youth is at epidemic proportions. The development of a sense of healthy identity is profoundly related to one's culture and its ability to reproduce itself in its members. Thus the anthropological and sociological dimensions can have a deep impact upon the psychological.

● (2035)

It is important to be reminded that suicide intervention really does work and many lives are saved every year. Despite this fact, Canadian response is mainly due to the efforts of individuals and private groups who strive against the tide with very few resources. We have many great examples of local groups across Canada that are doing heroic work in preventing suicide.

When I first heard the news of the 11 suicide attempts in Attawapiskat, my heart sank and I immediately remembered an incident from 2011 when I was contacted by Tana Nash of the Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council. She informed me of the fact that three suicides had occurred in three different high schools in Waterloo region in one week. Help was urgently needed. At that moment, I knew that I wanted to do something to deal with issues; albeit, I knew my attempts would be less than adequate. I knew that something must be done to address the tragic loss of hope, especially among our young people. To that end, I embarked upon drafting Bill C-300, an act respecting a federal framework for suicide prevention.

As a nation, we have not done enough to implement a coherent program of suicide prevention. Some provinces have begun to make great strides, especially Quebec. Yet, in general, efforts to prevent suicide are still a patchwork, depending upon the generosity of individuals, many of whom have been personally impacted by suicide.

This is why it is so urgent that the government implement the federal framework on suicide prevention as soon as possible. With its immediate implementation, we would be able to give to the groups on the ground the much needed tools and resources they so desperately need.

When fully implemented, Bill C-300, through the Public Health Agency of Canada, would provide guidelines to improve public awareness and knowledge about suicide. It would disseminate information about suicide, including information concerning its prevention. It would make publicly available existing statistics about suicide and related risk factors. This is one of the weak points that many of the groups which came to our committee pointed out: the statistics relating to suicide are so old and so out of date that there is really no way to plan forward in going ahead. The bill would

promote collaboration and knowledge exchange across domains, sectors, regions, and jurisdictions. It would define best practices for the prevention of suicide. It would promote the use of research and evidence-based practices for the prevention of suicide.

The principles embodied in Bill C-300 could be contextualized and individualized to communities, depending upon their unique circumstances. I want to underline that fact. This is not a bill that would tell communities how to do it. My colleague earlier pointed out that we need to give communities the ability to contextualize within their own communities.

Furthermore, safeTALK training for all front-line service workers and volunteers on reserve would be a major investment in proactive prevention of suicide. Community members, such as teachers, doctors, nurses, coaches, pastors, club leaders, and many more, are in a unique position to recognize the early warning signs and would be able to ask the right questions that could very well lead to saving a life.

I am certain that everyone in this chamber can tell us how they, their families, or a member in their community, has been negatively impacted by suicide. Each of us knows someone whose sense of hope was overcome by despair and who ended his or her life by suicide. However, we know that suicide does not end the pain. It simply transfers it to the family, to the friends, and to the community.

This particular community that we are discussing tonight is currently in extreme pain. Now is the time to do all that we can to deliver hope.

Evidence is accumulating that when aboriginal communities design their own interventions, typically based upon traditional cultural values and practices, the efficacy of these interventions is high. Therefore, there is hope, but much more needs to be done. We need to offer hope to those who are facing this unbearable pain and who subsequently descend into a state of hopelessness and despair.

Hope is dependent upon having a sense of connection to the future, even if that future is short term. Hope is the oxygen of the human spirit. Without it, the spirit dies.

I am a person of hope. The very fact that this important discussion is happening tonight in the House of Commons in Canada is a huge step forward in providing hope.

We stand with our brothers and sisters in Attawapiskat to provide immediate practical help. We want them to know that they are in our thoughts and prayers. I pray they will know that their lives have value and meaning, that they are loved by their families, their friends, their fellow Canadians, and their Creator.

● (2040)

Mr. Doug Eyolfson (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to sincerely thank the hon. member for his comments and his work on this issue. I appreciate his passion on this, and I agree completely on how important this issue is.

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The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay made reference to medevacing people out from remote communities. This reference resonates with me personally. Since starting in the mid-1990s, I spent 13 years as a flight physician with the Manitoba air ambulance. On more than one occasion, I personally performed medevacs to first nation communities, airlifting young people who had attempted suicide out. Some of them survived, but tragically, others did not.

Appallingly, as much as it is unacceptable to see this once in one's life, I lost count of the number of times I saw this. My colleagues said the same thing. We knew this was a pattern for years, and this was 20 years ago. This is not a pattern that has occurred under the watch of any one provincial or federal government. We saw several governments come and go over this time.

These incidents did not make the press; they were individual tragedies, but we have been brought together by some high-profile tragic events.

I have no question, but I would simply thank the hon. member for his comments and assure him that I think we are all going to work together toward the same goal.

• (2045)

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, I think all of us in the House are grasping for ways to effectively address this tragedy. It is so heartening for me, not only tonight to hear the kind of commitment that we are making, but over the last number of years on the initiatives that I have embarked on along with many colleagues on all sides of the House. I find that we are committed to working together to provide hope to those who have descended into a cycle of despair.

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the problem that we are talking about tonight has been around for a long time. I go back to my first week as a police officer in early 1968. I do not think I was on the job three days before I had my first suicide, and I have never seen them stop. They need to stop.

We need to work together with our aboriginal communities, and we need to do something now. There is a lot of discussion of what we are going to do with programs, but we need to do something now.

I ask my hon. friend if he could tell us some of the things that we could do immediately to look at the problem and try to resolve the situation that we are faced with today.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his service to our country. I cannot imagine the trauma caused by observing the results of some of these unfortunate incidents. In my comments, I referred to the fact that suicide does not stop the pain, but simply transfers it to others who are left to bear that burden.

If there were a simple solution, or even 10 simple solutions, I am sure everyone in this room would be sharing them with us tonight, but there is none.

One of the suggestions I have that I think is a help, not the answer, involves our front-line workers, and I listed a few of them. I think of hockey, baseball and lacrosse coaches. These men and women are working weekly, if not daily, with our young people. I think we do a disservice by not equipping these kinds of volunteers with the skills. Yes, we teach them first aid and how to apply a splint to a broken

ankle, but we could also teach them how to use safeTALK. It is an effective mechanism that has been developed to teach lay people like me how to possibly intervene. I do not have to solve the problem, but I have to listen and possibly discover that a person is crying out for help and then get them to the available resources.

I think that implementing safeTALK across Canada, especially on our reserves, would be one way of possibly reducing the number of unfortunate premature deaths that we are observing today.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Kitchener—Conestoga for sharing his time with me.

Mr. Speaker, I hope you will grant me a little leeway in the time, for I feel this might be a tough speech for me to get through in the allotted 10 minutes. I also want to thank our colleague from Timmins—James Bay for bringing us together tonight, for unifying us in this important debate.

It is with a heavy heart that I rise to speak to tonight's discussion on the state of emergency declared this weekend in response to the high number of suicide attempts in Attawapiskat First Nation in northern Ontario. The state of emergency was declared by Attawapiskat's chief and council on Saturday night after the community's 11th suicide attempt in April alone. This comes after 28 suicide attempts last month and 100 suicide attempts since September, and the several hundred attempts that have come in recent years.

This is a reality that many ordinary Canadians simply cannot begin to grapple with. The living conditions are of such extreme poverty, with people not knowing if they will have shelter or food to put on the table or in the fridge. Words cannot properly express these deplorable conditions, which no human being should have to suffer through—conditions that oftentimes lag behind many of those in this country in terms of employment, education, safe drinking water, access to housing, and the infrastructure that we as Canadians often take for granted. This is a community that has dealt with more than its fair share of suffering. My heart goes out to this community, and our thoughts and prayers are with the people there.

However, words simply are not enough. Only immediate action will stop another unnecessary loss of life. Sending in a few additional health workers and a minister to pay a visit is a great start, but it is not enough, and we can do better. It is a temporary solution for a very complex issue. We are here tonight to call on the government to quickly provide immediate needs in Attawapiskat. Moreover, we are here to offer our help and, more importantly, to develop a long-term prevention strategy.

On March 8, 2016, we asked the House of Commons aboriginal affairs committee to study the staggering rates of suicide among Canada's indigenous peoples. Both Liberal and NDP members of the committee disagreed and instead chose to study general health issues in one specific community.

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Studies have indicated suicide and self-inflicted injuries are among the primary causes of death among first nations, Métis, and Inuit people. In fact, Statistics Canada reported in January that more than one in five off-reserve first nations, Métis, and Inuit adults reported having suicidal thoughts at some point in their lives.

This is a subject close to my heart, as for a time I worked with at-risk youth and at-risk adults. I worked in their first nations communities at a time when fear paralyzed the discussion for fear it would only get worse, at a time when medication was the only preferred method of dealing with the issues. I know first-hand the experience of the importance of the availability of services such as counselling and mental-health support for those at risk or those silently suffering.

We need action to provide resources now. We need action to provide training for our communities, for our families, and for our schools so we do not lose another life. We need to break the stigma where, if people say they are hurting and in need of help, they are not seen as weak. We need to be better, all of us, because this can mean the difference between life and death. I have sat with teenagers who felt that their only way out was death. I have sat with families grieving because they had missed the signs; we could not reach their son or daughter to save him or her. I have missed the signs. Today, so many years later, I still bear the guilt—if only. Could I do more? What did I miss?

● (2050)

I have a quote from Attawapiskat First Nation Chief Bruce Shisheesh:

We are trying to be positive here, but at the same time we are emotionally drained. Our staff is breaking down emotionally, I'm talking about counsellors.

I'm homeless, leading my own community, I sleep on a couch. How would you feel if you were leading Attawapiskat and you didn't have a home?

More needs to be done. Just overnight, we have learned that another 13 youth in Attawapiskat were part of a suicide pact. As a father of four, I find this truly heartbreaking. Kids should not have to grow up in poverty, and they should not have to feel that the only choice they have is life or death. They should not have to grow up in an environment where addiction, depression, and suicide are the norm.

Outlined in the Liberal budget 2016 is this:

To ensure that investments reflect the needs of Canadians and Canadian communities, the Government of Canada will consult with stakeholders in the coming months to determine where future investments in social infrastructure should be made.

We have a state of emergency declared. We have a first nations chief trying to lead from a couch. I am not sure what further consultations need to be done to demonstrate that this community and others facing the same dilemma are in dire need of resources. Do we have to lose another life? Do we have to have another La Loche?

Budget 2016 shows us that the Liberal government has no plan to ensure investments are reaching those who are in need and who need it the most. There is no plan to help first nations build economic opportunities on reserve, the most reliable solution for addressing the chronic poverty that leads to such tragedies.

While I commend the Liberal government on setting aside \$8.4 billion to deal with aboriginal issues, this money is spread out over five years. We are only elected for four years. First nations need funding certainty. They need a budget that sets a plan for the next year, even for the next four years. A plan for year five, which the government does not have a mandate for, is ludicrous. It just goes to show that the Liberals have no idea where or how to get the money that these communities need the most.

The Minister of Health said in this House yesterday, "It is these funds that would actually restore hope to communities".

Hope is not enough. A state of emergency means governments need to implement a course of action to address the emergency, and unfortunately, hope is not tangible. A plan is tangible; actions are tangible; both of which we have yet to see.

We need a national strategy that deals with the immediate emergency, one that looks at how we as a nation deal with current mental health issues affecting all Canadians.

We sit here tonight because an emergency debate was called, and it involves a community that needs help. A crisis like this opens our eyes to the fact that we still have so much to learn. After all these years, we have so much to learn. Sadly, it takes a crisis to bring us all together, as citizens, as community members, and for those of us sitting in this House, as parliamentarians.

I think I speak for all of my colleagues when I say we took this job as a member of Parliament with the hope of leaving behind a better country, a better Canada for the next generation, a better Canada for all. First nations communities deserve the same level of services that the rest of Canadians have.

Sometimes partisan politics need to be put aside and members need to come together to find solutions to prevent another unnecessary loss of life, to give a voice to those who feel they are not being heard, to give every Canadian equal opportunity to succeed, and give every Canadian the resources to lead healthy lives, and if faced with the unimaginable, that we never miss those signs.

● (2055)

The Speaker: I want to thank the member for achieving the difficult task of staying within his 10 minutes. The difficulty we have this evening is that so many members want to take part in this very emotional debate. It is hard not to be moved by it. However, because so many members want to take part, we do need to stay to the 10 minutes.

Now, we are on to questions and comments.

● (2100)

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, you are right. We all want to take part in tonight's important discussion on this incredibly tragic issue.

What we are hearing tonight are heart-wrenching stories, and I would not expect anything less. I agree with the member when he said that words are not enough.

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Just last week I had the honour of attending a grade 3 class at the Standing Stone School on the Oneida Nation of the Thames near London, Ontario. I heard from the students who had all written letters to the Prime Minister imploring him to make a difference. They questioned me on whether we were going to follow through on our commitments and on the mandate letters. I was so impressed with these grade 3 students who were all of seven or eight years old. They were asking me really tough questions. I realized at that point that words are not enough, that we must do more. The fact that we are all here tonight discussing this important issue makes me believe that we are on the same page and that we will make a difference.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, I apologize for the emotion.

We can leave a mark and we can leave a legacy. We can do better. Regardless of political stripe or background or social background—it does not matter whose name is on it and what we are doing—we need to get together. We need to get around a table and work together to find solutions. There is time for debate and there is time for arguing. There is time for us to hold the government accountable, but today we are faced with an emergency not just in Attawapiskat but across our nation. Today we need to talk. Although I used speaking notes, we need to stop using the speaking notes and speak from the heart. We need to talk about solutions, final solutions, and implement those solutions together so that we do not lose another life.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all members in the House for being here tonight to talk about what is really a tragedy in our history and in our time.

A fiend of mine, an elder of the Tla-o-qui-aht people, Moses Martin, when we were talking about building a recreation complex in our community, said that if we can save one life, it is worth it. I hope tonight, when we come up with our ideas, we can do better. I hope we can save more than one life. More than that, we have to find a solution. My hon. colleague and friend from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo talked about this going on for 28 years and not much having changed; so tonight we have to make change because our communities deserve it.

In 2005 in Ahousaht nation, 60 people attempted suicide in a six-month period. Fast forward 10 years. Last August, 15 people attempted suicide in that community of 1,800. Not much has changed.

Will the hon. member join me in calling on the government to invest more immediately to deal with mental health to help these communities?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, I will join my hon. colleague in imploring the government to invest more immediately.

One of the reasons I tabled my Bill C-211 is to look at a national framework to deal with PTSD for first responders and veterans, because mental health issues affect all Canadians. We need to have a national strategy. In putting forth that bill I hope to not only help those who run toward danger when others run away from it, but to have this discussion so that we can serve all Canadians and build a national framework so that we can stop this incredibly horrendous epidemic.

• (2105)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Picard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to take part in tonight's debate. I want to inform the House that I will be sharing my time with the member for Pontiac.

I first want to thank the member for Timmins—James Bay for moving this motion.

[*English*]

The member's request for an emergency debate includes several references to the word “hope”. It refers to the need to bring a hopeful solution to the desperate situation we see in many northern and indigenous communities. It calls on us to join together to turn the issue into a moment of what he refers to as a “hope-making”. I can assure the member opposite that we share his strong conviction on this issue.

For a long time, the indigenous people across the country have called for change, called for hope. They have sounded the alarm about the rising rates of suicides and suicide attempts, the lack of clean water and proper housing, and the urgent need for action to address violence against indigenous women, children and men.

[*Translation*]

In just five months, the government and the Prime Minister in particular have taken swift action to begin addressing many of these issues.

Very early on in his mandate, the Prime Minister spoke before the Assembly of First Nations and pledged to renew and restore the relationship between the federal government and indigenous peoples.

[*English*]

Our government is committed to moving forward to implement the recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

[*Translation*]

The issue of health and safety of indigenous communities was also on the agenda of this past January's meeting between the federal, provincial, and territorial ministers responsible for justice and public safety.

In March, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness addressed the Assembly of First Nations during the Indigenous Public Safety and Policing Forum. The goal was to open a dialogue on the government's work and how to move forward.

The funding allocated in budget 2016 will support education and infrastructure on reserves, which will start to address some of the root causes of poverty and build a brighter future for indigenous peoples.

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[English]

By improving circumstances in these communities, we can make a difference in reducing the unacceptable and chronic overrepresentation of indigenous people in the justice system. This funding to address root causes is a good start for our work on public safety issues, many of which fall under the purview of Public Safety Canada.

In addition, Public Safety Canada is working closely with Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, the Department of Justice, and Status of Women Canada to carry out the important work to be done through the national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

Of course, a critical element in building strong and healthy communities is ensuring the safety and security of the individuals who live there. This means engaging meaningfully with these communities to make real progress on priority issues such as community safety, supporting youth at risk, and policy.

This becomes all the more urgent in the face of the crisis unfolding in Attawapiskat, where so many young people have attempted to take their lives that the community has declared a state of emergency. Last month we saw a similar action taken by the community of Cross Lake, Manitoba, where an epidemic of suicides prompted leaders to call for urgent emergency help for their community. Also, we cannot forget the tragic events of La Loche, Saskatchewan in January that saw four lives lost and seven others wounded. Sadly, these events are not isolated. There are many communities at risk.

[Translation]

The government is determined to work with the communities that are facing this challenge in order to create lasting solutions that come from the communities, and not from the top down. Public Safety Canada has an important role to play in that regard.

[English]

Through the community safety planning initiative, the department helps community members work together to identify risks that can lead to crime and victimization, and builds on local community strength to respond to those risks and to keep people safe. This is a government-supported but community-driven process at work with indigenous communities to identify risks and potential solutions to community safety issues.

• (2110)

The first nations policing program is also key to our work, and lays a strong foundation upon which to build strong, safe communities. The program, which was first introduced in 1991, provides funding to support the provision of professional, dedicated, and responsive policing services to first nations and Inuit communities.

Financial contributions under the program are shared between the federal government and the province or territory, with the federal contribution providing 52% toward eligible costs. To date, there are 186 multi-year agreements in place, which provide funding for 1,299 police officers who are serving 410,000 residents in approximately 400 first nations and Inuit communities.

This program has had a measurable, positive impact on the safety and security of many communities that receive policing services. As members may know, the current agreements expire in two years. Public Safety Canada officials are already exploring ways to ensure that indigenous communities benefit from a renewed and sustainable program that delivers quality policing services beyond March, 2018.

We want to build on the success of the program and the evidence about what works to respond effectively to the policing and public safety needs of indigenous communities. We know that to meet the requirements, we need to consider alternative and innovative approaches in program delivery.

I mentioned earlier that our work must include community input, and our efforts to renew this program will be informed by meaningful engagement with the communities themselves on these important issues.

[Translation]

We are convinced that together with our partners, we will create a strong and renewed program that will provide financial viability and predictability to the first nations policing program.

[English]

I would also like to mention the work being done in terms of youth at risk in communities across Canada, including in remote and indigenous communities, under the national crime prevention strategy. When families and youth face bleak futures, the compulsion to turn to crime can be overwhelming.

[Translation]

This is why it is so important to address the root causes of crime and to emphasize prevention. If we want to build a safe society, we must first make our homes and communities safe. This often starts with our children and young people. That is why we need programs for youth at risk.

[English]

Through Public Safety Canada's national crime prevention strategy, we can support and nurture critical crime prevention programs. Through this strategy, we can make a difference where it matters, by implementing measures in specific communities that will have a direct impact. The strategy allows us to support programs that reach out to youth through the schools, community centres, and neighbourhood organizations to help steer them away from drugs and gangs. It also helps us to support programs that provide counselling and support to families, and strengthen communities.

Of the 67 active projects, nearly half, 32, focus on indigenous peoples. The majority of these are interventions that are delivered in indigenous communities. I would note that we have a well-established project in place in La Loche, and another is in development. These are the types of programs that build community and provide hope for the future for these youth.

In sum, our government is committed to taking bold steps to create a new and stronger relationship with indigenous peoples.

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[Translation]

By working together we can give hope to these communities.

[English]

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a comment first, then ask my colleague a question. I want to recognize another colleague on this side of the House who made a very compassionate speech this evening.

The silence in the House this evening is deafening. It says to me one thing: we are here listening. I would like to challenge all members in the House and all the members of the House to do more than just listen into the late hours tonight. Let us spend some late hours at home listening to what our communities think will help solve this problem. Then let us follow that up with action. Would the member support me in that?

• (2115)

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Picard: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague raised a very important point about listening, but I would also add sharing, since sharing plays an important role in indigenous culture. This is exactly the sort of action we have started to take and will continue to take in the coming years. After March 2018, our contribution to the aboriginal policing program will start with consultations focused on listening to and sharing the needs of communities.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I agree. I want to commend my Conservative colleague and echo his comments. This is an evening that rarely occurs in the House of Commons where we are united in our sense of deep grief and, at least for myself, a sense of helplessness.

We are members of Parliament, and we want more than anything else to reach out to those kids in Attawapiskat and tell them we are here for them. They matter to Canada. We love them. They should not allow dark thoughts to cloud their future or steal it from them.

However, how we act will be very difficult. It is incredibly important that we find a way to solidify and crystalize our collective will as parliamentarians in this place to let nothing stand in the way of providing the help that kids need in Attawapiskat, in Cross Lake, in every first nations and indigenous community, and indeed every non-indigenous community in our country, and that we put our children first. Would the hon. member agree with that?

Mr. Michel Picard: Mr. Speaker, the only possibility with tonight's initiative is to all agree on common efforts to support our kids and their families.

On our side, we are involved in the field with projects for which we are waiting some answers to keep on improving those actions. For example, a second crime prevention project called the Strengthening Families Program was put in place in La Loche in 2014. It is scheduled to run until 2019.

There is some action in the field. I can promise, having been in the field in a previous life, there is no colour, no side and no partisanship. Everyone is working for the same reason.

Allow me to salute and congratulate the efforts of all these officers, namely in Attawapiskat, for the incredible work they are doing and for the incredible workload, hours and stress they are facing in helping our kids everywhere.

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I honestly do not know how to debate this topic. I do not even know where to begin because it does not feel as though it ought to be a debate. I appreciate the word "discussion" and it feels as if we have actually got to the point where we realize the problems are bigger than what politics can solve.

I tried to write notes for this and it did not work. It made no sense, so I took a different tack. I called the chief of Kitigan Zibi community in the northern part of Pontiac, an Algonquin community. Chief Jean-Guy Whiteduck was kind enough to give me some advice. I called his brother and former chief Gilbert Whiteduck gave me further advice.

I got a text from the executive director of the Anishinabeg Nation Tribal Council, Norm Odjick. He had further sage thoughts. I asked him to help me understand this, to help me articulate something to the Canadian people who were struggling themselves to figure out what a state of emergency meant, day after day, suicide after suicide, suicide pacts. It does not feel as though it is one community in a state of emergency. It feels like Canada is in a state of emergency. It feels as though our Parliament is in a state of emergency.

The only comfort that I take in this discussion right now is that I feel intensely uncomfortable discussing this. I feel intensely uncomfortable that I have a comfortable place to sleep tonight and I know my kids are tucked in tight in bed.

This is the message I would like to convey at this point in time.

• (2120)

[Translation]

I would like to build on what my hon. colleague from the Green Party said. Her comments echoed the words of Gilbert Whiteduck.

[English]

He said to make sure that we say loud and clear to the kids of Attawapiskat, and everywhere else, in other aboriginal communities, that we love them. Let them know that they matter. If we do not stop and ask what it will take to make sure they know they matter, then our nation is at a place where we have to question how we are going to go forward.

I really appreciate the members opposite who sought an emergency debate on this topic. That is so important and so appropriate. I would not have thought of it myself as being an appropriate injunction at this stage. It is appropriate, and I appreciate the opportunity to listen, so I thank all of my colleagues.

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We need to convey in so many different ways saying yes to government programs, to funding initiatives, to emergency presence in communities. We need to take every possible way that these children will not be ignored. They have a right, just like every other child in this country, to clean water, good health care, a safe environment to learn in, economic opportunity.

It is a combination of these factors that the current chief of Kitigan Zibi, Chief Whiteduck, talked about. If there is a community that has no economic opportunity, where the quality of the water is not fit for human consumption, when there is a history of abuse stemming from a colonial relationship, and when there is health care and mental health care that is not adequate, it is a recipe for collapse, for a society that does not function.

We know we can do better. I hope that the debate will not end after tonight. This weekend I am going to reread sections from the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples that are relevant specifically to health, but also the historic relationship between aboriginal peoples and the crown, because what was discussed in that commission remains relevant today.

It is not as though these issues have not been discussed before. We have looked at them repeatedly, and we know we have much to overcome. That does not mean that we have all the solutions. I am not going to stand here as a member of the government and say that any government could have all of the solutions. I think we are on some of the right paths. I am proud that this government is standing for a new nation-to-nation relationship. I am proud that we are making significant investments in some important areas of aboriginal infrastructure. Does that mean that we have it all right? I highly doubt it. There is no way that one government could get it all right.

Having an honest conversation about what is going to bring multiple indigenous nations closer to a place where they feel they are part of a great project together is where we have to start moving, because there are clearly entire communities with children who do not see Canada in the way that so many of us more fortunate individuals see Canada.

• (2125)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for speaking from his heart, and for his initiative in connecting directly with aboriginal leaders to get their perspective on how we could move ahead in dealing with prevention on this issue.

Most of our discussion tonight has been focused on prevention, and rightly so. However, there is another aspect to suicide that I referenced in my talk, and that is on those who are left behind. There are a number of good postvention initiatives out there. I am going to list a couple of them, and then I will ask my colleague if indigenous leaders may have referenced some tools that they would recommend and that we should be aware of in the House.

The collateral damage project, run by Scott Chisholm of Thunder Bay, is an excellent resource. If members are not aware of it, I would encourage them to go online. The collateral damage project helps those who have walked through the trauma of having lost a loved one to suicide.

There is another website, and in our modern age, it is important that we avail ourselves of all the tools available. I am certainly not suggesting that online tools will help to eliminate all suicide, but it is another active way that we can be involved. Your Life Counts is another online tool that I think would be helpful.

I am wondering if my colleague is aware of other postvention initiatives to help those who have been traumatized by the scourge of suicide within their communities or in their families.

Mr. William Amos: Mr. Speaker, I will admit that I was not made aware of that in my conversations today with the Algonquin leaders.

There are certainly projects being undertaken that can lead us in the right direction. One example of a project that is near to my heart, and that I know is near to the hearts of a number of members of the Anishinaabe community, is the friendship centre in Maniwaki. This is an idea that is gathering steam. It offers the potential for both on-reserve and off-reserve first nations to achieve better integration and find support where they need it, whether it is employment support, health care, or community and culture.

These are projects that are exciting, but I think one can recognize quite quickly that they are not going to solve the overall challenge.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his speech and welcome him to the House. We have worked together previously under different mantles.

I know the member is a lawyer, and I would like him to respond to the same question that the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou put to the justice minister. It is related to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. A number of people in the House tonight have asked if it is perhaps not time to let the aboriginal communities themselves, whether they be first nation, Métis or Inuit, deliver these programs—education, health care, and so forth—on their own.

Would the member, with his legal background, agree with the recommendation by my colleague, who previously tabled a bill to this effect, that international law, including the UNDRIP, does not become the law of Canada until a bill is adopted in the House? Does he support the call by my colleague that we take that first step, which would then recognize the rights of the first nations to order their own business?

• (2130)

Mr. William Amos: Mr. Speaker, that is an interesting question. It is a question that has a number of layers to it.

There was a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and there were recommendations that flowed from it. Among the recommendations was a reference to the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and obviously our government has made specific commitments in relation to those recommendations.

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I am not an aboriginal law specialist, and I do not think it would be appropriate for me to comment on how the Government of Canada ought to incorporate the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into the legal fabric of our country, which is in fact a legal fabric that has in many ways protected aboriginal rights in a fashion that is remarkable. Recent Supreme Court judgments in *Calder*, *Sparrow*, *Delgamuukw*, and *Tsilhqot'in* have achieved a number of different things, so I think it would be difficult to answer that.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a single suicide is a tragedy. A pandemic of suicide is not only horrific, it is unacceptable. Last weekend, the Attawapiskat First Nation experienced a terrible tragedy. On one night alone, 11 young people from that community tried to commit suicide. It is reported that children, some as young as nine, planned a group suicide to end their lives. It is hard to imagine the level of desperation that these youth felt as they saw death as their only course of action. As a society, we cannot and must not ignore this level of desperation. It is truly appalling that such hopelessness even exists in Canada.

I want to thank the member for Timmins—James Bay for calling this emergency debate on this issue. I know it is an issue that he has raised many times in this place. My colleague from Kitchener—Conestoga has also done extensive work on suicide prevention and has kept this important issue in front of Parliament.

A 2010 study of some Ontario first nations reported that the suicide rate for children under age 15 is more than 50 times the national average. We must remember that historically suicide was extremely rare among indigenous peoples. There are many factors that lead to this level of despair, and like any solution to a complex problem, the solution needs to be multi-faceted and comprehensive. Many indigenous peoples live in abject poverty. They lack resources. They lack opportunities. Indigenous communities suffer from overcrowding, a lack of clean drinking water, and crumbling infrastructure. Any of these things can lead to desperation, but the cumulative effect of all these factors increases the impact tenfold. The conditions become overwhelming and unfixable, a way of life that offers no hope.

Before I continue, Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform you that I plan to share my time with the member for Lethbridge.

It is a profound tragedy that this way of living has become the norm in some of our communities. It is not a new problem. In fact, I would argue that this is a cycle that has gone on now for generations. Consider the history of the residential schools and the profound impact they have had on an entire generation of indigenous peoples. They lost their identity. They lost their language. They lost their culture. They suffered from mental and physical abuse during their time at school. This despair has cycled down through the generations, and yet it is only one of the factors that continues to contribute to the high suicide rates among indigenous peoples. The question remains: How do we interrupt this cycle of despair and provide hope and health to our indigenous communities?

Suicide is not just a mental health issue; it is also a public health issue. As such, it should be considered a health and safety priority. Suicide is a complex problem involving biological, psychological,

societal, and spiritual factors. All of these can be influenced by societal attitudes and conditions. A long-term solution must look at all of these facets. Mental health services need to be improved. Overcrowding, housing shortages, and substandard infrastructure need to be addressed. Proper sewage facilities and clean water need to be provided. Bullying at school and rampant substance abuse need to be managed. Long-term healing can only come when these factors are dealt with. A strong, healthy community will provide the social and spiritual structure needed to raise spiritually whole children who have a future with hope. Abject poverty breeds hopelessness.

I recently spoke with Chief Perry Bellegarde at the indigenous and northern affairs committee. Our discussion was focused on the importance of sustaining life and suicide prevention. Chief Bellegarde emphasized the importance of looking at all aspects of what it means to be human. He stated:

When you look at a holistic health, you think of the mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical health. These are the four quadrants of an individual's being and they all have to be in balance. Mental health is a huge issue, and there are not adequate resources. The suicide rate is high among the Inuit and it's high among our youth. It really has to be addressed. Where are the adequate resources to deal with this?

He went on to say the following:

Children are gifts from the creator. The role of the grandparents was huge and key in raising the family as a unit. Everything has been displaced.

Chief Bellegarde is absolutely correct. Children are a gift from the creator, and we must do everything we can to nurture and protect these gifts. Life is sacred and must be protected, from the beginning to the end.

• (2135)

Indigenous people also emphasize a holistic approach to the four stages of life: childhood, youth, adulthood, and elder years. Through each of these stages, each indigenous person's challenge is to find the Creator, celebrate the Creator, and to be of service with one's gifts to all of mankind.

I believe that in many cases indigenous youth are struggling to find the purpose or the gifts that the Creator has given them. As a Christian, I share this belief that our Creator has created us with purpose.

Professor Margaret Somerville wrote, "Hope is the oxygen of the human spirit; without it our spirit dies, with it we can overcome even seemingly insurmountable obstacles."

Thus, I strongly feel that a critical part of the solution to end suicide in indigenous communities is to help enable indigenous youth to find hope in the purpose and the gifts that the Creator has given them. I believe that it is necessary for us to approach the issue of suicide by combatting hopelessness through an informed use of resources. We must concentrate on all four quadrants of holistic health: mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical. An effective multi-pronged approach will provide the long-term solutions we need and ultimately will help to heal our indigenous communities.

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The level of heartbreak our indigenous communities have had to bear is staggering. We would not accept this suicide rate in any other community in this country. We must not accept it in our indigenous communities either. It is heartbreaking that Attawapiskat had to suffer yet another tragedy such as this before this topic was thrust back into the national spotlight.

This is 2016, and we are not a third world country. These kinds of deplorable conditions should not exist in Canada. We must put aside party politics and come together as a nation to address this truly horrific event.

I want to applaud that resources have been mobilized by the government to deal with the immediate crisis at Attawapiskat, but it is a short-term solution. I urge the government to develop a long-term suicide prevention strategy that addresses the hopelessness and the factors that lead to suicide.

Life is sacred from its beginning to its end. As parliamentarians, we must ensure that we do all that is in our power to preserve life and fight suicide in indigenous communities.

As we struggle here today to come up with solutions, I ask the Creator for his help that we may send our thoughts and prayers to those affected in this community. We want to give hope to all those who are wrestling with despair throughout indigenous communities in Canada.

We hear them, and we are listening.

● (2140)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, earlier in the debate, one of our colleagues apologized for showing emotion with tears. I do not think there is a need to apologize for the tears. I think the children deserve our tears. If anything, we should be apologizing to the children that we have let down in this country.

In British Columbia, which is what I know, children from Haida Gwaii, from Ahousaht, and from every corner in British Columbia, the children in the highest need of mental treatment, children suffering from post-traumatic stress, on suicide watch, get sent for help, for therapy, to the Maples Adolescent Treatment Centre in Burnaby. At that facility right now there is a one-year waiting list to get help. How many of those children are going to make it a year? We are letting them down.

Will the member join me in calling on the government to end that wait list, end the wait lists for the children of Attawapiskat, Ahousaht, La Loche, and the children of this country so that no other child waits for the help he or she needs?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, I said in my speech that we should put aside party politics, and I really appreciate the tenor of the debate this evening. We can all stand here together as one voice for all of Canada in saying that we need to fix this issue. However, I do not feel that I have the tools in my hands at this point to be able to fix it. As I said in my speech, it is going to take a multi-faceted approach.

The organization in Burnaby that the member mentioned sounds like an amazing organization.

Within humanity, we have the ability and the tools to fix these issues. I hope that we can all come together to fix this issue.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my friend the hon. member for Peace River—Westlock is a new member of this House, but I have come to know him through another connection, and I am impressed by his eloquence.

I want to put to him something that was just posted on Twitter by Cindy Blackstock. I think it would unite us as we are already united. Cindy is, of course, a great champion for first nations children across Canada. She wrote:

Parliament needs to pay as much attention to children as they do to the economy. Then Canada will truly be a wealthy country.

I think that she is right. It is a hard thing to do. We almost worship the economy. However, we also love our children. Can we imagine that Parliament in Canada would, in Cindy's words, pay as much attention to our children as we do to the economy?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, for sure we must pay attention to our children. Our children are what this country is all about. I have two children of my own. It is when we have children that suddenly the world becomes a bigger place. We realize that it is not just about us. It is about leaving a legacy, providing for our children and all of that, and building a nation that they will truly prosper in.

When we talk about the economy, we talk about it in abstract terms, but we always should bring it back to why we want a good economy. We want a good economy so that we can provide an education for our children, provide a house for them to live in, provide water for them to bathe in, all these kinds of things. We work hard so that we can provide for our families.

When it gets into the abstract of debt or all the aspects of what the economy is and the terms that we use, we sometimes fail to remember that we need a good economy in order to pay for the things that allow our families to thrive. I would agree with my colleague that we should always bring the discussion back to our families and to our children.

● (2145)

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, collectively as members of Parliament and as Canadians we were shocked to find out about the recent events in Attawapiskat.

As members of Parliament, we tend to be hopeful individuals. Though we may not agree on the method, I believe that all of us share a common goal and that common goal is to make Canada a better place. When a tragedy like this unfolds before us, it is absolutely shocking and very sad.

Sadly, this crisis is not something that is unique. Suicide and self-inflicted injuries are the leading cause of death for first nations youth and adults up to the age of 44. The suicide rate for first nations male youth ages 15 to 24 is 126 out of 100,000. It is only 24 out of every 100,000 for non-aboriginal youth. That is five times more. For females, the suicide rate is 35 out of 100,000 among aboriginals versus five out of 100,000 for non-aboriginals, a rate that is seven times higher than the national average.

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These statistics, however, cannot convey the personal tragedy of a life lost to suicide. When we talk about these individuals, we are talking about daughters, sons, friends, brothers, and sisters. At the end of the day, we are talking about deeply loved individuals.

Suicide is clearly a symptom of something that goes much deeper, something that is deeper and faced within this community. The challenge we collectively face as parliamentarians and as a nation is how to create hope. None of us here has lived in Attawapiskat, and so none of us is able to speak with authority on what it is like to live here. We do not know the stories that the elders have to speak of or the personal tragedies that they have endured. We do not know what challenges the youth have faced or what they have overcome.

Nevertheless, I believe that there is an understanding and a hope to be found in the experience that is lived by other aboriginal communities in Canada.

I did a little research in preparation for today. The Centre for Suicide Prevention explains, "In communities where there is a strong sense of culture, community ownership, and other protective factors, it is believed that there are much lower rates of suicide and sometimes none at all."

To further support this point, there was a recent study done by Dr. Chandler and Dr. Chris Lalonde in British Columbia. They found that more than 90% of youth suicides are concentrated in only 10% to 15% of first nations bands. While some communities suffer rates as much as 800 times the national average, more than half of the province's 200 first nations bands have not experienced a single suicide at all. Therefore, the tragedy of youth suicide is not endemic to all reserves. This is an important point to make, because it brings hope. It brings hope that youth suicide is not inherent to the aboriginal culture. Let us make no mistake. Also, it provides hope to communities that a solution is in fact possible.

To offer a paraphrase of the research that Chandler and Lalonde completed, they said that suicide becomes a serious option only when one's sense of connectedness to a hoped-for future is completely lost. According to their research, the common denominator among all aboriginal suicide victims is a lack of identity and purpose, particularly in light of significant life changes.

It is being able to understand why we are here and what our purpose is that provides us with the ability to imagine a better tomorrow and the pathway to achieve it. This sense of purpose and destiny is imparted by the community around us. The culture shapes our world view.

We all know that many factors have eroded the culture of our first nations people. The list of historic grievances is quite long. The intergenerational trauma of these events is largely to blame for the systemic challenges that we face today. I truly believe that regardless of partisan affiliation, every government has conducted itself with the best intentions in order to address the systemic problems that these historical events have in fact created.

If there is one thing that history has taught us, I believe it is that government-imposed solutions will not resolve the issue that we see before us today. Both the Liberal and the Conservative governments have funded national aboriginal youth suicide prevention strategies.

● (2150)

From 2006 to 2015, our previous Conservative government spent over \$131 million on the Attawapiskat reserve, including the construction of 60 new renovated houses and a brand new school. This was to support a community of about 2,000 people. The previous Liberal and Conservative governments have provided resources, emergency supplies, and expert advisers to this community, yet we are still facing this crisis.

While suicide rates within aboriginal communities do fall slightly with increasing wealth, the correlation is proven to neither be statistically nor socially significant, so it is clear that a budget line will not resolve the deeper issue that is before us today.

There is no doubt that having greater access to education, mental health counsellors, and better community facilities could help in the short term. However, until this community feels a sense of ownership over its destiny, we will continue to see recurring crises such as this.

By ownership, I mean ownership of cultural destiny. That is the ability to connect with the best hopes of the past in order to fulfill and attain the dreams of the future. We know that this is possible because it is the lived experience of many other aboriginal cultures across Canada. Many have created a positive culture connected to the past that enables them to build for a hopeful future.

How we support such a future, as a matter of government policy, is difficult to prescribe, given that vastly different approaches are employed by band leaders across Canada. However, there are probably some principles that we could approach this with.

I believe the focus should be on empowering every member of a community, not just its leadership. I believe that transparency is fundamental to any democracy, including band councils. Without informed choice, ownership cannot be found.

I believe the rule of law matters and that many have lost faith in those who are supposed to protect them. The perceived impunity to crime on reserves undermines the hope for a better future. Equality before the law cannot be realized until the rule of law is properly enforced.

I believe that economic empowerment is key. Without the ability to see a way to provide for oneself and one's family, it is difficult to feel in control over one's future and to have hope.

This is where I would say the Conservative approach has perhaps differed from the Liberals. The Liberals have been very good at working with the chiefs, but the chiefs offer a very limited perspective on how to approach these issues. This is why the previous Conservative government worked on empowering individuals on reserve to enable them to contribute to a positive future for their community.

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We passed matrimonial property rights to give women the same equality as men on property rights, something non-aboriginal women have had for over half a century in Canada. We created transparency in band finances, including transparency on the salary and benefits that band leadership received. We also invested significantly in job training and job creation so that community members could take ownership of their financial future. We signed new treaties in order to provide ownership for bands in British Columbia. As well, our government worked with all parties to issue a national apology for the residential schools program in order to fully and finally acknowledge the tragedy that took place.

I am sincerely grateful for the thoughtful approach that has been taken by the Liberal government in addressing this recent crisis. The solution to this crisis cannot be found in government programs. Instead, the solution is found in the connection of history to purpose to future.

This is something that has to be discovered. It cannot be administered through a program.

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thought I would highlight a little incident that happened many years ago when I was discussing Attawapiskat with someone. This person said, “We are spending so much money on this community. Look at all the money they have wasted and everything they have let go. They have not pulled themselves up by the bootstraps. Look at all the federal money the government has spent on them.”

Then I said, “Let us look at Quebec City”, where this person lives. The provincial government spends \$12,500 per year on each person. Then the federal government spends around \$11,500 per citizen. Then the city government spends around \$2,500. Added up, it is over \$26,500. However, if we look at the spending in Attawapiskat, where the sole responsible level of government is the federal government under the Canadian Constitution, it is around \$13,000 a year. The difference is absolutely enormous. If we expect to see different results when we spend so much less, then I think we need to start considering our own values and what we can actually do.

Perhaps there is a role for the government to play. I am not saying it is the only role, but it certainly has an important role to play, especially in relation to the structures of society.

• (2155)

Ms. Rachael Harder: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question.

I may be misunderstanding you, but it would appear that you are insinuating that perhaps government dollars—

The Speaker: Order, please. I want to remind the member to address the Speaker. There has been some of this, but let us try to keep that in mind.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Mr. Speaker, I may be misunderstanding the member, but my understanding of what was said was that government dollars would help structure—he used the word “structure”—and would perhaps solve the issue before us here today.

As I said in my speech, I am not convinced that this is about putting another government program in place. I believe that this is about creating hope, about facilitating hope in a generation of

people, in a culture of people. I believe that one of the best ways we can do that is by empowering them to take ownership, to be free citizens, to live great lives, and to embrace their culture. I do not believe the best way to do that is by creating government programs flooded with bureaucracy and regulations that hinder people rather than empower them.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague, but I have to say that what I am hearing is a lot of claptrap.

The member stood in this House and said that spending money on indigenous children is what governments should not be doing. Rather, we should give them hope. We should tell them to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. We should talk about transparency.

Under her government, every single year \$100 million was promised to indigenous schools. Then it was pulled back and spent on tax cuts. The Conservatives promised the money and never gave it. We could not find where the money went. That was the lack of transparency under her government.

The numeracy and literacy rates in the Ontario region of Treaty 9 were down at 21% and 28%. Literacy rates that low cannot be found anywhere else except sub-Saharan Africa.

What did her department do? It decided not to follow up or do any more studies because it could spend the money better elsewhere. We are talking about chronic underfunding of education, whereby children in Kashechewan and Attawapiskat get half of what kids in the public system in Ontario get, and the previous government said that it would not throw any more money at it.

They did not have the money for mental health services. That is why people are killing themselves. It is not because they do not have jobs. We have children killing themselves on reserves where they do have jobs, but they cannot access mental health services. Still, if white kids in suburban Canada need it, they get it.

Let us talk about the role government should be playing here. Let us not talk about giving them hope but not giving them a dime to be able to get an education.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Mr. Speaker, I do not believe there was a question there, but I will respond to the hon. member's comments.

I believe that money is a tool. It is not the answer. It is not the solution. It is simply a tool. It is something that we use, and if we use it correctly, it can perhaps create a solution or contribute to a solution.

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In this case, as the Conservative government, we did believe in using money effectively as a tool. We would give it to bands and then we would ask for transparency. We would ask for accountability measures. Unfortunately, the Liberal government that is in place today just took all of that back. Now we are allowing band members to spend money as they will, with absolutely no transparency and no accountability. Unfortunately, at the end of the day this hurts the people on reserves. This hurts our children in the aboriginal communities. That is incredibly unfortunate.

● (2200)

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Edmonton Centre.

Thank you for recognizing me and allowing me the opportunity to stand in the House today to discuss this heartbreaking and family-shattering issue.

Sadly, suicide is a word we all know only too well. Nowhere is the pain of self-inflicted death more prevalent and more poignant than in our indigenous communities.

My heart bleeds for the residents of Attawapiskat First Nation, and I thank my hon. colleague, the member for Timmins—James Bay, for asking for this emergency debate today.

As we previously heard, I hope that this is not a debate but a coming together of all of us in this chamber to truly begin to search for solutions.

In the north of our land and in the east, the west, and the centre, we all know the pain and anguish of losing someone close, but those of us of indigenous descent also know far too well the tragedy of suicide and the despair that caused it and that it left in its wake.

I have been personally affected by the suicide of family members and friends. Can members imagine telling their cousin's five-year-old son that his father is not coming back again? I had to do that. I had to cry with my aunt over the loss of her son, my cousin. I have had to talk to my teenage daughter, who lost one of her best friends to suicide.

Nunavut has one of the highest rates of suicide in the world. Almost every person in our territory, as well in Nunavik in the north of Quebec, has been personally touched by the suicide of a loved one. Rarely a week goes by that there is not a suicide in our territory. There have been roughly 500 suicides in Nunavut since it was created in 1999.

The rate of suicide of Inuit in Nunavut is about 10 times the national average. It happens far too often among Inuit boys between the ages of 15 and 19. In fact, it is 40 times higher than it is among their peers in the rest of Canada. This is unacceptable.

This rampant crisis has an impact on all aspects of life in Nunavut. It affects the well-being of the family. It affects students in schools who have lost a classmate or a friend. It has an impact on the spirit of the community and on society as a whole.

While the rate of suicide is staggering, these numbers do not even include those who have attempted to take their own lives and luckily have received help in time.

Many Nunavut Inuit work hard to prevent suicide despite the trauma, grief, and loss that overwhelm them. I have seen many parents who have lost their children to suicide in Nunavut take up the challenge and do what they can to help prevent this crisis that is affecting us. I know how hard it is for them to talk about it.

We are working in partnership with Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated and the government of Nunavut to identify joint actions to improve mental wellness in our territory.

● (2205)

Last month, the government of Nunavut, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, the RCMP, and the Embrace Life Council released Resiliency Within, a one-year suicide-prevention strategy action plan. The plan incorporates recommendations from a 2015 coroner's inquest and outlines a number of initiatives for community engagement, as well as training, programs, and support. This is a first step toward the development of a longer-term plan, and I will do what I can to support this initiative.

I know that Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami is also seized with this issue, and I want to recognize Natan Obed, the president of ITK, for his leadership on this issue. ITK is in the midst of drafting a national Inuit suicide-prevention strategy that will be released in August. It will help coordinate suicide-prevention efforts among the four Inuit regions: Nunavut, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut, and the Inuvialuit region. This is very valuable and important work.

While the responsibility for the provision of health services rests with the territorial government, Health Canada considers the high rate of suicide in Nunavut a big priority. Health Canada is investing \$96.5 million over five years in the territory to support mental health services. This includes money specifically for suicide prevention. It is also providing \$33.4 million over three years to the territorial health investment fund that is aimed at improving health services, including projects that help increase mental health services in Nunavut. Health Canada is also working to ensure nurses are prepared and trained to work in northern communities.

I could go on about the investments our federal government is making to try to reduce the number of suicides in Nunavut and elsewhere, and there are many. However, the fact is that in our territory, in Attawapiskat, in Nunavik, and in other indigenous communities across this great country there is a tragic, urgent situation where so many young people are ending or attempting to end their lives. This is a complex issue that requires a broad response. It is not and cannot be the sole responsibility of one level of government or one organization. It is the responsibility of all of us as a society to work together to find lasting solutions that will change the lives of people and make them feel that life is worth living. We need to deal with this crisis now, but we also need to look to the longer term and address some of the underlying causes. That means better access to housing, health care, and other social services, as well as education, training, and employment opportunities—in other words, a future.

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It is not a partisan issue. It is one that we all need to make a priority, no matter where we live and no matter which party we represent.

Qujannamiik, merci, thank you.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank our hon. colleague from across the way for his heartfelt speech and also apologize for the losses that he and his family and his communities have gone through.

We have heard a lot of passionate discussion tonight. My question for my hon. colleague is this. Does he feel that we are at a point where pride can be swallowed, where blame can be put aside, and that an all-party group—a special committee, or whatever the name is—can be formed so that together we can solve these issues and work together for solutions?

• (2210)

Hon. Hunter Tootoo: Mr. Speaker, in my speech I did not show any pride; I did not show any partisanship. What I am hearing here tonight is that we are all in this together and we need to work together. I believe there is an aboriginal affairs committee. I am not sure if the member is a member of it, but I am sure that committee will look at this issue and hopefully bring some recommendations forward for the government to look at.

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for his speech. The minister and I share similar ridings, in terms of not only size but also population, so I can relate easily to the stories he brought to this House today.

I would like his comment on a quote that I will read to members. It is a quote from a former prime minister of this country, a former minister of Indian affairs, and also the architect of the 1969 white paper. After explaining that these kinds of things are complicated, are complex, and take some time—a long time, as a matter of fact—he said, “There is no economic base for having jobs and so on and sometimes they have to move like anybody else”.

I would like his comments on that comment, particularly from a former prime minister. Also, I want to ask him if this national tragedy will continue under his own government or if he will make sure that this time is the right time, that this time is the time for real change.

Hon. Hunter Tootoo: Mr. Speaker, I do acknowledge that we both share a lot of commonalities in our ridings and the issues and challenges we face.

Our Prime Minister has said he wants to work at a renewed relationship with aboriginal people. When we met with folks in the leadership at ITK, he said he wants to work with them to be able to unleash the untapped potential that we have in our northern communities.

If we look at the Washington declaration that was signed in Washington by the Prime Minister and President Obama, we see it talked about building stronger northern communities and it included housing, mental wellness, and education. So, I do believe the proof is in the pudding with this government. The time is now, and we are taking action.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we resume debate, I will just let hon. members know that, during an emergency debate, members are able to sit in whatever seat in the House they wish. They can be recognized to speak or to pose questions and comments from any seat. This is just a reminder for hon. members on that rule.

Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the invitation to participate in this important debate this evening.

As a Canadian and as an adopted Cree, I am deeply saddened by the loss of life and the profound feelings of despair that have brought us here tonight.

Although this evening's meeting was planned as a result of urgent situations in specific areas of the country, particularly Attawapiskat First Nation, we understand that these same issues also affect other communities across Canada.

Improving the health and wellness of indigenous communities is a critical issue for our government. I am confident we can do better and recognize, as do my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, that we must do better to support first nations and Inuit communities in crisis across the country.

The government acknowledges the scope and seriousness of the health and mental issues that exist in some indigenous communities. The crises in these communities remind us of just how important it is to work collaboratively with first nations and indigenous peoples across the country to address the very real challenges facing their communities.

• (2215)

[*Translation*]

Our government is personally and directly involved in the states of emergency that have been declared recently. We have initiated discussions with indigenous leaders in order to determine how we can work together to provide short- and long-term aid.

[*English*]

When a significant health-related event occurs in a first nation community leading to a crisis situation or a state of emergency, our government responds by reaching out to community leadership to identify potential needs, partners, and supports.

If additional resources are requested, such as nursing and mental health surge capacity, the federal government ensures that the community receives them, either by providing them directly or engaging with other partners to secure them.

Close collaboration with community leadership is essential.

[*Translation*]

As we all know, some very high-profile incidents have occurred in various indigenous communities, which have brought to light a number of social and health problems.

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In every case, our government is working actively and closely with community leaders and other partners in order to give members of the community access to the support they need. I would like to point out a few measures taken by our government to support the communities that are currently experiencing a health-related emergency or crisis.

[*English*]

In February, the Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority and the Nishnawbe Aski Nation declared a state of emergency over the state of health care in their communities. Our government is already taking action to enhance care in all of these remote first nation communities. We are improving access to mental health supports, improving infrastructure, and working to ensure that needed equipment is available. In addition, we continue to meet with the Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority, the local chiefs, and the Province of Ontario to develop a plan to improve access to health care in the short, medium, and long terms.

In Attawapiskat First Nation, a state of emergency was declared last week as a result of an alarmingly high number of suicide attempts. To address the urgent need for additional mental health resources in the community and with the help of our partners, Health Canada has responded by deploying two counsellors, one crisis worker and coordinator, and two youth support workers, and additionally, one psychologist will arrive in the community this afternoon.

Health Canada is also working with the community, the Weeneebayko Area Health Authority, and the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care to coordinate our response to this crisis in the community. As well as enhanced services for youth at risk, this health authority has deployed five additional mental health counsellors to Attawapiskat, including a departmental manager from the James Bay Community Mental Health unit. The Province of Ontario has deployed an emergency medical response team, which consists of nurses, nurse practitioners, and mental health workers. The province is working closely with the Weeneebayko Area Health Authority to coordinate this support. Together these collective efforts will provide approximately 18 new resources to support the community of Attawapiskat in its time of extreme need.

In March, Kashechewan First Nation received widespread media attention after skin rashes presented on a number of local children. A medical team examined more than 30 children and diagnosed the vast majority with eczema along with a few cases of scabies, impetigo, and psoriasis. These are skin conditions that are fully treatable, and the children are getting the treatment they require. While we are relieved to know there is no immediate medical emergency in the community, the situation in Kashechewan is another troubling reminder of the many social and health challenges faced by first nations and Inuit communities. Our government continues to work with first nations leadership to respond immediately to needs identified by the community.

In the northern Ontario community of Pikangikum, a tragic house fire occurred in March. Nine family members were killed, and concerns were raised about overcrowded houses, lack of capacity to fight fire, and access to clean drinking water. Trauma teams were mobilized to provide counselling for community members, and the

federal government is working with the province to respond to the tragedy.

In recent months the Cree in Cross Lake, Manitoba, have been experiencing a high incidence of suicide attempts and cases of suicide ideation. We have reached out to the community leadership to offer our assistance and have made additional funding available for mental health surge capacity. We will continue to work with the community to help address its mental health needs in this difficult time, to respond to the complex issues facing the community. We are also working with the Province of Manitoba and other partners to look at the long-term health needs as they pertain to mental health, child welfare, education, and employment.

[*Translation*]

Since the unfortunate events that occurred in La Loche, Saskatchewan, in January, our government has provided assistance to the community of La Loche and the nearby Clearwater River Dene Nation.

Health care workers were deployed to offer assistance, and we are supporting the people who had to be evacuated. We are working with the Meadow Lake and Clearwater River Dene Nation tribal councils to implement a long-term response and recovery plan. We are also looking at medium- and long-term mental health care needs.

We must also consider the alarming statistics on suicide in Nunavut. We are committed to working with the Government of Nunavut and the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, or ITK, to determine the underlying causes of this crisis.

The minister will present the ITK's suicide prevention strategy in the summer of 2016. This strategy should guide all of the partners so that they focus on preventing suicide rather than responding to it.

● (2220)

[*English*]

To fully respond to the crises and emergencies in indigenous communities, the root causes, such as health inequalities and social determinants of health, must also be addressed. To reduce health inequalities and to justly walk the path of reconciliation together also requires a robust urban aboriginal strategy that involves all orders of government.

[*Translation*]

Our government attaches a great deal of importance to these factors and their impact on health. We are constantly working with our provincial and indigenous partners on several fronts to address the factors that are not a direct part of our mandate.

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In order to truly improve the well-being of indigenous peoples and give communities hope, our efforts must focus on improving their socio-economic conditions. In Ontario, for example, the federal government is working with the province to set up a consultation forum in order to make it possible for the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to work hand in hand with first nations leaders to find concrete solutions. The work is already under way.

[*English*]

Making real lasting change that also addresses the social determinants of health requires a new fiscal relationship with first nations, one that provides sufficient and sustained funding for first nations communities. That is why our government has laid out historic investments in budget 2016, which includes \$8.4 billion for better schools and housing, cleaner water, cultural and recreation facilities, and improvements for nursing stations.

In closing, I would like to emphasize our government's commitment to a renewed nation-to-nation relationship with indigenous peoples. As part of this commitment, we will continue to prioritize issues of importance to indigenous communities, including community health and mental wellness.

If my great-grandmother Lucy Iseke Brenneis were here, she would remind us of a Cree phrase that was used centuries ago when settlers first arrived, “*miyotôtâkewin tatawaw*”, which means, “Guests, you are welcome. There is room here”.

It is vital to our nation's future that the federal government work in genuine partnership with indigenous communities and the provinces to ensure better health, social and economic outcomes for all indigenous peoples. At a minimum, this is what we owe to our fellow citizens.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what I am hearing tonight is a desire to move beyond talk. We need to tell the people of Canada that the House of Commons can be transformative at historic moments, and I see the goodwill of all parties.

I want to relay a message that I received from Sarah Hookimaw, who is watching the live debate tonight. People are watching this back home. They are watching this in Indian country. She asked me to thank everyone because hope gets rekindled by the smallest spark. We can do a heck of a lot better than a small spark in this place. Otherwise, why are we here?

I want to ask my colleague an unorthodox question for all the young people in all the communities that have the ideas and hope. Will the government agree that we could put together some form of youth initiative, to start regional round tables where young people can come together and start to talk about their hopes and dreams? Then we can bring it to a national level, where they can address the Parliament of Canada to say what it will take, from their points of view, and give us the instructions, as the adults, to start moving forward? I am sure I have the support of my colleagues in the Conservative Party and the Green Party. I ask my hon. colleague if we can move forward with something unorthodox but transformative so we can follow through on these small sparks into a brighter future for all young people.

● (2225)

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague opposite and I had the opportunity to speak when he was at a convention in my riding of Edmonton Centre on the weekend. I want to thank him for fanning the flames of care and humanity as it pertains to this issue and for bringing this debate to the House today.

I live in a riding that, within two years, will have highest concentration of indigenous peoples of any city in the country and the highest population of youth, my riding of Edmonton Centre. I expect unorthodox questions from the hon. member opposite. It is part of his parliamentary charm.

I cannot speak on behalf of the entire government, but as the member of Parliament for Edmonton Centre, I embrace this suggestion and in Edmonton Centre there will be a round table of young people. If that is the spark that it takes to make this happen, that is what we will do. Then I will encourage my colleagues to join me.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Picard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in a previous speech, I was surprised to hear from members opposite that the Liberals were only consulting chiefs of communities, as though we were holding back on the resources and tools to achieve results.

Therefore, I invite my hon. colleague to speak more about how we have benefited from communicating with the chiefs of communities.

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

Clearly, in any emergency situation, whether it has to do with mental health or general health, it is crucial that our government work closely not only with the chiefs but also with community leaders, including mayors of the surrounding communities and health care officials.

Of course we are working closely with the provinces and territories. That is important in each and every case. I know the minister spoke with Mr. Bellegarde about the situation in Attawapiskat. That is important. Through not only our investments, but also coordination with the system, we will finally come up with some long-term solutions, and not just emergency solutions.

[*English*]

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House this evening. I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

As always, I thank my constituents of Calgary Confederation for their ongoing support and encouragement, and the opportunity to speak to important issues such as the one we are discussing tonight.

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I could not have imagined that I would be rising here to speak under such dire circumstances for the people of Attawapiskat. In my prior political life as an MLA in Alberta, I was the minister for aboriginal relations. This position allowed me to see first-hand the challenges facing many of our indigenous people, and the grief and the stress it placed on every member of these small and close-knit communities.

Just over six years ago I lost my wife Heather. Nothing can prepare us for it and it hurts more than anything we can imagine. In my times of need and my times of grief, I was fortunate to have a strong network of family and friends, and in particular, counselling to support me and my three daughters.

Sadly, this is not the reality of most in Attawapiskat. I cannot imagine what it must be like to have lost loved family members and not have the proper support or help. The stress, the despair, the unanswered questions must all be so stressful and seemingly never ending. It is with these thoughts in mind that I cannot even imagine what it must be like to be a parent in Attawapiskat at the moment.

Parents must be on the edge like never before, wondering if their family will be the next to suffer a challenge or a tragedy. The loss of a child is the most tragic of all family tragedies, yet we sadly see this becoming a routine part of many reserves, especially at Attawapiskat.

I realize it is not only the youth in these communities that are being directly affected by these suicides. People are losing their parents, their spouses, their siblings, their friends and their relatives. The community is dying from the inside out and the government needs to take urgent and defining action.

The Canadian Mental Health Association reports that the suicide rate in Canada is 15 people per 100,000. We cannot even compare that with Attawapiskat, which only has an on-reserve population of about 1,500 or so. Based on the national suicide rate and its population, this community should expect to see one suicide every four to five years, but right now we are at the point where we are counting mere hours between suicide attempts.

Before I speak more about Attawapiskat, let me make it clear that this is not a problem on this reserve alone, or among this community alone.

In my past, I have visited many communities like the ones we are discussing tonight and the conditions vary greatly from one to another. However, it ought to shock many Canadians that suicide and self-inflicted injuries are among the leading cause of death for our indigenous people. That is shocking and tragic embarrassment for a country like Canada.

Aboriginal leaders have called on the federal government to develop a national strategy to combat indigenous suicide, but this sounds like a lot of reason to talk rather than to act. We already know many of the causes of their despair and why people turn to suicide. Any previous suicide or mental health study has dozens of recommendations that the government should look into right now.

There are those, and there are many, who suggest we should relocate this community to some urban area to solve the problems. I do not believe that is a solution. Statistics show that among

indigenous populations, the suicide rate is no better when they live in our urban areas.

● (2230)

The sad reality is that the federal government has responsibilities to serve these communities and it is not upholding them. Folks in these communities do not have access to the resources they need to prevent suicide or to deal with the grief following one.

Many of us in this House were affected by the sudden and tragic loss of our friend recently, member of Parliament Jim Hillyer. Every member of this House and their staff were offered grief counselling, and it was immediate. The plan was a good plan, and it was in place. It responded to our needs, as it should have.

Unfortunately, we are not offering this same level of service to those we are supposed to be providing services for. Governments of all stripes have watched Attawapiskat suffer suicide problems for decades, and still the problem persists. We must help Attawapiskat.

Tonight I am asking the minister to take a proactive approach with these communities and to please not let their situation become as dire as Attawapiskat. We need to see the government take a proactive approach to these issues, to tackle them sooner, when it is relatively easier and the chance of success is higher. Once we have a total collapse, like the one at Attawapiskat, it takes a lot more resources to help the community than if we had intervened earlier.

I cannot imagine what it must be like for health care workers in this community. I gather from news reports that they do not even have the necessary training to deal with these mental health issues. The stress, the pressure, and the feelings of despair amongst these workers must be tremendous. I imagine that their families are also suffering as a result.

The problems in the community are not new, which means that these workers are not quitters. They have endured, and they have tried to do what they can. We need to help them. Their courage is unbelievable, and their determination is unmatched. However, they too have a limit.

Through this entire process, I am personally asking the minister to make sure that these workers get the support and the help they need. In many ways, they remind me of our soldiers who have suffered after witnessing horrific circumstances on the battlefield. Tragically, we know what outcomes are possible when we ignore their needs too.

This community is broken, and it will take a lot more than a few brave social workers to fix it. I took great care this evening not to blame anyone for this problem because I do not believe that would help. For far too long, too many have expended too much energy blaming others for the problems instead of putting that energy to good use.

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I would like to see all governments, including first nations leaders, stop the blame game and instead focus on solutions. I would like to see honesty. Let us be honest about what works and what does not, what could work, and what would be a waste of time and money. Sadly, both are in a limited supply. I want the government to work proactively to identify other communities before things get bad. It would save time and money, but most importantly it would save lives.

I truly hope that we can do more than just speak to the issue tonight. As they say, when all is said and done, there is often a lot said and little done. Let us hope that that is not the case here.

• (2235)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to acknowledge my colleague, the member for Timmins—James Bay for bringing this very important emergency debate to this House. I thank him for his relentless advocacy in highlighting the issue.

This is a national emergency. Many of the members spoke about their specific experiences, what they are seeing in their own communities. In the community of Vancouver East, we have perhaps the largest urban aboriginal community in the Lower Mainland. We have a community called the Downtown Eastside, where we struggle with these issues each and every day. We have poverty beyond measure, and a lack of housing. We have aboriginal women who have lost their children, and the only reason is because they cannot get safe, secure, affordable housing. They cannot get their children back. We have endless tragedies that happen. Despair is beyond measure, in that sense.

Yet, in spite of all of that, we have incredible resilience as well. What I am hearing today is the goodwill from every single member of this House to work together to address this as a national issue.

I want to ask whether I can count on every single member in this House, across all parties, to come together and bring forward solutions for each and every one in our own respective communities, to put resources in it, to put in a team of people across government, to work collaboratively with the local MPs to find solutions, so that nobody has to lose a life again and we do not ever have to have this debate in the House again.

Mr. Len Webber: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely agree with everything that the member said. I too represent an inner city riding, in Calgary, where we have a large population of aboriginal people who are struggling day to day. It is heartbreaking. I have served on the Calgary Homeless Foundation for a number of years, and I have met with many of these individuals. We have done what we have been able to do to help them.

We all need to come together as a government, all parties, to ensure that this cannot continue. We have to take this more seriously than ever.

• (2240)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for sharing his thoughts and his personal experience with grief and loss. There is a tremendous amount to be learned from our own personal experiences that we bring with us to the House.

What I would like to ask my colleague is what he believes would be the best possible support response that we could provide to Attawapiskat and similar communities at this time.

Mr. Len Webber: Mr. Speaker, in my time as a provincial aboriginal relations minister, I focused more on the long term, with regard to aboriginal education. I know that to build a foundation around education for a child is of utmost importance. It is what will enable them to continue to learn as they get older and enable them to thrive in society.

With regard to the short-term solution to deal with what is happening in Attawapiskat, we need to bring in counselling services immediately. There are so many things that we need to do. We need to assure these children that there is hope in this world for them and that we do care for them. We want them to thrive in this society, in this world.

I do not know what the solution is. I truly do not. We just all need to work together with the aboriginal leaders to come up with something of substance that encourages young people, and all of society, to have hope for the future.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak to this critical issue.

All of us know in the House that there is an urgent need for action. There are many challenging parts to this issue. There are no easy answers.

I think it is important that we do not wrap this particular issue exclusively in just the broader question of the challenges facing aboriginal communities. There are many challenges facing first nations communities. However, we also need to have a specific strategy to address suicide, because suicide is a challenge like no other.

We have all been moved by the tragedy in Attawapiskat, and the broader context in terms of suicide within aboriginal communities is horrifying. Suicide rates in aboriginal communities have been shockingly and persistently high. Not only are the numbers high, but while the overall Canadian suicide rate has declined, these rates have continued to rise in aboriginal communities.

Existing numbers may in fact under-report the levels of suicide in aboriginal communities. In many cases, suicides may appear as accidental death, and aboriginal communities have significantly higher rates of accidental death as well as suicide.

I spent some time today reading a report prepared for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation called “Suicide Among Aboriginal People in Canada”. I would certainly recommend the reading of this report to all members in this place.

There are a few points in particular from this report that I would like to highlight, because I think they may help us chart a way forward.

First of all, the report highlights the significant need for more study, specifically about suicide within aboriginal communities. There is a need to dig deeper into the specific dynamics, problems, and potential solutions that apply here in Canada.

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I know my Conservative colleagues recently proposed a study at the aboriginal affairs committee specifically on the staggering rate of suicides among Canada's indigenous people. Our colleagues in other parties disagreed and preferred instead a study focused on general health issues. It is not to suggest that is not important, but I think we need to recognize suicide as a specific and distinct kind of challenge.

It was interesting for me to read in this report that there is significant variation across different aboriginal communities. This is important. It gives us an opportunity to study communities where things are working and to try to facilitate connections between communities with significant challenges and communities that may already have some solutions. Let us explore the possibility of facilitating partnerships between communities and also studying the significant variation between communities.

The report highlights how suicide can spread in small communities with close interconnections. The report reads as follows:

In small Aboriginal communities where many people are related, and where many people face similar histories of personal and collective adversity, the impact of suicide may be especially widespread and severe.

Later on, the report tells us this:

Early interventions with families and communities to support the healthy development of infants and children may reduce the prevalence of personality disorders and other mental health problems, which are more difficult to address in adolescents or adults.

Therefore, we know the importance of that early intervention.

The report highlights strategies that make a difference: restricting access to the means of suicide, providing education on coping skills, training youth as peer councillors, training those who come into regular contact with youth, mobilizing the creation of community-based suicide programs, and ensuring that mass media portrays suicide and other community problems appropriately.

Through all of this, I think we all recognize that there is a role for government but that government policy is not the central factor. The report I referred to highlights that we need to explore and support local solutions to strengthen individuals, families, and whole communities. Certainly I would again underline the emphasis on the need for further study.

There is one final and perhaps somewhat distinct point that I want to make about these tragic suicides. Very soon in this place, we are going to be debating legislation on physician-assisted suicide. I know that we will all have an opportunity to debate this latter point, but I do want members to think about that debate in light of this one and of this situation. The young people who took their lives I am sure felt that they faced serious and irremediable suffering. Indeed, anyone who commits suicide likely feels themselves to be experiencing serious and irremediable suffering.

● (2245)

Most systems of morality or law rely on absolute moral or legal rules. When morality or law is seen as situational, it becomes more fluid, more subject to individual situational justification. That is why moral rules like "thou shalt not kill" are important. Any time modifications are introduced to previously understood absolute moral rules, they may induce a relaxation in the social taboo beyond the parameters of the proposed modification.

For example, Oregon legalized assisted suicide in 1997 and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report showed suicides within men and women ages 35 to 64 increased by 49% in Oregon between 1999 and 2010, compared to a 28% U.S. national increase overall. It seems to be that when clear immutable behavioural standards are removed, behaviour changes.

Certainly, whatever we do on that issue we particularly need to make sure that we are listening to the voices and concerns raised by indigenous Canadians.

I want to quote at some length from comments that Dr. Alika Lafontaine, the president of the Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada, made before the special joint committee. He said:

In reviewing these hearings, I feel obliged to identify the absence of the major national indigenous organizations. I believe there has not been meaningful consultations with indigenous peoples, although meaningful mainstream Canadian consultations have been carried out by many other organizations that have presented here. You are all aware of the widening health disparities among indigenous peoples and the rest of Canada. When considering the overrepresentation of indigenous peoples in nearly every category who may qualify and pursue medically assisted dying, it should be strongly considered that you may be ignoring the largest proportional demographic that is eligible to pursue this service. I hope the apparent absence of indigenous consultation is remedied prior to any final decisions regarding indigenous patients and medically assisted dying.

He went on to say:

My personal experience with indigenous patients and their concerns regarding medically assisted dying are very different from my experience with mainstream Canadian patients. One reason is that medically assisted dying has existed in our communities for more than a century.

When residential schools exposed children to nutritional deprivation and medical experimentation, that was medically assisted dying.

When child and family services apprehend indigenous children at an alarmingly high rate—if not the highest rate of all demographics—with medical decisions made by the crown, and an inconsistent quality of standards that contribute to children dying in care or going missing, that is medically assisted dying. When the trauma of residential schools is perpetuated intergenerationally and we do nothing to stem the tide of abuse, addiction, and suicide that overwhelms our indigenous communities through insufficient mental health intervention, except in crisis, that is medically assisted dying.

When indigenous peoples have programs designed without their input, then are chastised for poor engagement in mainstream health care, that is medically assisted dying.

When there is no monitoring, tracking, or enforcement of standard practice that every other Canadian can expect when receiving medical care, that is medically assisted dying. If an indigenous person dies and no one tracks it, does anyone care?

What we are pleading for in indigenous communities is not medically assisted dying. That already exists in more ways than can be counted. What we are pleading for is medically assisted life.

Those are the remarks of Dr. Lafontaine. I think we need to listen to them. We need to take his concerns seriously. Going forward, let us leverage the collegiality we have seen tonight to build a better country for everyone.

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• (2250)

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member and all hon. members for the debate tonight. Certainly, when I listen to this debate it is very easy to become overwhelmed by the challenges faced by our aboriginal youth, especially as symbolized by the crisis that we are facing in Attawapiskat.

However, my head, my heart, and my faith also convince me that the first nations indigenous communities and their youth, as challenging as the problems are, also have the resilience and the strength to deal with these problems if only we were to offer some form of co-operation with them.

Let me tell a story from my own riding of Hull—Aylmer, which is a place where a lot of first nations communities come. Parents come to study to improve themselves, to go to CEGEP or to go across the river to a college or a university, and oftentimes they bring their children. The children face a difficult transition of moving from school to school. Yet, let me mention one school in my riding, Pierre Elliott Trudeau Elementary School, where the kids got together and under the guidance of a first nations music producer, David Hodges, produced a fabulous video in which the elementary students themselves told their story. They wrote the song. They wrote the music. They produced the video. It really was a positive demonstration of what can happen when they come together. It was the first time that a lot of those students felt that they were paid attention to and they had that opportunity to express themselves.

There are many ways in which people in a community can take action themselves. I wonder if the hon. member would have a comment on that.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I think the point the member makes is right to suggest that really there is a lot of resilience and a lot of hope within aboriginal communities.

In my speech I talked about identifying aboriginal communities where things are going relatively better and looking at ways that we can help build those connections. Many of these solutions are not going to come from government. As the member alluded to, they are going to come from individual groups, communities, schools, and families. However, we can play a role as well in helping to facilitate those connections and those conversations.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I think all of us tonight are feeling very united in a commitment that is shared and non-partisan. I want to make this more as a comment than a question because I do not want to put my hon. colleague on the spot.

The systemic violence of the residential school system over 100 years is clearly part of the context in which these young people are struggling. I just wanted to have at least some opportunity tonight to reflect on the importance of the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. While we are talking about immediate steps to address a mental health crisis, a crisis of hopelessness in specific communities, we should not forget the searing violence that may have played, and I think likely played, a large role in making beautiful young people think of their future in muted greys, that they have lost the full spectrum of the rainbow of beauty that awaits them

if they would just believe that they have a real future, being loved and embraced by all Canadians.

• (2255)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her work on this, and certainly for her passion as well.

Yes, the circumstances in residential schools, most would suggest, were a significant contributing factor to high levels of suicide in aboriginal communities. The report that I referred to earlier identified community challenges as well as individual factors that can lead to higher rates of suicide. I think we need to always be talking about both, about the individual factors that may predispose or create risk for an individual and also the factors that create risk in the community.

The apology that happened in this place was an important step, but of course, there is much more work that we can do. There may be disagreement about some of the specific details, but I think there is a consensus in this place about the need to move forward with reconciliation and with support for our aboriginal communities.

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague from Newfoundland and Labrador.

I am proud to stand here on the unceded land of the Algonquin people, the meeting place of the Métis Nation, the united first nations, the Inuit people, and the home of all Canadians.

I have a message for the people of Attawapiskat, for the people of Cross Lake with whom I have met, for every indigenous person, whether they live in Quebec City, on a reserve or in a city, in Newfoundland, in Winnipeg, or in Regina. Wherever they are in Canada, each and every one of them matters. Every life matters.

An elder said to me, “We need to fight hard to keep the spirit of suicide out.”

The pain those people feel is real. It is a pain that I have felt myself. They may feel powerless. They may feel despair. They may feel hopelessness. However, there are cracks in the world, and that is where the light can come in. If they can hold on through that pain and muster their strength to make it through another day, that pain can fade, and they are never alone. There are people across Canada who care about what happens to them. This is a demonstration here tonight of the people who care about them. They matter. They are important.

The only thing harder than losing someone is losing someone before his or her time. The pain he or she is feeling is a part of grieving. It is part of honouring a lost life. Grief is hard, but it is not evil. It is our spirit that is in pain because we have been split away from the one we loved. However, the loss of hope that we feel is something greater, more profound, and it is real.

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The reality of the lives of the people in Cross Lake and Attawapiskat needs to be heard across the country and around the world. Life in first nation communities is hard, and it is harder than it needs to be. There are too many communities like Cross Lake and Attawapiskat, across Manitoba and across the country where too many people, young and old, are living without hope. There are many indigenous people living off reserve who struggle with poverty and racism in our great cities. We, as their brothers and sisters, as their fellow citizens, as their fellow human beings, have let them down.

There is a prophecy that was told to me by an elder, Winston Wuttunee, who comes from the west. The prophecy as told is that after contact with Europeans, the indigenous people will suffer greatly. However, upon the shoulders of the seventh generation will fall the task of lifting up the people. Starting in greater numbers, they will start to take pride in themselves, in their culture, in their religion, and in their families. They will realize that their culture and their ancestors are strong, and that their ancestors are standing behind them willing them on to success.

There is a second part to this prophecy, which is that the seventh generation will not do this by themselves. Rather, hand-in-hand with newcomers they will bring change to their common society, because we all know it has to change and the change must be deep and structural. We must embrace deep change for our communities. I believe that change is possible.

Despair can give way to hope, and fear can give way to joy, but it will take an awful lot of work. It will take work from every level of government, from the esteemed members of this chamber to every chief and band council across the country, to provide the deep change that is needed. It will also require the work of corporations and our fellow citizens. It will take the federal governments, provinces, cities, and first nations, the Métis nation and the Inuit people, because too often when we hear about a tragedy or a tragedy-on-tragedy in first nations communities, our very first thought is to separate ourselves from the problem and pronounce our own innocence. Too often we, as Canadians, say, "What are they doing? What is their leadership doing to solve their problems?" We do not ask what we are doing. We do not ask what our leadership is doing to solve our own collective problems. These are our collective problems.

● (2300)

Since before the first European set foot on Turtle Island, the territory we now call Canada has always been home to not one but many people. Today, Canada is home to many people from many nations, and first nations and all indigenous peoples are Canadians. We are still many people united as one. It starts with hope. Everything begins with hope. Making hope a reality takes work, effort, and resources.

I will urge them to do something more. Every single one of them is stronger than they know. Every single one of them is better than they know. When times are at their hardest, I urge them to use the spark of sacred energy within them to hold on to hope, to look to the light, to look within them to keep moving forward, even when hope seems lost. If they hold some guilt or shame within them or think of themselves as a bad person, they should know this: that they can

change, they can grow, they can be forgiven, and they can forgive themselves. They are not born good, nor are they born bad. We become good by doing good deeds. We become generous by doing generous acts. We can inspire others to goodness so they can join with us. If they wake up in despair, they can say, "Today is a good day because I am alive and I matter." The road ahead may not be easy.

Basil Johnston, an Anishinabe elder, wrote that each and every one of us has a life path, a potential, a destiny. We start with many possible paths, but we must choose one path. For some in our society, that path is steep and rocky. The young start climbing the hill. Some walk, some run, some crawl, and some stumble. Those who arrive at the top of the path and see the path continues, they move along that path getting older. Some youth will pick a different path, a path which will not lead to their full potential. They arrive at the top of a rocky hill. They look over to the other side and the road continues. Some will give up and not realize their full potential, but others will continue and conquer that mountain and see that promised land that we heard about over 50 years ago.

The elders are victors for they have walked many winding paths, yet they still stand at the top of the mountain and can look back and see the young, the youth, and the adults in the distance behind them and still look forward into the sun and see the grandfathers in the distance.

However, each of them have a road and a path they can follow out of the darkness and into the light.

I will carry them in my heart on my travels and I will remember them and think of them, and I will invite them to work with me, for themselves and for all of us to see the deep change we need.

However, we know that hope is not enough and words are fleeting, especially off in the highest chambers of our land.

Hope is a good breakfast, but a poor supper.

In the midst of darkness, we need to redouble our efforts and offer not just words but action. We must offer not just hope but opportunity.

We can build homes for the homeless. We can provide jobs for the jobless. We can provide better health care and education. It is our duty and our plan to do so, but we must do more.

We have an opportunity to move forward, not simply in reconciliation, as survivors waiting passively for the house of Canada to come to the rescue, but we must move forward in celebration of indigenous peoples as a founding people of this land in recognizing the covenant that we have together.

There are four directions in my indigenous tradition. There are four seasons in this land. There are four founding peoples. They are the indigenous peoples, the English, the French, and the newcomers who have come from around the world who now call this place, Canada, home. That is the true nature of our nation.

We did not make this broken world that we inherited, but we do not have to leave it to our children.

It is about recognizing dignity and freedom and care for all Canadians, about recognizing that each and every one of us is a human being, worthy of respect, that each and every one of us matters.

[Member spoke in Cree as follows:]

Tapwe akwa khitwam.

• (2305)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, earlier my colleague from Timmins—James Bay told the House that the greatest resource in Canada is not oil. It is not our metals, our forestry, our fish, or our agriculture. It is our children, and our children's greatest resource is hope. It is that wholehearted optimism about positive outcomes, that special way that children seem to approach each day as they wake up. I have seen it in my own twin daughters every day, and it is a remarkable thing to behold.

Children are the future of every community across this vast land we call Canada, and that is why it is so devastating when children lose that hope.

In 2012, Cowichan Tribes Chief Harvey Alphonse, in response to 52 suicide alerts in his community, said, "My personal experience is that a couple of individuals that have approached me have considered taking their life.... They've given up because they feel there isn't any hope for them."

The gap still exists in first nations children funding despite the promises in the budget, so I ask the hon. member if he will stand and say that his government is going to commit to developing that greatest of all resources, the hope of our children, so that all children will have that full opportunity.

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I do agree that our children are the future. We are imperfect as adults. We have done things imperfectly, but our children can have the perfection that we can never have.

There is a need for deep and profound change within our Canadian society. We need to ensure that we see the deep change, that we think about the long term, the structural change that needs to occur in governance structure. We need to think about empowering people, ensuring that first nations are able to come together like the James Bay Cree and have the opportunity to create a society that fulfills their long-term potential.

When I think of successful first nations, I think of the James Bay Cree. This first nation has been able to govern itself since 1975 and be autonomous to a large extent. It still has issues with some relations with other governments, but at the same time it has always been able to build capacity and build a future.

The differences are stark between Attawapiskat and its brothers just on the other side of the Quebec border. That is telling about the different types of structures: one exists under the Indian Act, and the other exists in self-determination under its own governance structure as proud indigenous people.

Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Winnipeg Centre for his inspiring

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words earlier, not only to the people in the House but to anyone who might be listening at home on CPAC.

Our party campaigned and won on a promise to implement the recommendations in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report. The path forward under that is very long and will not necessarily provide solutions immediately, so in addition to those recommendations, I ask the member for his personal opinion on things we might be able to do to allow us to see more immediate results. I think that would be helpful to the House.

• (2310)

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, we do not have to do one specific thing. We could be doing many things on all sorts of fronts.

First off, we need to ensure that indigenous peoples have the monetary resources to raise their children properly. No child should live in poverty. I hope some of our new government programming will go a long way toward providing that in the form of a type of guaranteed income. Though not enough, it would certainly be a very good start.

I also hope that we can perhaps look at some of the treaty territories, such as Manitoba first nations. Perhaps we can look at Treaty 4 territory. Perhaps this area is now ready for self-determination. Perhaps it is ready to look after itself. With 34 first nations, perhaps it is ready to work together to build communities among itself and use them as an example of what we can build off from the James Bay Cree. Perhaps we could then move into Treaty 4 territory and then perhaps Treaty 6 and look at building long-term relationships, an actual nation-to-nation relationship, and look at building long-term capacity. An individual community of 500 might not be strong enough to develop the necessary long-term capabilities to provide for themselves, but if first nations work together, perhaps they will be able to in the very long term.

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all colleagues in the House of Commons this evening for their contribution to this important discussion we are having around youth suicide in indigenous communities. I think the discussion tonight actually marks a full understanding of the action that is needed toward strengthening, supporting, and ensuring survival and success of our indigenous youth, our indigenous communities, and families.

The member for Timmins—James Bay came to the House of Commons today asking for the help of Canada and Parliament to respond to the unfortunate acts of suicide in his riding in the community of Attawapiskat. He also knows that there are many other communities that share these sad circumstances and events across our country's indigenous community.

In my own riding, I have full communities today that are filled with grief on a monthly basis as they are forced to say goodbye to another hopeful young person who decided to take his or her own life.

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It is even those young people who have lived a full life in indigenous communities, some who became strong leaders. I remember a young girl whom I met in one of the communities in my riding. Her name was Duru. Everyone knew her as Duru. She was a fantastic young woman in high school, leading as a great example for young Inuk women and young Inuks in the community. She was a strong leader. She led the celebrations of life in the loss of many of her peers. She led the youth healing circles. She led the youth onto the land. She worked with the elders. A few short weeks ago, she took her own life because the grief and trauma of despair that surrounded her in trying to raise up the young people in her community was too much.

Even our healthiest young indigenous people, who are out there trying to make a difference, do not often see the path forward. Sometimes we have to stop and reflect on the impact it is having on all people who try to lead in circumstances like this.

Tonight, as we discuss this important issue in Parliament—and it is getting close to midnight—I want us to remember that there are children in communities who are not able to close their eyes this evening because of fear and trauma, because of pain, because of the feeling of hopelessness they experience. There are many young indigenous people today who are unable to close their eyes because of the addictions they suffer from. There are many of them still walking the streets in our villages. They are probably not even aware of what they are looking for. However, the feeling of restlessness, of hopelessness, is the one thing they cannot fix.

There are children this evening without a safe house, without a comfortable bed, not even looking forward to a better day to wake up to tomorrow. That is why we are here having this discussion. Suicide in indigenous youth in our community is in a state of turmoil.

● (2315)

It may be one community that brings a motion to Parliament, but it is shared by so many more, so many that we never hear about in the news. So many young people take their lives in indigenous communities every day and never make it to a public announcement. What does that say about us as a society when we become accepting to a certain degree?

I am proud to stand here tonight among people who are not prepared to accept this, and I pray there will be a way forward. I know there is a way forward. What we have just recently seen in our country, the real change in attitude toward indigenous communities and indigenous people, the real change of reaching out and lifting them up because we know they have been left behind, is going to be the path forward. Simply recognizing that there is a responsibility by the people of our country to lift up indigenous people, the first people who came here, in itself will be change.

Today, as I sat in the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, I listened to the president of the National Women's Association of Canada. She spoke very eloquently, very passionately and emotionally about the work she had been doing in our country to help women, families, and children. She talked about the progress they had made, but then slipped back. She talked about funding cuts for critical programs that were making a difference in communities that now were lost.

Why does this happen? When we find models that work and people who are willing to give every ounce of energy they have to make the change, why do we walk away? I do not want to see those things ever happen again. Every time we turn our backs on helping one person, that is one person who is falling through the cracks. For every one, there is another.

When I listened to the president of NWAC today, I was reminded of the good people in our country, those who give their time and energy, their commitment, their heart, and their patience to make this change. That is why it is up to us to work with them.

The budget was just presented. Historically, we will invest \$8.4 billion over the next five years to improve the socio-economic conditions of indigenous people and their communities. It deals with clean water, early education, support for housing and addressing poverty, shelters, counselling, support for services, and health care. All of these things are included. Why are they included? Because it is a recognition that we have to start with the basics. The basic foundation has to change.

We have to support indigenous communities and indigenous people. We also have to recognize that they are not all the same. There is not a one size that fits all. For the first time in our country, we have a budget that recognizes that the needs of Inuit are different from first nations and Métis, and we are able to invest in those directions.

I heard people this evening say that it was not about investing money. When children in first nations schools are getting far less education, then it is about money. When children in first nations communities do not have proper health services and counselling, then it is about investment and money. Do not confuse the fact that there is no investment required, because Liberals recognize that. Even in the first budget we have made moves to do that, and we will continue to do it.

● (2320)

A number of people this evening talked about the fact that it is 2016. Well, it is 2016, and I am proud that we have a Prime Minister and a government in this country that is recognizing the real need for reconciliation and that it requires investment in first nations.

I am happy that my colleague opposite is bringing these issues to the House of Commons. That is where they need to be. This is the house of people. This is where ideas and solutions should get generated. This is where we should be responding to people, and I am proud to stand this evening and say that I will do my part to ensure that we help lift up the indigenous communities in this country and lift up our young aboriginal people who are bright and brilliant and who need us right now.

I look forward to working with the minister, our government, and all my colleagues to make that happen.

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Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs for her very powerful speech, one of many we have heard tonight. I do acknowledge that the government has put significant resources into a long-term plan.

I want to focus my comments on the short term, so it is a two-part question.

We have heard about the needs of Attawapiskat, and we heard about La Loche. One of the things that concerned me was what I heard from the member of Parliament who represents La Loche, that services were flown in, but within two months those services were no longer there, and as we can imagine, the trauma impacting that community was significant.

In the short term, given all the speeches tonight, given the fact that she has a very important and critical role, what will my colleague be recommending to the minister and cabinet in terms of what we should do immediately, the next steps?

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Mr. Speaker, immediate action has already been taken. No one has been sitting around waiting for a debate or a discussion. This is about a longer-term fix and being committed.

In the short term, Health Canada, along with INAC, has despatched numbers of health care workers, mental health workers, and all the services that have been required to respond to the critical needs existing in the community immediately. Will more be necessary? Absolutely it will.

Funding has been available for the first nations to secure the programs and services that we think will help in the short term. There have been a number of recommendations made to government of ways in which we should be approaching this and working with the communities. We will continue to take their advice. We will continue to partner with them, and we are there every step of the way. Let there be no doubt about that.

• (2325)

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the speech of the parliamentary secretary was very inspiring indeed.

She mentioned in her speech something very fundamental that I want to raise with her. She said that the basic foundations of this country need to change. I happen to agree with that.

In a speech before the Assembly of First Nations, Special Chiefs Assembly, the Prime Minister made a commitment. He said, “Finally, we will conduct a full review of the legislation unilaterally imposed on indigenous peoples by earlier governments”.

If there is one piece of legislation in this country that is pernicious, insidious, and archaic, it is the Indian Act.

Will the parliamentary secretary tell the Prime Minister to uphold that commitment to change the Indian Act?

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Mr. Speaker, I have great respect for my colleague who has been a tremendous advocate on all issues involving indigenous people in this country.

We also understand the need for changes to the Indian Act. The Prime Minister has made that commitment. We are planning to move forward with some review in terms of the Indian Act. How that review will look is still being undertaken at this stage.

We have heard this recommendation from every indigenous group we have met with. All I can say to the member right now is that we stand by that commitment. We know it is important to make that change and adjustment.

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski.

First of all in this debate, we need to try to understand where we come from as a country. We need to reflect on where this country comes from and on the basis it was founded almost 150 years ago.

When I came out of a residential school, I set out on a mission to bring us back together. I set out on a mission to reconcile with the people who put me away for 10 years. They had incarcerated me culturally, linguistically, and politically. When I came out of there, I wanted to make sure that this would not happen to any indigenous children in this country anymore.

The historical and contemporary situation in Canada includes many long-standing injustices. In a broad context, members may remember that the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recounts that “No segment of our research aroused more outrage and shame than the story of residential schools”.

The royal commission went on to describe the incredible damage done to indigenous peoples in this country. There was a loss of life, denigration of culture, destruction of self-respect, destruction of self-esteem, rupture of families, and the impact of these traumas on succeeding generations.

The assimilation policies of the Canadian government involved the forced transfer of large populations of young aboriginal Canadians. Such government acts also had the aim and effect of depriving aboriginal peoples of their integrity as distinct peoples and of their cultural values and identities.

I recall in 2005, the former federal justice minister Irwin Cotler said that the decision to house young Canadians in residential schools was the single most harmful, disgraceful, and racist act in our history.

Therefore, it is useful to consider the broader context of how we came to what we are discussing today and the policies relating to aboriginal peoples. For instance, from 1927 to 1951, it was an offence under the Indian Act for Indians to raise funds or retain a lawyer for purposes of their land claims. That is shameful. This discriminatory policy contributed to the further dispossession of aboriginal peoples' lands and resources, and today, as we see, their dependency.

Indigenous peoples had their integrity, security, and well-being undermined. Indigenous peoples in Canada were persecuted on the basis of their culture.

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• (2330)

[*Translation*]

As members probably know, and as my colleague from Winnipeg Centre pointed out, I have the good fortune of being from the James Bay area in Quebec, where we signed Canada's first modern treaty in 1975. When people talk about indigenous issues here in the House, they often say that these issues are so complicated that they are almost afraid to go anywhere near them. I have been hearing these kinds of comments for nearly five years now.

I know, however, that when the will to address these issues is there, we are capable of great political and legal imagination. I have no doubt about that. I have seen it and experienced it first hand in my part of northern Quebec.

I have participated in this debate from the very beginning, and I have listened to all the speeches. It is important to remember, in looking for a solution, there is no lack of precedents in our history. We need only think of the James Bay Cree, in northern Quebec, as members opposite pointed out. There are solutions. However, there must be respect for indigenous peoples, and we must recognize their most fundamental rights. That is what is missing most of the time.

I was also involved in the process that led to the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the United Nations General Assembly. This process lasted 23 years and I was involved from start to finish. This document contains provisions that inform the issues we have been discussing for several hours.

Article 21.1 pertains to health services. Article 21.2 is another example. Article 24.2 concerns the possibility of indigenous peoples controlling the programs that we are discussing here today. Article 43 is key. It states that the rights recognized in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples constitute the minimum standards for the survival, dignity, and well-being of the indigenous peoples of the country. That must be the basis for our work.

The Prime Minister made a commitment to work with indigenous people to implement the principles and goals of the declaration as well as to adopt it. I asked the question twice this evening. People talk about implementing the principles and goals of the declaration, but the members on the other side of the House never once said anything about passing legislation to adopt it. I find that unfortunate, but the private member's bill I plan to introduce will fix that. I hope to have the support of the members opposite when I introduce it.

• (2335)

[*English*]

I want to assure the House once again of my full co-operation in this process. I have had many years of experience, 35 years, in dealing with these issues, and I am prepared to contribute to this process.

I want to quote the highest court in 2012 in the case of Ipeelee. The court said:

...courts must take judicial notice of such matters as the history of colonialism, displacement, and residential schools and how that history continues to translate into lower educational attainment, lower incomes, higher unemployment, higher rates of substance abuse and suicide...

Genuine reconciliation cannot be successful as long as colonialism is perpetuated. I said over the weekend that true reconciliation is not possible in the absence of justice. We need to remember that.

Finally, I spoke briefly about my mission when I came out of residential school. We know that South Africa also had its own process of truth and reconciliation. I will quote Nelson Mandela on how he described his own transformation during 27 years in prison:

It was during those long and lonely years that my hunger for the freedom of my own people became a hunger for the freedom of all people, white and black. I knew as well as I knew anything that the oppressor must be liberated just as surely as the oppressed...[for all have been] robbed of their humanity.

When I walked out of prison, that was my mission, to liberate the oppressed and the oppressor both.

That is our mission today. That is our mission for the next couple of years. Let us hope that we walk on that same path.

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to give my hon. colleague the opportunity to elaborate on how his private member's bill can be part of the solution to this grave problem that our nation faces. If he would like to elaborate on that, we would be happy to hear that elaboration.

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of talk about reconciliation nation-to-nation since the government arrived on October 19, so it is important to elaborate on that.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission adopted a very important report. In that report are 94 calls to action. Most governments in the country, provincial, territories, and the federal government, have committed to implementing those 94 calls to action. However, the most important call to action is 43, which deals with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The commission makes the distinction clearly between adopting and implementing. The commission calls for the full adoption, the full implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

I argue that the UN declaration already applies in the country. Not too many years ago, Supreme Court Chief Justice Dickson mentioned that international instruments like declarations were persuasive in relevant sources to interpret domestic law in the country. Therefore, the declaration already applies. My private member's bill proposes to translate that legislatively through the House.

• (2340)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the dialogue in the House tonight and for all the people watching at home, especially to the front-line workers who are supporting Attawapiskat and other communities in great peril. They are doing hard work.

I would like to urge my fellow colleagues to give as much hope as we can to the people supporting us and the people supporting these communities. We will do our full work and use the full extent of the powers that we have in the House.

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Things that come to mind are upholding our international human rights obligations, as my colleague has so beautifully put it; funding first nation children, as is our great responsibility and absolutely their right; reconciling with residential schools survivors, not fighting them in court; stopping litigating against first nations that argue quite rightly rights and titles. We have to stop interfering. As legislators, we have to start working together.

I urge all members of the House to do everything we can to do the work that the people in our home communities elected us to do, and that is to make change on the ground for people every day. I urge my colleagues to stand with me in that important task.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Mr. Speaker, I do not think there was a question in that comment.

However, I will take this opportunity to thank my colleague from Timmins—James Bay for his initiative in bringing the debate to this august chamber. I think discussing this issue thoroughly for the first time was important. It was unprecedented.

I would especially like to thank the members who stayed here for much of the evening to listen to the other speeches. Once again, I thank the House for allowing me to speak to this subject.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is inadequate to thank my colleague for a truly deeply moving and important speech in this place. When will the private member's bill that the hon. member is putting forward come up for a vote? How can we help?

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Mr. Speaker, seeing the openness and collaborative spirit that the current government showed when it got elected, I proposed to the minister that somebody from the other side co-sponsor my private member's bill. She has not come back to me on it, but nevertheless the private member's bill is ready and it is going to be introduced next week.

Given that the current government supported the bill that I had in the 41st Parliament, I am hoping that the Liberals will do the same with this private member's bill because it is the framework for reconciliation. As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission indicated, it is the framework of reconciliation.

However, we cannot say that we will implement the entire calls to action except that we have a slight problem with number 43. That is not how it works.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in this House, following a very powerful speech by my colleague from Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, to take part in this historic emergency debate.

I first want to acknowledge that we are on unceded Algonquin territory.

I want to thank the members of our NDP team, and particularly my colleague, the MP for Timmins—James Bay, for pushing for this debate.

Today, as many have said, is not about talk; it is about action. It is about the need for the Prime Minister and his government to take

action to end the suicide crisis that is taking place in first nations and northern communities across our country.

On March 9, in Pimicikamak Cree Nation in northern Manitoba, leaders declared a state of emergency. In a span of a few weeks, these young people took their lives: Anita, Joni, Cody, Finola, and Lucille. Over 100 suicide attempts have taken place in Cross Lake. Families are grieving. A community is in pain. However, this pain and this trauma is not recent.

Amber Muskego, a courageous young woman in Cross Lake, stated, "If you were to drive into my community, you would notice billboards along the road. They are signs of horror, with the pictures of missing and murdered people of our community. Their cases are still unresolved. And if you go on social media today, you will see that it is flooded with the silent pain of hopelessness and misguided trust."

Suicide on first nations is twice that of the national average. Suicide and self-inflicted injuries are among the leading causes of death for first nations peoples. However, this did not just happen. In fact, the trauma that is apparent through suicide and through the suicide crises across Canada is the direct result of our history of colonization and decades of racist policies passed through this House, approaches, policies, and laws that have sought to silence, intimidate, assimilate, and kill indigenous peoples.

Let me be clear. The despair that many people on first nations face is a direct result of our political and economic policies that have systemically sought to steal the lands of indigenous peoples so that governments and corporations can exploit their wealth without consent. These policies forced first nations people to live on small parcels of land, reserves, often some of the most uninhabitable land in this country. So oppressive was this reserve system that it served as the foundation of the apartheid system in South Africa.

As Julian Brave NoiseCat said this in his powerful article in *The Guardian*:

This is how First Nations live in the Bantustans of Canada's north [...] They look on as hundreds of millions of dollars worth of resources are mined from their ancestral homelands. This is not an emergency—a catastrophe for which Canada was unprepared and never saw coming. No, this is and always has been part of the design and devastation that colonization wrought.

Let us talk about taking responsibility. It is important that we recognize that at the federal level it has been Liberal and Conservative governments that have implemented such policies. Tonight we have heard many times that this is not a partisan issue, and it is not. However, let us be clear that the reasons behind this epidemic have been partisan. They have been ideological, and they have been founded in the politics of colonization, of white supremacy, and of greed.

Standing Order 52

It is strangely ironic that today, the day we hold a debate on the suicide epidemic in first nation after first nation, is also the very day of the 140th anniversary of the Indian Act, a piece of legislation that is the symbol of colonialism. This piece of legislation and the way it is imposed on first nations is deeply connected to the oppression that exists today.

● (2345)

As Chief Isadore Day explains, the suicide crisis in Attawapiskat and far too many other ongoing crises across the country are rooted in the poverty and despair that was created by the Indian Act .

The list of policies goes on: residential schools; the administration of colonial science; the theft of land; the prohibition of ceremony, of spirituality, of language; the criminalization and incarceration of indigenous peoples; the forced relocations that so many first nations and Inuit communities have faced; the imposition of the 2% cap, a cap that cut education funding to first nations, a cap that I know many of us have seen first-hand what it has done to first nations in our ridings: mouldy classrooms, freezing portables, not enough books, not enough pencils, and fire systems that do not work. What message does that send to first nations youth?

There are the cuts to band capital funding that have led to inadequate housing, overcrowded homes, lack of water and sewer services, and inadequate services to fight fires. There is the overall prevalence of third world living conditions.

These assimilationist views, these colonialist views that pushed these kinds of policies continue to be perpetuated even today.

A former prime minister of Canada when asked about the suicide epidemic in Attawapiskat perpetuated such assimilationist views in suggesting that first nations peoples should just leave their communities. He said, “The problem is sometimes you cannot. You know, it’s—you know, people have to move sometimes”.

First nations people and many people who work in solidarity with them know that these views are unacceptable.

Where do we go from here? We listen to first nations. First nations have been leading the way. They are calling for a nation-to-nation relationship, a relationship founded in the treaties. They are calling for the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. They are calling for approaches that involve decolonizing our approaches to development, to governance, and to the future.

As Cheryl Hunter Moore said, “I think it’s about time that Canada allows us to live freely and not as wards of the state”.

Canada needs to recognize aboriginal sovereignty and respect aboriginal rights once and for all. It means ending the crushing poverty that exists on first nations. It means investing in housing to end the horrific impacts of overcrowding. It means working with communities to create jobs on first nations. It means supporting first nations in their language and cultural education.

As Charlie Ettawacappo from Norway House said, “Now our next step for first nations is to heal. We need to start by teaching our children about the residential school, treaties and our mother

tongue...then our children will be proud of who they are and know where they came from.”

It means having serious conversations about suicide and untangling the impacts of colonialism and the need to support LGBT youth.

Alex Wilson, from the University of Saskatchewan, and an Opaskwayak Cree Nation member said, “The issue of LGBTQ first nations people and suicide has yet to be addressed. In northern communities, suicide rates for this group are extremely high. We need to consider LGBTQ people in every and all conversations and solutions when addressing suicide.”

It means listening to first nations youth, youth like Amber Muskego, who are calling for recreation services in their communities, who want a drop-in centre, like young people have in communities across the country. It means ending poverty. After all, we know that reconciliation requires action.

As I conclude, I think of the elders, the strong leaders, the incredible women, the supportive men, the inspiring young people who live on first nations in our north and across the country.

● (2350)

I think of their fight, their resistance, and their protection of their traditional teachings and knowledge. I think of their commitment to the next generation. I think of how Amber Muskego, that young woman in Cross Lake from Pimicikamak, said that she is a voice for the voiceless. Today, let us join our voices to that of Amber Muskego and young first nations people across this country in saying never again and saying that together we will work in solidarity and commit to action so that no other life is lost and we can truly achieve justice.

● (2355)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for the many solutions she offered, the member for Timmins—James Bay for his work on this and many other aboriginal issues, the four ministers who spoke so passionately tonight, and all members who are giving hope tonight to the people of Attawapiskat that they have a future and that all parties in Parliament are behind them.

I have three suggestions, since we are now into solutions a couple of minutes before midnight. Of course, everyone has mentioned the vast need for mental health services, addiction services, and counselling services. This is the tip of the iceberg. As the Mental Health Association of Yukon says, one in five Canadians has mental health problems at some time in their life and far more services are needed.

Standing Order 52

The second of my three suggestions stems from child development scientists making it clear that the most important part of a child's life that affects his or her future is the first two or three years. Hopefully, there will be huge investments in those first three years of life of aboriginal children.

Finally, in my riding of Yukon, there are 11 self-governing first nations. Their future is in their own hands and they control their own government. That takes away the helplessness. There is nothing more depressing than being in terrible, intolerable situations and having no control over them. If they are self-governing, they are given back the autonomy to rule themselves, as they have for centuries, and it will give them hope for the future. They will have their own destiny in their hands and it will provide hope. They had great societies for hundreds of years before we even came here.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the important work being done by first nations in his territory in the struggle for self-governance, as well as their opposition to oppressive legislation that was put forward by the previous government, legislation that they opposed so clearly.

We have heard from many people here tonight about the commitment to hope. There is no question; none of us can disagree that hope guides us in the work we do, but hope requires action and investment. It requires putting our money where our mouth is. I find it unacceptable that the government is not living up to the necessary commitments put forward by the Human Rights Tribunal when it comes to child welfare; and it is unacceptable that the government is not living up to the kinds of commitments that are required for first nations education.

While hope is important, let us also be clear that, in order to make a difference in the lives of first nations young people, there must also be action.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I feel honoured and blessed to have shared the conversation with my friends from Manitoba and Quebec, with their words of wisdom, hope and encouragement, and the specific things that we as parliamentarians must do. The region I represent in northern British Columbia has, unfortunately, seen its own episodes of severe loss and tragedy. In Hazelton, in the northwest, there was a suicide attempt every few days for almost a full year, particularly by young people. If any members of Parliament have had the opportunity to sit

with the families, they will know that it is impossible to imagine that we do not have the power and intelligence to do more.

My specific question for my friend is this. There has been a lot of talk and, as she said, a lot of offers of hope, praise, and encouragement, but one specific thing that the government could do, beyond just words, through a budgetary measure or the support of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, is offer actual concrete actions that young people, in particular, living in first nations communities could cling to. They could hear it in this debate tonight and understand that this is a Parliament that is starting to understand and does not repeat the errors of past governments.

As the past prime minister said, the great thing about Canada is it has no colonial history. That ignorance has to take a step back; and the acknowledgement of reality, our history, and the actions we need to take are what Parliament and this country desperately need.

● (2400)

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley. We all know of the important work that he has done for years, working in solidarity with first nations in his part of the country.

His question is about what concept or thought we can put front and centre in this whole discussion, and I want to hark back to the speech made by our colleague from Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, who talked about the central importance of the concept of justice.

It is clear to me that in the struggles that young first nations people are waging on the ground, what they are fighting for is justice—the justice that they deserve, that their nations deserve, that their peoples deserve. They get it, but it is we who need to understand that.

I am proud of the work of our party, the NDP, in pushing for decolonization and seeking that pursuit of justice. I hope that tonight all members in this House will join in that struggle to achieve what so many young people deserve: the fundamental understanding and the reality that is justice.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 12 midnight, I declare the motion carried. Accordingly this House stands adjourned until later this day at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12 a.m.)

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