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(HANSARD)

Thursday, May 5, 2016

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, May 5, 2016

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1000)

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to six petitions.

* * *

FORT MCMURRAY FIRE

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in this House to speak to the ongoing wildfire situation in Fort McMurray, Alberta.

It is with a heavy heart that all Canadians have watched the devastation unfold over the last few days. Over 80,000 residents have been evacuated in the largest fire evacuation in Alberta's history. Homes have been destroyed, neighbourhoods have gone up in flames. The footage we have seen of cars racing down highways while fire rages on all sides is nothing short of terrifying.

I know I speak for all members of this House, and 36 million Canadians, when I say that our hearts go out to all affected families. We are thinking of and praying for the people of Fort McMurray.

Though Alberta's loss is profound, we will get through this tragedy together, as friends, as neighbours, as Canadians. The people of Fort McMurray can count on the full support of this government. We will weather this storm together, and together, we will rebuild.

While it is too soon to comprehend the full extent of the damage, we know that it is far reaching and utterly devastating.

I have spoken with Premier Notley, and our orders of government are in close contact as we monitor the situation every step of the way.

I want to assure the people of Alberta that we are doing everything we can to help.

[*Translation*]

The Government Operations Centre, or GOC, which is under Public Safety Canada, provides strategic-level coordination on behalf of the Government of Canada. The GOC also helps assemble the necessary resources and prepare for deployment.

The GOC is monitoring the situation in Fort McMurray and reporting on it around the clock. It is sharing information with federal authorities and the Government of Alberta. The GOC is connected to multiple partners, including law enforcement, emergency management organizations, and non-governmental organizations, to name just a few.

The Government Operations Centre is the hub for real-time information gathering. It is a reliable source of information as the situation evolves. With many years of experience to its credit, the GOC has developed efficient systems and products to help respond to emergencies.

[*English*]

The people at the government operation centre know what they are doing and do their job well. They have been in communication with various partners on how to properly address this crisis. These are partners like Natural Resources Canada, Health Canada, National Defence, Indigenous and Northern Affairs, the RCMP, the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre, and emergency management organizations like the Canadian Red Cross.

In addition, the people of Fort McMurray have the support of the Canadian Armed Forces.

● (1005)

[*Translation*]

The Canadian Forces are always ready to help in times of crisis anytime and anywhere, including during natural disasters.

The Department of National Defence is currently working with federal and provincial authorities to determine how our troops can best contribute to the rescue effort.

[*English*]

Currently the RCAF is deploying four CH-146 Griffin helicopters to Fort McMurray and one CC-130J Hercules to CFB Cold Lake.

The RCAF is ready to provide support to the Province of Alberta in the provision of air assets to assist with evacuation efforts, deliver essential aid to affected regions, and transport firefighting personnel and equipment to these regions.

Routine Proceedings

In addition to the efforts of our Forces, as well as the GOC's coordination of information, supplies, and services for response and recovery activity, we are announcing further help for the people of Alberta.

Today, I am pleased to announce that in addition to the Government of Canada providing future assistance through the disaster financial assistance arrangement, the government will also be matching individual charitable donations made to the Canadian Red Cross in support of the disaster relief effort.

The outpouring of goodwill and compassion from Canadians right across the country has not only been inspirational, it has been entirely characteristic of who we are, and the fundamental human values we share as Canadians.

[*Translation*]

People are opening their doors and donating to organizations such as the Canadian Red Cross, and our government will continue to offer its steadfast support in the difficult days and weeks ahead.

[*English*]

Personally, I have been in Fort McMurray four or five times over the past few years. Because one of those instances was a few visits for a by-election, I got to do a lot of door-to-door visits. I met with a number of homeowners, people who were rightly proud of the homes they had built in that beautiful town. To think now of the number of doors of homes that I knocked on and visited—that all of us as politicians visit regularly—and to see the pictures from Fort McMurray right now that could have been taken in a war-torn corner of the world instead of our own backyard, is a reminder of how Canadians will and must stand together to support our friends and neighbours in this difficult time.

To those people who are displaced, please remember that we are resilient, we are Canadians, and we will make it through this most difficult time together.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I also rise today, alongside my parliamentary colleagues, to speak about the devastation in the city of Fort McMurray and the surrounding area.

We want to thank the Prime Minister for his remarks this morning, and we know that his words will resonate with the people of Alberta. I thank the Minister of Public Safety for all of the good work that he is doing.

We thank both the Prime Minister and the Minister of Public Safety for meeting with me yesterday at short notice, and also making sure that all of us, particularly MPs who live in the region, have all of the updated information. We are thankful for that.

All our thoughts, of course, are also with our colleague, the member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, who is not here today for this very reason. He is on the ground, supporting his constituents, and all of us in the House support the work that he is doing.

The Speaker mentioned him yesterday, but I also want to mention the leader of the official opposition in Alberta, Brian Jean, who used to be a member of the House. He lost his home in this fire. We want to thank him for his courage. He is obviously going through a very

difficult time, but in very typical Alberta spirit, he said it is just stuff and that they will carry on and rebuild. We applaud him for his courage.

What people in that region have gone through in the last couple of days is literally hell on earth. I know that all of us have been shocked to see the images that have been broadcast on our televisions, not just here but all around the world. The Prime Minister mentioned he had gone door to door. The devastation has descended upon a very honest and hard-working group of people in Fort McMurray.

The challenges we will face in the coming days, weeks, months, and even years, to rebuild this city on the Athabasca and Clearwater Rivers, will test everyone's resolve. However, I also have hope and faith, because these are Albertans, and the people of Fort McMurray are a very resilient group. If we think back to the history of Fort McMurray, the building up of that city, it literally started from nothing and grew to be the economic engine of this country. I know that all of us will pull together to support these people.

A lot of these citizens were born and bred in Fort McMurray, but they have also come from all over Canada to build Fort McMurray, to turn it into what is the great economic engine of Canada. Their hard work has benefited all of us. We have to remember that when we think of how much they now need us.

As members have criss-crossed the country, we have met people who have come from places like St. John's and Cornerbrook in Newfoundland, or Sydney and Digby in Nova Scotia, or Miramichi and Moncton in New Brunswick, or even P.E.I. A lot of people from Atlantic Canada have made their homes and lives in Fort McMurray. It is the stories of all of those who have helped build this place, no matter where in Canada they have come from, that gives us hope and faith that the city of Fort McMurray will rise again.

On a practical note, I want to encourage the government to take action, on two fronts. One of them it has already done this morning, which I want to thank them for, and that is to match all of the donations to the Red Cross. This is a fantastic way for the country to come together to show that the national government supports the people of Fort McMurray. I thank the government for moving forward with this.

Second, given that there is a continuation of a large infrastructure investment throughout this country, I ask the Prime Minister and the government to keep Fort McMurray a top priority as it moves forward in making announcements and decisions for infrastructure investment. It will take many years to rebuild that city. These people did not just lose their homes, they are losing community centres, and streets literally need to be rebuilt. We need to keep them top of mind when we think about infrastructure investment, every step of the way.

These are very practical actions, but they are things that the government, at the federal level, can do. I want the Prime Minister to be assured that I, as leader of the opposition, and the party on this side of the House, will support him every step of the way to take these practical steps.

Routine Proceedings

• (1010)

[*Translation*]

In practical terms, I encourage the government to take action on two fronts.

[*English*]

As I said, I thank the Prime Minister for already taking action on the first step.

[*Translation*]

As for the second, given that the Liberals have promised to continue the previous government's commitment to invest in infrastructure, I call on them to ensure that Fort McMurray remains a top priority.

[*English*]

In closing, I want to recognize all of my parliamentary colleagues in this House, as an Albertan. Their messages of support and comfort, their donations, and their concern have been heard loudly and clearly by Albertans. It has been wonderful.

I want to again thank the Prime Minister and the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness for making this issue a priority, but most of all, on behalf of all of us, I want to tell the families, the workers, the first responders, and all the public officials who are coping with this crisis that we are here for them.

We are here for them. I will be in Edmonton tonight, doing what I can do in my small way in my community. Fort McMurray is a place where Canadians have come from all across this country. It is a tough day for Albertans, but we will persevere.

• (1015)

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I too want to thank the Prime Minister for his statement here this morning, and I thank the Leader of the Opposition for those very moving words.

One of the important things that has been said is that there will be matching funds for donations to the Red Cross. It is a particularly easy site to get to and to navigate, and it is specific to the Fort McMurray tragedy that is still ongoing. It is particularly user-friendly.

For Canadians to know that, for every dollar they give, there is going to be a dollar put in by the government, I think should encourage everyone to give generously to the Red Cross.

There are times in this House when we have to put everything else aside and pull together to help our fellow Canadians, and this is one of those times. We are all heartbroken by the suffering we have seen in Fort McMurray, and our thoughts and our prayers go out to everyone affected by this tragedy.

Our thanks go out, of course, to the firefighters, pilots, volunteers, and emergency service workers, but I dare say that our admiration goes out to the ordinary folks we have seen affected by these tragic events. There is something incredibly reassuring to see how Canadians respond.

There are 80,000 people on the move, leaving that inferno, waiting on the side of the road for gasoline to eventually get to them, patiently. There are stories of neighbours helping neighbours, good folks helping good folks.

I do not know if there are many societies on earth where that type of calamity would be met with that type of stoic, strong, poised response. Everyone there deserves our congratulations.

[*Translation*]

There are probably few places on earth where, when faced with such a natural disaster, instead of panicking, people would stand shoulder to shoulder, ready to help their neighbour.

We saw the same thing in eastern Canada about 20 years ago during the ice storm. Perhaps it is a profoundly Canadian trait to be there for others and overcome obstacles. Perhaps it is part of our history. It is truly admirable. I applaud the people of Alberta for the fortitude they have shown the past few days.

As the Leader of the Opposition indicated, it is also important to bear in mind that certain things need to be done as we go forward. We need to immediately look at what is no longer there in terms of programs. Things like the joint emergency preparedness program, which no longer exists, and the disaster financial assistance arrangements come to mind. The government needs to have a closer look at these things in the future, to ensure that if something like this ever happens again, although we hope it does not, we can be there for those affected.

[*English*]

Premier Notley and her government are, of course, working tirelessly to ensure first responders and the affected communities have everything they need. I do urge the Prime Minister, as I did yesterday, to work with Alberta, and all the provinces, to bring back funding cut in 2012 for the joint emergency preparedness program. I think we can all agree that, tragically, this is the type of event that we are going to see increasing in our country.

My friend and colleague the member of Parliament for Edmonton Strathcona spoke to me last night about two other subjects that we have to keep in mind, one of which is the immediate availability of employment insurance. People who have already lost everything should not be made to wait, and they should not be the subject of aleatory discretion in the public administration. We have to open up, make sure we are generous, and make sure it gets done rapidly. We have to make sure people have access immediately to EI.

In remembering the importance of employment insurance and the importance of putting money into housing, we are just going to be doing what we have been seeing from everybody there, showing generosity of spirit and kindness. Those are the two words that my colleague from Edmonton Strathcona stressed last night.

Routine Proceedings

The Leader of the Opposition just reminded us that Brian Jean, who was one of our colleagues here in the House of Commons, lost his home. When I visited the flooded area of High River in 2013, I was struck again by how people can just rise above the normal things. The person who came out to greet me was Danielle Smith. Her own house was flooded, and she took it upon herself to make sure that I visited that area. We will not find any accounts of Danielle Smith doing that. It was done spontaneously, from the heart, and there was not a drop of partisanship in something like that. It was just, “This is what we have been through. Do everything you can to help”.

●(1020)

That is what we have to do—everything we can to help the people of Fort McMurray.

[*Translation*]

At the very moment we convened here this morning, some Bombardier Canadair jets left Quebec City to go and provide assistance in Alberta. That is a great example of what needs to be done. Everyone must be there for the people of Alberta.

[*English*]

We are all in this together. Everybody in Canada understands and feels for the people of Fort McMurray today. The House should rise as one and provide all the help and support they need.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like the consent of the House to speak this morning to what is happening in Fort McMurray.

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

Hon. members: Agreed.

The hon. member for Rivière-du-Nord.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleagues.

We are all dismayed at the devastating situation that the people of Fort McMurray, the Wood Buffalo region, and Alberta as a whole are going through right now. The images coming out of the region are surreal. Having to urgently flee in the face of desolation; leaving behind homes, furniture, personal belongings, everything; and potentially losing everything is a nightmare that pains me and every one of us very deeply.

The Bloc Québécois wholeheartedly supports those who are now caught between the hope of returning to everything left behind and the fear that everything will have to be rebuilt. As we all know, a home is so much more than a roof over one's head. Our thoughts are with all these displaced people and families. We wish them courage, safety, peace, and solace.

It is when tragedy strikes that we discover the friendship, solidarity, generosity, and tenacity, truly, the great compassion of the people all around us. We are confident that at the end of the day, this community will come out of this stronger, closer, and ready to face new challenges and put this terrible episode behind it.

The Bloc Québécois wants to acknowledge the hard work of the firefighters, police officers, armed forces personnel, and countless volunteers who are in Alberta fighting the wildfires and helping the victims. Your dedication and generosity are invaluable.

I will close by saying that I was told this morning that many Quebeckers have already responded generously to the Red Cross's calls for financial donations. I thank them and encourage them to keep giving in solidarity with those affected by this situation.

[*English*]

The Speaker: Would I be correct in thinking the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands would also have the unanimous consent of the House to speak?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I think we all share the same sentiment, which was expressed so beautifully by the leader of the official opposition, who lives closest to this tragedy of all of us who are leaders of parties in the House. We know people who live there. We have friends of long standing from all across Canada who make their living in Fort McMurray, but particularly friends from my original home of Cape Breton Island; so many friends who have made money, who have made a life, who have worked hard in Fort McMurray. To see it going up in smoke in the most dramatic and catastrophic fashion of any television images I can remember from anywhere on this planet, it breaks our hearts.

I want to thank the Prime Minister for this clear statement that Canada stands together, that we will donate, and that we will see our government match our donations. To every member of the House, I think we stand united and want the people of Fort McMurray to know that they are in our thoughts and prayers.

This disaster has not yet concluded. I know the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness is working hard. I know our government is working hard. We are one country, and we love Fort McMurray and every single resident. I do not want to stop without thanking their brave Mayor Melissa Blake, their Premier Rachel Notley, and our friend, my friend, Brian Jean, leader of the opposition party, who suffered grievously through this tragedy, but who we know will continue and will rebuild.

●(1025)

The Speaker: I thank all of those who have spoken, for their excellent comments. I certainly share them.

I wish to inform the House that because of the ministerial statements, government orders will be extended by 23 minutes.

*Routine Proceedings***COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, entitled “Bill C-6, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act and to make consequential amendments to another Act”. The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

* * *

RESPECTING FAMILIES OF MURDERED AND BRUTALIZED PERSONS ACT

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-266, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (increasing parole ineligibility).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to reintroduce the bill I introduced in the last session. It made it past second reading and was headed to committee when I was appointed parliamentary secretary. Therefore, it was dropped from the order of precedence and the bill died. It was subsequently picked up by our former colleague Colin Mayes, who then brought it forward.

The purpose of this bill is to increase parole ineligibility for the heinous criminals who kidnap, sexually assault, brutalize, and murder their victims. These are the Paul Bernardos, the Clifford Olsons, and the Robert Picktons of the world, the people who never get out of jail. Unfortunately, under the current Criminal Code provisions, they are eligible for parole at year 25, and they start making their applications at year 23. The families are revictimized when they have to go back and listen to these cases being told every two years after that point in time. Therefore, to respect those families and save them the heartache of reliving the loss of their loved one, who often was sexually assaulted, tortured, and killed, we want to give powers to the court to use its discretionary powers, either by jury or by judge, to increase that parole ineligibility to 40 years.

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

* * *

JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS OF CORRUPT FOREIGN OFFICIALS ACT

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-267, An Act to provide for the taking of restrictive measures in respect of foreign nationals responsible for gross violations of internationally recognized human rights and to make related amendments to the Special Economic Measures Act and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce this bill, whose short title is the justice for victims of corrupt foreign officials act. In the spirit of Iran Accountability Week, this bill would ensure that those individuals in Iran and other countries who are committing serious human rights crimes within their countries, or the corrupt individuals who are stealing the assets of people, both foreign nationals and their own citizens, can be held to account. This would provide the tools and mechanisms to the government to ensure it can put in place the proper sanctions with respect to the travel and

economic activity of those corrupt foreign officials without having to do it on a case-by-case basis.

More important, it also provides both the House of Commons and the Senate foreign affairs committees with the ability to look at who is on the different lists for sanctions around the world on an annual basis and report that back to the House.

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

* * *

• (1030)

PROTECTION OF FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE ACT

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-268, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present my private member's bill known as the protection of freedom of conscience act. With the introduction of Bill C-14, I have heard from many Canadians. I think all of us in this House have heard that Bill C-14 has a gaping hole: it does not protect the conscience rights of Canadians. The Carter decision required that conscience rights be protected for medical health care professionals. This is not included in Bill C-14. The government has said that it does not compel but it also does not protect conscience rights. Therefore, I am proud and thankful to represent all Canadians with respect to a pan-Canadian approach to protect the conscience rights of health care professionals with the passage of this bill, the protection of freedom of conscience act.

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

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP), seconded by the member for Joliette, moved for leave to introduce Bill C-269, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (sentencing) and to make consequential amendments to another Act.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to present my private member's bill. It is very lengthy and detailed, but let me summarize its purpose.

Routine Proceedings

Its purpose is to remove the use of mandatory minimum sentences for most criminal offences. They remain in place for murder and high treason, but we do now have, and we had at the time that many mandatory minimum provisions were brought into this place, adequate and in fact overwhelming evidence that mandatory minimum sentences do not reduce the crime rate. They result in overcrowding of our prisons, additional costs to the provinces, for which the federal government is not compensating, and in fact increase the likelihood that people who would otherwise be leading useful lives are placed in prison for longer than they normally would be. It removes judicial discretion, which may also lead to plea bargains and which takes decisions out of the hands of judges.

In the process of this private member's bill we can debate this issue, but it is also my hope that the government and the Minister of Justice will see fit to bring these provisions in more expeditiously than a private member's bill can.

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

* * *

[*Translation*]

PETITIONS

SHARK FINNING

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

The first concerns sharks in Canada.

[*English*]

This petition is to ban the trade in shark fins, possession and trade. We already ban the finning of sharks in Canada but not the trade in fins that come to us. They are of course a primary cause of the pending extinction of many shark species.

• (1035)

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ALFALFA

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to present hundreds of names on petitions, from my riding as well as from the Toronto area, calling on this House to ban the registration of genetically modified alfalfa.

This is something opposed by farmers as well as by numerous people concerned about the expansion of genetically modified foods.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Lastly and quickly, Mr. Speaker, I present a petition that is a timely reminder to the Government of Canada to respond quickly to the climate crisis, accept the signs of climate change, and table a comprehensive climate change plan.

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand in the House today to present a petition signed by 138 of my constituents to ensure Canadians have a fair electoral system.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last Parliament it was discovered that endangered fin whale meat had been shipped across Canada and left through the Port of Vancouver, destined for Japan from Iceland.

Since 1972, Canada has banned commercial whaling in Canadian waters. Canada is signatory to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, which has listed the fin whale and other endangered whales under the category requiring the highest level of protection against commercial trade.

Canada must be an international leader in protecting endangered species from extinction, to preserve biodiversity throughout the earth's ecosystem. Many members of this House support this and the people of Vancouver Kingsway and many people in British Columbia and across this country have signed this petition to urge the Canadian government to do exactly that.

JUSTICE

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this petition is with respect to Molly matters.

Canadians want Parliament to know about the tragic story of Cassandra Kaake, who was 31 and pregnant when she was murdered in Windsor, Ontario, a little over a year ago. Tragically there will be no justice for Cassandra's preborn baby Molly, who was also killed in that violent attack. That is because in criminal law in Canada a preborn child is not recognized as a separate victim in attacks against its mother.

This petition calls on Parliament to pass legislation that would allow a separate charge to be laid in the death or injury of a preborn child when the child's mother is a victim of a crime.

I have heard lots of comments about justice being needed for Molly.

[*Translation*]

HOUSING

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have in my hands a petition calling on the government to continue its long-term commitment to social housing. I am talking about "social" housing and not necessarily just affordable housing.

I noticed that the second person to sign the petition is Ms. Godard, a resident of my riding who does a lot for her neighbours in her low-income housing community. She prepares breakfasts and invites people to Christmas parties. She cares about people and looks after her neighbours.

Routine Proceedings

This petition is in that same spirit. It calls on the government to also look after the most vulnerable, who need housing and are generally disadvantaged, and who could use some help, which could be provided through housing subsidies, among other things.

[English]

JUSTICE

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to submit today both on the same topic. Petitions continue to come in from across Canada on this issue, and these two are from my province of Saskatchewan.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to bring forward a law that would protect pregnant women and their preborn children. In Canada women have the freedom to choose to consent to end a pregnancy and also the privilege and the right to carry a child to term.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I also have a petition that I am honoured to present regarding Molly matters. This petition supports the private member's bill put forward by the member for Yorkton—Melville, which highlights that a woman's choice needs to be protected, including the choice to become pregnant.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to pass legislation that would recognize a preborn child as a separate victim when that child is injured or killed during the commission of an offence against its mother.

PRODUCT LABELLING

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition signed by constituents in the great riding of Burnaby South.

The petitioners call upon the government to require all consumer products sold in Canada to be labelled if they include flame retardant materials. They note that research has found women's exposure to flame retardant materials during pregnancy may be linked to a decrease in intelligence.

* * *

• (1040)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 80 will be answered today.

[Text]

Question No. 80—**Mr. Blaine Calkins:**

With regard to the Prime Minister's decision to hire staff to care for his children: (a) what is the total combined salary cost for all caregivers; (b) the cost of the benefit package for the caregivers; (c) the anticipated cost of all meals to be provided, per diem included; (d) the budgeted cost for all caregiver domestic travel; (e) the budgeted cost of all caregiver international travel; and (f) the cost of living accommodations for all caregivers employed by the Prime Minister?

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, the Privy Council Office, PCO, responds that the staff hired to care for the children at the Prime Minister's residence are paid in accordance with the Orders in Council dated November 26,

2015 through which they were hired. The staff members are paid salaries which are within the range of \$15.00 to \$20.00 per hour for work during the day and within the range of the hourly rate of \$11.00 to \$13.00 for night shifts. For the period from November 4, 2015 to March 9, 2016, the combined salary paid to the caregivers was \$30,850.99.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the caregivers are staff within the Prime Minister's residence; therefore, the terms and conditions of their employment is governed by the Treasury Board Secretariat policies for minister's offices. As per section 3.5 of the policy, the staff members are entitled to three weeks per year of paid vacation leave in addition to statutory holidays. As exempt ministerial staff, they are not entitled to overtime. The staff members are also eligible for coverage under the public service health care plan and the public service dental care plan. As well, they contribute to the public service superannuation plan.

With regard to parts (c) and (f) of the question, PCO has incurred no costs regarding meals, per diems, or living accommodations for caregivers employed by the Prime Minister.

With regard to parts (d) and (e) of the question, PCO does not have a budget for the domestic or international travel of the caregivers employed by the Prime Minister.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 81 and 85 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 81—**Mr. Blaine Calkins:**

With regard to the Prime Minister's trip to Washington for a State Dinner with President Obama, what is: (a) the total combined cost for all persons attending on the trip; (b) the cost of the accommodations; (c) the anticipated cost of all meals to be provided as well as per diem; and (d) the total number of persons attending as part of the delegation invited by the Prime Minister?

(Return tabled)

Government Orders

Question No. 85—Mr. Scott Reid:

With regard to the Natural Research Council of Canada's (NRC) National Fire Laboratory (NFL), located at Concession Road 8, Mississippi Mills, Ontario: (a) on what date were Perfluoroalkylated Substances (PFAS) first used at the NRC NFL facility; (b) since 1981, how many instances, broken down by year, and in what capacity have PFAS been used at the NRC NFL facility; (c) since 1981, how many assessments and tests, conducted or paid for by the government, have occurred which resulted in the discovery of PFAS in the groundwater at the NRC NFL facility, and on what date (i) did each assessment and test begin, (ii) were the results of these tests known by the NRC, (iii) were the results of these assessments and tests made public; (d) what events and policies led to the assessments and tests referred to in (c); (e) since 1981, how many assessments and tests, conducted or paid for by the government, have occurred which resulted in the discovery of PFAS in the groundwater of properties adjacent to or nearby the NRC NFL facility, and on what date (i) did each assessment and test begin, (ii) were the results of these tests known by the NRC, (iii) were the results of these assessments made public; (f) what events and policies led to the assessments and tests referred to in (e); (g) under what circumstances would the discovery of PFAS in the groundwater at the NRC NFL facility initiate assessments or tests for PFAS in the groundwater of adjacent or nearby properties, and what policy regulates this procedure; (h) under what circumstances would the discovery of PFAS in the groundwater at the NRC NFL facility not initiate assessments or tests for PFAS in the groundwater of adjacent or nearby properties, and what policy regulates this procedure; (i) in each instance of the discovery of PFAS in groundwater at the NRC NFL facility and subsequent testing for PFAS in groundwater of properties adjacent to and nearby the NRC NFL facility, (i) how much time elapsed between the date of receipt of test results from the NFL property and initiation of testing of adjacent and nearby properties, (ii) does any policy regulate the amount of time that may elapse between the testing of the NFL property and adjacent and nearby properties and, if so, what are the details of this policy, (iii) for each instance in which the time elapsed exceeded that specified in the policy in (i) (ii), what was the reason for the delay; (j) what policies, procedures, regulations, and other measures does the NRC have in place to ensure that chemicals from the NFL facility do not enter the groundwater in surrounding properties; (k) does the NRC have policies and procedures for compensation to owners of private property that is negatively affected by activities a NRC facilities; (l) what policies, procedures, and regulations determine what is a safe, and unsafe, amount of PFAS in drinking water; and (m) what policies, procedures, and regulations determine what is a safe, and unsafe, duration of time to consume PFAS in drinking water before negative health effects may develop?

(Return tabled)

[English]

M. Kevin Lamoureux: I would ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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[English]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2016, NO. 1

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.) moved that Bill C-15, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2016 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, esteemed members of the House, I would like to start by acknowledging the enormous human and economic challenge in Fort McMurray, and say that all of our government stands at attention, looking to see how we can be of most assistance to people in this time of need.

It is a pleasure for me to rise today in this chamber to speak about the investments that our government will make to keep Canada's

economy strong and growing for the long term. We bring a fundamentally new and optimistic approach to managing Canada's economy, one that is focused squarely on the middle class and on those working hard to join it.

[Translation]

The measures in the budget implementation bill will enable us to move forward with the main measures of our very first budget, which I tabled in the House on March 22.

I am particularly proud of this budget. It makes people the priority and sets out investments that will ensure the growth of the middle class and our economy.

This budget takes major steps towards the implementation of a long-term plan that will re-establish hope and ensure economic growth to the benefit of all Canadians.

[English]

I can say that our plan for the middle class is resonating with Canadians. Since the day after I tabled budget 2016, I have been travelling across Canada from the Maritimes to Quebec City, Waterloo, and west to Vancouver. Canadians are telling us that we are on the right path to long-term growth. I have also taken our message internationally to Chicago, New York, Paris, London, and Washington. I have met with economists, representatives of the financial sector, and investors. Everywhere I go, people are telling us the same thing, "We really like what you are doing up in Canada".

Members may have read that the *Financial Times* called Canada a glimmer of light. *The Wall Street Journal* called Canada the "poster child" for the International Monetary Fund's global growth strategy, and Christine Lagarde, head of the IMF, praised our approach. Our budget earned these endorsements because, I firmly believe, our government is focused on exactly the right things.

The legislation we are debating today would be a significant step in revitalizing the economy by providing better support for the members of the middle class and their families. Budget implementation act, 2016, no. 1, includes measures that would give Canadians the opportunity to build better lives for themselves. For some, that would mean being able to afford to send their kids to a quality day care or helping their teenagers with college tuition. For others, it would mean a secure and dignified retirement.

We have chosen to invest in Canadians because they are this country's most precious resource. They are among the most highly skilled and educated people in the world. As a result, we are poised to lead on many fronts, owing to our collective strength and the soundness of the policy direction and decisions outlined in this budget. The responsible way forward is to seize the opportunity in front of us, an opportunity to embrace the future and make targeted investments to grow our economy. We have the lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7. Interest rates are at record lows. This allows the Government of Canada to borrow on favourable terms and boost the economy over the long term.

Canadians can take heart that, much like the turnaround of the country's finances back in the 1990s, our plan of investing in long-term growth is pivotal and transformative. This is a budget that would offer a fresh boost to the core of this economy, Canada's middle class.

• (1045)

[Translation]

The bill we are debating today will help build a strong economy in Canada and will give Canadians in the middle class, and those who are working hard to join it, more money to save, invest, and help grow our economy.

We want to act quickly on as many budget measures as possible, to give immediate support to Canadians and lay the foundation for long-term growth. That is why this bill contains measures that will help seniors retire with dignity, support workers and businesses, and give veterans the benefits they deserve.

[English]

The overall health of our country and economy can be gauged by how our middle class is doing. Middle-class people need a government that acts to restore hope and brings opportunities. What they need is more than temporary half measures.

That is why the new Government of Canada introduced the middle-class tax cut as its first order of business last December. Because of this measure, nearly nine million people across the country have seen their tax burden shrink. They are getting a break on each and every paycheque so they can better help themselves and better plan their family's future. In order to help pay for this middle-class tax cut, a new income tax rate of 33% was introduced for the wealthiest Canadians with more than \$200,000 in taxable income each year.

In addition to the tax cut, we introduced the new Canada child benefit in budget 2016. This benefit is intended to help parents better support their most precious resource, their children. The Canada child benefit is a simpler, more generous tax-free benefit for Canadians. It is also better targeted to those who need it most than the existing child benefits. It is estimated that about 300,000 fewer children would be living in poverty in 2016-17 compared with 2014-15, once the Canada child benefit is in place.

With the passage of this bill, starting this July, families with children under 18 will be provided a maximum annual benefit of up to \$6,400 per child under the age of six and up to \$5,400 per child for those age six through seventeen. Nine out of ten families will receive more money than they do now. Whether the extra money is

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used for things such as signing up their children for summer camp, helping cover the family grocery bill, or buying warm coats for the winter, the CCB will help parents with the high costs of raising their children.

By supporting the budget implementation bill, members will be helping more Canadian parents breathe a little easier at month's end, and help them save for their children's future.

The educational opportunities for young Canadians lie at the core of a creative and entrepreneurial economy. Budget 2016 recognizes the costs educators often incur at their own expense for supplies that enrich our children's learning environment. The passage of the bill will implement a new teacher and early childhood educator school supply tax credit, in recognition of out-of-pocket expenses for supplies such as paper, glue, paint, games, puzzles, and supplementary books for their students.

This 15% refundable income tax credit will apply on up to \$1,000 of eligible supplies in the 2016 and subsequent tax years. It will provide a benefit worth about \$140 million over the 2015-16 to 2020-21 period.

Canada's compassion ought to be judged on how it treats its most vulnerable. A crucial part of this is to help our seniors to retire in comfort and dignity. One of the most important social contracts since the mid-20th century in Canada is the ability to enjoy a secure and dignified retirement. Canada's retirement income system has been successful at reducing the incidence of poverty among Canadian seniors. However, some seniors continue to be at a heightened risk of living in a low-income situation. In particular, single seniors are nearly three times more likely to live in low-income situations than seniors generally.

The budget will help seniors retire comfortably and with dignity by making significant new investments that support them in their retirement years.

• (1050)

[Translation]

The passage of this bill will cancel the provisions in the Old Age Security Act that increase the age of eligibility for old age security and guaranteed income supplement benefits from 65 to 67 and allowance benefits from 60 to 62 over the 2023 to 2029 period.

[English]

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

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This enhancement will more than double the current maximum guaranteed income supplement top-up benefit, and represents a 10% increase in the total maximum guaranteed income supplement benefits available to the lowest income single seniors. This measure represents an investment of over \$670 million per year, and will improve the financial security of about 900,000 single seniors across Canada. Over two-thirds of those who will benefit from this increase are women living alone.

[*Translation*]

Budget implementation act, 2016, no. 1, includes measures to facilitate access to venture capital for small and medium-sized businesses and support saving by the middle class. Its passage will restore the labour-sponsored venture capital corporations, or LSVCC, tax credit to 15% for share purchases of provincially registered LSVCCs for 2016 and subsequent tax years. This measure will provide federal tax relief of about \$815 million over the 2015-16 to 2020-21 period.

[*English*]

Budget 2016 takes immediate action to enhance the employment insurance benefits program so that out-of-work Canadians have the support they need while they need to look for their next job. After the passage of this legislation, new entrants and re-entrants to the labour market will face the same eligibility requirements as other claimants in the region where they live. An estimated 50,000 additional Canadians will become eligible for EI benefits as a result of this measure, which will take effect in July 2016.

The bill will also reduce the EI waiting period from two weeks to one week, starting January 1, 2017, in order to help ease the financial pressure on those individuals who find themselves between jobs.

Passage of the bill will also extend EI regular benefits by five weeks to all eligible claimants in affected regions of the country and provide up to an additional 20 weeks of EI regular benefits to long-tenured workers who have experienced the sharpest and most severe increases in unemployment in those regions.

We are making significant investments to ensure the financial security and independence of disabled veterans and their families as they make the transition to civilian life. Veterans and their families have earned the deepest respect and gratitude from all Canadians.

Budget 2016 invests to give back to those who have given so much in service to our country. It proposes to restore critical access to services for veterans and ensures the long-term financial security of those who are severely injured, physically or mentally, in the line of duty.

The bill will amend the Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Act to increase, both retroactively and going forward, the disability award and associated benefits, such as the death benefit, and to adjust the orientation and terminology of the permanent impairment allowance while also increasing the earnings loss benefit to 90%.

Some \$1.6 billion over five years will flow directly to veterans and their families in the form of higher direct payments.

Specifically, this bill will be increasing the value of the disability award for injuries and illnesses caused by service to a maximum of

\$360,000 and ensuring payment of higher benefits retroactively to all veterans who received a disability award since 2006; increasing the earnings loss benefit to replace 90% of an eligible veteran's gross pre-release military salary; and changing the name of the permanent impairment allowance to the career impact allowance, to reflect the intent of the program, consistent with changes announced in the budget to better compensate victims who had their career options limited by a service-related injury or illness.

These enhancements deliver on mandate commitments and respond to recommendations from key stakeholders, including the veterans ombudsman.

Investing in infrastructure creates good well-paying jobs that can help the middle class grow and prosper today. Budget 2016 lays the groundwork for future growth by making immediate investments of \$11.9 billion over five years, starting right away, in public transit, green infrastructure, and social infrastructure. Over 10 years, the government will invest more than \$120 billion in infrastructure to better meet the needs of Canadians and position Canada's economy for the future.

The passage of the bill will help ensure that government institutions are aligned to best support infrastructure and innovation by transferring responsibility for PPP Canada Inc. from the Minister of Finance to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities.

• (1055)

[*Translation*]

In conclusion, our government is committed to openness, transparency, and collaboration. Respect for Parliament is an essential part of this commitment.

[*English*]

That is why our government is restoring Parliament's oversight of the government's borrowing plans: to provide greater accountability and transparency for how the government finances its activities.

I would like to highlight the hard work of former senator Lowell Murray, one of the most distinguished parliamentarians of the last century, and his advocacy over many years on this important measure. I would also like to thank Senator Moore for carrying on that tireless advocacy in the years since his colleague's retirement. He worked with others, like retired senator Tommy Banks and Senator Day, making sure Canadians understood the importance of this issue.

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Budget 2016 represents a giant step forward in our plan to put those in the middle class first and to deliver the help they need now, while investing for the years and decades to come. It is about creating the necessary conditions to ensure that hope and hard work will not be wasted but will be rewarded, where our children and our children's children can flourish.

With these investments, inspired by a sense of fairness, we are ensuring that Canada's best days lie ahead. I therefore encourage all members in the House to support this bill.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in order to grow the economy and pay off the debt and deficits that the government is going to incur, the government needs to create jobs, and in creating jobs, it also needs people to fill the jobs. My question for the minister is very specific, and I want an answer to it.

Policy decisions need to take into consideration not only what the effect is in the short term, but also the impact on the workforce. I would like to know whether or not the minister or his department conducted a policy analysis on the Canada child benefit and what effect that will have on young women entering the workforce.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, we analyzed the measures in our budget exhaustively against a number of issues.

First and foremost, we looked at the measures in our budget and how they are going to impact on our economy in the immediate term. We calculated that the measures in our budget would increase our economy's growth by .5% this year and 1% next year. We looked at the number of jobs that are going to be increased in the economy this year and next year, 43,000 and 100,000, respectively.

Then we looked at measures like the Canada child benefit and what that was going to do for Canadian families. We looked at the number of families that were impacted positively by this measure. We concluded that nine out of ten families with children would be impacted positively, that, on average, they would get \$2,300 more per year.

Of course, many of these benefits go to those families that are experiencing the greatest challenges. A single woman with one child, as a good example, earning \$30,000 would be able to get \$6,400 under our new measures, significantly enhancing her opportunity to be in the workforce while raising her child.

We have looked at the measures. We have considered them, and we believe that they are in the best short-term, medium-term, and long-term benefit of Canadians, including women.

• (1100)

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Minister of Finance for his speech.

The fact that this is an omnibus bill has been raised a number of times in the House. The government denies it. However, O'Brien and Bosc's *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, our bible of parliamentary procedure, indicates that an omnibus bill "seeks to amend, repeal or enact several Acts...".

This 179-page bill amends 35 laws.

O'Brien and Bosc goes on to say that an omnibus bill "is made up of a number of related but separate initiatives".

The word "initiatives" is an improvement over the previous definition and clarifies the situation.

This bill rolls an entire government bill, Bill C-12, into one measure. This bill contains an entire section on an extremely complex and important measure on the recapitalization of banks. There are measures that affect 35 different laws and nine different departments.

The minister claims that this is not an omnibus bill and that the committee and the House are not being prevented from conducting an in-depth study. How then does he define an omnibus bill? How does his definition differ from the definition in O'Brien and Bosc?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his question.

We want to be open and transparent with Canadians. We know that it is very important for the bill to contain measures that correspond to the ones in our budget. That is why we can say that this bill contains only measures that relate to budget 2016. That is why this is not an omnibus bill. It is a bill on the measures set out in budget 2016. It is clear and transparent.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, could the Minister of Finance comment further on how Canada's economy will benefit by the substantial decrease in taxes?

We have made reference to the millions of Canadians, Canada's middle class, who will receive a direct tax cut, and that tax cut is coming. By having that extra money in their pockets, communities from every region of our country will benefit.

Could the Minister of Finance elaborate on how enriching the middle class by giving it a tax cut will be healthy for Canada's economy?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, we embarked on our initiative to improve the lives of Canadians with the very first measure that we put in place, which was a tax reduction for middle-class Canadians.

We looked at the second tax bracket of between \$45,000 and \$90,000 and recognized that by reducing taxes for people in that group by 7%, by moving it from 22% down to 20.5%, we could reduce the taxes for a large number of Canadians. Almost nine million Canadians would be impacted by that tax reduction.

We recognize that middle-class Canadians are finding themselves anxious and challenged to get ahead. By reducing taxes in that cohort, we create a better situation for those Canadians and their families, and we create a heightened sense of optimism and possibility for the future, which will inspire us and Canada's economy to do that much better in the future.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister of Finance for his remarks.

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[English]

I thank him for the quality of his French. Every time I rise in the House of Commons and ask him a question, he answers me in French. I deeply appreciate that, not because he is speaking French but because what he is saying is right.

[Translation]

I would like to clarify a few things, however. When the minister talks about a better debt-to-GDP ratio, he should acknowledge, as a seasoned executive, that it is the legacy of the previous government.

During the election campaign, the minister promised changes to the tax system that would not cost a penny but are costing us \$1.7 billion. He promised changes for children that would not cost a penny but are costing us \$1.4 billion. He promised that his deficit would not exceed \$10 billion, but it looks more like \$30 billion.

This is not question period. I am appealing to the minister's good judgment, good sense, and goodwill. Can we agree on at least one thing and acknowledge that he inherited a budget surplus from the former government?

• (1105)

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, when I speak in French, I try to get things right, and I will continue to do that today as always.

With respect to the debt-to-GDP ratio, the balance sheet shows that our country is in a strong position because of actions taken in the 1990s and the early 2000s. Governments led by Mr. Chrétien and Mr. Martin changed the game by dramatically reducing the debt-to-GDP ratio. That is what led us to where we are now. That is what made it possible for us to invest.

Fortunately, our investments will boost our growth rate in the future and help us achieve a balanced budget in about five years while we continue to invest.

That will put us in a better situation than the difficult one the Conservatives left behind. We were in deficit for 10 years, and we will remain in deficit for the 12 months of 2015-16. That is how things stand now, but we are going to fix that.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the Minister of Finance that we also welcome the economic stimulus program announced in the budget. I want to echo Ms. Lagarde, who pointed out that economic stimulus is very important when growth is uncertain. Now is the right time, and the announced infrastructure investments are appropriate.

However, I am concerned about the time it will take to transfer the money. The Minister of Finance said that we would proceed immediately. However, the budget says that transfers to the provinces, such as Quebec, will essentially be made through the building Canada model. In the past, it took two and a half years to come up with a framework agreement, and then it took one and a half years to come up with an agreement for each project.

With this economic stimulus model, we need money to come in quickly, but that will not happen.

Why did the minister not use the gas tax transfer model?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

We know that it is very important to make investments and to make them as quickly as possible.

We will start with an \$11.9-billion first phase of infrastructure investments. This phase will start very soon. However, we must still remain prudent. We must work with the provinces and municipalities to make sure that the projects are good projects and that they will help communities across the country.

We will try to invest as quickly as possible through the process that is working right now, but we will also be prudent with the money, which is really Canadians' money, to make sure that the investments will truly have a positive impact on our economy, now and in the future.

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, I came across a very telling quote in the *National Post*. It said, "election promises are like babies: fun to make, hell to deliver". It seems that the government is learning this lesson every day in the House.

It is kind of shocking the speed at which the Liberals have actually broken the election promises they made to the electorate during the campaign in August and September. It is almost uncanny to think about. They made a commitment to modest deficits, capping at \$10 billion. They said that they would reduce the ratio of debt-to-GDP. They also had that goal of returning to a balanced budget. However, after taking power, they changed their minds.

They have nearly tripled the deficits now. They have admitted that they cannot control debt-to-GDP ratios. Finally, they decided that balancing a budget was a position that should be mocked. Needless to say, we know they probably have no intention on fulfilling that commitment to a balanced budget.

However, throughout all these changes proposed in the budget implementation legislation, the Liberals are deceiving Canadians about what the real facts are.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister took a moment to commemorate his first six months in office, but I am not quite sure what he can celebrate. After all, much of what the Liberals have done since taking office has been nothing more than simply undo the progress that we made as the Conservative government.

It does bear some time to talk about what we accomplished.

When the Liberals took office, taxes on the Canadian public were at their lowest point in 50 years. By the end of our mandate, the average family of four was saving almost \$7,000 a year. The Conservatives took a \$55 billion deficit, which we entered into on agreement with parties in the House in order to come out of the great recession, and in five years we had a surplus. Even during the global recession, the Conservatives ensured that we moved the economy on by creating 1.3 million net new jobs. The majority of them were in the private sector and full-time.

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In fact, Canada was recognized globally as having the best job creation and economic growth records in the G7. What do we have today? Well, we have officials from the Department of Finance, the minister's own department, indicating a surplus has been left, yet the Minister of Finance stands every day in the House and denies the reality of a surplus.

The most recent "Fiscal Monitor", which we continuously try to table as information in the House and are rejected, confirmed that there was a surplus over the first 11 months of the year of \$7.5 billion. However, the government wishes to pretend that this does not exist.

The *National Post* again hit the nail on the head with it said that this "may be the first surplus a finance minister doesn't want to talk about". Earlier this week, I asked the finance minister a question on the "Fiscal Monitor" and in frustration perhaps, he said that the Conservatives would do well to get past "this whole balanced budget thing".

I find it very surprising, and it is almost a bit baffling, that the Minister of Finance for our great country can take our economy so lightly in saying those words in this place.

My perspective of the budget is this. It is bad for Canadians and, as such, we must vote against this budget implementation act. Contrary to what the government asserts, this budget would stifle growth in our country. The excess spending that it sets out is not targeted and it will end up hurting Canadians in the long run because it will show up as future tax increases. That will nothing but saddle my kids, my grandkids and my family's kids with debt and deficits.

Even the Canadian Federation of Independent Business was not left alone in this budget. It had been promised small business tax cuts, and the Liberals have now decided to mysteriously defer this.

• (1110)

The parliamentary budget officer has indicated that this is going to cost small business \$2.2 billion, which is a significant cost on the backs of hard-working men and women across this country who are trying to help us grow the economy.

This budget is fundamentally a betrayal of Canadians who trusted the Liberal Party to keep the promises they made in a campaign where a Liberal government breaks those promises. It is a betrayal of the middle class. They get it. They know that eventually, with the debt and deficits, they are going to have to pay for it through higher taxes themselves. It is a betrayal of families, because what family in Canada does not understand that they have to live within their means?

Right before the release of his budget, the finance minister's economic outlook showed that revenues were actually holding up better than expected. GDP growth in the last quarter of 2015 was actually higher than what was anticipated. However, here we are still on track with the Liberal government to borrow billions and billions of dollars that it does not need, to fight a recession that we are not in.

Conservatives believe fundamentally that we should always try our best to run the country like we would run our own households: not by living off credit cards, especially when the circumstances do not justify the spending, but living within our means. That is why,

when we were in power, we mandated that balanced budgets be the law, not the exception to the rule.

Page 51 of the Liberal budget says, "The Government remains committed to returning to balanced budget", but on the very next page, the budget says "The balanced budget legislation enacted under the previous Government is inconsistent with the Government's plan to return to balanced budgets".

The budget implementation act not only repeals the Federal Balanced Budget Act, it actually projects deficits extending longer than five years, with no plan to return to balance. This is a very curious quote. It is not just a projection to show another broken promise to Canadians, but it is an uncanny demonstration of the arrogance of the government, assuming that Canadians will re-elect them. That is not going to be an easy task after four years of the fiscal mess that the Liberals are about to plunge us into.

I would like to shine some light on other parts of this bill that set out to change the old age supplement eligibility from 67 to 65. As we know, this measure would have eliminated an estimated \$11 billion in annual spending up to the year 2030. The decision was not made lightly, but it was made in keeping with OECD recommendations.

An expert on the issue said this in 2012:

The cost of OAS represents about 2.3% of GDP but the chief actuary for the Canada pension plan forecasts it would have risen to about 3.1% by 2030 had the retirement age not been increased.

That expert was none other than the now Liberal finance minister, yet Liberals are now moving to reverse this measure, even though the evidence suggests that it was better to keep it in place.

It is interesting to see what else the finance minister has said on the issue of OAS. Prior to becoming the candidate and then the minister, he wrote a book called *The Real Retirement*. We have given it a good read. Again, some of the things he said were quite interesting. Here is a quote from the book:

If we were to retire three years later than we do now, any concerns about having adequate retirement income would practically vanish. It would also alleviate any shortages in the workforce due to the aging...population.

• (1115)

These are very interesting remarks. He also wrote, "there must be moderate cutbacks in social spending phased in over time". He also said that phasing in the eligibility age for OAS and GIS from 65 to 67 was a step in that direction. Evidently he disagrees with his own government's budgetary measures, by virtue of what he wrote not more than two years previous to that.

These are just a few examples of the Liberals' refusal to accept expert research, evidence and hard facts. Their platform is based on deception. On behalf of Canadians, I am deeply concerned.

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In the budget document that was produced, there is a chart on page 63. The chart is often pointed to as showing examples of why Canadian families would be better off with the Liberals' child benefit, as opposed to the system we had in place under the Conservative government. However, if we read very closely, there is a bit of fine print at the bottom. What the fine print says is that the examples do not take into account the former measures we had, like income splitting, fitness tax credits, education tax credits, and tuition tax credits. These are all of the benefits that would be available in exactly those circumstances, which would then show that maybe not everyone is doing as well as they would under their Canada child benefit. It admits, rather cryptically, that Liberal evidence was being pulled out of thin air.

I have spent a lot of time in my career making sure that women have the opportunity and ability to enter the workplace and achieve great things. I fundamentally believe that if we want to grow our economy, we want to make sure we have great productivity and innovation, we cannot leave an entire part of our population behind. In many places in the budget, while the Liberals talk a good talk in how they are helping women, I fear it is going to be the exact opposite. I asked the finance minister in questions whether there is any hard data on what effects these measures would have on choices that women make in going into the workplace, how long they stay, and what they do there.

One of the areas I find very curious and interesting is the decision the Liberals took in small business that it was a sham set-up to allow people to avoid paying a higher level of personal tax. Why is this a problem? One of the areas I discovered in my time as a minister in the past, and in the workforce, for a lot of time now, is that women want to make different choices on where they work based on flexibility.

It is Mother's Day on Sunday, a day that we all look forward to. Being a mother is possibly the greatest job a woman could ever have, should she choose to do so. However, we also want to be active in our community and in the workplace, because we have great contributions to make. Sometimes a woman may make a choice that opening a small business or becoming an entrepreneur would allow her to balance what she wants to do in life, in terms of raising a family and also contributing to our economy. It is offensive for the government to indicate in its opinion that a lot of these cases are tax loopholes because husbands set their wives up in sham corporations.

More than that, it is a chill. It is saying that we do not really need to have them in the workplace, that we do not believe when they attempt to become small business entrepreneurs that they are doing it with great purpose. The tax cuts that were meant to go to small business, which have been deferred to the future, are another step along that continuum of chill.

It is very difficult, first, to have the courage to start a small business if someone is balancing a couple of kids at home. Second, we never want to make things happen that put the economic prosperity of our family unit in danger. Taxes do matter. It matters how much women make in their business. It matters how much they make in their life.

The reality is that getting through that threshold to take a decision to start a small business can be a very difficult one, for a lot of

reasons. Now the Liberals will make it even harder, because that diminishing return will not be there for a lot of women. First they are told it is not a real business, and second they are told they will make it harder for them instead of making it easier.

• (1120)

It is not necessarily women-friendly. Why do I talk so much about small business and about women? It is because that is the area where women are entering the workplace in a disproportionate amount: 50% of small business start-ups are coming from women; two-thirds are from majority-owned women businesses. This is an area in which women can exceed and excel, and the door is being shut on it. They are putting a gloss over it, saying that it is not real work. I find that to be very disturbing, because after all, it is 2016.

One other aspect of the child benefit that I find of concern is one that not a lot of people will be talking about, but I will give it a go.

I grew up on Cape Breton Island. Cape Breton is a very unique and special place. I am grateful that the minister went to Sydney so he could see what it is like to be part of Cape Breton. I think it is important for people to see what it is like now, because things are not better on Cape Breton Island, despite enjoying a bit of a bump from the oil patch doing well. We sent a lot of our brothers and cousins and fathers, and a lot of our mothers as well, out there to work.

The reality is that in the eighties, when the steel plant closed, the fisheries closed, the coal mines closed, there was not a lot of work. As a result, and I am one of the examples, families split up and left.

The decision taken at the time by a series of governments was that the best way to deal with Cape Bretoners was to write them a cheque and make it easier for them to get government help. It was perhaps done with great intention, but it did not work, because the reality is that today the unemployment rate in Cape Breton is still atrocious.

Today, the saddest place in the world is Sydney airport. When kids come home from Ontario, Alberta, and B.C., or wherever they ended up, it is the grandmothers waiting for the babies to come off the plane.

I fear that when we set up a program that realistically is there to help, it can become a crutch. It will not be doing great things for women either, with entering into the workplace, taking tough decisions about being single mothers, or having the help from the government become more of a noose around their necks.

I ask the government to do very careful analysis going into the future on what effect the child care benefit will have upon decisions of young women to enter the workplace. Whether it is having an effect, detrimental or positive, I would like to see both. However, anecdotally from my past experience, being paid by the mailbox, as my friend from Saskatchewan has always said, is certainly not as good as being paid by a cheque. That is definitely the better way to deal with people's prosperity.

Government Orders

I appreciate the opportunity to stand in this place to talk about difficult things and the effects that policies may have on people's life choices. I appreciate very much that it is a touchy subject, and I hope that members of the House understand that it is not necessarily coming from a negative place. It is coming from an honest place of what I have experienced in my life and who I am as a result.

The budget implementation act has given a lot of great words and platitudes for Canadians to consider, but at the end of the day, the great concern I have is that Canadians will also be responsible for the billions of dollars in debt.

The Minister of Finance did say in his book, and it is very true, that debt prevents us from doing things such as sleeping well at night. Right now, knowing the kind of debt that we will be saddling our kids with, combined with the debt of the provinces across this great country, I fear that not a lot of us will be sleeping very well at night.

Conservatives will not forget the Canadians who voted for responsible fiscal management on election day. We will not forget those who voted Liberal either, because the plan that those people voted for, the plan that they were actually promised, is a far departure from what the Liberals have delivered in this legislation today. We will continue to hold the government accountable. We will continue to ask questions.

• (1125)

We are going to continue to fight for lower taxes. We are going to continue to fight for a balanced budget. We want to see a plan that will keep Canada growing and thriving.

At this point, I would like to move an amendment. I move:

That the motion be amended by replacing all the words after the word "that" with "this House declines to give second reading to Bill C-15, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2016 and other measures, since the bill does not support the principles of lower taxes, balanced budgets and job creation, exemplified, by among other things, repealing the Federal Balanced Budget Act.

• (1130)

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to my hon. colleague's comments, because she was describing my life. I am one of those women entrepreneurs who started a number of small businesses while raising my children.

I found it really interesting as I listened. As small businesses first start out, what the tax rate is, frankly, does not matter because owners are cashing their paycheques and putting that money back into the business, because they are growing the business and starting it.

What my small business needed and what the small business owners I talked to as president of the Chamber of Commerce needed were customers. I wonder if the member opposite would comment on whether she believes that growing the economy is the tool that would create customers for small businesses.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the fact that, when individuals run a business, there are two things they care about: revenue and expenses. I do not know whether one is more important

than the other. Both definitely have to be looked at in order to ensure that the bottom line does well.

On the expenses side, that is something the government could absolutely control; that is something that it could do right now to alleviate pressure on small businesses, to ensure that they do well, that they do have extra cash to invest in their business. What the government cannot guarantee, and what the government will not do through this legislation, is get more customers for small business, or increase revenue for small business. It is a plan, it is an idea, it is an ideology in some cases that putting money into the hands of the middle class will inevitably end up increasing the economy. Economists have said different things about what is going to happen to the GDP, but how Canadians feel about their security in our economy is going to determine whether or not they will spend that money.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have had the pleasure of sitting with my colleague on the finance committee.

Everybody knows that there is a wide ideological gap between the Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party, but there are some things on which we agree. I do remember, for example, the long crusade of my colleague Pat Martin, the former MP for Winnipeg Centre, for the abolition of the penny. We saw that measure in a previous Conservative budget.

Another element on which we can agree is the tax reduction for small and medium-sized businesses. The NDP introduced this commitment back in its 2008 platform, and in 2011 as well. We also did it in 2015. The Conservatives, once again, in a previous budget announced the gradual decrease of the tax on small businesses from 11% to 9%. The Liberals followed suit during the 2015 campaign. It is never too late to board the train. They said that they would also decrease that tax to 9%. What do we find in this budget? The Liberals have kept the first tax cut to 10.5% and cancelled the rest. This is clearly a broken promise by the Liberal government, and it will cost small and medium-sized businesses \$2.2 billion.

I would like to hear my hon. colleague's comments on this.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the great work that the NDP did in asking the parliamentary budget officer for a true quantification of how expensive this would be for small businesses in Canada. It came out to \$2.2 billion, a very large number. That is exactly the hit that small businesses are taking across this country as a result of the Liberals breaking their promise.

We do agree on a lot of things together, but we do also agree that we have to keep the government to account for the promises it made. The hon. member and I, through our work on committee, will make sure we do that every single time we meet as a committee.

Government Orders

• (1135)

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her thoughtful comments and constructive criticism of this budget. However, a day after the government abruptly shut down debate on Bill C-14 to comply with the Supreme Court order to provide Canadians with the constitutional right to a physician-assisted death, I wonder if she does not find a bit rich the finance minister's comments about avoiding half measures, in that there is not a mention of a penny of the \$3 billion promised during the campaign by the Liberals for palliative care, among other things, which would ease Canadians' constitutional right to live a full and complete life. I wonder if my colleague shares my concern about this disappointing delay of priorities.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the great impassioned speech he gave on the topic of assisted death in this House. He was one of the four MPs allowed to do so; three-quarters of us were prohibited from doing so as a result of the shutting down of the debate yesterday.

The hon. member brings up a very good point, which is this. There is no real policy rationale throughout this entire budget. It is half-baked at best. Promises made are promises are kept, depending on whom the Liberals wish to reward for their election last year. The saddest part of this budget is this. When we have a serious issue before this House, such as physician-assisted death, knowing that palliative care has to be that anchor on the other side, the rush on the one side and the complete ignorance to the issue on the other is breathtaking. Therefore, it is a half-baked piece of policy that we will be watching very carefully.

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague from across the aisle used words like “cryptically”, and referred to “fine print”, with respect to some parts of the budget. She even used the word “arrogance” to describe the budget from the government. She referenced our government's decision to invest in families, in infrastructure, and in growing the economy. That was hugely problematic to the member opposite. She also referenced the fact that she sees an issue with the Canada child benefit, which would put more money into the pockets of families.

What is difficult to understand is this. When did this shift take place in the mind of the member when she suddenly had a huge issue with deficits, whereas her own government increased our debt by \$150 billion? Also, when did she suddenly develop this huge issue with investing in families and providing support to families, whereas her government provided support to families?

What we have simply done is increase that investment and also made it clear for families to understand by making it tax free.

I would like to know what the date was when this shift occurred in the mind of the member opposite. I am sure it was October 19 at midnight. However, I would like clarification on that.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, I do not quite know how to answer the question and still remain in the chamber. The reality is this. There are wide gaps of policy rationale difference between what the Liberals have done with the child care benefit and what we did with the universal child care benefit. The biggest difference is the term “universal”. Everybody in Canada received it and could choose to do

with it what they would. As well, it was costed and within our budget to do so, and it made a lot of sense to give parents the ability to choose.

Since we are taking this walk down memory lane, I would like to ask the member this. When did his party figure out that it is okay to give money directly to parents? When did it stop being afraid they would spend it on popcorn and beer?

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a great respect for the hon. member for Milton. I congratulate her on many of the points she made. However, I have something to ask with respect to her speech, which was very confusing. She repeatedly made mention of the importance of assisting women in this country and, in particular, assisting women in entering the workforce. She spent a great deal of her speech on that aspect. She even talked about the particular challenges facing women who are starting small businesses.

The New Democratic Party has championed having a national child care plan that would be the single biggest contributing factor to assisting women to enter the workforce, to contribute to our society, and to start those small businesses. However, the member was part of a government that, for 10 years, studiously and steadfastly resisted bringing in a national child care system that would have exactly the effect and impact that she so passionately advocated for in her speech. I wonder if she can help me understand and bridge that confusion as to why she is opposed to a national child care plan but wants us to encourage women to enter the workforce in every aspect they can.

• (1140)

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, where I land on the topic of institutional or national day care is this. It is a fact that the type and timing of child care needed in today's workplace is very different from what it was 30 years ago when we were talking about having one national day care system. Entrepreneurs have different hours, and millennials want to work different ways. I certainly wanted to work different hours that did not fit into the normal day care situation. In fact, I could not choose regular day care for my kids and ended up going to somebody in a house, who took in about five or six kids. That is how I did my child care.

It is the flexibility that I needed in my career that would be more, I would say, beneficial to women in the country, as opposed to a national day care plan. That is why I supported the universal child care benefit, because it would have enabled the mothers and the fathers to decide which way they wanted to deal with child care, which I thought would be the best way, given how technology changes the way we work.

I commend the NDP for all the work it does in ensuring that women enter either politics or the workplace. I appreciate that the member always brings up his point on national day care. I do not agree with him on it, and that is okay. That is what we do in the House, we debate those issues, but I am grateful for the question.

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[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the first budget implementation bill was really the first test of the new Liberal government in terms of the economy. Of course, there have been some ways and means motions, but, since the budget was tabled on March 22, 2016, this is the first concrete expression of the approach that the Liberal government plans to take.

[English]

I am saddened to say that this first test has been a failure. It has been a failure on many counts, especially with regard to the promises that the Liberal Party made during the campaign.

[Translation]

It has been a failure because the Liberal government promised to do things differently. I was a member here during the previous Parliament. Time and time again, twice a year, the Conservatives introduced omnibus bills that included many different elements. The omnibus bills were often 300, 400, or 500 pages long, and the Standing Committee on Finance had to study them within impossibly tight timelines, which prevented the committee from doing its work. In other words, it could not study matters that were extremely important to the social and economic well-being of this country in a careful, rigorous, and analytical manner.

During the election campaign, the Liberals promised the following in their platform:

We will not resort to legislative tricks to avoid scrutiny.

[The previous prime minister] has used prorogation to avoid difficult political circumstances. We will not.

Let us wait and see what happens.

[The previous prime minister] has also used omnibus bills to prevent Parliament from properly reviewing and debating his proposals. We will change the House of Commons Standing Orders to bring an end to this undemocratic practice.

We are still waiting for that.

Let us now talk about the definition of the word “omnibus”. The Minister of Finance is denying that this is an omnibus bill. I will go back to the question I asked him. According to O'Brien and Bosc, our parliamentary procedure bible, an omnibus bill “seeks to amend, repeal or enact several Acts”. That is true of this 179-page bill: it seeks to amend 35 laws, it includes specific laws in their entirety, and it repeals other laws. It affects nine different departments. With that in mind, I think we can agree that Bill C-15 is an omnibus bill. It is characterized by the fact that it “is made up of a number of related but separate initiatives”.

The Minister of Finance himself said that these measures are related because they are in the budget. Instead of really doing what Canadians expect them to do, which is to take a different, transparent, and more responsible approach, the Liberals have decided to play with words by saying that all these measures are in the budget.

The budget is often 300, 400, or 500 pages long. If the Liberals now want to include all the measures in an omnibus bill by saying that they were in the budget, they are going to start changing the

budget to reflect the legislative changes they want to make. That makes no sense.

This makes no sense because the size of the bills and the limited time we have to carefully study them preclude transparency. In order for the committee to do a proper job, it needs time and bills, especially when they are technical, that will allow it to conduct an analysis and present a proper report to Parliament.

• (1145)

[English]

It is not the case because there are many highly technical aspects of this bill that should be studied separately.

For example, the bail-in plan in the bill aims to solidify the banking system and reassure Canadians that if there is a failure in the banking system, taxpayers will not be on the hook for it. Often we are between the choices of letting the banks fail and having large consequences for the economy, or bailing them out with taxpayer money. This would bring a third possibility, which is currently being studied through OECD countries.

Why include this 20 to 25-page highly technical bill of its own modification of the Bank Act to be studied with hundreds of other measures that touch things as diverse as the Canadian Wheat Board, veterans, modifications to the GST, and so on?

This creates uncertainty right now among the Canadian population. I am not opposed to the idea of the bill. It should be studied. It actually might be a good way to protect the economy and at the same time protect the taxpayers. It is possible we will go in that direction. However, I am sure the government members, and all of the members of the House, have already received emails and communications from concerned citizens that this might touch their deposits, that the money they have invested in banks could be affected.

It would have been wise for the government to take this part and study it separately to reassure Canadians that this would not be the case, that this would not be like Cyprus, for example. However, the Liberals decided to put everything in this 179-page bill. It does not make sense.

What was the rationale of including a full bill that had been tabled in the House, Bill C-12, which aims at the reinsertion and the compensation for veterans? Honestly, I think we are all in agreement that we need to study this bill carefully. It would have been studied carefully if it had stood as its own bill.

[Translation]

If that had stood on its own as a bill, it would have warranted a study in committee over three or four meetings of two or more hours each, to ensure that the concerns of veterans were heard. What is going to happen now? The Standing Committee on Finance is going to review the provisions of this bill with the very few witnesses we will have for the entire study. To share their concerns and opinions veterans will have to compete with bankers and tax experts who will come to talk about other measures in the bill, including the bail-in regime.

Government Orders

Why draft a bill that we would debate here? We can discuss the details, but I think the House generally agrees that we should at least find a way to provide compensation to the veterans.

Do not tell me that this is not an omnibus bill, when it includes all these measures that could have and should have been studied differently.

Some of the other measures are highly questionable. Once again, they are going to have to share the stage with a myriad of other completely unrelated measures. I am thinking about employment insurance in particular. The government once again misled the House by saying that the EI surplus would be kept separate from the consolidated revenue fund and would not be used to fund government activities. However, we can clearly see in the budget that the EI surplus will be used as part of the consolidated fund.

Although the government may pat itself on the back for introducing measures to partly reverse the Conservatives' 2012 EI reform, those measures do not really meet the needs of workers and do not give them the protection they expect from the EI program.

There are measures to eliminate the discrimination between the different classes of workers, which forced frequent claimants, who are often seasonal workers, to accept jobs at 70% of their salaries and more than 100 kilometres away from their homes. We applaud those measures. We agree with them. We fought for that. Our party was the first to oppose those restrictions. Since I come from a riding where seasonal work is still important and still a major part of the economy, I am certainly in favour of eliminating those two requirements.

However, there are other very important measures that the Conservatives got rid of. I am thinking about what was known as the pilot project, which sought to bridge the gap between the end of EI benefits and the beginning of the working season. That measure was available to all workers in areas of high unemployment. For reasons that I cannot understand, the Liberals decided to restore that program but only for exactly 12 regions of Canada.

• (1150)

I do not take issue with these 12 regions getting an extra five weeks of employment insurance benefits. However, this measure should be available to all workers, as it was before 2012.

When I look at the Liberal members from the Atlantic provinces, with the exception of Newfoundland and Labrador, which is really the only province to benefit from this extension, I sincerely wonder what they think of these measures. What do their workers in seasonal industries such as the fishery, tourism, and agriculture think of these measures that exclude them from the extended benefits that they were entitled to before 2012, when they had seasonal industry status? The Liberals are turning a deaf ear despite the fact that they currently have all 32 seats in Atlantic Canada. As my party's critic for the Atlantic provinces, rest assured that I will be asking them this question many times.

I still did not get an adequate answer to something else I asked the official opposition finance critic about. Why did the Liberals break their solemn promise to follow the NDP example and then that of the Conservatives who lowered taxes for SMEs? That promise has vanished.

Then they have the nerve to claim through the parliamentary secretary that they did lower the SMEs' tax rate because it has gone from 11% to 10.5%. It was not the Liberals who did that. Those measures were in place in the Conservatives' previous budget. Nonetheless, we would have liked the measure that we supported in the Conservatives' budget to be applied more quickly. It was a gradual reduction from 11% to 9%. The measure to lower the tax rate to 10.5% did not come from the Liberal government. It was a previously made decision.

I find it appalling that the Liberals want to take credit for a measure that has nothing to do with them, and that they are trying to divert attention away from the fact that they cancelled the gradual reduction that would have lowered the tax rate to 9%. This measure will cost \$2.2 billion, and was harshly criticized by the small business community. The government has provided no justification whatsoever for failing to adopt that measure. It was one of the most important and most popular measures of the 2015 Liberal election platform.

The Standing Committee on Finance will have to pay particular attention to certain other measures. For instance, some elements are problematic and are causing concern and uncertainty regarding the potential disclosure of personal information to the Canada Revenue Agency. I am not saying whether that is a good or a bad idea. I am saying that, any time we are dealing with such sensitive issues, especially in light of what we have learned over the past few months regarding tax evasion and other problems that seem to abound at CRA, clearly we need to be able to take our time studying these measures. Once again, it is not my intention to block or obstruct the process, but I want to reassure Canadians that these measures are necessary and they will protect their privacy.

The government does not seem to understand that that is what should happen. It would rather bundle everything together in one big package. Then it will ask the Standing Committee on Finance to proceed as quickly as possible so the bill can be passed and we can stop talking about it. That approach flies in the face of the Liberals' commitment to transparency and to restoring the watchdog role to Parliament and committees and giving them the time they need to study and scrutinize bills.

We do not use our names in the House. I am the member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques. All members of the House are identified by their title or their riding. In committee, we use people's names. Why is that? Because even though our presence is determined according to the number of seats we have, we are not there on behalf of the government, the official opposition, or the third, fourth, or fifth opposition party. We are there to study the government's bills and ensure that they pass the test of legislation that will ensure well-being and progress for Canada, its economy, and its people.

Government Orders

● (1155)

We cannot do this with bills that are 179 pages long. Why is the number of pages important? The answer to this question can be found in another quote, this time from a study by Louis Massicotte published in the *Canadian Parliamentary Review*.

It has been computed that between 1994 and 2005, budget implementation bills averaged 73.6 pages, while since 2006 they averaged 308.9—four times longer. But the increase is even more huge than it looks. While during the first period a single budget implementation bill was presented each year (there were none in 2002 and two in 2004), bills of that nature have since then been presented twice a year except in 2008, when there was a single one. The yearly average of budget implementation legislation in recent years is therefore closer to 550 pages—this is seven times longer!

We should note that the period between 1994 and 2005 corresponds to a time when the Liberals held power. That was the last time that the Liberals were in power. Their budget implementation bills were on average 79 pages long. They sought to legislate tax measures affecting income tax, the GST, and excise taxes.

Now, we have just been casually told that a 179-page bill that affects a myriad of other measures, which may have been mentioned in the budget but are still extremely complex and should be examined separately, is not an omnibus bill.

I am not convinced by the explanation given by the Minister of Finance. I do not think the House or Canadians are either. They are not being fooled. This government, which promised to be more transparent and more accountable, is failing its first test miserably.

I would like to end my speech by talking about a point that was raised by one of my Conservative colleagues, and that is the fact that this bill repeals an entire law, the Federal Balanced Budget Act. I will admit that we did not particularly like that law, but the way the Liberals have chosen to repeal it is highly reprehensible. They are retroactively repealing an act that is currently in force and that, as of June 1, they will technically be violating.

Apparently that is not a problem for them because they are just going to retroactively repeal the law. It will be like it never existed.

We live in a country governed by the rule of law. The government cannot and must not start changing laws retroactively to exempt themselves from them. However, that is exactly what this government has done twice in three weeks.

The government wants to repeal a law, but as we are debating whether to repeal it, the act may have already been violated and the case could end up before the courts. That is completely at odds with the principles of a country governed by the rule of law and the principles of the rule of law.

For all of those reasons and others that I do not have time to get into, even though I hope to have the opportunity to answer questions from my colleagues, I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the words “since the bill” and substituting the following:

- (a) is an omnibus bill that amends or repeals 35 acts and regulations, that retroactively repeals an act of Parliament, and that contains a bill that has already been introduced in the House;
- (b) breaks the promise to lower taxes for small businesses;
- (c) does not significantly improve access to employment insurance; and

(d) contains significant changes to benefits for veterans, changes to the guaranteed income supplement for seniors, and a new banking regulation without any review or proper parliamentary debate.

● (1200)

The Deputy Speaker: I have heard the subamendment from the hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques. Normally, a subamendment can only amend the amendment currently before the House. I will therefore consider the proposal of this subamendment and come back to the House with a decision.

The hon. member for Burnaby—Coquitlam on a point of order.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it was Burnaby—New Westminster and had been since 2004, but Elections Canada saw fit to change the riding and it is now the riding of New Westminster—Burnaby. It was Burnaby—New Westminster and now it is New Westminster—Burnaby, so go figure.

I want to follow up on the subamendment by asking you to consider the subamendment on the following basis. The actual amendment that the official opposition submitted a little while ago is “this House declines to give second reading to Bill C-15, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2016 and other measures...”.

Then there is a modification that has been offered by my colleague, the member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, which does not change in any way the principle of the amendment that was offered by the official opposition, but does omit and add some words. The principle that the House declines to give second reading to Bill C-15 is very clearly maintained in the subamendment.

Also, if we refer to our bible, which is O'Brien and Bosc, on page 534, when it comes to subamendments, it is very clear:

Each subamendment must be strictly relevant to...the corresponding amendment and must seek to modify the amendment, and not the original question;

That is what has happened here with the subamendment that was offered by my colleague. It goes on to say:

A subamendment cannot strike out all of the words in an amendment thereby nullifying it;

As I have already mentioned, the principle is maintained that the House declines to give second reading to Bill C-15. Finally, it states:

Debate on a subamendment is restricted to the words added to or omitted from the original motion by the amendment.

This is exactly what the subamendment from my colleague does.

It is important in this House that we look at the precedents from this Parliament. I would like to cite a precedent from last month, April 11. In this House, the official opposition offered an amendment, that “this House not approve the budgetary policy of the government...”.

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The subamendment that was accepted by you, Mr. Speaker, offered again from my very active and hard-working colleague, the member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, was to maintain the principle of the amendment and add and omit some words that did not interfere with the principle of the amendment, but certainly sought in the subamendment to omit and add some words.

Very clearly within our bible, O'Brien and Bosc, very clearly in terms of precedents, including in the debates just last month, and very clearly from the wording that our colleague from Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, the subamendment should be considered in order.

● (1205)

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby for his intervention. I apologize for messing up his riding name. I am not accustomed to doing that. I recognize that error.

I appreciate also the clarity of his intervention in respect to this matter, and commit to get back to the House soon in terms of the issue at hand. We will take this under advisement, very carefully, and appreciate the urgency in respect to the debate of the bill and the amendment that is currently before the House.

We will get back to the House as soon as possible.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Intergovernmental Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague's analysis of his interpretation of what an omnibus bill is. I have to say there is actually no formal definition in either the rules of the House or in terms of legal definitions of what constitutes an omnibus bill.

However, when one reads his and other assessments of what constitutes an omnibus bill, it requires that the omnibus bill not only group together legislation, which any budget implementation bill does, but it groups together legislation that is not related to the budget.

The very clauses that the member raised concern with as being complex and many—and I appreciate that even though it is not 643 pages, it is only 180-odd pages, a much smaller version of a complex bill than we have seen presented in previous budgets and certainly in the last one I was in the House for—every item the member identified is actually a budget item. In other words, they are of a family of changes to existing bills and legislation that are related not only to each other but are directly related to the budget.

I appreciate that the movement on restoring and growing benefits for veterans is a previous piece of legislation which has been sped up through this process so we can get help to veterans as quickly as possible. I appreciate his concerns on that, even though he seems to support it, that we have included it in the budget, I think is appropriate.

Additionally, the idea that EI reform and expanding EI reform is part of the budget, is part of the legislative agenda, and we are bringing it through at the same time.

A very famous New Democrat by the name of Jack Layton once said at Toronto City Council that when they argue with process, they have conceded defeat on the principle.

I am wondering if the member opposite would like to reflect on the fact that they actually support these measures in the budget, and that what they are complaining about is that they cannot support them individually often enough.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, who is also the member for Spadina—Fort York.

We could debate this issue at length. According to our bible, this bill is an omnibus bill that includes different measures that can be found in the budget. However, just about everything the government does can be found in the budget. One could then make the argument that the budgets introduced by the Conservatives were not omnibus budgets.

We are debating the letter of the bill, but we must also debate the spirit in which the current government and the party made promises to voters during the election campaign.

The Liberals claimed that they would change things and that they would increase transparency and enhance the mechanisms intended to facilitate the work of committees and Parliament. However, that is not what this bill does, because it contains some extremely complex measures that will not be subject to a careful, comprehensive study, even though they will have serious consequences and should be carefully studied.

The committee will not be able to do so. The bill will then come back to the House and we will vote. The Liberals are doing the exact same thing as the Conservatives did before them. They are preventing even independent members from presenting their amendments in the House.

The Liberals' actions may be more subtle than the Conservatives' actions in the past, but we are still talking about introducing omnibus bills and about preventing the committees from working effectively.

In that sense, the process is unfortunately problematic. However, a number of the elements I mentioned in my speech, such as the Liberals' broken promises, will not go unnoticed. These elements could have been included, such as expanding all of the employment insurance measures and extending benefits across the country, not just in 12 regions. Some important elements in my speech should also not be overlooked.

At the end of the day, the point I want to make is that this government is no different from the previous government, despite the promises it made during the election campaign.

● (1210)

[*English*]

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, for his trenchant critique of this omnibus budget bill.

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I am sure he also remembers that the current government was elected promising a new health accord, yet the budget does not provide any increase in federal transfers to provincial governments, either as a share of the economy, or relative to previous projections. In fact, by 2019-20, this budget will have reduced annual transfers to provinces by \$1 billion. To be specific, if we look at table 5.2.6 in budget 2015, it shows major transfers to other levels of government of \$76.3 billion in 2019-20; whereas, if we look at table A1.4 in budget 2016, it shows the same figure down to \$75.4 billion, again in 2019-20.

I wonder if the member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques would comment on why the Liberal government is cutting health transfers to Canadian provinces.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Regina—Lewvan.

This question is extremely important, and it goes to the very heart of Canadians' expectations following the last election.

On the NDP side, we clearly committed to restoring the 6% increase in health transfers to the provinces. What the Conservatives put forward limited the increase to the cost of living, with a certain minimum that was established at that time.

Clearly, this measure is completely inadequate for the provinces, which need those transfers to deal with the increased pressure being put on their health care budgets, largely due to our aging population.

It strikes me as problematic that the Liberal government is claiming that it is going to negotiate a new health accord. It is talking about negotiating one, not imposing one. However, the budget makes no mention of any increases in health transfers.

These negotiations will not be easy, because we are talking about not only the current situation facing the provinces, but also the situation they will face over the next 5, 10, or 15 years, since the demographic pressures are only going to increase.

What are the government's plans? We have no idea. Tabling the budget and introducing the budget implementation bill would have been a perfect opportunity for us to learn more about the government's intentions, but that remains very mysterious and nebulous at the moment.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech

[*English*]

While we in the official opposition and the NDP disagree on many points and many points relative to this budget, we do have convergence in a number of areas. I wonder if the NDP shares our concern about the absence of any mention of what was an immediate commitment in the Liberal campaign for \$3 billion for home care and palliative care at a time when the government is rushing to comply with the Supreme Court order for the constitutional right to physician-assisted death while putting off, we do not know for how long, the commitment to provide palliative care for Canadians' constitutional right to live a full, complete, and comfortable end of life.

● (1215)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for asking that very important question. It touches on a belief that our two parties have in common.

Campaign promises were clear about investments and provincial transfers amounting to \$3 billion for home care and palliative care, but there is no mention of it in the budget.

I think that is not all we should invest in immediately. For example, we can talk about restoring the tax credit for labour-sponsored funds, which help raise capital for venture capital firms. The Liberals promised to restore it to 15% right away. This year, when people filed their tax returns, it was 5%. The Liberals made a lot of promises and then shelved them. I suspect they made those promises just to get elected.

The palliative care and home care measure is extremely important because it would have helped so much with the debate we just had and will continue to have on medical assistance in dying. We missed a golden opportunity to connect a conversation about palliative care with the subject before us. The Supreme Court is expecting an answer from Parliament on that subject.

If we had debated home care and palliative care at the same time as medical assistance in dying, that would have been a very helpful perspective. It would have been very useful not only for parliamentarians in the House but also for all Canadians.

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in this special place with humility and gratitude.

I rise with humility because I represent the 90,000 people of Winnipeg South Centre who, in the most magical moment of all in our democracy, have transferred their trust to me to represent them in the Parliament of Canada. They represent, really, all that is great about Canada, in all of its diversity across all of its neighbourhoods and with all of its sense of place and pride of place, as all of us in the House feel. We bring that pride of place to something that is greater than our own identities or the places in which we live: to the great country that is ours.

I rise with gratitude because I am here due to the courage of my grandparents. They left Russia in 1906, escaping the pogroms of the czar, Jewish people who were not at home in the Pale of Settlement, who could not exercise freedom, who could not own property, who had no sense of opportunity for their children or grandchildren. They came to Canada, where there was a single relative to welcome them. They came with no English, no money, and really no prospects. What they brought with them was a sense of hope, opportunity and the freedom to be who they were. They were displaced Jews from a foreign country. What they found when they came to Canada was limitless opportunity, if not for themselves, for their children and, in my case, their grandchildren.

Government Orders

In my mother's family, only one of the four children could go to university. Three of them went to work so one could learn. His name was David Golden. David Golden was a prisoner of war, who was captured by the Japanese in Hong Kong on Christmas day of 1941. He came back to Canada weighing 120 pounds in August of 1945. He then picked up his Rhodes scholarship and became the youngest deputy minister in Canadian history at the age of 34. His minister was C.D. Howe.

My uncle was one of a handful of public servants who rebuilt the Canadian economy after the war. What he taught my family was that citizenship in a country such as Canada and the nobility of serving that country was the greatest calling of all. I owe to my grandparents and parents a sense of what it means to serve the people of Canada. I am grateful for that opportunity, and I am humbled by it.

I come from a very special province for many reasons. We all think that our home province is special, but I want to talk about a few things that are particularly appropriate to the budget we are debating. We are all immigrants, with the exception of indigenous peoples who have been here for thousands of years.

I remember when I was president of the Business Council of Manitoba, we held a conference called *Pioneers 2000*. As an icebreaker, we wanted all of the delegates to see if their ancestors would have been allowed into Canada under the circumstances of today. It was remarkable because former premier Duff Roblin, a Progressive Conservative premier of Manitoba, whom I considered to be a mentor, would not have been allowed into Canada. The ancestors of Gary Doer, who was the premier of Manitoba at the time, would not have been allowed into Canada.

Therefore, I am so proud of what the country has done in accepting 25,000 Syrian refugees, with the promise of more. We realize that when we open up our country to those who are fleeing persecution from other places, we provide them the possibility of a lifetime, and that will always be repaid to the generosity of the nation that accepts them. I feel, as a Canadian, so honoured and proud to be part of a nation that understands that, as well as a nation that understands the importance of immigration as a way of building our nation.

● (1220)

We have a sensibility and a sense of generosity, which is really unique in the world. I was struck by the comments of the member for Outremont this morning in reflecting on the tragedy in Fort McMurray. He was probably speaking for many of us when he expressed that where else but in Canada would there have been such an outpouring of generosity, understanding, and a sense of the collective that we had a responsibility to help each other.

As a Manitoban, I also grew up with the understanding that our indigenous populations had been marginalized for decades, for generations. Therefore, I was happy to see the budget announce significant investments so children raised in remote communities would have the same opportunities that my children have for a quality education; that they live in places where the water is clean and does not have to be boiled; that they live in communities where schooling is going to prepare them to live out their lives to fulfill their aspirations, the same way my children are experiencing now. We have a historic challenge to offer indigenous communities what

all of us aspire to, regardless of our ethnicity, our religion, our place of birth, and our community. I am particularly happy to be part of a government that has recognized this, not only with words but with action.

I am also very happy that within the first few weeks of us taking on this responsibility, we brought back the long form census. We asserted again the importance of evidence-based decisions and of scientific evidence as we looked at forming and informing public policy.

Then, who can forget November 4 when the cabinet was sworn in on one of those absolutely perfect days? The fall foliage was in all its resplendent colours, with not a cloud in the sky, and a gentle breeze. We walked from 24 Sussex to Rideau Hall. When the cabinet was sworn in, we saw a reflection of the nation itself. Many of us were particularly moved when our colleague, now the Minister of Justice, was sworn in. An indigenous woman, having just been appointed to be the minister of justice for Canada was in its own way a symbol of how far we had come. Remarkably, it was in 1960 when aboriginal people were given the right to vote in Canada. That is in the lifetime of many of us who sit in the House, certainly in my lifetime. Therefore, to see that the very diversity, the very texture of the country was reflected in the cabinet was very moving.

Very shortly after we were sworn into office, we were given our mandate letters by the Prime Minister. However, it was not just that I was given a copy of the mandate letter, so were you, Mr. Speaker, and 36 million Canadians. In fact, anyone around the world with access to a computer has access to what the Prime Minister has asked us to do as members of the cabinet, which is a remarkable departure from any other government.

As Minister of Natural Resources, the Prime Minister has asked me to do many important things. One of them is to work with the provinces to develop a Canadian energy strategy. I have a particular interest in the subject. In 2009, when the President of the United States came here to meet with the prime minister of the day to talk about a continental energy strategy for North America, a few of us scratched our heads and said "Well, that's a great idea, but what's the Canadian energy strategy?" There was not one.

● (1225)

We decided that we would put the frame around some principles, which ultimately led to the Council of the Federation publishing a Canadian energy strategy in July 2015, but the Government of Canada was not at the table. Therefore, a great national enterprise was not part of the Government of Canada's attention.

This is not the only example of how, over the last 10 years, the country has lost its sense of building national consensus over great national projects. In fact, the previous prime minister did not meet with the premiers for six years until the current Prime Minister called them to Ottawa to meet, first to prepare for the COP21 meeting in Paris, and then subsequently to begin sketching out a pan-Canadian framework on climate change, which most would agree is one of the great issues facing our time.

Government Orders

The whole nature of nation building by bringing leaders together to talk about those issues that were important to all Canadians had been lost. Well, not anymore. Now we are fully engaged in the business of building Canada from the top down and from the bottom up, as we have seen in the way in which the government has gone about doing its business.

Since taking on my responsibility, I have had the pleasure of representing Canada at the meeting of the International Energy Agency in Paris and of representing Canada at the G7 energy ministers' meeting in Japan just last week. My colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, has travelled to China, representing this government on energy and climate issues. Wherever we go there is a tremendous welcoming of Canada re-engaging in the forums of the world to talk about issues that are important not only to Canada, not only to Canadians, but to our partners internationally. This is a responsibility that we take seriously, and it is a responsibility that I discharge with the great humility of knowing that when I am at these places, I speak on behalf of the Government of Canada and on behalf of Canadians.

This is a government with a different approach, with a different tone, with a different way of going about its business, but also, as we see in this budget, with very precise commitments that give meaning to the promises of the campaign, that give substance to the mandate letters given to ministers by the Prime Minister and part of our commitment to the people of Canada.

I will talk about some of the elements of the budget that bear directly on the portfolio of Natural Resources, particularly on our commitment to facing the greatest challenge of our time, climate change. In many ways, Canadians are showing us the way, and I will give colleagues some examples of how Canadians are doing that.

At the north end of Howe Sound, a Canadian company is pulling carbon dioxide from the air and turning it into a fuel that can replace gasoline. In Okotoks, just south of Calgary, a community is heating its homes by collecting energy from the sun, storing it underground, and drawing on it as needed. In northern Ontario, Whitesand First Nation is looking to biomass to provide its electricity. In my own city of Winnipeg, entrepreneurs are providing streetside solar-powered stations so passersby can charge their cellphones and computers for free.

In these communities, and thousands like them across the country, Canadians are using their ingenuity to solve problems, to better their lives, and bring us to the future. They know our world must phase-out its reliance on the fossil fuels of the past and embrace the renewable energy of tomorrow. While that transition may be long, its trajectory is clear.

Our government welcomes this new direction. We recognize that as a nation rich in fossil fuels, we need to find greater ways of extracting those resources. We must also accelerate the use of renewable energy.

● (1230)

Some may see these two imperatives as incompatible. They may, for example, view any investments in oil and gas exploration or infrastructure as reinforcing the past rather than building the future. We disagree. We see opportunity in all forms of energy, and as the

Prime Minister has said, the choice between pipelines and wind turbines is a false one. We need both to reach our goal. Here is why.

While it is exciting to think about the low-carbon economy of the future, we are not there yet. The truth is that even in light of the Paris agreement, the demand for fossil fuels will actually increase for decades to come. In fact, according to the International Energy Agency, the world will need a third more energy by 2030, and three-quarters of that energy will come from fossil fuels, nor does it end there.

By 2040, a growing middle class in developing countries will consume 26 million more barrels of oil every day. At the same time, the use of natural gas could increase as a transitional fuel, cleaner than coal or oil and more accessible than many renewables. In short, oil and gas are not going away soon.

As Canadians we have a choice. We can say shut down the oil sands and natural gas production and let others meet this global demand, let others have the jobs and reap the benefits. That certainly is one option, or we can say let us use this period of increasing demand to our advantage. Let us build the infrastructure to get our resources to global markets and use the revenues to fund Canada's transition to cleaner forms of energy. In other words, let us leverage the fossil fuel resources we have today to deliver clean energy solutions for tomorrow.

How do we get there? Our government understands that to attract investment and build the infrastructure to move our energy to market, we need to get our environmental house in order and have Canadians behind us. We have to go to work.

The Prime Minister went to Paris with our provincial and territorial colleagues and let the world know that when it came to fighting climate change, Canada would no longer be a bystander. Then he met again with the provinces and territories to craft a new approach to climate change, including the possibility of putting a price on carbon. This budget goes further, providing \$50 million to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the oil and gas sector.

We are restoring credibility to the environmental assessment process, and as Grand Chief Perry Bellegarde said so well, "Before you build anything...build a respectful relationship". We agree. All of these measures are aimed at creating environmental assessments that will carry the confidence of both Canadians and investors. That is what this budget does.

The budget also invests more than \$1 billion in clean innovation and technologies, technologies that will transform traditional sectors and open up entire new industries, technologies that can strengthen our economy, preserve our planet, and expand the middle class. Worldwide investment in the clean tech sector grew by 16% in 2014 alone. In less than five years it will be a \$2-trillion industry. If Canada were to earn just its fair share of that market, we could create a \$50-billion industry by 2020.

Government Orders

This budget goes further, investing billions of dollars in clean energy and technology, energy efficiency, charging stations for electric vehicles and refuelling stations for alternative energy, and a low-carbon economy fund that will support provincial and territorial action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

All of the budget initiatives I have talked about today take us closer to our long-term vision for Canada.

I believe that Canadians are ready to embrace that vision. After all, our history is marked by successive generations, dreaming big and achieving greatly. We saw that spirit in a railway that spanned a continent, a broadcasting system that connected a country, and an arm that reached into space.

Today, that same spirit animates Canadians in every corner of our country. Like their forebears, they are tackling big challenges with big ideas, creating a future that will be brighter than we can imagine. This budget brings us closer to that future.

● (1235)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for his elegant speech. I want him to know that I share his pride in our country and look forward to a very bright future. I am paraphrasing, but he said the budget gives meaning to the commitment made by the government. One of the commitments it has made was to palliative care.

I was the parliamentary secretary for the minister of health for many years and I was here in the House during the economic downturn and I fought to make sure that there was no cut in transfers to the provinces. As a matter of fact, we continued to put more new money into health care.

I think Canadians want the priority of the government to be for people who are suffering, but frankly, there was absolutely no new money in the budget for health care, absolutely zero. The Liberals have been saying they have committed to \$3 billion for palliative care. Our concern this week is that they have used closure on a bill on assisted suicide, a bill that would support an early death for those Canadians who are suffering and have no other choice without the same commitment or priority to alleviate the suffering of those Canadians while they are still alive.

I know the minister sits on cabinet and I was hoping we could get a commitment for some type of support today. Where is the \$3 billion for palliative care? When will it be delivered? How does the government define its vision for palliative care?

Hon. Jim Carr: Mr. Speaker, when we tabled the bill, at the same time, ministers spoke about the need and importance of palliative care across the country. As a matter of fact, at one time I was deputy leader of the Liberal Party in Manitoba and my leader was Sharon Carstairs who then became a member of the Canadian Senate and has led the Canadian conversation about the importance of palliative care.

This is a subject that we take seriously. It has been part of the discussion from the Minister of Justice and from the Minister of Health. It is something that I believe deeply to be a very important part of our responsibility as a government and as Canadians. I believe members will see that the government's commitment to palliative care will be real and will endure over time.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member's role as energy minister is important, but I also noticed in the budget that there is some mention of appointments. In my riding of Burnaby South, we have the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline expansion being planned.

I know there has been great talk about changes to the National Energy Board process, which has not been changed, but I know in terms of appointments that the minister has said that he would appoint a ministerial representative to oversee this process. The appointment has not been made and I have also heard that this person's appointment would only pay \$1 per year.

I am wondering if the minister could confirm or deny that and also tell me where this representative is that we have not heard from yet.

● (1240)

Hon. Jim Carr: Mr. Speaker, there will be a panel of ministerial representatives appointed very soon. Their responsibility will be to consult with indigenous and non-indigenous communities up and down the line. The member I am sure is aware of the timetable of the Trans Mountain expansion.

The recommendation to government will come from the National Energy Board on May 20, and that will be followed by a seven-month period in which the government will assess the recommendations and ask the ministerial panel to do more meaningful consultation with indigenous communities up and down the line. There will be a decision taken by cabinet somewhere before the end of 2016.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if I may compliment my colleague from Winnipeg who in his humble fashion talked a great deal about Winnipeg, our home city and province. He has been, over the last number of months, an ambassador of goodwill, opening all sorts of thoughts and dialogues on Canada's natural resources.

I have had the opportunity to have some chats with him in that regard and I am wondering if the minister would talk about how important Canada's natural resources are to our country, whether it is the creation of jobs or the contribution to the GDP. Could the minister share with the House these things, which I know he shares well beyond Ottawa and our home province of Manitoba?

Hon. Jim Carr: Mr. Speaker, natural resources account for about 20% of the country's GDP. Part of the mandate letter from the Prime Minister stated that I was to understand that our prosperity is linked to the natural resource sector.

Government Orders

On the subject of consulting Canadians, I have had the pleasure of hosting round table conversations from Halifax to Vancouver. At these round tables were industry representatives, environmentalists, and indigenous leaders, who were sitting together, sometimes for the first time, listening to each other's points of view. It is remarkable. After two or three hours of such a conversation, they would suddenly start finishing each other's sentences, and that is because the objectives really are common ones. One of the challenges has been to ensure that people are in rooms listening to each other, not only in a small room with 10 or 20 people, but in the rooms of the nation.

That is why we have established a new way of assessing these projects that will require that a consensus be developed. In terms of a sense of public confidence in the regulatory system, we think the best way to do that is to facilitate these kinds of conversations among Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I commend the Minister of Natural Resources on his inspiring speech. I especially enjoyed the first part of his speech when he talked about his family history, starting with his grandparents' immigration story. I did not know that story. I was very moved by it.

I also appreciated the part where he said that the government supported renewable energy development. I would like him to give the House a concrete example of a measure in the budget through which the government will support the production of renewable energy in Quebec.

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Carr: Mr. Speaker, the government has made significant investments in renewable energy right across the country. As a matter of fact, the Prime Minister along with 19 other heads of state signed the mission innovation agreement in Paris on November 30 that committed all of those signatory nations to doubling their investments in research and clean growth over a five-year period. The 2016 budget is a significant down payment of that international commitment.

The member brought up the province of Quebec. We know how important natural resources are to that province, the mining industry and particularly the forestry sector. Just within the last two weeks I had a chance to meet with the Forest Products Association of Canada, which is leading the world in sustainable forestry practices.

The Government of Canada will give incentives to these industries, will encourage them to continue down the path of sustainability wherever they happen to do their business in Canada, whether that is in Quebec or in the other provinces.

• (1245)

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to participate in the debate on Bill C-15, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22 and other measures.

Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Calgary Shepard.

A budget is a demonstration of a government's priorities, a reflection of its vision, so to speak. Yet, despite borrowing almost \$30 billion this year, budget 2016 is missing a pronounced emphasis

on putting in place the conditions that support long-term growth in the wealth and prosperity of all Canadians.

In less than six months, the Liberals have taken Canada from a budget surplus to a massive deficit. The finance minister has been asked countless times whether running a deficit three times larger than what he campaigned on is a breach of his contract with Canadians, but the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance, and his parliamentary secretary have simply refused to answer the question.

If the finance minister is so proud of this budget and the massive deficit experiment he has taken Canada into, he should be willing to tell Canadians that his campaign promise was not worth the paper it was written on, and why.

Once again Finance Canada confirmed that, from April 2015 to February 2016, the Government of Canada ran a budgetary surplus of \$7.5 billion.

It is worth repeating over and over.

The Liberals inherited a balanced budget and an economy that was growing. Thus, the over-\$113 billion in additional debt that Canada will incur over the next four years is entirely the choice of the Prime Minister and his Minister of Finance. It is their duty to explain this decision to break their promises and the additional debt charges that Canadian taxpayers will have to pay, going forward. The “Canada is back” statement that the Prime Minister likes to pronounce just about everywhere he goes is certainly true. Canada is back—back to the 1970s and the early 1980s where the Liberal government of Pierre Elliott Trudeau ran deficits, in adjusted dollars, starting in 1975: \$27 billion; \$28 billion; \$41 billion; \$46 billion; \$43 billion; \$41 billion; \$29 billion; and, finally, \$72 billion in his final budget of 1983.

If deficit spending is indeed the path to long-term economic growth, as the government claims it is, former prime minister Chrétien would not have had to cut transfer payments to my home province of Saskatchewan by 15% in 1995 because 33¢ of every dollar collected had to go to public debt charges, and the government could not afford to do anything else.

While it is true that the budget was finally balanced again in 1997-1998, it took deep cuts in transfers to the provinces to do so. The budget did not balance itself; revenues did not grow at a faster rate than spending.

Bill C-15 also represents the return to an activist federal government that believes it has all the solutions; in other words, big government that knows best. The Liberal plan to create jobs is to increase direct payments to individuals and then pay for these transfers by borrowing money. The plan for the struggling sectors of western Canada's economy is to provide a temporary bump in employment insurance, rather than removing barriers to getting resources to market, which would create real new jobs; and the Liberals did not even get that right.

More to the point, western Canadians do not want a government handout. They want a federal government that supports the west because we have a dynamic and innovative economy that is temporarily struggling due to a drop in demand for goods.

Government Orders

The Liberal government could, at the very least, attempt to do no harm to the energy sector, but instead, it plans to impose additional regulatory red tape.

On another front, the government did not even bother to hide its dislike of small business, or any business for that matter, in this budget. In the finance minister's budget speech, the word "government" was mentioned nearly 40 times, while "business" received just six mentions.

The finance minister's actions have, unfortunately, matched his talk. He is reversing a four-year phased decline of the small business tax rate, which will cost small businesses nearly \$900 million per year.

The Minister of Small Business and Tourism has attempted to justify this tax hike by trying to make the implausible claim that small businesses will benefit from the government's new social programs because, presumably, folks will have more money to spend.

● (1250)

The Minister of Small Business and Tourism should know that taxes are an expense that is passed on to the consumer through higher prices. Higher prices make Canadian goods less competitive, should a company try to find new customers outside Canada. More and more, small businesses are competing continentally and internationally, and this tax hike ignores that reality. It makes good sense to give small businesses every chance to succeed at home and abroad by reducing their tax burden.

I know that many Liberal members are excited about their first budget. However, I would caution those members that governments cannot borrow money in perpetuity to pay for their spending sprees. As I noted earlier, over the next four years the Liberals intend to borrow over \$110 billion. Over that same period, the Government of Canada will have to pay approximately that same amount in interest on its debt. While this Liberal government likes to say that now is the time to spend money because interest rates are low and Canada's debt-to-GDP ratio is among the lowest in the world, this statement is fraught with problems for a number of reasons.

First, despite Canada having comparably low federal government debt levels compared to other countries, at present nearly 10¢ of every dollar spent by the federal government goes toward paying the interest on our debt, which was largely accrued during the 1970s and 1980s. That 10% of every dollar spent by the federal government going to pay interest on debt is money that does absolutely nothing for Canadians today.

Second, when combined with provincial debt, total government debt in Canada is at \$1.2 trillion, or over \$34,000 for every man, woman, and child living in Canada.

Third, Canada's population is aging. Every year, more Canadians are retiring than are joining the workforce. In a few short years, as the baby boom generation retires, Canada will face a shortage of taxpayers to support the pensions and benefits of retirees. Consequently, the fact that Canada is in a sound fiscal position is not a reason to step back and return to the 1990s, when *The Wall Street Journal* called Canada an honorary member of the third world. Rather, we should continue to lessen our debt burden, which will

reduce our monthly public debt charges, and then either pass those savings on to Canadians or put that money back into our economy in the form of long-term durable infrastructure without having to raise taxes. Unfortunately, we are seeing the exact opposite.

Bill C-15 would make substantive changes to PPP Canada by allowing this crown corporation to sell or otherwise dispose of all or substantially all of its assets. As the government has already moved PPP Canada from Finance Canada to Infrastructure Canada, I can only speculate that the Liberal Party is planning to get rid of this corporation and transfer its funding to Infrastructure Canada. PPP Canada has received \$2.4 billion in funding since 2007, and it has disbursed this in an efficient manner for water, public transit, local road, and green energy infrastructures, and so on. Funded projects include a new bus depot in Saskatoon, a biosolids energy centre in Victoria, a road expansion in Winnipeg, and a housing renewal project in Vancouver, just to name a few. These are exactly the types of infrastructure projects the Liberals say they support; yet it appears they are about to gut a program that is getting money out the door for good projects, simply because they are not able to dictate which ones will be funded. I hope one of the Liberal members across the way can provide more clarity on the intent of allowing PPP Canada to dispose of all its assets, during our opportunity to question them.

In conclusion, together with my colleagues on this side of the House, I will continue to demand a real plan to create jobs, and fight to keep more money in the pockets of hard-working Canadians

● (1255)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is fascinating to hear the hon. member's party refer to 9-, 10-, or 11-month results as if they are year-end results. I have never seen that in business. It is curious that those results are being used as measurements in this House.

The Conservative government also added \$154 billion to our national debt. Therefore, I would ask the hon. member this. Would she admit that it is really the year-end results that matter when looking at financials?

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, the IMF called on every government in the world to deliver stimulus, in the order of 2% of GDP in additional spending to replace private sector demand during the recession of 2009. When Canada emerged from the recession in better condition than any other G7 nation, the deficit was gradually reduced, until it became a surplus in 2015, which the Liberal government's own finance department has confirmed.

I would remind the members opposite that the Liberal Party was, at the time, asking for a much larger deficit and a slower return to balanced budgets. When Canada posted a deficit in 2009, there was a clear plan to return to balanced budgets, something that the current government is clearly failing to do.

Government Orders

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I come from the school of thought that, in Canadian elections, in order for voters to cast a responsible ballot, they should be able to count on the promises that the political parties are making to them at that time, so they can have confidence that what they vote for is what they are going to get.

We are talking about the budget today, and we know that the Liberals told Canadians in their campaign that, if they were elected, they would run budget deficits of \$10 billion in three successive years and balance the budget in the fourth year. They told Canadians that the important measure was the percentage of the deficit compared to the GDP, and yet a budget was tabled that includes \$120 billion of deficits over the next six years, no plan to balance the budget over four years, and forget about the metric of GDP to deficit.

We have a government that told Canadians it would put \$3 billion into home care, and there is not a penny for that in the budget. It told Canadians it would restore home mail delivery and that there would be a national framework for child care within the first 100 days in office. I could go on and on.

I want to ask my hon. colleague this. Does she think that this budget reflects the promises that were made to Canadians, and has there been any cost to Canada's democratic process as a result of the government breaking so many promises within its first seven months of government?

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, I have heard from many constituents since the government tabled this budget. During break weeks, I have had the opportunity to meet with them. I can say that there is a growing concern with the complete lack of leadership being provided by the Prime Minister and the government, combined with the speed with which they have abandoned many of their election promises and an unwillingness to admit the fact of inheriting a surplus.

It would appear that everyone except the Liberal government understands that sooner or later deficits have to be paid back.

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Guelph raised some interesting points. He is a nice fellow. I sit on the industry committee with him, and I like him enough to tell him that he is wrong.

I wonder if the member from Saskatchewan could give us a little more insight on the financial statements the member for Guelph was talking about. I am afraid that, at the end of this fiscal year, we are going to have a big addendum on the massive Liberal spending in the final quarter of this fiscal year. Maybe the Liberals would like to table a budget that shows what it would have been if the Conservatives had been still in government and what the financials look like with the Liberals now in government.

I wonder if she would talk about the Conservatives' balanced budget with a surplus and the Liberals' massive spending deficit.

● (1300)

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, very simply put, our financial statements are based on the fiscal year and not the calendar year, so the statements we are referring do refer to the end of the fiscal year.

An hon. member: With a surplus.

Mrs. Kelly Block: With a surplus, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be on extra good behaviour. I have a pair of eyes looking down on me today belonging to an eight-month-old.

Epiphany is on January 6. I only had my epiphany this week. I actually figured it out. I figured out that the balanced budget promises and the small deficits that the Liberals are proposing, and have proposed in the past, are a work of fiction.

The budget is fiscal fiction. I am sure that the Minister of Finance intends to submit the 2016 Liberal budget for the Giller Prize, a worthy nominee no doubt. I would like to talk about the Giller Prize. The 2016 Scotiabank Giller Prize is for literary works of fiction. The criteria says, "To be eligible, a book must be a first-edition full length novel", and I think it counts as that, "or short story collection", if you will, of broken promises, and "written by a Canadian citizen", of which there is not doubt.

It also says, "No self-published books shall be eligible." We've covered that. It also says "The decision of the judges as to whether a book is eligible shall be binding." I think we are on the right track here. The good news is that it can be submitted by September 30, 2016.

If that does not work, the Liberals could also apply for the Shaughnessy Cohen Prize for Political Writing. This being a political document, of course, it could be submitted. The criteria states, "Publishers should note that the prize is for literary excellence; they should only submit books they deem outstanding in this regard." By far, the fiction in the budget and the budget implementation act is outstanding fiction.

It continues: "Books that are strictly hagiography or political advocacy or which fail to illuminate political trends or issues are unlikely to be shortlisted." That might be sad news for this budget document. The other sad news is, "No more than 20% of the manuscript can have previously been published in book form."

That is good news too, because many of the promises in the Liberal red book are not in the budget. The Liberals have broken pretty much every single fiscal promise they had, which again adds to this new theme that this is fiscal fiction. It just does not add up.

I have another one, the Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction Prize. This is another prize that the Liberals could seek. It would also help to pay down some of the deficits. This may be something that government may want to do, apply to every single literary prize in Canada or the United States to try to pay down the deficit. Again, the sad news is, "No more than 20% of the manuscript can be previously published in book form." That is very sad to see.

When we talk about a work of fiction, this budget, the budget implementation act, is exactly that. It pretends to be for the middle class when it is actually against the middle class. It does very little for them. What it does do is to saddle future generations with hundreds of billions of dollars of debt.

Government Orders

In this budget, there is absolutely no plan to return to a balanced budget. There is no pretending to return to a balanced budget, hence the fiscal fiction. On one hand, the Liberal government talks about returning someday, potentially, maybe, if it so happens, to a balanced budget. In the actual budget implementation act, there is no such talk. In fact, in the budget document itself, there is no graphic that shows when it intends to return to surplus.

I would like to talk about page 53, “The Path Forward”, where it talks about repealing the Federal Balanced Budget Act. This is one of those fiscal anchors that is quite important to the budget. Instead of amending it in the budget implementation act, the Liberals are completely getting rid of it. Again, it just adds to the fiction. They talk a good game about trying to balance the budget but have no intention to do so in statute. They are actually getting rid of any statute that talks about balancing the budget.

As we talk about this wonderful statute, the Federal Balanced Budget Act, I want to read from the preamble of the act that the government is getting rid of. It says:

Whereas attaining and maintaining a sound fiscal position requires that the Government of Canada achieve annual balanced budgets and reduce debt, other than when a recession or extraordinary situation occurs;

Whereas maintaining balanced budgets and reducing debt helps to keep taxes low, instill confidence in consumers and investors, strengthen Canada’s ability to respond to longer-term economic and fiscal challenges and preserve the sustainability of public services;

And whereas reducing the debt burden will help to ensure fairness for future generations by avoiding future tax increases or reductions in public services;

These are all great things to want to have in the administration of our public finances, but obviously the Liberal government does not think so, which is why it is getting rid of it entirely instead of amending it. This just adds on to the fiscal fiction. I am sure that the judges for the Giller Prize will be most pleased to see that.

• (1305)

When the Minister of Finance was asked about balancing the budget, he brushed it off. He claimed that he did not want to focus on the issue. It was not important to him. In fact, he went on to say that we Conservatives were stuck in this whole balanced budget thing.

I actually understand his position. If one does not care for it, if it is just talk and fiscal fiction, then one would say to those who disagree that they are stuck on it. Obviously, he is not stuck, because he is about to get rid of it in the budget implementation act. He would get rid of the one fiscal anchor, the legislated anchor, that says we must have a balanced budget, for all the great reasons that are in the preamble. He obviously does not like the preamble, so he is getting rid of that too.

The International Monetary Fund did a study that reported 89 countries had implemented some form of statutory debt restraint through the end of 2014. It reported that, “Such laws are useful in showing skeptical bond investors that a nation is serious about kicking old habits of profligacy. They also allow voters to hold politicians to account.”

There is such a thing called an election and Canadians made a choice, and perhaps we disagree with them. However, on the fiscal side, Canadians were promised something. They were promised tiny little deficits and a return to a balanced budget, which is an

expectation by Canadians. It is part of the values we share, that we manage our public finances in the way we manage our household finances. One cannot keep spending money on a credit card. Eventually, one has to return to a balance and create a surplus to pay down the debt. That is how it works. In this budget, though, there is no such plan. There is no talk of it, even. There is no such goal. There is no such pretension anymore. Hence, this fiscal fiction is worthy of the Giller Prize.

When we talk about small business, the tax rate was supposed to go down to 9%, but now it will stay at 10.5%. Again, this is another broken promise from the Liberal government. According to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, that decision will cost small firms \$900 million per year, as of 2019.

The parliamentary budget office calculated that it could cost up to \$2.2 billion. I asked a question to the Minister of Small Business on this matter, partially, but also on the matter of small professional corporations and how they are treated as a business entity. Basically, I did not get an answer. There is nothing in the budget implementation act that speaks to it. It is a completely avoided subject. The minister, in fact, avoided answering the question entirely. Therefore, what is there for small business in this budget? Nothing. Again, it is fiscal fiction that the Liberals are going to be helping small businesses across Canada. They have no such plan. They have no such intention.

As I have done before, I love to use Yiddish proverbs, and I have one here: “There’s plenty of time to bemoan bad fortune once it arrives.” What is going to happen when the next recession hits? What will happen when there is a major disaster? How will the government pay for it? It is already running tens of billions of dollars of deficit with no plan to return to surplus. What will the Liberals do? Will they simply double the deficits? Will they simply increase the national debt even further?

The Liberal plan runs well beyond 2019, beyond the mandate of a Parliament. They simply have no plan or promise to return to a balanced budget. It is a fiction worthy of the Giller Prize.

The parliamentary budget office has done a substantial amount of work to show that the Liberals inherited a surplus. I hear the talk from the other side that we cannot only look at the first 11 months out of a year. That is not how a business would look at things. However, what a business would look at are cost control measures. Ever since October 19, 2015, all cost control measures are basically gone. Therefore, what the Liberals are going to present to us in the last month of the fiscal year is a massive deficit that they will blame on the Conservatives. However, in truth, they are responsible for it. They have had the reins of power since then, and they have been the ones running this country and running the finances. They are responsible for the debt that has been accumulating. It is nobody else but them.

Government Orders

Indeed, the Liberals consistently refer to defending the interests of the middle class, and that is literary fiction. We see in the summary of the budget implementation document that they are eliminating the education tax credit, the text book tax credit, the children's arts tax credit, the family tax cut credit, and the child fitness tax credit. I mentioned at the beginning of my speech that I have a pair of little eyes looking down at me, my eight-month-old. However, there is something in here for teachers. Therefore, we are eliminating everything for middle class families, while introducing something for teachers. Again, this budget was never meant for the middle class; that is entirely fiction.

•(1310)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Intergovernmental Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as someone who represents a riding that I think has more bookstores than any other riding in the country, I cannot tell the House how refreshing it is to hear a Conservative actually talk about literature and books.

For ten long years, the cuts to the Canada Council, the cuts to the programs that supported authors and the publishing industry, the damage done by the copyright reforms to publishing and the authors in this country was astonishing, a shameful record on literature.

However, if the member opposite is actually interested in reading more books, I would like to suggest a few titles for him: *Beautiful Losers: Essays on the Failure of ...Conservatism*, *Dismantling Canada: ...New Conservative Agenda*, and my favourite one that I could really recommend, *The Conservatives Have No Clothes: Why Right-Wing Ideas Keep Failing*.

Would the member opposite like to reflect on the fact that the budgets that his party produced prior to the recession, during the recession, after the recession, and, even now, have landed us in more debt than any other government in modern Canadian history? Why do the Conservatives think they have any right to lecture anyone on fiscal management when they put \$160 billion of debt on the backs of their children?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question, but that continues the same point as I mentioned before. It is fiction. Small business entrepreneurs, the writers of books, do not need the government's support to basically finance their operations. Good books get recognized. Good books get purchased, no matter where they are. That is why there are e-books. That is how writers get the material, just like musicians. They are entrepreneurs. They know what to do to get the material out to people who want to listen to it, to read it, who want to take advantage of it.

To speak to one point that the member made about spending and how much debt was accumulated by various governments, the government he supports has zero plans to reduce the deficit. It does not even pretend to do it in the budget document. Again, going back to my point, it is a work of literary fiction.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. The Liberals are in denial, when it comes to the fact that they introduced a completely undemocratic bill, an omnibus bill. We will not have the chance to split the bill into a number of separate bills to study some of the areas

that are problematic, dense, or very complex and that should be studied by a committee.

The Liberals keep harping on about how they are the best defenders of the middle class, but on April 14, a UNICEF report indicated that Canada was one of the richest countries where child inequality has continued to grow over the past few years. Canada ranks 26 out of 35 countries in that regard. That is nothing to be proud of.

UNICEF proposes such solutions as new investments to stimulate family income and early childhood support programs. However, this budget makes no investments in crime prevention or drug prevention, and there are no investments in mental health or affordable housing. I could name a number of other gaps.

I talked with a number of youth forums, and they all told me that there is a shortage of prevention programs. That is not really the Conservatives' cup of tea. However, since the Liberals said that they would bring about change, I would like to know what my colleague thinks about that.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the NDP member for her question. She touched on a number of subjects and so it will be difficult to answer in 60 seconds.

Nevertheless, I would say that before deciding to run up such deficits over several years and put the future generation into debt, they should think hard about it. That will be the biggest problem that future generations face.

How will they pay for the programs and services they want when they have to pay for the services and programs we are using today?

•(1315)

[English]

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague from Trinity—Spadina.

I am very pleased to join the discussion today.

Before I talk about the budget, I want to offer my condolences, and my heart and prayers go out to all of those in Fort McMurray and community who are suffering. I pray for their safety and the safety of the entire community.

Six months ago, I made a promise to the people of Humber River—Black Creek. I promised that a Liberal government would put people first. It is with this promise in mind that I rise to speak to the budget implementation bill.

Government Orders

For the first time in a very long time, I am proud of a budget put forward by a federal government. I say this because in contrast to budgets put forward by previous governments, budget 2016 is both fiscally prudent and socially responsible. It acknowledges that Canada cannot be strong if our families and our households that form our core are not strong. In fact, budget 2016 is an innovative long-term plan that is specifically focused on strengthening the fiscal security and stability of our families living in places like 10 San Romanoway, 7 and 11 Arleta, and in similar working-class homes throughout Canada. The budget contains a range of measures that are intended to grow the economy while helping low-income families, supporting seniors, and expanding affordable housing for those who need it.

When I visit my friends and constituents at Elspeth Heyworth Centre, or at the North Islington seniors group, or at the Jamaican-Canadian Centre, they know that Canada's per capita GDP is important, but that is not what they focus on every day. They struggle to focus on that kind of national number because they are too busy worrying about their next trip to the grocery store, or their next rent payment.

When I spoke to previous budgets over the years, I stressed that national economic prosperity must be felt at the kitchen table, not just the boardroom table. Conservatives would laugh, but the residents along the Jane-Finch corridor in my riding did not laugh. They understood it exactly.

For too long, seniors, students, young families, and those looking for work felt abandoned by their government, but since October 19, my constituents feel more optimistic. This budget is part of that change. Today the people at 3001 Finch, the kids at St. Andre's, and the students at York University can all feel their individual needs are being addressed thoughtfully and compassionately. Canadians gave this government a mandate to help the middle class and those working hard to join it, and that is precisely what we are doing with budget 2016.

Budget 2016 pursues an agenda driven on innovation and investment, which is at the heart of our policies and part of the government's long-term vision for a more inclusive economy. This is in stark contrast to the previous budget of the Conservatives, who not only squandered the \$13-billion surplus that was left for them, but also failed to achieve any real sustained economic growth during the course of their 10-year mandate.

As the Minister of Finance stated in his budget speech in March, we are seizing the opportunity to invest in people and the economy, and to prepare Canada for a brighter future. This is the kind of positive outward thinking that will drive our economic focus going forward, and it will help to ensure that families living in my riding and others across Canada will have a real shot at the kind of prosperity the previous government so often promised but consistently failed to deliver.

Despite the political rhetoric, the truth is that the Conservatives overspent to the tune of \$160 billion, and they did so without any solid plan or any measurable results. While a certain armchair economist in this House thought that out-of-control spending was a good idea, even the most junior economist knows better.

We must not lose sight of our objective to create an economy that is more inclusive and that benefits everyone involved. The budget is setting us out in that direction. Canadians are asking for help and this government is listening. The days of picking the pockets of low-income seniors, young families, starving students, and the unemployed hopefully have come to an end.

• (1320)

Budget 2016 is about establishing a new fiscal foundation, one that includes everyone. For example, given the high poverty rates and low household incomes facing many residents of Humber River—Black Creek, tackling the fiscal crunch that many are facing on a daily basis is critically important to them. Notably, many low-income seniors living in places like 35 Shoreham Drive or 3680 Keele Street are facing a number of financial strains just to make ends meet. The rising cost of living has already erased any hope of saving for the future, so without meaningful support, any hope of a dignified or secure retirement is gone, and that is wrong.

The budget will dramatically improve the quality of life for seniors by increasing the guaranteed income supplement annually by \$947 starting this July. This represents an immediate 10% increase in GIS benefits for low-income seniors.

As well, we will reverse the decision imposed by the previous Conservative government by restoring the eligibility age for old age security from 67 back to 65. That means the hard-working people like those living in the Northwood Apartments will have access to the financial assistance they require to retire with dignity. This was an issue that I fought for while in opposition and I am very happy that our Prime Minister and our government have made the change back to 65, which is where it needs to be.

In addition, the Government of Canada intends on working with its provincial and territorial partners in order to enhance the Canada pension plan with the objective of improving retirement income security for all Canadians. I look forward to the future discussions that will follow on this issue.

No seniors should be forced to decide between paying their monthly bills or going hungry, and the budget goes a long way in helping them achieve a dignified retirement.

The budget will also provide \$200.7 million over two years to repair and expand affordable housing units for seniors and others, and \$573 million will be directed to tackling repair and energy efficiency issues for the social housing sector. Many of the people at the addresses and units I referred to earlier are struggling tremendously to cope with the cold air coming in and the lack of repairs to many of Toronto's community housing buildings as in many parts of Canada. Anyone who comes and sits in my constituency office for a single day will quickly see that these are areas with a tremendous need.

I am pleased to say that affordable housing is a priority under the \$2.4 billion allotted for social infrastructure spending. This will have a positive impact on seniors and others who need an affordable, safe, and respectable place to live.

There will also be \$3.4 billion over three years as part of the public transit infrastructure fund that will be of great economic benefit to many communities, particularly those people who are struggling to get to work on time via the Finch bus route in Toronto. This route has been an issue for many years, and I am glad to see it is a priority for our new government.

Just as the seniors of today are struggling, the seniors of tomorrow are feeling the pinch too. We need to address those issues as we run the risk of kicking that can down the road. Canadian families, particularly single parents, are facing mounting personal debt, high living costs, and an inability to pay for their children's education or save for retirement. Our government will make immediate investments to improve the fiscal capacity of families who are planning ahead, as well as those looking for work to support their loved ones.

A key feature of budget 2016 is the launch of the new Canada child benefit, a more simplified program in which families will receive a monthly tax repayment targeted for low-income and middle-income earners. Those who will benefit will see an average increase of almost \$2,300. That means nine out of ten families throughout Canada, and especially in ridings like mine, are going to see the benefits of being able to better support their families and their loved ones.

• (1325)

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague's speech and she forgot to mention that the first two years we were in office, the Conservative government paid down the national debt of \$37 billion. She also forgot to mention that while that happened, we lowered taxes, like the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%.

She also forgot to mention that at that time there was an incredible, some called it a world depression, in 2008, when all the G8 countries got together and decided that they would massively infuse cash into the system. Canada, being the only country at that time that did so, had an objective of paying down that debt and coming into a balanced budget position, which we did, leaving the Liberals with a modest increase in the budget, but also, in March, provided the same government with about \$7.5 billion in its coffers, which it quickly spent.

Having now heard those facts, could the member explain to the House why the government thought it would be necessary to go back into a deficit position, bringing about all the things that we have heard about today, which would cause so much havoc for our children and grandchildren in the future?

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Mr. Speaker, when the Conservatives came into power and replaced the Liberals, they had \$13 billion to play with, and they clearly used it over the many years to try to buy every single vote they could from every community throughout Canada. At the end of their time in office, they left us with \$160 billion more in debt.

Government Orders

I am really proud that our government is going to invest in people. We are going to invest in people by helping students get a good education. We are going to focus on innovation and job creation. We are going to be focusing on Canadians. That is where our investments are going to be.

It is really important to make sure we are growing the economy. We are not afraid to spend \$5 to invest in Canadians, because it is their money, and right now they want us to be investing in them, their families, and making sure that we are opening the doors to opportunity for all of them so they do not have to continue with the struggles they have been dealing with, especially for the last 10 years.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech.

We have been debating the budget since this morning. There are some good measures, such as the reinstatement of the credits for labour-sponsored funds and the elimination of the tax on feminine hygiene products, which is a big expense for women. The Liberals are also eliminating income splitting.

However, there is nothing in the budget about Canada Post and home mail delivery. With respect to employment insurance, which the seasonal workers in my riding of Jonquière need, 12 regions are supposedly more important than my riding. The workers in my riding are being penalized, because they will not be eligible for the five extra weeks of benefits that workers in other areas will receive.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about that.

[*English*]

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Mr. Speaker, as we move forward with our budget, we are looking at a variety of areas throughout the country that are struggling and we are deciding on the best way to help them. There are challenges facing Fort McMurray. It is an area that we are going to have to pay specific attention to and invest a lot more money than maybe what we had planned, because we need to help those people.

In reference to the Canada Post issue in particular, I believe the minister announced in the last day or two that a committee has been put together that will be doing a review between now and the end of the year. It will consult with Canadians, academics, and professionals on how to maximize the opportunities for Canada Post, because the issue of mail delivery is important to all of us and we would like some of those issues resolved as soon as possible.

• (1330)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Intergovernmental Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House to speak to this bill today and, in particular, to follow my colleague, the member for Humber River—Black Creek, who laid the groundwork for a new urban agenda in Ottawa, after all those years, before the lost 10 years of the last decade, where as a city councillor, support for cities disappeared.

Government Orders

The reason I chose to run federally, to leave city council and join Parliament, was for one reason, and one reason only. Beyond the need for a stronger urban agenda, we needed a new national housing program. This budget is the first time in 25 years, the first time in my political life, I have seen a federal government step back in with the strength, the commitment, and the diversity of programs for housing that our country so badly needs, as we watch thousands of people who night after night go homeless.

Compared with the last budget which had \$2.7 billion over 10 years, this year's budget provides for \$2.3 billion over two. This includes doubling the money flowing to provinces to a total of \$500 million to build, subsidize, and repair public housing. It includes \$200 million for senior housing. It includes, importantly, \$90 million for people escaping family violence. Taken together, this is the most substantive and the most important investment in affordable and public housing we have seen in a generation. It is this budget that delivers it, and it is the most important reason to support the budget.

Cities have also been spoken to. We have moved away from the one-third funding formulas that defined infrastructure programming over the last 20 years. We have moved to a fair system, a flexible system, a system that gets money into the hands of city councils fast.

The fifty-fifty split defines a new relationship that we have established between the federal government and our municipalities, large and small, rural, highly urbanized, in the south, the north, and coast to coast to coast. This is the most important dynamic in our new relationship. We now recognize that cities are where the majority of Canadians live. If we are to improve the lives of the majority of Canadians, we have to invest heavily in the equity, the stability, and the capacity of cities, not only to provide shelter and services to Canadians, but also to generate economic growth.

One of the other critical steps that has been taken in this budget, which has not been present in the last 25 years, is we now recognize that aging infrastructure, not just new infrastructure, needs support. State of good repair and the recapitalizing of urban infrastructure is a fundamental part of the new infrastructure program. Cities have been crying for this for decades. Finally, we have a party and a government in Ottawa that is prepared to listen.

I sat by as a city councillor and watched the province of Prince Edward Island, in particular, see more money spent on billboards about infrastructure than on the actual infrastructure that was advertised on those billboards.

The previous government was very good at putting up the billboards, very good at cutting ribbons for projects that did not exist, but when it came time to cut the cheque, it was missing in action. While it put up the billboards, spending actually went down. That is unacceptable.

Major cities in this country, Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg, Regina, Toronto, Mississauga, Ottawa, Montreal, Halifax, St. John's, received zero dollars in the new building Canada fund over the last two years, while citizens in those cities cried out for support. If members talk to the mayors in those very cities, they will find out that is exactly what happened.

The other thing I am proud of is the fact that infrastructure programming goes beyond just transit and housing. It reaches into

arts and the social infrastructure which builds stronger neighbourhoods—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order, please. I am just going to interrupt the hon. member. It is getting noisy. I want to ensure that everybody understands there will be time to ask questions of the hon. member, although now is not the time.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Intergovernmental Affairs).

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the social and cultural infrastructures this government is investing in, including the universities. It is not good enough just to build housing and transit; we need to build complete neighbourhoods. This infrastructure program does just that.

The spending categories for infrastructure, the social, green and transit, also include something else that is critically important. Much of our housing infrastructure stock is aging. Many of the federal programs built in the 1950s and 1960s were built at a time when energy efficiency and high-quality construction was not a priority in the federal government programs of the day. This budget puts \$500 million into the revitalization and the retrofitting of those housing units, which not only become more expensive to operate, but also generate a significant amount of greenhouse gas. We can both repair, restore, and also address some of the climate change needs with the infrastructure spending targeted at low-income Canadians living in aging housing stock. This is the smartest infrastructure program related to housing that is in this budget.

We have also committed and lived up to our promise to sustain the subsidies that keep people in affordable housing. Whether it is seniors in Alberta, or single mothers in Toronto or aboriginal and first nations people living in the Maritimes, those subsidies under section 95 will be restored for two years, while we sit down with the provinces and our housing providers and renegotiate a new housing dynamic for the country that goes well beyond the life of any one government into the future so we have a program of which we can all be proud.

The other thing that is part of this budget and this government's action, which underpins all of that is the need for better data on how, where and why Canadians are choosing to live where they live, is the long form census.

I was part of the city council that had to take the previous government to court to get it to admit that it had deliberately under-measured and under-counted people living in high-rise buildings. It said that it could not get into the building. The reason it was unable to get in was because it was not committed to the census and what the census would give cities and communities as they did long-range planning.

Government Orders

Restoring the long form census, doing a proper census, and getting real data and evidence into the hands of cities allows us to spend the money that is now on the table more effectively to produce better results for Canadians, not just economically but socially. That is part of the approach this government has. It is not just about putting resources on the table. It is getting smarter about how we spend them so we spend them into the economy quickly and fairly, meaning equitably, and at the same time in a flexible manner that realizes and understands that smaller provinces no longer have the capacity necessary to participate in the infrastructure programs constructed as they were three decades ago.

The smaller municipalities do not have the opportunity to get public-private partnerships put together because they are asset-based and the size of the project is not big enough to attract the interests of the private sector partners. We have changed those dynamics because we have listened to cities. Most important, we have listened to people living in those cities.

The transformation that this promises for a majority of Canadians is profound. However, at the same time we have not walked away from other parts of the country that do not define themselves as a “large urban centre”. The broadband investment is about economic development and access to the Internet and the larger world for smaller and more remote communities. It is a critical piece of infrastructure investment that once again will not only build and strengthen remote and smaller communities, but will deliver capacity economically to those places so they too can thrive, grow and become strong metropolises.

Additionally, and this is the most important part of the budget, we have stepped up on aboriginal affairs with \$8.4 billion in funding. We have declared that the clean water crisis will come to an end, that equity in education and health care outcomes and investments will be there, that education and distance learning will be invested in and made stronger. We have declared and supported the call for an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women.

I remember sitting here during budget day, looking up into the gallery and seeing the pride, the confidence, and the trust on the face of the chief of the Assembly of First Nations. I remember the particular applause that budget received. We should all be very proud of this. It is one more reason to support this budget.

This budget turns a page on 10 lost years. It projects equity, opportunity, and economic growth into the future for 10 years and beyond, and provides an ability to build a country we can truly be proud of and is truly one that takes care of Canadians no matter where they live, how they live, or why they choose to live the way they do.

It is a critically important time in the history of our country on the aboriginal component alone. However, for cities and municipalities, there has never been a budget that has spoken more directly, more respectfully, and more profoundly to their needs. As someone who comes out of that sector politically, when I talk to mayors across the country, they know that on October 19 the right decision was made. However, more important, they know this budget is the right thing to support as we move forward.

● (1335)

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the member's speech and some of the misleading statements made. I am from a community that has the largest first nation in Canada. We built it a \$42 million water treatment plant during my term in office over the last four years. In my community we built well over \$300,000 worth of new infrastructure such as the Wayne Gretzky Sports Complex, which is a \$63 million project. We rebuilt Applegate Co-op housing at Toll Gate Road. We rebuilt social housing right across the community and on Six Nations. We built the Six Nations a new police station because of crumbling infrastructure.

The member is telling Canadians today that we did not make any of those investments. How does he square that to the House of Commons?

● (1340)

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, if the member thinks that drinking water and the crisis around clean water has been solved, he is out of his mind. I invite him to go to the northern communities that have had 5, 10, and 20-year boil water alerts that were not addressed in the last 10 years. If he drinks a glass of water, we will see how well he does in answering questions of his colleagues in the House.

On the issue of critical infrastructure, the mayors in the major cities of Vancouver, Calgary, Regina, Winnipeg, Mississauga, Ottawa, Toronto, Montreal, Quebec City have said that not a penny of federal infrastructure has come from the building Canada fund for two years.

If we ask folks in Calgary and Edmonton what that infrastructure money would be doing right now, it would be putting unemployed workers back on the job. Instead we had a previous government that walked away from that province. That is one of the reasons their unemployment challenge is so hard to solve right now.

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Spadina—Fort York spoke about the urban agenda and part of that is transit funding. The budget allocates transit funding according to ridership, which is certainly a good formula for jurisdictions that already have well developed transit systems. When I think of my home city of Regina, last week I had the opportunity to ride on a couple of buses and they are very nice, but we could use more buses and more frequent service.

Regina will not get very much transit funding because ridership is currently low. If we look at the province of Saskatchewan as a whole, we get less than 1% of the transit money in the budget even though we comprise more than 3% of the country's population.

Could the member speak to the fact that the budget really focuses transit funding on jurisdictions that already have a lot of public transit and does not do much to expand it in cities like Regina, which he was fond of mentioning in his speech and question responses?

Government Orders

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, one of the things transit planners and transit operators across the country know is that to make transit investments more effective and to deliver the greenhouse gas transformation that is required through investments in transit as well as to get the most riders moving quickest and to deal with gridlock right across the country we build from strength. In other words, we build transit systems out from where they are highly used and highly congested into areas that have less. We move from strength into areas that need the development.

This is phase one of the transit program. As we start to build that stronger transit across the country, communities that are not dealt with specifically, as the member has identified, in the budget this year, phase two is on its way. The second, third, and fourth years of this mandate will show that the system we have chosen to invest in will provide the strength and the capacity as we grow from strength into new areas as part of our strategy.

Transit operators and transit properties across the country have been asking for this. We have listened, we have responded, and this will deliver the results we all hope to see in our country.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to participate in the debate on Bill C-15. It is an important debate, because the bill implements a budget that does long-term harm to our country. It sets Canada down a path of reckless spending, over \$100 billion in debt, and higher taxes, and leaves a massive burden for future generations.

First, let me address some of the specific items in the bill that are not particularly well thought through. Despite the Liberals' clear promise to small businesses on the campaign trail, this budget hikes taxes on small business owners. That means that hard-working small businesses, the driving force of Canada's economy, are being forced to cough up a staggering \$2.2 billion to help pay for the budget spending spree of the Minister of Finance.

I did forget at the start of my speech to inform the House I would be sharing my time with the member for Beauce, so I'm doing that now.

Bill C-15 will further damage the economy because it levels some Canadians with an overall income tax rate of over 50%. Experts across the board predict that this will cause some of our country's most talented people to look elsewhere to pursue their ideas and their businesses.

That is not all. The bill targets charities and ends children's fitness and arts tax credits, but even with all of these ill-considered tax hikes, budget 2016 still leaves Canada with a \$30-billion debt. That cuts to the heart of the broader problem of Bill C-15.

Bill C-15 implements a reckless budget for this country. It is completely non-transparent and is built on a set of misleading and questionable numbers. The Minister of Finance arrived in Ottawa telling Canadians that the books were in worse shape than he had anticipated. He outlined a set of fiscal assumptions that have since been completely debunked, and he used them as the foundation for his budget. He ignored the evidence from his own finance department and from the PBO that both said the budget was in surplus. He repeatedly told members of this House that he inherited a

deficit, and he built his budget on that assumption. However, we now know he has inherited a surplus of \$7.5 billion.

We also know that he jammed as much new Liberal spending as possible into the last month of the past fiscal year to get rid of that surplus. He has not been transparent about his efforts to spend his way out of surplus, and he has been completely non-transparent about the state of Canada's finances. Then he went against the independent advice of private sector economists and against the advice of his own department and unilaterally downgraded Canada's growth forecast.

He build his budget on economic assumptions made without any explanation. Here again, the Minister of Finance was called out by the PBO for his lack of transparency. Then the Minister of Finance had to be forced to reveal his five-year budget figures by the PBO, which he was trying to keep hidden from the public. If that is not enough, the 2016 budget is filled with wild assumptions of job creation, all of which have been repudiated by the PBO and other experts.

Fiscal prudence matters. Managing taxpayers' dollars responsibly matters. Being transparent about managing public money matters, but this Minister of Finance continues to play games with the budget, hide the numbers, and damage his own credibility.

The Liberals received a mandate from Canadians to go into deficit, but it was a very specific mandate. Canadians were promised that the Liberals would discipline themselves by sticking to three core fiscal anchors: deficits of no more than \$10 billion, an annual falling debt-to-GDP ratio, and a balanced budget by 2019. These were all articulated in writing and posted for all Canadians to see in the mandate letter the Prime Minister gave to the Minister of Finance. The 2016 federal budget betrays every one of these promises.

● (1345)

Somewhere along the line, the finance minister decided that rather than exercising discipline and delivering what he had promised to Canadians, it would be a lot easier to interpret the election results as a mandate to borrow and spend as much money as he wants, for as long as he wants, on whatever he wants.

Let me be very clear, Canadians did not give the finance minister a blank cheque to go on such a spending spree.

Budget 2016 will saddle Canadians with \$100 billion in new debt, which will have to be paid back through higher taxes. Budget 2016 plans for massive deficits and borrowing indefinitely into the future, with no plan whatsoever to return to balance. The budget barely mentions business. It will not create jobs and it throws away Canada's competitive advantage.

Government Orders

I also come from a riding that has a substantial agricultural component to it. It is about 65% urban, 35% rural. There is not one mention in the budget about enhancements to any of the communities in the small rural centres, and no talk about agriculture at all. These are the people who are heart-blood of many ridings, many communities. They are the ones who, daily, toil so that we can have the benefits of living the bountiful life we do from their agricultural pursuits and their risk-taking.

I can speak as a small business entrepreneur, having owned my own company over 25 years. One of the most important things for governments to do for small businesses is to make sure that they do not have the highest tax rates imposed upon citizens who are creating jobs, like small business owners.

I happened to be in the building industry, an industry that is the bellwether of the Canadian economy. We are talking about businesses that employ more than 800,000 workers in this country. This budget does absolutely nothing to improve and enhance the livelihoods of those small builders in my community who are building maybe five, six, or seven houses. All it is doing is adding to their red tape costs and the costs of their taxes and employee remittances.

These are the people who drive our economy. This budget and this budget implementation bill do nothing to help them out.

I urge all members of the House to vote against this reckless Liberal spending spree.

• (1350)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is borderline humorous when I hear member after member from the Conservative Party stand in their places and try to give the impression to Canadians that there was a Conservative surplus budget.

In reality, if the previous government demonstrated anything, it demonstrated that it did not have the ability from within to be able to manage a budget to a surplus. History and the facts clearly demonstrate that.

My question to the member is as follows. Why do the member and his Conservative colleagues believe that they have an ounce of credibility on the issue of deficits, when they have failed so miserably in terms of being able to deliver a balanced budget?

The budget during the election year that they talk about as they stand in their places today is not a balanced budget. No matter how often they try to repeat it. It is a deficit budget. Every budget leading up to that with the Conservative government was a deficit budget. In total, over \$150 billion was added to Canada's debt because of the Conservatives and they got a stagnant Canadian economy. Canadians wanted investments but they never received them.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, talking about humorous, this member obviously does not understand that money coming in in excess of spending is a surplus. We balanced the budget, every month of this past fiscal year, except for one month, March.

What did the finance minister decide to do? He clawed back all of the Liberal spending, over \$13 million, into that month so that he

could stand up and say that the Liberals were left with a deficit. In October, Conservatives left government with a surplus, right up until the end of February. Now the Liberals want to say that?

Second, the fact is that we went into deficit spending because the global economy was crashing. Every advanced country in this world signed on to spending. In fact, that party wanted us to spend twice as much. They were asking us to spend twice as much as we spent. We brought it back to balance.

• (1355)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it must be nice to be in the House to ask questions and pat oneself on the back. Members on both sides have been saying that they balanced the budget or that they did this or that. In reality—

Some Hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order. There seems to be a bit of a problem in the House.

[*English*]

I would like to remind hon. members that we are in session, and screaming across the floor is not part of that session.

I will give the floor back to the hon. member for Jonquière.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel: Thank you Mr. Speaker. That is what I wanted to point out in my remarks. When members on either side of the House rise to speak, they should always be thinking about workers. I have been listening to the speeches that have been given since this morning and I am thinking about the workers who get up every day, pack their lunches, and go to work. They need employment insurance when jobs are cut.

Given the reform that my colleague's government implemented and that is still in effect, I would like him to tell us what he thinks about the penalty being imposed on workers in certain regions, the workers who are not eligible for the five additional weeks.

[*English*]

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, I am caught off guard here. I was not aware of the question.

Let me just underscore what I said in my speech and the way I have responded every time the deficit question comes up.

A person who has a business that has a balance sheet would watch income coming in and watch the spending. Therefore, it is absolutely unconscionable to me what has happened with the Minister of Finance. He has taken a surplus of \$7.5 billion and turned it into what he claims is a deficit that the Conservatives left him. It is because of his spending, putting it into that fiscal year and then claiming that is the case.

Statements by Members

It is unfathomable to me that they think Canadians buy this argument. They understand that they get a paycheque and they have expenses. If they want to pile themselves into debt, they can choose to do that at any time. That is what our Minister of Finance has done. He has piled us into debt at the last possible moment to claim that the Conservatives left him a deficit. However, we did not choose that spending. We left a surplus.

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just wonder if the member would comment on some of the things that our previous government did, especially in 2006 to 2008, before the entire planet went into recession.

We paid down close to \$40 billion of national debt. We lowered the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%. Throughout the great recession, we led the G8 and G7, the most industrialized countries in the world, with growth. There was over one million jobs created in spite of that recession. Also, we balanced the books and had a surplus a year ahead of the action plan.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, I think those points have been made through questioning and through my speech. However, the reality is that if we take the empirical data of all of this, taxes were at their lowest rate for Canadians over the last 50 years. Most average Canadian families had gained in excess of \$7,000 more in their pockets.

Actually, one member who spoke here from the opposite side today got into politics because of social housing. I got into politics because I was disgusted with the fact that politicians thought it was their money and they could do what they wanted with it. I got into politics because it is not politicians' money. It is the taxpayers' money. It is the money of hard-working people who are honest and pay their taxes. What motivated me, as a businessman, to run, was the government that took our money, gave it to their friends for—

• (1400)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Statements by members, the hon. member for Sydney—Victoria.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

THE NETHERLANDS

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today as we celebrate the 71st anniversary of the liberation of the Netherlands.

More than 7,600 Canadians died during the nine-month liberation battle, and a vast number of our Canadian lads are buried in Holland.

More than one million Canadians are of Dutch descent, and almost every Dutch family has a relative in Canada. One of the reasons why my parents came to Canada was the liberation of Holland.

Yesterday I was honoured to take part in a Dutch Remembrance Day ceremony with the Ambassador of the Netherlands to Canada, Cees Kole.

Spring is the best time to celebrate the friendship between the Netherlands and Canada. Each May, Ottawa is coloured by the blooming tulips from the Netherlands as a sign of gratitude for the efforts extended during World War II.

I encourage all my hon. colleagues and all Canadians to learn more about the heroic efforts Canada played in the liberation of the Netherlands and join in the celebrations of our two nations.

* * *

CANCER

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, cancer has touched all of us at some point in our lives. Over the past few months of 2016, our family has lost a cousin and an uncle.

This weekend in Prince George, I will take part in our annual Canadian Cancer Society 24-hour relay for life, raising funds for cancer research and vital support services for those fighting cancer and their families.

I will be walking for those who have fought cancer and lost and those who continue the fight today. I will be walking for my little brother Trent, who has fought cancer twice and kicked its butt. I will be walking for our colleague from Scarborough—Agincourt, who himself is fighting cancer.

I ask my hon. colleagues to join with me today and every day in the fight against cancer. We can and we will win this fight. Our collective goal should be creating a world where no Canadian, no human, lives in fear of cancer.

My goal for this Saturday night is to walk the entire 24 hours with the Hell Yeah Prince George team. It is going to be tough but not in comparison to the fight against cancer.

* * *

[Translation]

GUY BOULANGER

Mr. Jean Rioux (Saint-Jean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would to draw members' attention to the vibrant cultural life in the municipality of Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu.

I therefore join with the local newspaper, *Le Canada Français*, an institution that has been around for over 150 years, in paying tribute to Guy Boulanger. I commend him for the leadership that he has shown over the past 27 years in his role as the head of the Société pour la promotion d'événements culturels.

The Haut-Richelieu region now welcomes over 70,000 theatre goers a year, thanks to Mr. Boulanger's efforts to modernize the Théâtre des Deux-Rives and establish the Cabaret-théâtre du Vieux-Saint-Jean.

Thank you, Mr. Boulanger, for your years of work and commitment, which helped stimulate our region's cultural development. This cultural vitality will be evident throughout the year as we celebrate Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu's 350th anniversary.

Statements by Members

[English]

IAN DEANS

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of myself, the member for Hamilton Mountain, my leader, my caucus, and my party, I rise in the House today to join with Hamiltonians in mourning the loss of Ian Deans and to extend our sincere condolences to his family.

Starting as a Hamilton firefighter and becoming a political giant, Ian was the MPP for Wentworth from 1967-79 and was the MP for Hamilton Mountain from 1980-86. Ian's incredible talent made him an ideal House leader not just at Queen's Park but here in Ottawa as well.

For 10 years, Ian served as the chair of the Public Service Staff Relations Board.

I am honoured to have called Ian a friend and a mentor. He was the one in 1984 who convinced me to move from the labour movement to the political arena. Ian was one of the most naturally gifted politicians I have ever met, and he set the gold standard for what it means to connect with one's constituents, represent one's community, and make a real difference here in Parliament. Hamilton has lost one of its true champions.

Rest in peace, my friend.

* * *

CANADIAN REALTORS CARE AWARD WINNER

Mr. Don Rusnak (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge Vince Mirabelli for all of the outstanding work he does in our community of Thunder Bay.

Mr. Mirabelli has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars and donated countless hours for an array of local charities. He most recently was named the first recipient of the Canadian Realtors Care Award.

In 2005, he kick-started a gala fundraiser for the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Foundation. This event has raised more than \$500,000 for the hospital over the last many years.

In 2009, he established the Mirabelli pediatric endowment fund to help support the hospital's littlest patients.

On top of his generous monetary donations, Vince is also a dedicated companion to a child living with cancer as part of Camp Quality.

Vince continues to make our community of Thunder Bay a better place.

Congratulations, Vince.

* * *

● (1405)

URBAN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and pay tribute to urban community associations and their amazing volunteers for their contribution to the fabric of

urban life in general, and to my riding of Calgary Rocky Ridge in particular.

Community associations in Arbour Lake, Citadel, Evanston, Hawkwood, Kincora, Ranchlands, Rocky Ridge, Royal Oak, Sage Hill, Scenic Acres, Sherwood, Silver Springs, Tuscany, and now Nolan Hill, greatly increase the quality of life in these neighbourhoods. Dedicated volunteers in each community make their neighbourhoods great places to live, raise families, and enjoy retirement. These associations are the civic backbone of neighbourhoods. Their volunteers put on festivals, run programs for youth and seniors, maintain recreation venues, operate pools, organize cleanups and beautification projects, and much more.

Without community associations, our neighbourhoods would not be the fantastic places they are. Please join me in recognizing the importance of urban community associations.

* * *

DON RIVER WATERSHED

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Sunday, I paddled down the Don River with friends and residents from Toronto—Danforth, as well as my colleagues, the members for Don Valley West and King—Vaughan. Paddle the Don celebrates the importance of this major Toronto watershed in the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the New Credit and the resplendent parkland that surrounds and supports it.

Led by the representatives of the Métis Nation of Ontario, this 10-km paddle reminds us of the benefits we have received from the Don River watershed over the years, and for the harm we have done to it.

[Translation]

The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority wants to protect the Don River from the pressures of urbanization. Around 1.2 million people live in the Don watershed, and this event is a good way to raise awareness among many of them.

With the help of volunteers from the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary and Scouts Canada, along with many other people, a rainy day in Toronto became a remarkable experience.

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[English]

MENTAL HEALTH

Ms. Karina Gould (Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak during Mental Health Week. Brian Hansell, a father from my riding, founded the Paul Hansell Foundation in memory of his son.

The Paul Hansell Foundation looks to break down barriers and establish a proactive and preventive dialogue that puts mental health on an equal footing with all other forms of health. The conversation plate initiative was created to get people talking about all aspects of mental health.

Today, the foundation will celebrate the official conversation plate launch at Assumption Catholic Secondary School in Burlington. Assumption students will be performing their play *Beneath Our Skin*, which sheds light on difficult mental wellness issues.

Statements by Members

This past weekend, I had the opportunity to make my own conversation plate, and I am proud to take the lead on a conversation thread here in the House.

I congratulate Brian, the foundation, and Assumption students on this important issue, and look forward to sharing this plate and this conversation with my colleagues.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE MIDWIFE

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, May 5 is International Day of the Midwife. We hope that soon it will be recognized as the national day of the midwife here in Canada.

Midwives in Canada are represented by the Canadian Association of Midwives. The organization provides leadership and advocacy for midwifery as a regulated primary maternity care system. Midwives are also well positioned to address the specific challenges still faced by women in rural, remote, and aboriginal communities in Canada, as well as in developing nations.

Today, I also attended the event on Parliament Hill by the Canadian Network for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, an organization that works to improve women's and children's health worldwide. Midwives play a critical role in this area too.

We must work on increasing women's access to quality midwifery services. Today, on International Day of the Midwife, I ask all my colleagues to please join me in celebrating the profession of midwifery in Canada and in the world.

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●(1410)

[*Translation*]

21ST DICTÉE LAVALLOISE

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week, I had the pleasure of awarding several young people in my riding certificates of recognition for their performances in the 21st Dictée lavalloise.

As a former teacher, I am delighted with the success of the Dictée lavalloise, a family activity that has gone international with students from Burkina Faso to France participating in the latest edition.

The young winners achieved excellence thanks to their teachers. That is why I am so proud to be part of a government that plans to support them by creating a tax benefit for teachers for up to \$1,000 worth of school supplies.

I speak from experience when I say that teachers rarely hesitate to use their own funds to buy supplies that their students need—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Burnaby North—Seymour.

[*English*]

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Mr. Terry Beech (Burnaby North—Seymour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a true pleasure to rise today to congratulate Simon Fraser University on its 50th anniversary. Named after the famous explorer, SFU has stayed true to its spirit, encouraging its talented researchers, faculty, and students to push past boundaries and engage the world.

Their drive to explore and innovate are among the reasons that SFU is repeatedly singled out as Canada's finest comprehensive university. It is also what makes Simon Fraser's vision for the future so exciting. SFU Innovates is a bold action plan that embeds innovation and entrepreneurship throughout the university. That means all students, from engineers to anthropologists, can access the critical skills of entrepreneurship and innovation to succeed in the new economy.

I invite my fellow parliamentarians to celebrate this great university at a reception to be held next Tuesday and find out more about how SFU mobilizes the very best ideas and people for Canada.

* * *

MENTAL HEALTH

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you and the Minister of Veterans Affairs, alongside parliamentarians from all sides for joining me and Romeo Dallaire for the third annual Sam Sharpe breakfast this morning.

Each Mental Health Week combats mental health issues facing veterans and their families. This year, we heard broadcaster Joe Tilley speak about the tragic tale of his son Spencer, who succumbed to his addiction following his service in the Canadian Armed Forces. Whether it is PTSD, its effect on families, or whether it is addictions, our friend Michael Landsberg reminded us they are sick, not weak, and there is help for them.

Parliamentarian Sam Sharpe returned to Ottawa 100 years after he left for the Great War, surrounded by students from his old high school for the unveiling of his sculpture by Scugog artist Tyler Briley. What a legacy this parliamentarian from 100 years ago has, showing veterans and first responders today that they are not alone in their mental injuries.

* * *

JANSSEN INC.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to highlight a key contributor to research and innovation development in my riding of Don Valley East.

Janssen Inc. is the largest pharmaceutical company in Canada. It employs over 800 people and is providing world-class leadership in life sciences investment. Over the past two years, Janssen, along with its parent company Johnson & Johnson, has committed over \$1 billion in investments to life sciences across Canada.

Additionally, Janssen is launching a new venture on May 11, JLABS @ Toronto, which will host up to 50 Canadian start-up companies that will share over \$3 million in world-class lab equipment and scientific support. I applaud the company for its continuous efforts in being a good corporate citizen and for its leadership efforts in life sciences.

I look forward to working with Janssen and wish it continued success.

* * *

MIDWIVES

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is International Day of the Midwife. My three daughters were born at home, thanks to midwives. Back then it was not even recognized by the province, so my bandmate Jason Collett and I had to barter the services for our daughters' births by building a deck for midwife Bridget Lynch, who, of course, has gone on to be a world leader on child maternal health.

Things have changed dramatically since then. In Ontario there are over 82 midwives just serving rural and isolated regions. I would like to thank the team at Centre de santé communautaire du Témiskaming, and the teams serving James Bay, Attawapiskat, and communities like Moosonee and Fort Albany.

Amy Moland-Osborne has come home to Timmins with Boreal Midwifery.

These women offer incredible service and mentoring.

Childbirth should be a sacred time and midwives and doulas have restored the power of this moment to the mother, to the child, and the family.

Let us praise the midwives.

* * *

● (1415)

MUNICIPALITY OF WOOD BUFFALO

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake asked me to pass on the following message to the House and Canadians:

“Please pray for all the firefighters and first responders who are putting their lives on the line to save the municipality of Wood Buffalo. Many of the evacuees I have spoken to are very concerned about their future. Many have limited means as a result of the tough economic situation. Some people are already jobless and now their homes are gone.

“These people have nowhere to go and they just want reassurance that someone has their best interests at heart, that someone is there to help them get back on their feet and rebuild their communities. They need help to put the pieces of their lives back together. In many

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cases, just knowing we care and will not let them down can be enough.

“Canadians have never shied away from helping others in need. I am very proud of all Albertans who have opened their homes, provided food for their stomachs or fuel for their cars, and a shoulder to cry on and, in many cases, a few dollars for their pockets.

“Thank you, Canada, for your compassion and generosity.”

* * *

JANE JACOBS

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Spadina—Fort York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 100 years ago this week, an extraordinary woman was born: Jane Jacobs. Jane Jacobs was an internationally recognized writer, an urban thinker, and a bit of a troublemaker. Her books on cities have been translated into dozens of languages. Even though they were written over half a century ago, many are still being used to teach in universities to this very day.

Jane Jacobs chose to live in Canada. It was my privilege to call her a friend and a neighbour.

When she died a decade ago, her friends and family chose to recognize her life by holding a series of walks in Toronto, talking tours that showcased her lessons, her life, and the impact that she had upon that city and others.

A decade later, these walks are now being held in close to 200 cities around the world, including in Canada. In fact, in Toronto this weekend, there will be more than 200 walks in neighbourhoods right across the city. I will be leading one on Friday and on Saturday. Members are welcome to join.

As we recognize the remarkable life of Jane Jacobs, I encourage everyone to look up janeswalk.org and join a walk this weekend to celebrate how city building and building better neighbourhoods is not just important work, but can be a lot of fun, too.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

FORT MCMURRAY

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the crisis in northern Alberta seems to be worsening. Additional communities have now been evacuated, including emergency response centres, and the province has now declared a state of emergency. Residents are very worried about what the future will hold for them. Once this crisis passes and the reconstruction begins, will the Prime Minister assure the residents of Fort McMurray and region that infrastructure funding will be top priority for them?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the answer is yes. The rebuild of Fort McMurray will take many years, and this government will be a strong partner to the province, the municipality, and to the thousands of Canadians who will be rebuilding their lives in that important part of the country.

Oral Questions

The thoughts of all Canadians are with the residents of the Fort McMurray area, as well as with the first responders who are working to keep them safe, and the courageous firefighters who are combatting the fire. Over 80,000 people have been evacuated, with many still in transit. Approximately 1,600 homes have been destroyed. Although the full scale of this disaster is still not yet known, the situation continues to evolve, and the Government of Canada is actively involved in ensuring that we provide support in every way we can, now and into the future.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the crisis in northern Alberta is getting worse by the hour. Additional communities have been evacuated. The province has now declared a state of emergency.

Can the Prime Minister give us his assurance that, once the crisis is over, Fort McMurray and the surrounding area will be a priority for infrastructure funding in order to assist in the rebuilding?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the crisis that the people of Fort McMurray are experiencing is absolutely devastating.

The Government of Canada will be a partner not only in the immediate emergency situation, but also in the long term, through the work we will do together in the coming months to restore the ability to grow and in the coming years to rebuild this important community and guarantee a future for everyone who has been affected by this disaster.

* * *

[*English*]

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' complete lack of transparency on spending taxpayer dollars now extends to their negotiations with Bombardier. While they negotiate to give \$1 billion to a corporation, we have been given no details, no details on how that will be paid back, and no details on what taxpayers will receive in return. When will taxpayers get to see the bailout deal for Bombardier so that they can find out if it is actually worth their money?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will point out to the hon. member what I have said many times in this House. The negotiations are ongoing. We believe in a strong future for the aerospace industry in this country. We know that there are many good jobs associated with it, not just in Quebec but right across the country. We are looking for a solid business case to make sure that the investments Canada makes in Bombardier or in the aerospace industry have benefits for Canadians, for good jobs and for our economy not just for the short term but for the medium and long term as well. That is the engagement we have made to Canadians, and that is the commitment we are keeping.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that the government is currently in negotiations with Bombardier. As everyone knows, these negotiations are important.

Now we are hearing that the government wants to be involved in managing the C Series program. Considering how the Liberals turned our surplus into a deficit, if I were a shareholder, I would be extremely worried.

Since the Prime Minister likes to talk about transparency so much, this is the perfect opportunity for him to talk about how transparent he is being in this file.

What are the conditions? When will we know what is on the table with Bombardier? When will we finally see the results of these lengthy discussions?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect our government to invest in growth and in jobs, and to help the middle class and those working hard to join the middle class.

That is why investments in Bombardier will be determined by the negotiations that are underway with that firm's representatives. To ensure that the business case is solid, investments will be made in the short, medium, and long term in order to support job creation in Canada and the future of Canada's aerospace industry.

That is what Canadians expect, and that is what we are doing, in a responsible manner.

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think that all Canadians were proud to learn recently that Delta Air Lines has placed a large order with Bombardier for a better, cleaner, and quieter airplane.

Why did they say no to expanding the Billy Bishop airport in Toronto? Why did they say they did not want to do this in Toronto? Perhaps they did not want to inconvenience certain members, but this is a whole other story.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, you and all members in this House know very well that during the election campaign we committed to listen to Canadians and to respect members from the regions, so that they can be strong voices here in Ottawa and Toronto, where a large number of our members were elected. We made a commitment not to reopen the tripartite agreement, to respect the will of the people of Toronto, and that is exactly what we will do. We will keep our promises.

* * *

[*English*]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals continue to be in favour of special treatment for the wealthy and well-connected.

Today at committee, CRA officials testified that the sweetheart deal for KPMG clients did not include immunity from criminal prosecution.

My question is simple. If the Prime Minister is serious about tackling tax havens, and remembering that actions speak louder than words, will he ensure that those multi-millionaire tax cheats and those at KPMG who aided and abetted them face criminal charges?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have committed to making sure that all Canadians pay their fair share of taxes and the CRA and the Canadian government enforces all the rules and responsibilities linked to that.

That, quite frankly, is why we put \$440 million more in this current budget to go after tax avoidance and tax dodging.

At the same time, it was a Liberal member who launched the committee study that is being done on KPMG, and the audits, to ensure that we are actually doing that right.

•(1425)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Speaking of dodging, Mr. Speaker, as usual, the Prime Minister is dodging the question. I will repeat my very simple question. The Prime Minister talks about going after those who cheat on their taxes and hide their money illegally in tax havens. Today, the Canada Revenue Agency said that there is no immunity from criminal charges.

The question is quite simple: Will the Liberals do everything possible under the law, including the Criminal Code, to go after KPMG and these multimillionaires who have defrauded the system?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously it is not enough to just talk about dealing with tax avoidance and tax evasion. We have to do something about it. That is why we added an extra \$440 million in our budget to go after tax evasion and tax avoidance. That is why it was a Liberal member who proposed the study on KPMG and tax evasion. That is why we are going to do everything we must to ensure that everyone pays their fair share of taxes in Canada.

* * *

CANADA POST

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, talking about putting words into action, during the election campaign and with Mayor Coderre at his side, the Prime Minister specifically promised to restore door-to-door delivery. Today, he has created a committee. Where are the Prime Minister's sunny ways now? What about his promise to do politics differently?

Is the Prime Minister not ashamed that he misled Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, we promised to consult, reflect, and show that we understand that Canadians expect better service for less. That is exactly what we promised to do. We halted the installation of community mailboxes. We are working with Canadians and an independent panel, which will hold open consultations to ensure that Canada Post provides the best service to Canadians.

[*English*]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Actually, Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister was fishing for votes in our big cities, he solemnly promised to restore home mail delivery, no ifs, ands, or buts. Now he says that home mail delivery will not be restored.

I have an honest question for the Prime Minister. If the previous government had done that, if—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I want to hear the question. The hon. member for Outremont.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, to the Contrary to the Liberals, we're always honest.

I have an honest question for the Prime Minister. If the previous government had done that, what would he have said? Would he not have said that they were lying?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I would ask the member to be judicious with his language.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect good-quality service from Canada Post. That is exactly what we are offering.

That is why we committed to stop the implementation of community mailboxes, and why we committed to working with Canadians to ensure that they get the service they need and they want at an affordable price. That is exactly why we are putting the time in that the previous government did not to talk with Canadians, to look at the changing world of delivery of mail and services, and to ensure that they get the right quality.

That is what we committed to throughout, regardless of the fabrications the member opposite might make about what I said or did not say.

The Speaker: I want to point out to the hon. member for Outremont that although I know we have debates and disagreements in this place, I do not think he would want to do this when someone else is speaking to suggest that he does not want to listen.

That is not the kind of respect that he wants to show, I know.

* * *

•(1430)

FINANCE

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, continuing on the theme of broken promises, it has been six months of disappointment from the Liberals, fiscally, as well.

Since they have come to office, they have broken three key election promises: number one, that the tax plan would be revenue-neutral; number two, that the deficits would be no more than \$10 billion; and number three, they said that they were going to balance the budget by the end of the mandate.

After six disappointing months, can the Minister of Finance, despite the Prime Minister's gloating in the House today that "we keep our promises", tell Canadians which one of these broken promises he is most proud of?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak for a moment on what the members on the other side of the House might be doing right now.

They want to balance the budget on the backs of Canadians. What exactly would that mean? That would mean that right now we would be making cuts to services, cuts to Canadian families that would make their lives more difficult.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Let us have a little order. We all want to hear the member speak. We all want to hear everybody speak when they have their turn. Otherwise, we could have a very short question period.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, balancing the budget on the backs of Canadians means cuts to Canadian families, hurting Canadian families today. It means not investing in the future and getting to a lower growth rate.

Canadians were hopeful and optimistic. They made the choice to invest in Canadian families today with the Canada child benefit, and they made the choice to invest in Canadians tomorrow through investments. The future of Canada is going to be brighter because of the very hopeful optimistic choice they made.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are actually concerned by the attitude that the Minister of Finance has been demonstrating in the last number of days.

This week alone, he is denying a surplus that he inherited from us. He is also mocking us openly, saying that we are stuck in this whole balanced budget thing. Then he introduced a bill that actually repeals legislation which would make balanced budgets a law.

The minister said earlier this week that his kids and his grandchildren will be better off, but what part of sticking our kids and our grandchildren with debt and deficit is actually going to allow them to be better off?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I like to remember the most important promise that we made to Canadians. We are going to achieve a better future for Canadians.

What we are doing with the measures in our budget is that we are going to achieve a better future. We put, in our budget, measures that will lead to 0.5% faster growth this year; 1% faster growth next year. The parliamentary budget office and the Bank of Canada have confirmed that our measures will in fact grow the economy. That is what we are trying to achieve. That is the legacy for our kids and for our grandkids.

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SMALL BUSINESS

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for two days, the parliamentary secretary has accused small business owners of being tax cheats.

She is not alone. The Prime Minister has said small businesses are just a way to avoid taxes. Just today, a Liberal member said in the House that the small business tax rate does not matter.

When will the Liberals reverse their broken promise and bring the tax rate to 9%?

Ms. Gudie Hutchings (Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for the question because we know that there is a loophole that allows some to use the tax rate to get out of paying the personal income taxes the rest of us pay all year. But we do understand small business and I understand small business and we know they need a robust economy and they need strong consumers.

With our middle-class income tax cuts, the child benefits, the investments in infrastructure, in broadband, in incubators and accelerators, in tourism marketing, the list goes on, absolutely all of it helps small and medium-sized businesses.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives renewed the PPP Canada funding by providing \$1.25 billion over five years as part of the new building Canada plan. Infrastructure projects worth over \$100 million were required to go through a P3 screen to maximize the value of taxpayer dollars. But late last year, the Minister of Infrastructure announced that this screening requirement would be removed. Why are the Liberals getting rid of all the taxpayer safeguards?

• (1435)

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reason we have removed the P3 condition is to allow the local economy and local governments to make their own decisions on how they procure infrastructure. Furthermore, it also allows them to tap into federal resources at a larger amount, at 50% of the project costs. Under the previous government, they only qualified for 25% of the funding because of that particular condition. Our plan will deliver more for all Canadian communities.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first the Liberals removed the requirement for the P3 screen, then they transferred responsibility from the Minister of Finance to the Minister of Infrastructure, and now they introduced Bill C-15, which gives the infrastructure minister the power to sell off shares and assets of PPP Canada.

Something here does not add up. Are the Liberals intending to shut down PPP Canada and sell off its assets in order to pay for their out of control spending?

Oral Questions

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, P3s are a valuable tool that we respect, but we also respect the ability of the local governments to make their own decisions. We trust them to make their own decisions, unlike the previous government which imposed certain procurement processes on municipalities. We heard from municipalities. We heard from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. We heard from big city mayors and they all support our decision to remove the P3 condition so that they are allowed to make their own decisions.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we often hear the minister say that municipalities should be free to make their own decisions. In Quebec, they have to go through the Government of Quebec. At present, there has been no reply. Not one project has started. There will be no work done this summer.

I completely agree with my colleague: P3s are another example of the government's inability to take action that will create jobs.

Do the Liberals want to sell the assets of PPP Canada to pay for their out-of-control spending? Yes or no?

[*English*]

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me share some information with the House. Despite allocating almost \$2 billion for Quebec in 2014, the previous government delivered zero dollars.

We are committed to delivering that money to Quebec along with new money under public transit, under green infrastructure, and social infrastructure. We are here to support communities. We are here to support—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brousseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we know that the trans-Pacific partnership will have serious consequences for Canada. We are talking about losing 60,000 jobs and our sovereignty. The arguments against the partnership continue to mount.

This morning, at the Standing Committee on International Trade, Jim Balsillie, said that under the trans-Pacific partnership, the best thing that a Canadian technology company could do is to move to the United States.

Is the government refusing to release an economic impact study on the trans-Pacific partnership precisely because there are so many problems with the agreement?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the NDP is opposed to the TPP without having read it, but this government is committed to consulting Canadians, and that is what we are doing.

Next week, the Standing Committee on International Trade will consult Canadians in Montreal, Quebec City, Windsor, and Toronto. This will be a very important consultation and debate for our country. I appreciate the contribution of the opposition members.

[*English*]

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we saw the trans-Pacific partnership at the same time that the Liberals did, and that was after the campaign, after the election, after it was kept in secret by the Conservatives.

The fact is, the minister refuses to release an impact study and refuses to launch the public consultations that the Liberals promised.

The committee's work is not her own. However, we are hearing very troubling testimony. Today, RIM founder Jim Balsillie warned, "There will never be [another] large Canadian tech company under the TPP". He has also said that Canada would be a colossal loser.

Why is the minister proceeding with a deal that will so badly damage Canada's tech sector?

• (1440)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am afraid that is simply not true. The NDP opposed the TPP before even reading it during the campaign. We were all there.

We made a commitment to consult with Canadians, and that is what we are doing. Next week, I am delighted that the trade committee is actively consulting with Canadians. It will be in Montreal, Quebec City, Windsor, and Toronto.

This is a very important national debate. It is important not to cut it short.

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AIR CANADA

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, the Minister of Transport was at committee discussing his Air Canada bill. When asked by one of his own members how carrier maintenance obligations affect its competitiveness, he had no answer. Shockingly, he responded by saying, "It's a big, serious question and I don't have the answer at my fingertips..".

If the entire purpose of this legislation is to make Air Canada more competitive, could the minister at least have done his homework before introducing this bill?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I always do my homework before I speak.

I want to make it very clear that one of the reasons we are amending this act is not only to prevent litigation in the future, but also to allow Air Canada to have more flexibility when it is competing in a very competitive environment domestically and internationally.

We know that by removing from Air Canada a certain obligation with respect to where it must do its maintenance, we will allow it to be more competitive. We are convinced of this, and that is why we are doing it.

Oral Questions

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with that answer, it is clear that the Minister of Transport still has not done his homework.

I also asked if he could tell the committee what Air Canada's maintenance costs are, to which he responded: "No, I can't tell you what the costs are..".

Let me try again. The minister obviously cannot explain the bill. Can he at least provide a shred of evidence to support it?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe that my hon. colleague is simply going on a fishing trip here.

It is expensive for our airlines to maintain their airplanes to make sure they are very safe. It is a significant amount of their fiscal expenditures every day of the year.

We are providing Air Canada, which has over 400 airplanes, with some flexibility in deciding where it will do its maintenance while holding on to the obligation that it must do some maintenance in Ontario, Quebec, and Manitoba.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Quebecers and Canadians are very concerned about the government's position on support for the aerospace industry, which is extremely important to our economy.

When we recently asked the Minister of Transport why he had pushed through Bill C-10 under a gag order, he said that it was to make Air Canada more competitive.

Will the minister finally admit that he is leaving the door wide open for Air Canada to sacrifice good-quality jobs here in Canada?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Not at all, Mr. Speaker.

Because Quebec and Manitoba decided to drop their lawsuit against Air Canada, we were able to make amendments to the Air Canada Public Participation Act, through Bill C-10. That is what we are doing.

However, I remind my colleague that Air Canada is still required to perform maintenance in Ontario, Quebec, and Manitoba.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if shipping the maintenance jobs out of the country is going to make Air Canada more competitive, I have some serious concerns about how the Liberals are handling this file.

While Quebec's economy minister has urged the government to take its time with its bill, the Minister of Transport seems to be in a real hurry to shut down debate for reasons that he himself cannot explain. There really is something fishy going on.

Can the minister clarify his position and explain why he was in such a hurry to shut down debate?

• (1445)

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, I am in no hurry. In fact, I will speak very slowly to explain to my colleague.

We decided to change the legislation through Bill C-10, as I have been saying from the beginning, because the governments of Quebec and Manitoba decided to drop their lawsuit against Air Canada. This gives us the opportunity to clarify the legislation and give Air Canada more flexibility in making decisions regarding the maintenance of its planes.

The Speaker: As members know, disagreements in this place are to be expected, but members' comments must remain respectful.

The hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

* * *

[*English*]

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, ever since the old Liberals slashed billions in funding for post-secondary education, the cost of tuition has skyrocketed. Now, according to the parliamentary budget officer, a majority of Canadian students are from higher-income families.

The PBO also said that a majority of federal funding is benefiting these same wealthy families and the Liberals' recent budget will not significantly change the situation.

The Liberals claim to help the middle class, but they are actually doing the opposite. Why do they not help all students to get a good, quality education?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we are doing in budget 2016. We are helping 250,000 lower-income Canadian students with grants that are going from \$2,000 to \$3,000, which is a 50% increase. We are helping another 100,000 middle-income Canadian students, going from \$800 to \$1,200, which is a 50% increase. We are making an enormous difference for the students of today. We know that is going to help us today, and tomorrow.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister just does not get it. The parliamentary budget officer's report confirms today that federal measures to foster access to post-secondary education primarily benefit students from high-income families, and the announcements in budget 2016 will change nothing.

We have also learned that the government spends less on post-secondary education for indigenous students. Furthermore, almost 40% of students are more than \$25,000 in debt by the time they graduate.

The government says that it wants to help Canadian youth and the less well-off to join the middle class. Then what is it waiting for to make post-secondary education accessible to everyone?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, we understand exactly the problems faced by students today. That is why we included some measures in budget 2016 to help them.

For example, we are going to increase grants by 50%, from \$2,000 to \$3,000, for 250,000 students. Grants for middle-income students will increase from \$800 to \$1,200. That is a big change for them and for the country.

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CANADA POST

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada Post provides important services for my constituents in Laurentides—Labelle and for all Canadians.

[*English*]

All across the country, people are dismayed at the lack of respect and service cuts that the previous Conservative government imposed on Canada Post. In rural ridings like mine, these impacts are even more noticeable.

During the last election, the Liberal Party committed to a comprehensive review of the crown corporation. Would the minister responsible for Canada Post please update this House on the status of that review?

Hon. Judy Foote (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada promised Canadians that they would have a say in the service that Canada Post provided.

Today, we are keeping that promise. Today I announced an independent review of Canada Post.

The review will be a two-phase process, which will be completed by the end of this year.

An independent task force will prepare a discussion paper that presents viable options for Canada Post, following which a parliamentary committee will consult with Canadians from coast to coast. We are encouraging all members of the public to take part in this very important review.

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MINISTERIAL EXPENSES

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the House leader is once again being thrown under the bus by his friends on the front bench. He has turned himself into a human pretzel trying to defend the justice minister's questionable fundraising, and he is now assuming the position for the trade minister and her Hollywood agreements.

Will the trade minister finally table those agreements, or is she prepared to pay for the ongoing House leader's chiropractic treatments with her own money?

•(1450)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my job to promote Canada to the world. That is what I did in California, meeting with business leaders, cultural leaders, and the international media.

The Conservatives oppose the positive message that I delivered on television about Syrian refugees, and to the *LA Times* about reducing income inequality. I was proud to do it, and I would do it again.

The Conservatives' failure on these issues is why Canadians rejected their government last fall and why they are sitting on that side of the House.

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the minister's marketing is working so well that the trade numbers of the U.S. are down by 6.3% in March alone.

The question is simple. Did the trade minister mislead the House leader? That is just not cool.

Will the House leader stand in his place and apologize for not being the House leader but for being the House "mis-leader"?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here is one of the things I said on TV during that visit: "I think it is incredibly important, particularly...after the Paris attacks, particularly now with [the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria] raging around the world, to stand up for real diversity and to say our diversity is our strength."

Now, more than ever, the Conservatives should be joining us in speaking up for our belief in diversity around the world, including in the United States.

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DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister said, "We are in discussions with the other parties" to set up a committee on electoral reform. He explained that the reason why it has not yet been struck is entirely the fault of the Conservatives and the NDP, since both parties will not give consent without unreasonable preconditions. This whole process is imaginary. I have met with the relevant minister exactly twice in six months, once in December at my request, and once at a breakfast, where she sat at my table for less than 10 minutes. My NDP homologue says it is the same thing with him.

Why did the Prime Minister just invent this patently false story about opposition delay?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I apologize through you to the member in the House. We are engaged in many different processes. We know how important electoral reform is and how passionately members of the House feel about it. I look forward to ensuring that we get moving on this committee in short order.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister repeated this three times, so I hope we will get three apologies from him.

Oral Questions

He said, “there are ongoing discussions with the other parties...”, which is false. He said there are ongoing discussions on “the mandate” engaged with that committee, which is also false. And, he said, “We are in discussion with the other parties about how to set up that committee..”.

This is where I tell the PM that even in the world of quantum computing, the non-binary repetition of an untrue statement does not make it true. So why—

The Speaker: After we finish enjoying the joke, we will hear from the hon. Minister of Democratic Institutions.

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind all members of the House that my door is always open. We will deliver on our commitment to modernize our electoral system. We will deliver on that promise just as the Prime Minister delivered on our promise to reinstate the long-form census and return to evidence-based decision-making, just like he made good on his commitment to bring forward a gender-balanced cabinet, and just as he made good on his promise to introduce a merit-based, independent appointment process for appointing senators.

I am confident—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Hochelaga.

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[Translation]

HOUSING

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 65% of federal funding to fight homelessness is allocated to the housing first approach. That leaves only 35% of the funding for the homelessness partnering strategy for other types of intervention, including prevention.

Crisis centres are having to close beds for lack of funding. Quebec is pleading for a return to a general homelessness strategy. This week, I introduced two bills; the first is on recognizing the right to housing, and the second aims to establish a national housing strategy.

Will the government support these bills so that people no longer end up in the street? Will the government respect Quebec's wishes?

• (1455)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question and her interest in this issue that is so very important to us.

In fact, in budget 2016 we announced an investment of 50%, the first since 1999. This means an increase of \$50 million a year for the next two years to support the fight against homelessness in our communities.

I am also pleased to say that I am listening to our partners and the provinces and territories and I am working with them to ensure that this is addressed properly.

QUEBEC

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is what happens when we need the Liberals from Quebec: “Hello. You have reached the Liberal Party. All our members are currently hiding. Please stay on the line. Your call is important to us.”

Can someone tell me what good the 40 Liberal members from Quebec are? They are no good. They are giving up 1,800 Air Canada jobs. They are betraying dairy farmers. They are ignoring everyone in Lac-Mégantic. They have forgotten about the unemployed, Canada Post, and the French language.

Is the Liberal Party's Quebec lieutenant asleep at the switch?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe my colleague's comments got off track.

The reality is that we are very proud of the 40 Liberal members from Quebec, who represent the interests of our province.

* * *

[English]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, six months ago the Liberals claimed they would “immediately” lift the Mexican visa requirement. Today, Liberals and officials confirmed that a standard evidence-based formal review had not been completed. Moreover, they confirmed that Mexico did not meet certain factors required to lift the visa requirements.

Given this, at the upcoming three amigos meeting, will the Prime Minister publicly admit that he knows the exemption will not in fact be immediately lifted?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member that we are all convinced that our commitment to lift the visa for Mexico will indeed provide major economic benefits in tourism as well as a stronger partnership with our second North American partner.

That being said, I am working with my colleague, the Minister of Public Safety, to ensure we mitigate any risks arising from irregular immigration that could arise from this policy change.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if that is the case, Department of Immigration officials confirmed that prior to imposing a visa requirement for Mexico, the asylum rate was at 25%, and many of these claims were rejected as false. Normally, Canada would consider a visa exemption if the asylum rate is lower than 2%. Today at committee department officials confirmed that this rate remained very high.

What assurances can the government give Canadians that there will not be another wave of unfounded asylum claims if this exemption is immediately lifted?

Oral Questions

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is why officials in my department and I are working along with my colleagues in public safety to find ways to mitigate precisely this risk, which is high on our minds as a challenge that we have to deal with. With that being said, there are major benefits, as I mentioned earlier, in lifting the visa with Mexico. We are confident that we will be able to keep our election commitment, while at the same time mitigating those risks that the member describes.

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since the visa requirement was introduced four years ago, the asylum rate for Mexican nationals has remained below 1%. In 2008, prior to imposing a visa, the asylum rate was above 25%.

The Liberals have not conducted a visa exemption review and yet they have promised to lift the restriction. What are the Liberals doing to ensure the asylum rate does not increase when they lift the visa requirement for Mexico?

• (1500)

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have implied a couple of times, Canada attaches great importance to our friendship with our second North American partner and to the closer ties that will come from lifting the visa, and to the economic benefits to many middle-class Canadians who will benefit with jobs from the additional tourism.

At the same time, we are not unaware of the problems raised by my colleague, the member Markham—Unionville. I can assure him that we are all working assiduously to deal with those problems and to mitigate them.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, many Canadians in my riding of Mississauga East—Cooksville are eager to take advantage of the benefits of CETA, which would give our exporters unprecedented access to over 500 million people and a GDP of some \$20 trillion.

Could the Minister of International Trade update the House on what she is doing to ensure a deal is promptly signed and ratified?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was proud to announce in February improvements to CETA's investment chapter to make it a more progressive deal. I recently travelled to Berlin and Brussels to promote its swift ratification. I was delighted to meet with German vice chancellor Sigmar Gabriel, the leader of Germany's Social Democrats, who previously had concerns about CETA, but who now says that it is clearly a "good agreement".

The Conservatives spent hundreds of thousands of dollars celebrating CETA, but the truth is they did not get it done. We will.

* * *

IRAN

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Foreign Affairs said the previous Conservative government withdrew from Iran because we disliked

the regime. However, let us be clear. Not only do we dislike this regime; we abhor this regime.

Iran wants to destroy Israel. Iran imprisons and tortures its own people. It sponsors terrorism around the world, and is determined to become a nuclear power.

Forgive my confusion, but could the minister please tell us what he likes about Iran?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I like the people of Iran.

Yesterday, the UN rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran said that we should engage with Iran, that it was the best way to see improvements to the appalling situation of human rights in Iran.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to B.C.'s auditor general, the devastating Mount Polley mine disaster is the result of negligence by the B.C. Liberal government. This resulted in one of the biggest mining disasters in the province's history. Fish habitat was destroyed and mine tailings spilled into surrounding lakes and rivers.

The federal government must not turn a blind eye to this clear violation of the Fisheries Act. What action will the fisheries minister take against the B.C. Liberal government?

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we value our relationship with the B.C. government and with all provincial governments, our partners. We will work with them to address any issues that come forward, and deal with them appropriately.

* * *

[Translation]

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the guaranteed income supplement can make all the difference for some seniors. During the last election campaign, many seniors from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles talked to me about this.

In March, the government finished making retroactive payments of the guaranteed income supplement to vulnerable people who did not receive it.

What does the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development plan to do to compensate these people in need?

Points of Order

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I am announcing that the 86,000 seniors who were penalized by this error will receive compensation for their loss of purchasing power. This error was discovered in April 2015 and may date back as far as 2008. We will also ensure that these 86,000 seniors will not lose other benefits as a result of this error.

Mr. Speaker, we are quickly working on these cases so that seniors do not have to dip into their savings to counter the effects of these administrative errors.

* * *

[English]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, any changes to northern shrimp allocation could affect jobs in Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Nunavut. However, we would not know it from the so-called independent advisory panel the minister has set up. Three of the four members are from Newfoundland and the other is from British Columbia. Five of the seven public consultations will be held in Newfoundland and Labrador.

How can the minister expect to have an honest, independent review of the northern shrimp policy when he is excluding so many communities, or is the fix already in?

• (1505)

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do understand the importance of the shrimp fishery to those who depend on it. We committed to review the last in first out policy. I have appointed a ministerial advisory panel. I can assure the member it is an independent panel. Members of that panel were appointed, and names were requested from both sides of the industry, and they are on there. It will be an independent panel. I look forward to the great work it is going to do.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government's proposal to add four regions to the 12 that are eligible for extraordinary employment insurance benefit extensions is a band-aid solution. What we need is true employment insurance reform that makes benefits available to everyone and is aligned with workers' actual needs. We need to get rid of the notorious black hole. What we need is an independent fund that is safe from the Minister of Finance's nimble fingers.

Since the government's 40 Quebec members are keeping mum, I will take it upon myself to ask the minister to commit to reforming employment insurance so that it meets the urgent needs of Quebec workers and Quebec regions.

[English]

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to say that we have completed the first phase of EI reform and

are in the process of doing the second phase. It is much broader and more comprehensive. It is looking at flex time, maternity leave. It is dealing with some of the more challenging problems of vulnerable workers and seasonal workers. This will include every region of Canada. I look forward to everyone's input.

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour gives vague answers every time someone asks her about this. For nearly 20 years now, the upper north shore has been asking for employment insurance reform that takes its high unemployment rate and its seasonal industry into account. What the minister is denying Manicouagan, she will soon be offering to 16 economic regions in Canada.

Of the 40 Quebec members opposite me, some of whom represent people struggling with the same problems as residents of the north shore, such as the people in the Gaspé, who will join me in persuading the minister that Quebec deserves the same treatment as Canada?

[English]

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important for us to recognize that employment is a fundamental right of Canadians. We all want to see employment for citizens, no matter whether they are in Quebec, or Newfoundland or Alberta.

Our goal is to have a robust economy. By investing in infrastructure and our economy, we are going to build a strong and sound economy, and put more Canadians to work.

The Speaker: I believe the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle has the usual Thursday question.

Mr. Andrew Scheer: No, Mr. Speaker, I thought I would try to table the "Fiscal Monitor" from February—

The Speaker: Is there consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: Apparently not.

Let us go on to the Thursday question.

I am sorry. There is a point of order. The hon. member for Banff—Airdrie.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise, reluctantly, following question period today because I think all Canadians would expect our Prime Minister to always conduct himself with the highest level of dignity and to demonstrate the utmost respect for an institution such as the House of Commons. That should happen whether the Prime Minister is on camera or off camera.

Speaker's Ruling

On a number of occasions during this Parliament, I have witnessed—and I am sure others on this side of the House can confirm this—the Prime Minister behave in a manner that I would say is far below the dignity of the office he holds. In fact, I think one could even call it childish behaviour.

I only stand today because I think it was particularly egregious today. I saw him, on a frequent number of occasions today, taunting and making faces at other members of Parliament as they were speaking. He certainly went too far when I saw him stick his tongue out following a question that had been put by the member for South Surrey—White Rock. That is, clearly, in my mind, far below the dignity of the office he holds.

I certainly hope that the Prime Minister will stand in this place and apologize to this House, and to all Canadians, for such immature behaviour.

• (1510)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Banff—Airdrie for his point of order. When I observe something of the type he described, I will often rise and ask the member not to do that. I did not observe it, in this case.

I see the hon. government House leader is rising to respond.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to reiterate something that Canadians know well; that is, the Prime Minister's deep respect for Parliament and every member of this House of Commons. One of the priorities the Prime Minister has set for his government is to work collaboratively with all members of the House of Commons to improve decorum in the House of Commons.

If my colleague in front of me were honest, he would agree that we can all do more to improve decorum in the House and we should—

The Speaker: Order, please. I am sure the government House leader would not want to question the honesty of any member in this House. None of us would do that, especially when we all want to see greater respect shown in this place, from all sides.

The hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, following what I am sure was a very productive week in our constituencies, getting in touch with all our constituents, we are back at it now this week. I wonder if the government House leader would update the House as to what the business will be tomorrow and for the rest of next week.

[Translation]

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question, as always.

This afternoon, as everyone knows, we will continue our debate at second reading of Bill C-15, the budget. We will continue this important debate tomorrow.

[English]

On Monday, I know members are really looking forward to this. We are going to commence report stage and third reading debate on Bill C-7, the RCMP labour relations bill, until 2 p.m. In the afternoon, we will resume debate on Bill C-15.

I am hoping and working hard to reach an agreement with my colleagues in the House to be able to conclude the debate on Bill C-15 on Monday evening. That certainly would be my hope. I think Canadians would benefit from that legislation being in committee. Those conversations are ongoing.

On Wednesday, we will resume debate on Bill C-7.

Finally, next Tuesday and next Thursday will be opposition days, something I know members are looking forward to a lot.

* * *

[Translation]

PRIVILEGE

AIR CANADA PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ACT — SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on April 22, 2016, by the hon. member for Montcalm regarding alleged misleading statements made in the House by the Minister of Transport and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport with respect to Bill C-10, an act to amend the Air Canada Public Participation Act and to provide for certain other measures.

I would like to thank the hon. member for Montcalm for having raised this matter, as well as the Minister of Transport for his comments.

In presenting his case, the member for Montcalm alleged that both the Minister of Transport and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport deliberately misled the House by repeatedly providing inaccurate information with respect to Bill C-10 in response to oral questions and during debate.

In particular, the member claimed that the statements, which pertained to the status of litigation regarding Air Canada's obligation to keep aircraft maintenance operations in the province of Quebec, had been refuted by the government of that province. The federal government's assertions, he argued, led members of the House to make decisions in relation to Bill C-10 based on false information.

[English]

The Minister of Transport, for his part, stood by his statements, while pointing out that the federal government was not privy to the negotiations between Air Canada and the government of the Province of Quebec. He concluded that, in his opinion, the matter raised did not constitute a question of privilege, but was more a question of debate.

The House of Commons is a debating chamber where opposing views are passionately held and vigorously defended, and where opposition members have a duty to hold the government to account. Consequently, the need for members' access to truthful and accurate information is primordial and goes to the heart of their role and privileges as legislators.

Government Orders

•(1515)

[Translation]

In fact, feisty exchanges during debate and disagreements as to facts are not infrequent; the member for Montcalm acknowledged this when he stated that he understood “that disagreements between members are to be expected and are fodder for debate”.

[English]

Not surprisingly then, the allegation that a member deliberately misled the House is a most serious one. In adjudicating such matters, the Speaker has a defined but very limited role, one which prevents the chair from judging the content or accuracy of statements made in the House.

As Speaker, my role is strictly limited to determining whether, in the course of debate, a member has deliberately misled the House.

[Translation]

Successive Speakers have clearly set out the three conditions that must be demonstrated in order for a Speaker to arrive at such a finding. My predecessor outlined them in his ruling of April 29, 2015, when he stated at page 13197 of *Debates*:

...first, the statement needs to be misleading. Second, the member making the statement has to know that the statement was incorrect when it was made. Finally, it needs to be proven that the member intended to mislead the House by making the statement.

[English]

As members can appreciate, the threshold is very high, purposely so given the seriousness of the allegation and its potential consequences for members individually and collectively. From this, it stands to reason that a finding of a prima facie case of privilege is an exceedingly rare occurrence in cases with respect to disputed facts.

Speaker Jerome understood that such situations are rarely grounds for finding a prima facie question of privilege when he stated on June 4, 1975, on page 6431 of *Debates* that:

...a dispute as to facts, a dispute as to opinions, and a dispute as to conclusions to be drawn from an allegation of fact is a matter of debate and not a question of privilege.

[Translation]

In the present case, no evidence has been brought forward to demonstrate either that the Minister of Transport knew that the statements he made were misleading at the time that they were made or that he intended to mislead the House.

Therefore, while the member for Montcalm has illustrated that there is a difference of opinion as to the interpretation of certain facts, it is clear to the Chair that the threshold for determining that the House was deliberately misled has not been met. As such, the Chair cannot conclude that members have been impeded in the performance of their parliamentary functions. Accordingly, I find that this matter is a dispute as to facts and not a prima facie question of privilege.

[English]

I thank hon. members for their attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS**BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2016, NO. 1.**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-15, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2016 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

[English]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to resuming debate, I will just take a moment to briefly outline another matter that was raised earlier today.

During the debate on Bill C-15, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2016 and other measures—the bill that is currently before the House—I took under advisement a subamendment moved by the member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques. I would like to thank the member for New Westminster—Burnaby for his comments on the matter, and I am now prepared to rule.

•(1520)

[Translation]

Reasoned amendments allow a member to state the reasons for his or her opposition to second reading of a bill. Subamendments to reasoned amendments are permissible but, as the member for New Westminster—Burnaby pointed out in citing O'Brien and Bosc at page 534, “must be strictly relevant to (and not at variance with the sense of) the corresponding amendment and must seek to modify the amendment, and not the original question”.

[English]

In the Chair's view, the original amendment was the list of reasons explaining why the House should decline to give second reading to the bill, and not simply the phrase indicating that the House decline to do so, as the latter could be achieved by simply voting against the second reading motion.

[Translation]

To be admissible, a subamendment should not simply relate to the lead-in “that this House decline to give second reading”, but should instead relate to the reasons stated in the main amendment, either proposing to delete some of the reasons or to suggest additional reasons different from, but relevant to, the main amendment.

Accordingly, I declare the subamendment out of order and debate will continue on the amendment.

[English]

I thank hon. members for their attention.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Beauce.

Government Orders

[Translation]

SECOND READING

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in today's debate on the budget. I would like to point out that the Liberals confirmed in their most recent budget that, unfortunately, they still believe in the old Keynesian theory that governments can create wealth by spending more.

However, when the government injects money into the economy, one has to ask where that money is coming from. We know it does not grow on trees. The reality is that whenever the government takes another dollar from someone's pocket, it is a dollar that the person cannot spend or invest. When that happens, public spending increases and private spending decreases, and there is no creation of wealth.

Government borrowing does the same thing. Private investors who lend their money to the government will have less money to lend to private entrepreneurs. Public sector borrowing and spending increase and private sector borrowing decreases at the same time. There is no creation of wealth.

To be a bit more clear and explain it another way, it is like taking a pot of water from the deep end of a swimming pool and pouring it into the shallow end. As we know, this has no effect and makes no difference, except that a bit of water is wasted between the two. It is the same for the government. When it spends or borrows, it prevents the private sector from spending, and we know that the private sector is better at creating wealth.

What we find with the Liberal government's budget is that it puts us in a difficult economic situation. The Liberals are going to run deficits and borrow money, somewhat like the Trudeau government of the 1970s.

It is important to tell the government that prosperity comes not when the government spends, but rather when entrepreneurs invest.

To kick-start the economy, the government needs to give entrepreneurs the means to create wealth. The government should put in place the best conditions to help entrepreneurs be more productive. To that end, it should reduce taxes for all entrepreneurs, reduce the regulatory burden on Canadians, and promote free trade.

Growth and progress are realized through more economic freedom and less government intervention in the economy. More public spending is not the solution to our social and economic challenges. On the contrary, it will drag us into a debt spiral. According to the government's budget, we will be in that debt spiral for the next five years. Future generations will have to pay off that debt.

I would like to summarize the government's economic logic. It is quite simple: if we are in a recession, spend; if we are not in a recession, spend so that we are in a recession.

That is the simplistic economic logic of this government. It does not understand that Keynesian spending logic does not create wealth.

● (1525)

[English]

I have a few questions for my Liberal colleagues.

What if the Liberal government's economics policy is deeply flawed and does not bring us prosperity? What if more government borrowing and spending are not the answer to our economic challenges? What if we wake up one day and realize that the deplorable state of Canada's finances is a predictable consequence of the current government's excessive borrowing and spending? What if the Prime Minister is wrong in his belief that the more the government spends and stimulates the economy, the less he needs to worry about the deficit? What if the Prime Minister is completely wrong and the budget does not balance itself?

What if the Minister of Finance is wrong and makes a huge mistake thinking we can spend our way to prosperity on borrowed money?

What if Canadians are right when they believe that we do not get richer when we spend money that we do not have? What if deficits do not create wealth but harm future generations? What if prosperity does not come from government spending but rather from entrepreneurs investing? What if more government spending and borrowing does not act as an economic stimulus but rather as an economic sedative?

What happens if my concerns are completely unfounded? Nothing. However, what happens if my concerns are justified and ignored? Nothing good for Canadians.

What I am saying right now is very simple. We cannot borrow money and spend money that we do not have and do not need to spend when we do not have an economic crisis or a recession. That is what the Liberal government is doing right now, and it will harm future generations.

[Translation]

I am very happy to have been able to participate in this debate on the budget. We ought to have a smaller government in Canada, a government that lives according to its means and allows future generations to progress and live in a country that is freer and more prosperous.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his most interesting speech, which was resolutely focused on the economy. I have a great deal of respect for him.

My father was an entrepreneur, a plumber and electrician. He often served as a municipal councillor as well. He had dealings with the community and with industry. As he would often say, it takes money to make money. You have to invest to make money. If you do not borrow, you cannot invest, and the best time to borrow is now, while interest rates are very low.

Is my colleague saying that small and large businesses should not borrow to invest in their economy and their work, in order to create more prosperity in the local economy as well as in Canada?

Government Orders

● (1530)

Hon. Maxime Bernier: Mr. Speaker, what I am saying is that entrepreneurs are free to decide, and it is not up to the government to decide for them and interfere in the free market. If some want to invest, fine; if others prefer to wait, that is fine too. After all, they are the experts.

With regard to the government and the interest on the debt, my colleague says that interest rates are very low. However I would remind him that for every dollar of income tax sent by Canadians to the federal government, \$0.10 goes to pay the interest on the debt. If we borrow and add more than \$100 billion to the debt over the next five years, the \$0.10 interest we are paying is going to rise to \$0.11 and \$0.12, and that is where the government loses its flexibility.

It is important to say this, because often people do not realize that today's borrowing becomes tomorrow's taxes. It is a shame that the Liberals want to tax future generations for today's spending, which will not benefit people in the future.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the speech by my hon. colleague from Beauce, although I was not particularly surprised at it. We are still in the imaginary world of libertarian phantasmagoria.

I would remind my colleague that while private enterprise has a role to play and creates wealth and jobs, that is also because there is public infrastructure and companies and entrepreneurs can benefit from an educated and well cared-for population that has roads, highways, and clean water in the morning.

All of that is possible because we have social programs, because we redistribute wealth, and because we invest in public services, which support economic growth in general.

I am aware of the ambitions of my colleague from Beauce. If he does not believe in government, why does he want to lead a government?

Hon. Maxime Bernier: Mr. Speaker, I believe in the federal government. I am a member of Parliament and was a member of the government for the past 10 years, and I am very proud of that. I believe in the role of the federal government. Its role should be what it was back when we lived according to our means.

Under this Liberal government, we are not living within our means, and that will have an impact on future generations. I believe in an effective federal government that is strong in its jurisdictions, but lives within its means.

I would like to close by quoting Paul Martin, the former finance minister. On February 22, 1994, he spoke about deficit, debt, and living within one's means. I quote: "The debt and the deficit burden pose much more than an economic challenge. This is a moral issue too. What right do we have to steal opportunity away from our children...?"

This is what the Liberal government is doing. It is borrowing at the expense of future generations and preventing future generations and our children from living fully according to their opportunities, as the hon. finance minister, Paul Martin, said.

[English]

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know my colleague to be a strong advocate for balanced budgets and living within our means. I know he stays strongly connected to his riding in Quebec and has indeed been going across the country listening to Canadians. Could he tell us what he hears from those he has met in regard to the government's deficit budget?

Hon. Maxime Bernier: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to share that. I was in my riding last week. People told me they thought it was irresponsible for the government to have a huge deficit. Canadians are working hard for their money and they want to keep their money in their pockets. They know taxes will go up in the near future and they will have to pay for that.

Also, they see that the federal Liberal government wants to shrink their paycheques and expand the role of the government and government programs. That is not what people want. They want to have a government that will respect them, and that is not happening right now.

● (1535)

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to say that I will be splitting my time with the member for Vancouver Quadra.

It is a privilege for me to rise today to speak in this chamber about the great riding of Surrey Centre. The city of Surrey is one of the fastest growing cities in the province of British Columbia. Each month, over 1,000 people move into it. At the current rate of growth, it is expected to eclipse the city of Vancouver in terms of population within the next 20 years. Because of the growth of Surrey, it is has become home to the most young people in the province of British Columbia as well as the most young families. That is why I am proud to return to Surrey and speak with my friends, neighbours, and colleagues about how budget 2016 will positively affect their lives.

Surrey Centre is home to young families who are keen on making their homes and lives in Surrey. As a national government, we have a duty and responsibility to support them when and where we can. The new Canada child benefit is our government's response to this. We are putting forward a more generous, simpler, and income-tested benefit that benefits more Canadian families than ever before.

I cannot tell members how many times in recent weeks I have heard from constituents in Surrey about having to pay taxes on their previous child benefits. I am pleased to see that our government recognized that this new benefit should be tax free, as it should. There will be no taxing of the Canadian child benefit.

On average, this new Canada child benefit means that nine out of 10 Canadians will receive more monthly money, more monthly benefits, than ever before. That means families in Surrey will receive more help toward child care and more money to put their children into soccer, hockey, or ballet.

Government Orders

The city of Surrey is also home to two of the greatest universities in the country. Simon Fraser University, the Surrey branch, celebrated its 50th birthday this year. It was designed by the eminent architect, Arthur Erickson, and was recently acclaimed as the best comprehensive university in the country. Along with Kwantlen Polytechnic University, both of these universities are helping to contribute to the excellence in research that Canada is known for.

Recently, I was able to meet with the presidents of both universities about our federal government's program for post-secondary institutions through the strategic investment fund, which will provide over \$2 billion over the next three years to help accelerate infrastructure projects at universities and colleges across Canada. This means that universities like Simon Fraser can finally expand to meet the demand of a growing city like Surrey, and that Kwantlen Polytechnic can continue to offer more of the great programs that it is known for.

More than anything, I am thrilled to be a part of a government that recognizes that post-secondary education should remain affordable and accessible to all those who seek it. It means that when I return to Surrey, I can tell students that our government is taking action to ensure that post-secondary education is more affordable for students from low- and middle-income families, and that we will make it easier for students to repay their student debt.

However, I would be remiss to not speak about some of the many challenges and difficulties that Surrey faces.

As many in this chamber know, and have no doubt heard about in recent weeks and months, there is a violence and gang problem that has beset our city. Having been involved for over two decades in helping to ensure that at-risk youth in our communities have alternatives to a life of gangs and violence, I am honoured to be a part of a government that will champion a new strategy on how the federal government can best support communities and law enforcement in their ongoing efforts to make it harder for criminals to get access and use such weapons. Thus, it will reduce gun and gang violence in our communities. I am also proud of the exceptional hard work of the Surrey RCMP in addressing this problem in our community.

Being the fastest growing city in the province, Surrey also has challenges with meeting the growth in demand for public transit that meets the needs of our constituents. Our government recognizes that we must invest now and not later, and that is why we are putting forward \$460 million towards public transit in British Columbia alone.

• (1540)

Canadians should be proud of our government putting veterans first. Budget 2016 proposes that we enhance service delivery for veterans by providing \$78.1 million over the next five years. This includes reopening service offices in Prince George and Kelowna, and it also means opening an additional office in Surrey to ensure that veterans across the Lower Mainland can get access to the services that they deserve in their communities. We are reopening the veterans service centres the previous Conservative government closed. We are doing this not because we have to, but because it is the right thing to do.

Low-income seniors from my riding are happy to know that the guaranteed income supplement will now be increased by 10% for those single-income earners.

Surrey Centre is also home to British Columbia's regional headquarters for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, our E Division. Our government recognizes that the RCMP's forensic laboratory services play a crucial role in supporting law enforcement investigation through forensic identification and analysis of evidence from throughout British Columbia and across Canada. This budget provides \$60.4 million over five years for a new RCMP forensic laboratory to be built and located within the RCMP regional headquarters in Surrey Centre, British Columbia.

My constituents are very happy to know that the initial infrastructure funding will inject billions into much needed repair, delayed maintenance, and upkeep of our community's infrastructure, such as our community centre, our rec. centres, and our swimming pools. This is money that is past due and will create better social infrastructure and good-paying jobs in the next building season.

I want to close today by sharing how proud I am to be part of a government that recognizes the realities of the constituents of my riding. Our government has put forward a proposal in budget 2016 that recognizes and addresses the high cost of raising families; a proposal that helps the constituents in my riding get what they need, where they need it, and when they need it; a proposal that helps to address violence by guns and gangs through a new federal strategy; a proposal that ensures that veterans across the Lower Mainland and the province get the services that they deserve; and a proposal that ensures that Canada is a more fair and prosperous place to call our home.

Budget 2016 is good news for the people of Surrey, good news for British Columbians, and most of all, good news for Canadians.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his speech. It is always lovely to hear from a fellow British Columbian in this chamber, speaking up for the province we know and love.

I would like to ask the member specifically about a provision to the budget implementation act pertaining to the bank recapitalization regime, otherwise known as the bail-in. That particular provision takes up about 20%, if not 25% of the actual budget implementation act. I would like to know, has the member opposite heard from his constituents? Has he heard concerns regarding this?

Obviously, it sounds like a very eloquent regime. However, would the member agree that this particular kind of measure is untested in the G7, and I would say probably in the G20? Does he have any concerns about this type of legislation, and does he feel that more discussion needs to be made on this particular provision?

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Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, I think the bank recapitalization regime is consistent with international best practices and standards developed following the financial crisis. I think it will help enhance the bank resolution tool kit. It will support resilience of our financial sector. I believe this bail-in regime would apply only to Canada's largest banks and would allow authorities to recapitalize a failing bank by converting eligible long-term debt into common shares.

The government is introducing a legislative framework for that regime, and regulations and guidelines will follow.

• (1545)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, British Columbia has a robust small business community. Ninety-eight per cent of our economy comes from the small business community.

The current Prime Minister, during the election campaign, denigrated the small business community and pretty well called small businesses tax cheats. He flip-flopped and then promised to reduce the small business community's taxes down to 9%. In this budget, he failed to deliver on that promise.

I wonder whether the member for Surrey Centre, who has a robust small business community in his riding, would join with the NDP opposition to call on his own government to make good on the small business tax cuts that the Prime Minister promised during the campaign.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, when I speak with my constituents and the small business owners in my riding, they say they want shorter travel times, better infrastructure, to get to and from their businesses faster, and a more robust economy. That is their first and foremost demand. They are very happy with the current budget, which is going to help them get to and from work and job sites quicker and allow their employees to get to and from job sites quicker through the public transit and transportation infrastructure investments that will take place.

That is what the small business community needs. It needs jobs and people to get to their jobs quicker. That is what they were demanding and that is the response I am getting.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have three children who were educated in their primary school years in Surrey, so I know the community quite well.

I would like to hear from the member what this budget offers, in his view, to alleviate the shortage of affordable housing and address housing prices in his riding and in the greater Surrey area.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, this budget brings a lot in terms of social funding through CMHC.

My constituents were very happy to hear my answer to the very first question I was asked when I campaigned and got nominated, which was whether co-op housing agreements would be renewed and maintained. My understanding is that this budget will maintain and renew those agreements so that we can keep affordable housing in my great city and help those who are financially challenged or have lower incomes stay in my city.

I am very happy that this budget addresses the very first question that I was ever asked as a political candidate in this election.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on the bill that I just asked a question about, Bill C-15, which will implement many of the measures contained in the budget that our government tabled on March 22.

In electing a new government, millions of Canadians signalled their desire for change. Our government was elected, in part, because we took that desire seriously. We offered Canadians an ambitious new plan for a strong middle class and a strong economy. We promised that we would do all we could do to help every Canadian succeed.

Budget 2016 is an important part of fulfilling that promise. It offers immediate help to those who need it the most, and lays the groundwork for sustained, inclusive economic growth that will benefit Canada's middle class and those working hard to join it. It helps reduce the income inequality gap while stimulating the clean economy.

For generations, Canadians worked hard, secure in the belief that their hard work would be rewarded. They trusted that in exchange for their honest efforts, they would realize greater opportunities for themselves and their families. This sense of optimism, paired with government policies that strengthen the middle class, as well as the robust immigration we have had that has created such a diverse country, has helped to make Canada the country it is today.

However, in recent years, the benefits of economic growth have been shared by fewer and fewer Canadians. Canada's wealthiest 1% have seen their income double in 30 years. Meanwhile, even though household costs continue to rise, most families' incomes have barely risen over the same 30 years, making it harder to make ends meet.

In Vancouver, we have the double whammy of a shortage of affordable housing and skyrocketing housing prices. That first started in my riding of Vancouver Quadra, on the west side of Vancouver, but it has now moved into our metro area.

I am pleased to say that I have met directly with leaders in CMHC, to make sure they understand the Vancouver situation, how hard it is for ordinary families and young people to buy a house and make a home in Vancouver, and the downside of that for our city. I am also pleased to have met several times with the minister responsible for housing, so that he can understand Vancouver's unique situation.

Our government has responded in this budget, not only with a massive infrastructure investment, social housing being a big part of it, but also through a half a million dollars being allocated for StatsCan to thoroughly research and understand the statistics, and bring the evidence forward about the housing price increases that I just described.

With budget 2016, our government seeks to help more Canadians and to restore the confidence of Canadians in a brighter, more prosperous future. I am going to speak about a couple of things that are near and dear to my heart. One of them is the environment, and another one is veterans.

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The environment is actually the top issue for Vancouver Quadra constituents, according to the surveys and how they fill them out. Our government is operating on the principle that the economy and the environment go hand in hand. I used to say that 15 years ago when I was an environment minister for the Province of British Columbia, but that principle has not been in operation over the last 10 years. I am very pleased that our environment minister, our Prime Minister, and our cabinet see the world that way.

I would like to highlight some of the investments in the environment. Budget 2016 provides \$3.4 billion over five years to address climate change and air pollution, ecological protection, and to restore public trust in the environmental assessment processes. It is a very important investment.

In addition to that, the budget invests \$81 million to boost Canada's marine and coastal protected areas, from 1% today to 10% by 2020, a very ambitious program of improving protection for our marine areas.

In addition, \$40 million a year has been reinstated for ocean science investments for research and science, so we can help protect our fish stocks, like our wild salmon that are so important to British Columbians.

● (1550)

The Kitsilano Coast Guard base, which is an absolutely necessary facility and was closed by the Conservative government, has been reopened. The announcement took place a week or so ago. This base will have a strengthened mandate to protect our environment, our ecosystem in English Bay and Burrard Inlet, and the beaches, by responding to oil spills. There is a lot of good news on the environment.

The other area where we needed real change to happen, and which Vancouver Quadra constituents see as a core responsibility of a responsible government, has to do with veterans. Veterans have dedicated their lives to the defence of our country and deserve our unwavering support. Frankly, they did not receive that from the previous government.

The Government of Canada, over the decades, has had a social covenant with all veterans and their families. However, the previous government had their lawyers arguing in lawsuits that it did not exist, and they tried to prevent the veterans from having a fair settlement for their injuries. That is a sacred obligation that we must and we will meet with both respect and gratitude.

As the defence critic for two years prior to the recent election, I met many times with veterans in town halls, in Legion halls, and meeting rooms across the country and in Ottawa, and heard their many concerns. I am delighted that our government will give back to veterans who have given so much to Canadians. We will respect the social covenant and this sacred obligation.

The bill restores critical access to services for veterans and ensures the long-term financial security of disabled veterans. Canada's veterans will receive more in local in-person government services, as well as better access to personalized case managers.

With this budget, we are providing additional funding to Veterans Affairs Canada, so it can reopen service offices recently shuttered in

Charlottetown, Sydney, Corner Brook, Windsor, Thunder Bay, Saskatoon, Brandon, and in Prince George and Kelowna in my province of British Columbia. We are also planning to open a new office in Surrey, B.C.

To help veterans in their rehabilitation process, we will enhance front-line services by hiring additional case managers and reducing the client-to-case manager ratio to no more than 25 to one. We will increase the earnings loss benefit from 75% to 90% of a veteran's monthly gross pre-release military salary. The principle here is that veterans who have been injured should not have to live in poverty because the government is ignoring their needs.

There are many other aspects of the veterans' requests that are being satisfied in the budget, and the government will continue to consult with veterans toward the full package of support and respect that they have earned and they deserve. Canadian Armed Forces and veterans with service-related disabilities will see an increase in the benefits they receive, and they will see an increase in the services that they are provided.

The measures contained in our budget will not only benefit our veterans, but other groups of Canadians who deserve our support and our respect. This includes senior citizens and our children.

Unfortunately, I do not have time in this speech to elaborate on the groundbreaking investments we are making in seniors and children that will remove almost one million low-income seniors from below the poverty line and lift hundreds of thousands of children above the poverty line as well.

By boosting funding for the most vulnerable, we are reducing income inequality. We are investing for the years and the decades to come. We are investing in our children and grandchildren, so that they may inherit a more environmentally sustainable, prosperous, and hopeful Canada.

Simpler, tax free, and more generous, the child tax benefit is an example of the kind of good public policy that is in this budget. The bill is an essential step to restoring prosperity to the middle class and fairness to all Canadians.

I look forward to hearing from colleagues from all sides of the House as we discuss the bill in the coming days. It is a very timely and very important piece of legislation for Canadians.

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• (1555)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for her comments, especially in regard to our veterans. Being deputy critic for veterans on this side of the House and having the opportunity to serve on the committee, it is very clear that veterans are a high priority for all of us. It is important to note that the previous minister in the past government was making some significant progress on the initial charter, which was introduced by the Liberal Party with the set amounts for the disability award that were put in place at that time. We all want to see this program grow and our vets to be truly cared for in the way they should be.

We are hearing in the committee over and over again about how things were improving, and are continuing to improve as well. However, in my own riding, and with the many veterans groups I am meeting with, there are two things that are concerning. I would like the member to comment on them briefly.

The first is that our veterans are concerned that their services are being provided in a large deficit situation and they are concerned about the ongoing viability of these awards. They are also very concerned with what is happening with the Department of National Defence. Our veterans care very much about our soldiers and are concerned about the cutbacks that we are seeing there.

• (1600)

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, in the two years that I was defence critic, no one ever came to me and said “Gee, our most severely incapacitated and disabled veterans are living below the poverty line when they turn 65, but it’s a good thing because we need to cut our spending.” They were not saying that.

In fact, I want to point out that the previous government took \$1.1 billion out of the funding for Veterans Affairs Canada. That has contributed to the shrinking of services, funding, and benefits for those who deserve it the most.

I am very proud that we are reversing that. If we are doing that in the context of a deficit that we will be eliminating over the course of the next few years, so be it. Our veterans deserve to be put first.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we heard during the campaign that the Liberals were promising more help to the middle class. In my riding, I have five neighbourhoods where the majority of people make \$45,000 or less a year. We had heard that the so-called middle-class tax cut would benefit those earning \$210,000 or more the most, which means that six out of 10 Canadians would not be getting anything from the tax cut.

Bill C-15 does not offer help through that tax cut to those who need it most. I would ask the member to comment on that.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, I do not know the source of the member’s data. People making \$210,000 and over will not enjoy any net benefits from the middle-class tax cuts, because there is an increase in their taxes. Nor would they enjoy any benefits from the new Canada child benefit because it will not be available to them.

Those who need it the most, at the lowest end of the income spectrum, will receive the bulk of the Canada child benefit. In fact, a low-income family with three young children could end up with about \$19,000 of tax-free funding. It is almost like a guaranteed

minimum income from the Canada child benefit. There will be nine out of 10 families who will benefit from the change. It is exactly what we need to address poverty and to reduce income inequality. Therefore, I am proud to support it.

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise to ask a question of my colleague, whose politics I have admired for a long time. She is a very authentic politician from Vancouver Quadra.

Having lived in her riding, and having cycled and taken the bus in that riding many times as a graduate student at UBC, what are her constituents saying about the proposed investments in public transit, and also in active transit, which is so important to our country?

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, the member for Pontiac clearly understands Vancouver Quadra, because the environment is the number one concern, as people express it to me. People in Vancouver Quadra are delighted at the investments in growing a clean energy economy and reducing greenhouse gas emissions: \$2 billion, I believe, over two years to help the provinces do that.

The huge increase in investment in infrastructure for public transit is very important; it will take a lot of cars off of the streets of Vancouver. There is a wealth of issues that this budget addresses in terms of the priorities of Vancouver Quadra.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L’Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague, the member for Carleton.

It is a great pleasure for me to be here today to speak about Bill C-15. When I use the word “pleasure”, what I mean is that it is a pleasure for me to share my thoughts with my colleagues and Canadians, although not necessarily a pleasure for me to speak about Bill C-15 and the Liberals’ budget.

Before broaching this subject, I believe that my colleagues will allow me a moment to repeat the appeal I launched to all Canadians regarding the tragic events now unfolding in Fort McMurray. Yesterday the population of Lac-Mégantic began rallying with the mayor to launch a universal call for donations to the Red Cross. We know that the Red Cross was a huge help to us in Lac-Mégantic during the recent tragedy. It raised over \$14 million. This was for the little downtown core of a small town in Quebec that was ravaged by fire. Of course, there were deaths. It was an extremely painful event. Recovery has been very difficult for us, and even today, the Red Cross is with us, providing support.

What is happening right now in Fort McMurray is massive, it is serious, it is horrible. These people will also need Canadians' support. I commend the government's commitment this morning to match the amounts that Canadians donate to the Red Cross to help the people of Fort McMurray. I think this is a wonderful gesture, and if we want this money to get there and help them as soon as possible, I hope that people will donate. It is easy. People just need to visit the Red Cross website to make a donation. If every Canadian donated the equivalent of the price of a coffee, the people of Fort McMurray could receive nearly \$60 million. God knows that they will need it.

Now, let us get back to Bill C-15. I read the bill. I read the summary, and this is how it begins:

Part 1 implements certain income tax measures proposed in the March 22, 2016 budget by (a) eliminating the education tax credit; (b) eliminating the textbook tax credit; (c) exempting from taxable income amounts received as rate assistance under the Ontario Electricity Support Program; (d) maintaining the small business tax rate at 10.5% for the 2016 and subsequent taxation years and making consequential adjustments...

Further on, it says:

(f) eliminating the children's arts tax credit; (g) eliminating the family tax cut credit; (h) replacing the Canada child tax benefit and universal child care benefit with the new Canada child benefit;

There is also the following:

(i) eliminating the child fitness tax credit;

That is how Bill C-15 begins. The government claims to be the champion of the middle class, the champion of families, and when we take the time to read the summary, we see how these splendid changes are announced, this new Liberal approach. For a government that professes to be the champion of the middle class, the tone is set. I think that most people in the regions of Quebec will not be fooled by what is going on here.

That is especially true since most of those people work for small and medium-sized enterprises. Middle-class children are directly affected since the incentives for culture and physical fitness no longer exist.

In my speech, I will be talking about three subjects. First, as you may well have guessed, I will be talking about small and medium-sized businesses. Second, I will be talking about the agriculture sector, because we must not speak only about what is in the document. We could speak about that at length because there are a lot of things I would like to say, but we also need to speak about what is not in the document. The things that are missing from the budget make me very concerned for the people living regions such as mine. Third, we will, of course, be speaking about the Liberals' management approach, the Liberal way of piling deficit upon deficit.

During the election campaign, the Prime Minister clearly stated what he thinks of small and medium-sized enterprises. He said, "small businesses are actually just ways for wealthier Canadians to save on their taxes."

We know why he said that. He said it because he himself has used small and medium-sized businesses to pay less income tax. During the election campaign, I wondered why he knew that. The Prime Minister created four SMEs in order to avoid paying income tax. I want to give him the benefit of the doubt. He does not know what a

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real SME is. In a region such as mine, an SME is a small manufacturing operation.

• (1605)

It is a small business that employs 5, 10, 50, or 60 people. It gives people work and creates wealth, which is good for the entire Canadian economy. That is what an SME is. It is not some kind of subterfuge on the part of a prime minister. It is something real.

For years, the mining industry was part of my riding. We had one company. We were a one-industry town. Today, all the mines are closed down. How do we survive? Because of SMEs. Unfortunately, they have been forgotten in the Liberal government's budget.

I will now sketch the profile of an SME based on an analysis done by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. Some seem to think that the owners of SMEs are rolling in money, but the reality is quite different. Data obtained by Statistics Canada, the CFIB, and other sources show that the vast majority of entrepreneurs are members of the middle class. What a surprise. One-third of business owners earn less than \$33,000 a year, and two-thirds earn less than \$73,000 a year. In fact, 41% of business owners work more than 50 hours per week. There are far more earning under \$40,000 a year than earning \$250,000. The ratio is four to one. Are these the rich people described by the Prime Minister in the election campaign? Not at all.

The budget is a direct attack on small and medium-sized businesses, and thus on the middle class. The owners of SMEs in our regions are middle-class people. The Liberals have decided to keep the tax rate for small business at 10.5% instead of lowering it to 9%, as was anticipated. They had promised to reduce it. The president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business said:

• (1610)

[*English*]

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 as it announced the rate will remain at 10.5 per cent after 2016.

[*Translation*]

Another promise broken. What is more, the Liberals have also put an end to the credit for hiring. Overall, the Liberal budget will cost Canadian SMEs more than \$2 billion.

I mentioned earlier that SME owners are not rich and are for the most part members of the middle class. That means a new bill for \$2 billion foisted on the middle class. Budget 2016 raises corporate tax and hence the tax on the middle class.

I cannot speak much about agriculture, as there is nothing on it in the budget. There are not even any measures to help those farmers who are faced with a serious crisis and are losing thousands of dollars every month because of imports of diafiltered milk. I will not speak about this, but I hope that the government will do more than just talk about it. The Liberals said they would talk about it, and we want them to take action since they know the solution. I hope that they will act now.

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Finally, on the deficit, I am not the one who will be talking. I will let my constituents do the talking. I asked some of them the following question: what does it mean to you to know that the government's budget is going to mean deficits and to not know when fiscal balance will be restored? In fact, with this budget, the Liberals have repealed the law that requires us to have a balanced budget.

This is what one of my constituents said: "It is crucial to reduce the Liberals' too often hare-brained spending and stimulate the economy through loans to SMEs. The SMEs will actually create jobs. First the bills have to be paid. Once everything is paid, we stop getting into debt, or at least run up as little debt as possible. Once there are no more bills to pay, real freedom will start for us. That is real wealth. How much will this cost future generations? We have to live within our means. Either the Liberal team is incompetent or it decided not to tell Canadians the whole truth in order to win the election. In any case, it does not deserve to govern Canadians."

It is incredible to see the wisdom of our constituents. I had many comments from my constituents, and I could quote many more of them, but my time is passing quickly.

In conclusion, I will say that the budget is not a budget based on sustainable development or in favour of the middle class, but a very average budget of sustainable deficit. That is why I will be voting against Bill C-15.

• (1615)

[English]

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was a small business owner before I had my job as a parliamentarian. I knew tax decreases enabled my business, but what allowed my business to grow and prosper was getting customers through the door.

Through the budget, we have proposed decreasing taxes for middle-class families. We have added a larger tax-free Canada child benefit. We have increased digital infrastructure spending. There is much more in the budget.

Does my colleague not think that the changes we have made and the policies we have put forward in the budget will help middle-income families, many that own small businesses, and will likely help them to grow?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I am sure that my hon. colleague did everything she could because people working in SMEs work very hard and put in long hours to earn every single penny.

For that reason, our Conservative government decided to lower their taxes so they could grow their business and provide more services to their fellow Canadians.

When money is in the hands of talented entrepreneurs, it yields much more than when it remains in the hands of government.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech.

As the proud representative of Quebec's agri-food capital, I was especially interested in measures affecting agriculture. I, too, was disappointed to hear the Minister of Agriculture say that the only

thing in the budget that could be of interest to agricultural producers was access to the Internet in rural areas. That is of very little concern to them.

I would like my colleague to tell us what he would have liked this budget to do for agriculture.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member.

First of all, I would have liked to hear that agriculture makes an important contribution to our economy. That would have been a good start because in our regions agriculture is not just a farm and bad odours in the spring. It means jobs and purchases of tractors and supplies. It is the economy of an entire town.

Unfortunately, just like everything else that has to do with Quebec's and Canada's regions, it seems to have been ignored by the government. This budget makes absolutely no mention of it.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. He was elected barely six months ago, but he nonetheless has excellent political experience, having been the mayor of a municipality.

As I believe I told the Minister of Finance yesterday, in Quebec, municipalities are not allowed to post a deficit. They may incur debt when they borrow to engage in development, but they are not allowed to run a deficit.

However, this government, which got itself elected on the promise of a small \$10-billion deficit, is now imposing a \$30-billion deficit on Canadians.

As a former mayor and city manager who was not allowed to run a deficit, could the hon. member explain the dangers that face Canadians due to a deficit three times higher than what the Liberals promised during the election campaign?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, when a city in Quebec posts a deficit, the first penny from the following year's taxes goes toward paying down that debt.

When a deficit is posted, citizens must be taxed in order to pay it down immediately, not in 20 or 30 years. Municipalities know that they cannot use money they do not have to repair streets and do all sorts of things. They cannot post a deficit.

I really appreciate this question, because that surprised me as well. The Liberals got elected saying that they would post a very small deficit, and in the end it turned out to be very big.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are told all the time that an activist government is like a gigantic fairness machine, transferring money from the wealthy to the needy. Why, then, does this machine seem so often to send money in the opposite direction?

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The Bombardier bailout is a case study. The Liberal government has now offered a billion middle-class tax dollars to a company that paid \$8 million to just one of its executives in 2015. According to Statistics Canada data, the lion's share of federal income tax that will fund this bailout comes from people earning between \$45,000 and \$90,000 a year. The federal government got more money from this income cohort than any other, money that it will use to bail out a company whose controlling family is said to be worth \$1.77 billion.

In the same year, as the company began seeking that bailout, it had enough money to pay \$32 million to eight named executive officers, an average of \$4 million per person. That does not just make them part of the infamous 1% but the 0.01%.

A company has the right to pay its leaders anything it wants with its own money, but this bailout represents a massive wealth transfer from the working class to the wealthiest of the wealthy. Some will argue that rich pay packages are necessary to attract top executive talent, but Liberals explicitly reject that argument. They just won an election on a platform of raising taxes on anyone earning \$200,000 a year, which is the Liberal definition of rich. Yet Bombardier paid 40 times that amount to a single executive. If executive compensation were capped at \$200,000 a year in 2015, Bombardier would have saved enough money to fund 400 more jobs at \$75,000 a year.

Of course, this is not about jobs. If it were, the budget would not have simultaneously raised taxes on small business job creators. Incidentally, it raised it by \$1 billion between now and the next election, the same \$1 billion that the Liberals want to give to Bombardier.

Taking money from job creators to give it to billionaires does not create jobs. If this were about creating jobs, the company would not have rejected the federal government's initial bailout of just a few weeks ago. It turns out beggars can be choosers. Nor would the vice-president of the company's C Series program have said that a bailout was not needed to save jobs, but merely "an extra bonus". Is it really the responsibility of middle-class taxpayers to fund extra bonuses for the wealthy and well-connected? Unfortunately, it would seem so.

According to a recently leaked government report entitled, "Examining Ontario's Business Support Programs", "Ontario's business support programs favour the largest and oldest companies, the companies least likely to be in need of support." About 200 companies, or 0.1% of Ontario businesses, got 30% of government subsidies, the report calculated. Why? Because the wheels of corporate welfare are greased with money, money for consultants to help navigate Ontario's 65 corporate aid programs in nine ministries, money for lobbyists to push an application along, and money for donations to the politicians who will make the final decision.

Postmedia's Anthony Furey recently revealed that companies that donated to the Ontario Liberals enjoyed massive taxpayer-funded grants. While Bombardier does not donate to federal politicians or parties, the lobbying commissioner's website shows the company met with designated federal public office-holders 54 times in the last 6 months.

All of this activity is legal, ethical, and properly reported, but it cost money. Therefore, those without money cannot do it. Because

they cannot influence the government's commercial decisions, they rarely benefit from them.

• (1620)

The wealthy can afford to work the system and so the system works for them. Examples abound: Ontario's taxpayer-financed electric vehicle incentive program recently helped super rich car lovers buy the million dollar Porsche 918 Spyder, according to the CBC; Ontario's so-called Green Energy Act, which forces higher hydro bills on seniors living on fixed incomes in order to subsidize well-connected, so-called clean energy companies that produce almost no reliable power; and elsewhere, government-mandated taxi cartels shut out competition and empower millionaire taxi plate owners to exploit cab drivers and passengers.

It is not that government failed to stop these injustices, rather, it has caused them. It is like the Sheriff of Nottingham posing as Robin Hood. We should fight for social justice. We Conservatives believe in doing so. The best way to start is by getting government, and the wealthy interests that influence it, off the backs and out of the pockets of the middle class and the less fortunate. In so doing, we can truly champion the underdogs among us so they can be part of a better and brighter future for us all.

• (1625)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while I appreciate the member's words, I do not necessarily agree with them.

I find it somewhat interesting that on the one hand, we have the Conservative Party say that we should forget about Bombardier, forget about trying to help the potential thousands of employees in a very important aerospace industry, not only in the province of Quebec but other provinces that are also directly or indirectly affiliated. On the other hand, the New Democratic Party and the members of the Bloc are saying that we should throw it all in, that we should give more, and that we should do this or that. The Liberal Party has had the right approach, which is to see what we can do to develop and enhance the aerospace industry in all regions of our country.

Government Orders

The member talked about tax fairness. Why would the member vote against a budget that delivers a tax decrease to nine million Canadians? That is what the member is voting against. Why would he do so if he truly believes the middle class should have more money? That is exactly what they would be getting.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the budget in question will give that member a nice big tax reduction, even though he makes \$150,000 a year. However, single mothers who are earning \$45,000 a year will get no income tax reduction whatsoever.

With respect to the second point on Bombardier, the Liberal approach on Bombardier has been to do \$2 billion worth of harm to the company by blocking the expansion of the Toronto island airport, and in the process cancelling the order for \$2 billion worth of jets by Porter Airlines, which lands at that airport. Then it comes forward, along with the Government of Quebec, to offer \$2 billion worth of taxpayer help.

Our approach would be to do neither. We would let the company expand its operations and sell to another great Canadian company by landing in the heart of downtown Toronto, which has the simultaneous effect of cutting off traffic between Pearson Airport and the downtown business section in Canada's busiest city and giving a free enterprise solution that will cost nothing to taxpayers to a company that is seeking to attract new revenues. By contrast, the approach of the Liberals is to take a billion dollars from everyday middle-class Canadians to bailout a company that is controlled by a billionaire family, which paid \$32 million in executive compensation in the same year that it was seeking handouts from the government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. We have not had an opportunity to debate for a long time.

I pinch myself a little when I hear a Conservative say he is concerned about social justice and the disadvantaged in our society after his government gave billions of dollars in gifts to big banks, big corporations, and oil companies all over the country.

I am also surprised to hear that the Conservative Party's position on Bombardier is to do absolutely nothing and abandon Montreal's aerospace sector. I will enjoy talking about that when I go back home.

I would like to hear what he thinks about the Liberals' deception with respect to the tax cuts for the middle class. In fact, 6 out of 10 people will not benefit from this, including people who earn less than \$45,000 a year and need it most. These people have been abandoned in the Liberals' budget.

• (1630)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member just said in his conclusion is true. He is right: people earning \$45,000 a year will receive literally nothing by way of a tax cut from the federal government. That is true.

However, I find it ironic that a so-called socialist—

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: No, not so-called, a real socialist.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: He corrected me, Mr. Speaker, and said that he was not a so-called but a real socialist.

He wants to give \$1 billion to a corporation owned by a billionaire family. It is true, as we now see, that socialists and leftists do indeed want to redistribute money, but they want to take it from the poor and the middle class and give it to the rich.

We want to do just the opposite: we want people to keep the money they earn through their own work, their investments, and their merit. That is what makes our approach to poverty different from that of the other parties on the left.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, The Economy; the hon. member for Saskatoon West, Asbestos; and the hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît, The Environment.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl.

I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-15, the budget implementation bill.

Just a short time ago, I had the opportunity to stand and speak to budget 2016, which I referred to as a middle-class, or better yet, a growth budget. I spoke about a budget based on the fundamental principles of investing in and strengthening our middle class as well as revitalizing the Canadian economy with a historic \$120-billion infrastructure investment plan.

I also talked about how the budget would help ensure a prosperous future for the residents of my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge, and in fact, for all Canadians.

Most important, I spoke about how, as a father of two young daughters, Natalia and Eliana, budget 2016 puts in place a plan for economic growth not only for today, but for successive generations so that all our children will inherit a more prosperous and hopeful country.

Bill C-15 is the concrete foundation emanating from the budget 2016 blueprint. The bill makes real the principles and commitments laid out by our government, such as the principles of greater tax fairness for Canadians, the belief that we should be there for our seniors to ensure they have a dignified retirement, a firm commitment to families with the introduction of the truly transformational Canada child benefit, a large step forward to honour our commitments to Canada's veterans, and significant improvements to the Employment Insurance Act.

Bill C-15 also continues to work on strengthening our financial system with the introduction of a bail-in regime for banks, which ensures that Canada's banks remain the soundest in the world, and very importantly, that Canadian depositors and taxpayers remain protected.

Government Orders

Bill C-15 contains 15 divisions. It had to be substantial, because our budget made substantial commitments to Canadians, and the technical underpinnings of these commitments are contained in this piece of legislation. Because there is so much to speak about in the bill, I am going to focus on a few sections.

I have stated how proud I am of this government's commitment to families, and Bill C-15 makes good on that commitment by introducing the Canada child benefit. The Canada child benefit will replace the current system of the Canada child tax benefit and universal care benefit. This transformational CCB will be simpler, tax-free, and paid monthly to eligible families beginning in July of this year.

Nine out of ten Canadian families will receive more under the Canada child benefit than under the current system. Overall, about 3.5 million Canadian families will receive this benefit, with the average increase in child benefits at almost \$2,300 annually.

Independent analysis, and I emphasize independent analysis, indicates that 300,000 fewer Canadian children will be living in poverty in 2016-17 than in 2014-15.

I am proud to be part of a government that is taking this bold step to build a better and what I believe is a more just and inclusive society.

As I have stated repeatedly, seniors built this great country and we will always be indebted to them. Bill C-15 contains measures to increase the GIS, the guaranteed income supplement, by providing up to an additional \$947 per year to our most vulnerable seniors, single seniors, the majority of whom are women. Seniors with personal incomes, excluding OAS and GIS payments, between zero and \$8,400, will see increased benefits. This step will help improve financial security for about 900,000 of our most vulnerable senior Canadians.

Members should know that budget 2016 does not impact pension income splitting for seniors. This will remain in effect.

A large portion of the budget implementation bill addresses regulatory changes to our financial system. There is a very good reason for this emphasis in the legislation. The strength of our economy and the middle class in large measure rests on the stability of Canada's financial institutions. Canadians rely on our banks and credit unions on a daily basis for virtually every aspect of their lives.

While the failure of a large Canadian bank is very unlikely, it is still important that authorities have adequate tools to promote and preserve financial stability as well as to protect taxpayers in a crisis. Canadian banks are among, and I would argue are, the soundest in the world. They have robust levels of capital, lending practices that are sound, and stood out as pillars of strength during the 2008 global financial crisis.

I had a first-hand view of the global financial crisis. I know full well the benefits of the sound regulatory environment governing our financial system.

I would be remiss if I did not add that, while I worked in New York City during the 1990s, it was a Liberal government under Prime Minister Chrétien and finance minister Paul Martin that said no to the Canadian banks merging. I believe this decision is the

major reason our banks came out of the 2008 global financial crisis with flying colours.

• (1635)

The bail-in regime contained in Bill C-15 would strengthen the tool kit and only apply to Canada's domestic systematically important banks and allow our regulators to recapitalize a failing bank by converting eligible long-term debt into shares.

More important, the bail-in regime makes it clear that the shareholders and creditors of Canada's largest banks are responsible for the banks' risks, not taxpayers. This way Canadians are not stuck with the tab in the event of an economic crisis.

This regime is consistent with international best practices and standards that were developed following the financial crisis of 2008 and although we have a robust banking sector, the provisions contained in the legislation would provide the legislative framework for the regime, with regulations and guidelines to follow.

I wish to make clear to all Canadians that insured and non-insured deposits would continue to be protected by the Canada Deposit Insurance Corporation.

In addition to the bail-in provisions, there are also a number of technical changes in this legislation which would help strengthen credit unions and the CDIC.

Bill C-15 would also help Canadian families by putting into place changes to the Employment Insurance Act which would assist those Canadians impacted by the very unfortunate situation of a job loss. In fact, the changes our government would implement would increase employment insurance payments to unemployed Canadians by \$2.5 billion over the next two fiscal years.

Key improvements include extra weeks of benefits for workers in regions affected by a downturn in commodity prices. In addition, the waiting period would be reduced from two weeks to one week and would provide unemployed workers with hundreds of dollars more at the time they need it most.

Our government will work and create the conditions for all Canadians to find meaningful employment. That is what we want. However, we must ensure a system that would provide help when Canadians and their families require it.

During the election campaign, one of our key commitments was to greater tax fairness for middle-class Canadians and all Canadians. Our government has also introduced Bill C-2, which would lower the income tax rate for middle-class Canadians. Today, over nine million Canadians are benefiting from lower taxes, with a total tax reduction of approximately \$3.4 billion.

Bill C-15 would provide even further tax fairness measures with amendments to the Income Tax Act contained in the first three parts of the bill. For example, we have added insulin pills and needles, feminine hygiene products, as well as catheters, to the list of items that are exempt from GST/HST.

Government Orders

The budget bill contains provisions that would increase the maximum benefit under the northern residents deduction, exempt taxable income amounts received as rate assistance under the Ontario electricity support program, and, quite proudly, introduce a teacher and early childhood educator school supply tax credit. This measure alone would provide a benefit of \$140 million over five years in tax relief to our educators.

These are just a few examples of the elements contained in Bill C-15.

As I had previously stated, budget 2016, the middle-class or growth budget, provides a blueprint for a hopeful future for all Canadians. Bill C-15 is a solid legislative foundation for the future.

I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will join with me in supporting the bill.

● (1640)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to offer congratulations to the member on his speech, make a comment, and then ask a question.

First, with respect to the bank recapitalization provisions of the budget, obviously this is a newer idea. What might be a good suggestion, and I would like to hear the member's comments on this, would be to have the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions make public stress tests so that the public and the people who invest in banks can know that the banks they are investing in or are trading on are of the highest standards.

I have heard a few Liberals mention today that this recapitalization regime meets international standards.

First, could the member name one country that utilizes it?

Second, since the recapitalization scheme has never been used, would he agree there is some trepidation that the next time there is a financial crisis where this may be used, that it would be the first trial, I think, in the world of such a bail-in regime? Is he concerned about that?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, in the 2008 financial crisis, one of the impacts was, for example, the injection by the United States of capital or equity into its banks to boost its banks. The same situation also happened in Europe. From that, we had what were called contingent CoCos or bail-in securities created where taxpayers would not be on the hook.

This came out of the G20, the G8, FASB, and many international organizations, where it was determined that taxpayers would no longer face the risk in case of a too-big-to-fail situation where creditors and equity holders would face the risk of a recapitalization.

Contingent securities are in effect across Europe, Switzerland, the U.K., Italy, Germany, and France. They have been issued. They are traded in the market.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the Liberals were in opposition, they called the Conservatives' omnibus bills undemocratic and disrespectful of our Parliament. Today our colleague declares himself very proud of a voluminous bill. I do not understand how anyone can be proud of a

179-page bill that amends 30 separate laws, affects nine different departments and has an impact on many others, contains a bill already on the Order Paper, would retroactively repeal an entire statute, and also contains other retroactive legislative changes.

My colleague says he is very proud of the banks, but does he not think that a complex section on bank recapitalization is deserving of much more thorough study than what it will receive as part of an omnibus bill?

[*English*]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-15 contains many of the measures that were in our platform and obviously would come into effect through our budget. We are obviously producing a piece of legislation that would fulfill our commitments to not only members of the House but all Canadians across this entire country. I will leave it at that.

In terms of our banks, I am proud to say that Canada has the soundest banks in the world, which employ literally hundreds of thousands of Canadians from coast to coast to coast. We want to maintain those banks and ensure that our financial system is still the soundest going forward.

● (1645)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, given that last week all MPs were in our home ridings where we had the opportunity to speak with our constituents, I am wondering what my colleague heard from his constituents as to the greatest needs of young families and seniors and how the budget might actually help to solve some of the problems they are facing.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, many young families in my riding are looking forward to receiving tax-free cheques on a monthly basis, beginning in July, with an average increase of \$2,300. That also transpired into nine out of 10 families that currently receive the UCCB and the Canada child tax credit receiving higher payments.

For the province of Ontario alone over the next two years, the increased payment amount will total \$4 billion. That is \$4 billion going directly into the pockets of residents in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Seamus O'Regan (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise in the House today to speak to this important piece of legislation. March 22 was an important day for Canadians. When the Minister of Finance introduced budget 2016, the first glimmers of hope were restored to Canadians who for too long had been made to work too hard, but just could not seem to get ahead.

Middle-class families, vulnerable seniors, veterans, and indigenous people were all given hope for a more secure tomorrow and a brighter future.

Government Orders

The Canada child benefit, a simpler, fairer, and tax-free solution to child benefits, will deliver more money to nine in 10 Canadian families and end the practice of sending benefit cheques to millionaires. More importantly, it will lift 300,000 children out of poverty and give them the start they need.

The rollback of changes to the age of eligibility for old age security and the guaranteed income supplement, from age 67 to 65, will allow people who have worked their whole lives to get the income security they deserve when they retire without having to wait.

For veterans who have bravely dedicated their lives to the defence of our country, we will enhance services and benefits in light of their dedicated service. This will help those veterans who have become injured and disabled and aid all veterans in the transition to civilian life, an all-too-challenging feat for those who have experienced the trauma of war.

For indigenous people who have suffered for too long from neglect and failed policies, the budget provided a new beginning. A first step in the nation-to-nation relationship with the fastest-growing segment of the Canadian population, our investments will contribute to improving economic prosperity for them, and for this country.

Today, it is my honour to rise in this esteemed House to speak in favour of the budget implementation act no. 1, a piece of legislation that will move forward many of the provisions contained in the budget.

The BIA is about many of the things I have already spoken to, but it also takes critical action in some areas that are occasionally overlooked in the fog of budget day. Importantly, it implements key measures designed to ensure tax fairness and a strong financial sector in this country.

As a matter of principle, our government is committed to tax fairness. We believe fundamentally that all Canadians, individuals and corporations alike, must pay their fair share of taxes so that all Canadians can benefit in return.

Tax evasion and avoidance put strain on this principle. They negatively impact the revenue collected through taxes, in turn compromising the services offered to Canadians.

The budget implementation act contains important provisions to cut down on the people's ability to use increasingly sophisticated means to avoid paying their fair share. This is combined with the budget's increased funding to the Canada Revenue Agency to hire additional auditors and specialists to undertake better-quality investigative work and improve its ability to collect outstanding debts.

As well, this budget addresses unintended tax advantages that businesses and high-net-worth individuals may be able to obtain through sophisticated tax planning techniques involving private corporations.

These actions are consistent with the principles of fairness, economic efficiency, and responsible fiscal management.

The government will continue to identify and address tax planning schemes to ensure that the tax system operates as fairly and effectively as possible.

We need to know that the system is working as it should, to ensure the economy is working for everyone. This is a critical part of strong fiscal management. Strong fiscal management also depends on ensuring our financial sector remains competitive and efficient.

Canada's financial sector is world-class and has remained resilient and stable even in the face of the great recession and throughout the slow recovery. However, we must keep the financial sector strong, especially at a time when new market forces like digital currencies and rapidly changing global regulations are precipitating equally rapid change.

Canada's financial sector remains the envy of many countries around the world. This reputation was the result of hard work and prudent decision-making by financial institutions and by the actions of the federal government in the 1990s and by our regulators. We want to keep it that way.

● (1650)

To ensure that Canada continues to benefit from a strong financial sector, the government proposes to introduce a bail-in regime for Canada's largest financial institutions, which would promote financial stability and reinforce that bank shareholders and creditors are responsible for the bank's risks, not taxpayers.

In the highly unlikely event of a system bank failure, we want to ensure that Canadians will not be on the hook and that banks will convert their debt into equity rather than force the government to bail them out.

It is important to add that this provision would not hurt depositors, as all insured and uninsured deposits will remain protected.

The budget implementation act is a critical step on the path to a fairer and more prosperous Canada. It brings into effect much-needed relief for Canadian families, for vulnerable seniors, and for veterans. However, it also takes action to close tax loopholes that hurt all Canadians and to ensure that our financial institutions remain strong, so that Canadians can continue to rely on them in the years to come.

For these reasons, I would encourage all members to support it.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am really glad to hear that the hon. member praised the Conservative government's financial prudence in getting us through the recession of 2008-2009. If it were not for the prudent financial planning of that government, we may not have been able to come through that as one of the strongest economies in the G7, so I want to thank my colleague for highlighting our good work in the government we had.

We have heard a lot today about employment insurance and some of the benefits that will entail, but I ask the hon. member why those EI extensions would only be given to 12 specific areas across the country. Those 12 do not include Edmonton, which includes Nisku and Leduc, which is the heart and soul of Alberta's energy industry. They do not include southern Saskatchewan, also a very important oil and gas area where communities are feeling the pinch of the downturn.

Government Orders

Also, will something be done with Fort McMurray and what is going on there? Will there be some special concessions for that community as well?

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: Certainly, Mr. Speaker, the minister spoke to the situation in Fort McMurray this morning, about special measures the government will be taking to take that into account.

Before going any further, once again, to reflect on what is currently going on in Fort McMurray, I can tell hon. members, as somebody who grew up in what I would term to be the sub-Arctic, along the same latitude as Fort McMurray, in Goose Bay, Labrador, that at a very young age I was confronted with a forest fire that almost hit our community. We were awakened by the RCMP at 4 o'clock in the morning and told to evacuate our house because we would not see it again, because it would have been taken down by a forest fire that was literally licking the lips of the hills of North West River, Labrador, only some 40 or 50 kilometres away from where I grew up in Happy Valley—Goose Bay.

The night before, watching the sky lit up pink from the flames that were just beyond that hill, inhaling the smoke from that forest fire, knowing that feeling of having to choose what items we would take with us and what we would leave behind is a feeling I will never forget, even though I was only at the tender age of 13 or 14.

I feel with all my heart for what is going on for those people in Fort McMurray, having had first-hand experience, and I know that our government will work together with those members on the other side of the House to ensure that everything possible is done for what is looking right now to be one of the most cataclysmic natural catastrophes that our country has ever faced.

• (1655)

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that we have recently had the opportunity to spend a week in our home constituencies, and budget 2016 and Bill C-15 contain some extremely positive measures that will benefit Canadians from coast to coast to coast, including Canada's largest-ever infrastructure program and the Canada child benefit, which will benefit nine out of 10 Canadian families.

I am wondering if the hon. member can share with this chamber what his constituents are saying about both Bill C-15 and budget 2016.

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: Mr. Speaker, like many new members of the House who were campaigning for the first time in order to enter this honourable House, I was struck by how our constituents spoke to us and the concerns they held. Certainly, their ability to find some stability in a world that is so rapidly changing, to find some financial security for their children, and for them to have the choice on how to spend limited resources on their families and their children was something that was brought up time and again.

I am very happy that the Canada child benefit will come into effect on Canada Day, July 1. People will be receiving their cheques and families will be able to determine how best to spend the benefit on themselves and their families.

I am a big believer in efficiencies. To take three separate, very disparate family benefits and turn them into one tangible cheque is one of the most tangible and most important parts of the budget. It is

not just something we use at the end of the tax year, but a tangible benefit that Canadian families can feel, use, and spend throughout the year on their children to make better lives for themselves and their families.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-15, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2016 and other measures.

I would like to begin by noting that I will be splitting my time with the member for Saskatoon West.

Budgets should reflect priorities, and the priorities of any government governing at this time in history ought to be the growing inequality in our country.

Over the last 30 years, we have seen the gap between the rich and everyone else grow. The richest 100 Canadians now hold as much wealth as the bottom 10 million combined. Just this week, Statistics Canada released a study that showed that over the last 30 years it has been getting harder and harder for Canadians to move up the income ladder, but it has been easier for the wealthy to hold on to that wealth.

This did not just happen. It is the result of decades of successive Liberal and Conservative governments that have chosen not to support the middle- and low-income Canadians in our country. This budget is sadly no different.

Early into the Liberal mandate, they prioritized the so-called middle-class tax cut. However, a study from the parliamentary budget officer proves the Liberal tax plan will give nothing to 60% of Canadians. The biggest breaks will go to the top 30% of income earners, and those making \$200,000 or more will receive the maximum amount. This is on top of no action to help minimum wage workers earn a fair living.

Another broken promise to Canadians made by the Liberals in the campaign that we have now seen is not taking any action to close the stock option loophole for CEOs, a loophole that costs the public \$800 million a year.

When we talk about the growing inequality in our country and the kind of crushing poverty we know to exist, I think many of our minds go to the experience of first nations. Let us talk about first nations youth. Half of all first nations children in Canada live in poverty. In Manitoba, my province, 62% of first nations children live below the poverty line.

What about this budget? We saw the Liberals choose not to live up to their promises to first nations children. This budget shortchanged first nations education by \$230 million. Following a historic ruling by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, first nations child welfare saw \$130 million less than was promised.

There is also no money for first nations health care, Jordan's principle, or mental health supports, while many isolated first nations, including communities in my own constituency, struggle with suicide crises.

Government Orders

We have also seen the Liberals choose to break their promise to invest in health care. After promising \$3 billion over the next four years to help Canadians access high-quality home care, this budget has nothing.

We have also seen the way the Prime Minister, the self-appointed Minister of Youth, came up \$170 million short on his commitment made to young Canadians. The millennial generation needs more than a selfie to help them grapple with the challenges they are facing: skyrocketing student debt, out-of-reach housing prices, and a labour market that is flooded with precarious, unstable, low-paying work.

Unfortunately, this is another missed opportunity by the Liberal government to reduce inequality.

When we look at the history of growing inequality in our country, we know that the 1990s, under successive Liberal governments, was the period of time in which the trend around inequality began to grow the fastest. We have heard from those who have studied that trend that one of the major contributors was the cuts to employment insurance.

On that note, let us look at the recent changes that were made to EI. The system left in place by the Conservatives was nothing less than devastated. However, let us be clear. The system the Conservatives inherited was already deeply troubled. The Liberals plundered countless billions of dollars, in fact \$54 billion, from the EI fund for political purposes, and supervised the biggest and most thorough attack on our social safety net as of yet.

● (1700)

If the Liberals believe that the only reason the EI system is in shambles is due to the Conservatives' reforms, I recommend that they look into their own history and uncover the real reasons why a majority of Canadians who are out of work today are left without access to EI. In fact, regarding the changes implemented by Bill C-15, we can see that they do not go far enough.

We know that while some extensions were made, areas like Edmonton and southern Saskatchewan were completely left out of the government's relief measures. When we asked the government why, the reply was blunt and brutal. It was because of "cold, hard math". Those words are certainly cold comfort to Canadian workers out of a job.

The cold, hard math rhetoric they are basing their policies on has apparently come out of thin air. When we have asked for references to studies and government reports, we have seen nothing. We call on the minister to correct this mistake and to include Edmonton and southern Saskatchewan in the targeted regions immediately.

The broader picture, though, is the failure that the regional thresholds have met in trying to achieve more fairness for the EI system. The regional thresholds have been described as inadequate by countless stakeholders. We in the NDP will continue to advocate for a universal 360-hour threshold that would be fair and adequate for all workers.

[*Translation*]

Canada's social safety net is broken. The government likes to place the blame squarely at the feet of the previous government, which certainly did its share of damage, but the Liberals should take

a look in the mirror. What they are now framing as a victory for workers is actually a return to a difficult time that bears the scars of damage done to our social safety net under Chrétien and Martin.

I would like to talk about the term "social safety net". What does that represent? In our current economic context, the professional lives of a growing number of workers are hanging by a thread. When that thread breaks, the social safety net can prevent people from crashing to the floor. When it works, the social safety net enables people to pick themselves up, dust themselves off, and start all over again.

The safety net has made it possible for many workers to get back into the job market relatively unscathed, but over the past few decades, more and more workers have been slipping through the holes in the net. Government after government has failed to ensure the integrity of our social safety net. Worse still, successive governments have come to power brandishing their scissors and cutting all kinds of holes in it. They seemed compelled to cut swiftly and indiscriminately.

The holes in our social safety net are well known. One of them is the notorious black hole that swallows up so many seasonal workers. The government could easily have enhanced the employment insurance system by renewing a pilot project that added five weeks of benefits, but it forgot about those workers, and they are once again slipping through the holes in the safety net. We are disappointed but not surprised.

People can count on the NDP to keep protecting workers' interests from the old parties' attacks.

● (1705)

[*English*]

Before I conclude I also want to spend some time talking about how this budget left out major promises to my own constituency, including a commitment that the Prime Minister made during the election to partner on the construction of the east side road.

The east side road is a legacy project that would have allowed 11 first nations that are currently isolated in my constituency to access something that so many Canadians take for granted, a road.

Climate change has made their existence in isolated communities more difficult and more precarious. We are talking about communities that have as high as 80% of the population on welfare. We are talking about communities that are struggling day to day.

On September 29, 2015, the Prime Minister, when asked if he was going to be a partner on the east side road, said, "The full answer is yes, the federal government will be the partner Manitoba needs in order to deliver the infrastructure that is required". Sadly, there is no such commitment in the budget. Therefore, whether it is on the east side road or whether it is on the other broken promises, we will remain vigilant.

Much work needs to be done on the budget to understand exactly what it covers.

Government Orders

I would like to seek unanimous consent to move the following motion: That, notwithstanding any order or usual practice of the House that Bill C-15, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2016, and other measures be amended by removing the following clauses: (a) Clauses 80 to 116 related to the Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Act; (b) Clauses 126 to 168 related to bank bail-ins and the bank recapitalization regime; (c) Clauses 188 to 191 related to the Old Age Security Act; and (d) Clauses 207 to 231 related to the Employment Insurance Act; that the clauses mentioned in section (a) of this motion do form Bill C-16; that Bill C-16 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs; that the clauses mentioned in section (b) of this motion do form Bill C-17; that Bill C-17 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Finance; that the clauses mentioned in section (c) of this motion do form Bill C-18; that Bill C-18 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities; that the clauses mentioned in section (d) of this motion do form Bill C-19; that Bill C-19 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities; that Bill C-15 retain the status on the Order Paper that it had prior to the adoption of this order; and that Bill C-15 be reprinted as amended and the law clerk and the parliamentary counsel be authorized to make any technical changes or corrections as may be necessary to give effect to this motion.

We are proposing this motion in order to give the full scrutiny that is required by parliamentarians on behalf of Canadians.

• (1710)

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments. The hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle.

[*Translation*]

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when faced with social inequality, a cause to which we are just as committed as my colleague, we must help everyone, help the entire economy, and invest in our infrastructure, our communities, and our future. If that means that we have to borrow to make investments, then that is part of our role as the government.

Can my colleague explain how the NPD could have helped anyone by promising to never run a deficit, even though there was already a deficit under the Conservatives? Where would the NDP's austerity have led us?

[*English*]

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, while I appreciate efforts to change the channel, we are talking about an omnibus budget bill that includes broken promises to Canadians. I explained a laundry list, including broken promises to first nations children, among the poorest people in our country. It includes a failure to step up to important election commitments.

When Canadians were presented with the tag line of real change, that is what they expected. They did not expect broken promises. They certainly did not expect more of the same, including omnibus bills. That is unfortunately what they are seeing from the Liberal government.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member cited some of the challenges that she faced in her community, particularly on the issue of income inequality. In many ways there are some similarities between her riding and mine. The issue that troubles me the most with the Liberal budget is the income tax cuts and who that benefits.

Could the member elaborate on that and on how the government can make changes that will assist people in both of our communities, like so many Canadians who are in the greatest need?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is an incredible defender of issues that many people on the margins face, including in her own constituency, and her advocacy alongside many indigenous advocates who speak passionately about the issues of poverty and marginalization they face on an ongoing basis.

As the New Democrats have pointed out time and again, one of the first things the Liberal government came up with was a tax cut that it claimed would help middle-class Canadians. However, the parliamentary budget officer said that Canadians who made \$200,000 or more a year stood to benefit the most. Despite the rhetoric, what is true is that the wealthiest Canadians continue to benefit more under the government while everyone else continues to lose out.

I can speak to a big issue that is on the minds of many people in my constituency, which is employment insurance, a program that should be there for Canadians when they have fallen on hard times. I referred to this as well in my speech. Unfortunately, this budget does not go nearly far enough in making EI more accessible to Canadians. Only 40% of Canadians are able to access it, so much more needs to be done.

Fundamentally, what this budget does not do is get at the structures that exacerbate inequality in our country. Under the Liberals, it continues to benefit those who have a lot already, while certainly not being on the side of everyone else.

Government Orders

• (1715)

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, budget 2016 is indeed a missed opportunity to reduce the inequality in our communities. Therefore, it is a missed opportunity to actually create real change. However, as my mother taught me, I do want to start by giving credit where credit is due.

I would like to commend the government on its choice to make investments in affordable housing by way of confirming for the next two years the rental subsidies for social housing. I know the social housing providers and the tenants in social housing in my community are relieved that this support is continuing.

I welcome the increase to the guaranteed income supplement and the commitment to enhancing the Canada pension plan. Likewise, I applaud the budget's commitment to lift the punitive and unfair 2% cap on funding for first nations. The tax-free Canada child care benefit will assist many parents and families in my riding. Each of these commitments is a good first step.

That said, the bill and the budget, when we weigh its costs and its benefits to Canadians, does not remove enough of the tax burden for those hard-working Canadians who fall below the median income of those few lucky enough to receive the tax breaks. In fact, the so-called middle-class tax break offers nothing for more than 60% of Canadians.

With its first budget, the government had the opportunity to create real change, to invest in reducing income inequality in the country and to begin to really tackle inequality through the most effective and efficient way possible, through progressive tax measures.

I know for a fact that large numbers of people from communities in my riding will not benefit from the middle-class tax cut. According to the city of Saskatoon statistics from 2014, the median income for five of Saskatoon's poor neighbourhoods in my riding will not benefit from the tax break. Those are thousands of people in my riding alone.

These are folks working two to three minimum wage jobs, paying well over 30% of their wages for unaffordable housing, and living in what we have called a "food desert". If they are fortunate enough to have money left over after paying rent, the cost of healthy food is often out of reach. Research done in my community saw an increase in the number of mothers going hungry in order to afford to buy food for their children. Put simply, good, healthy food is unaffordable. A tax break for those doing well will do absolutely nothing for these people.

Likewise, the budget does nothing for those who cannot find affordable child care, especially those working to re-enter the workforce or to get training to upgrade their skills and become employable.

Many in my riding are young people with young children, and they have dreams and aspirations. These dreams are not unreasonable. Nor should they be unattainable. We should support them in every way we can. One of the ways we can do this is by providing increased access to child care spaces that are affordable.

Right now in my riding it costs almost as much for a single child in child care as it does for rent. That is of course if there is actually a

space. Where is the incentive to work or go to school in that kind of situation? Simply put, a lack of affordable child care spaces is a huge barrier to young parents being able to realize their dreams. It is in fact a deterrent. It inhibits the economic growth by reducing productivity, and we must remove this barrier. A government that is committed to women's equality can pave the way to realizing that equality by implementing a national, universal, affordable child care program. However, there is no mention of child care in the budget.

The budget has been called a betrayal of small business by none other than the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. Canada's number one job creator is small business. Small business is a hugely important source of employment in my riding. In a city where there is limited primary industry, we survive on the strength of our secondary industry, our small businesses. Small business is central to the economic well-being in Saskatoon, especially during a downturn in the resource sector.

• (1720)

As a matter of fact, one of my campaign volunteers, a bright young woman and mother, started her own business while I was on the campaign trail. After spending her formative years in too many foster homes to count, Rachel is working harder than I have ever seen to make it, and she is, but where is the help? Where is the support for people like Rachel?

This budget also disappoints in another way. It provides no assistance at all for those in need of prescription drugs or home care. Right now, I have a veteran living in my riding who has to choose between rent, food, and the charge for the essential drugs that he needs. He pays his rent, which takes up to 85% of his pension, and uses the rest to pay for necessary prescription drugs. He has trouble looking after himself, has no family to help, and lives in a home that he increasingly cannot afford, which causes him to be housebound because of the physical inaccessibility of the building. How is he supposed to survive?

How does this happen in a country as rich as Canada? How is it that a country such as Canada does not have a national pharmacare program?

It is about choices, and this budget is about choosing to believe in a failed theory of trickle-down economics.

The government's thinking in this budget seems to be that if the Liberals give tax breaks to those who do not need them, eventually, and somehow miraculously, people living in poverty will somehow be lifted out of poverty. This is wishful thinking and proven time and again to fail in practice. It is anything but real change. It is pretty much same old, same old. Moreover, if that kind of thinking worked in practice, we would have eliminated poverty a long time ago.

Government Orders

That trickle will not get anywhere near being helpful to the poor, because the budget bill also does nothing to rein in the super rich who are hiding hundreds of millions of tax dollars in overseas accounts. People making \$45,000 or less a year will not get a tax break, but the rich and profitable get a chance to avoid paying taxes altogether. That is plain wrong, and it is unfair. It costs us Canadians dearly, not only in millions of foregone tax revenue, but it also impedes our ability to make real change right now in 2016.

What makes the rich and the large profitable corporations better than those working long hours at two minimum-wage jobs just to get by? Why do they not have to pay their fair share? Why are they getting better and special treatment for their income?

Budgets are about choices, choices that say this is what is most important. Budget 2016 and the implementation bill chooses tax havens for millionaire CEOs and giveaways often to foreign-based corporations that take economic wealth from our country and profit off of our public resources, all the while being carried on the backs and the taxes of hard-working Canadians, the people who live and work and go to school despite all the barriers in my community. That is unacceptable. It is a long way off from real change.

Real change does not make first nation children wait for equality. Real change invests in health care.

Canadians need improved pharmacare and home care. Making health care accessible and affordable will save lives. Why not choose to save lives? Why has the Liberal government government chosen to break its promise to invest in health care? After promising \$3 billion over the next four years, the Liberal government has provided nothing for home care in the budget.

Real change does not continue to raid the EI fund of almost \$7 billion over the next three years. People need those dollars now. It is their money.

In my riding, we have a lot of talented, hard-working Canadians who are unemployed, thanks to an economic downturn in the region. Real change is using EI money for what it was intended: to help unemployed workers.

People are working harder than ever, but cannot get ahead. As my colleague mentioned, the recent Statistics Canada report demonstrates that income mobility is not happening. The rich are staying rich at the same rate as the poor are staying poor. Over the past 30 years, hard-working Canadians have helped grow our economy by 50%, but those same hard-working people have seen wages stagnant and retirement security vanish.

Budget 2016 makes some changes, but not real change. It merely tinkers, when there is so much potential to make bold, important investments, choices that bring real change, like equality for women, and more fairness and equity for everyday Canadians.

Unfortunately for them, budget 2016 is many deficits away from real change.

• (1725)

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke a lot about child care and the NDP campaign promise of \$15-a-day child care. I was very concerned about this particular policy during the campaign for a couple of reasons.

My background, for those who are not aware, is working with organizations like the YMCA and the Boys and Girls Club. In fact, my name was on the licence for one of the largest child care programs in the Niagara region. There were over 200 participants in the child care program with the Boys and Girls Club. Most of the people in that program were subsidized through the region and actually paid about \$8 or \$9 a day.

I had two problems with the NDP plan. One was that the \$15 a day would disproportionately support those who truly did not need it and, two, there did not seem to be a plan on how to pay for it. I know this question has already been asked of the previous speaker, but could the hon. member explain how the NDP was planning to pay for this plan?

Ms. Sheri Benson: Mr. Speaker, it is nice to know that the member's background is in the YMCA and the Boys and Girls Club. I would like those in the House to know that the YMCA is the largest provider of child care spaces and services in Canada, so I obviously like the YMCA.

That is a very good question and New Democrats got asked about that. In my comments, I talked about the opportunity to make real change, to make the tax system more progressive rather than regressive. The corporate tax rate in Canada is at its lowest point ever since the year 2000. It is one of the lowest in the G7 countries. We had an opportunity to increase the corporate tax rate slightly in order to increase the government's revenue. I believe the government has an issue around increasing revenue, but that money would be available to fund programs like a national child care program, which is essential for a government that wants equality for women.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, like my colleague, I am very concerned about the Liberals falling into bad ways with what we can only describe as an undemocratic omnibus bill. The fact that it is 179 pages long and addresses a significant number of ministries and statutes concerns New Democrats very much.

My question is twofold. First, I absolutely understand that child care is an investment. For every \$1 that is invested, \$1.79 goes back into the economy, so it is a smart investment. I am sorry that it has not seen the light of day with the current government.

Second, I am very concerned about how veterans are being treated. Bill C-12 has been incorporated into this budget bill and it deserves our full attention. It is a bill that addresses the needs of our veterans with regard to their pensions. It needs to be separate and I wonder if my colleague could comment on that.

Government Orders

Ms. Sheri Benson: Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the speaker prior to me, had asked for consent, through a motion, to separate out this bill so that some of the bigger, more complicated pieces could be referred to committee for study. Included in that, of course, were the issues surrounding veterans, and I fully support that.

This is my first time in Parliament, obviously. I was looking forward to more democracy and an opportunity to discuss and feel that democracy at the committee level, so I was disappointed that so much was included in the bill and that we are getting shortchanged as far as being able to really look at what is contained in this bill at the committee level, where parties are able to work together democratically to improve bills.

• (1730)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if I may, I will just start off by expressing my prayers and best wishes to Fort McMurray, a community that is indeed in need today, and to do what the Prime Minister indicated earlier this morning, which is to tell the residents of that area that across Canada there is a very caring and compassionate mood, from all Canadians.

The federal government is going to be there for the community, not only for today but into the future, whether that is dealing with infrastructure, employment insurance-related issues, or the many other issues on which the federal government can be of assistance. I know, and I am confident that the government will be there for that community. All members of the House truly care about what is taking place in Fort McMurray today.

I have had the opportunity to listen for a number of hours to many members in the chamber speak to this particular issue. I suspect it is a bit of a challenge for New Democrats in particular. I have seen them kind of bend over or turn themselves into pretzels, trying to figure out what it is they should or possibly could be doing on this budget.

My best advice to the New Democratic members of Parliament is that they should vote in favour of this legislation. They can try to come up with all the excuses they want, but at the end of the day if they have a progressive mind and would like to see Canada move forward, they should be voting in favour of this budget.

Let me expand on a couple of comments. I listened to the member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski talk about our first nations communities. If she truly cares about what is happening with the first nations communities, this is a budget that she should be getting behind.

I listened to the member saying one thing after another, being critical of the Liberal Party. There is nothing that could be further from the truth. She should look at the NDP government of Manitoba, a provincial government that four years ago intentionally flooded out reserve communities. Some of those reserve communities that were flooded out by the NDP government are still evacuated today, and that was four years ago. I am talking about the Lake St. Martin First Nation reserve and the Little Saskatchewan First Nation reserve.

We do see more co-operation today with Ottawa to try to assist, but let there be no doubt that the provincial NDP government abandoned those communities.

When the member talks about the poverty that is there, that is very real. There is no doubt that there is a significant issue of poverty. I would argue, and it is not with pride, that with Manitoba's percentage based on per capita, we should be concerned about poverty in the province of Manitoba. In the last decade, it has not gotten better, with the federal Conservative government here in Ottawa or the provincial NDP government in Manitoba. I could cite many different reasons why the NDP's performance in government has been a big disappointment in the province of Manitoba over the last number of years.

I say that for one reason, and that is that the member went on at great length to try to be critical of the Liberal Party, as if her party has the high road in terms of trying to fight for good social programs. That is not the case.

If we take a look at the budget, we can see a huge redistribution of wealth. We often hear the opposition members criticizing the tax cut to Canada's middle class. It is something they try to make a mockery of. They say that only a small percentage of people will actually benefit from it, and that it is only the rich who will benefit.

The opposition members are wrong. They are dead wrong. There are workers from every region of our country, from factory workers to teachers to health care providers, who will benefit from the two-point tax break that is being given to Canada's middle class.

Then the opposition members cite those who make less than \$45,000. They are very much aware of the Canada child benefit program.

• (1735)

Members should think of the individuals who will benefit directly from that program, such as a single mother with one child, and the hundreds of dollars extra that she will be receiving every year because we have developed a program that will give more money to those in need. When we look at the budget in its entirety with respect to what is being proposed, we see three very significant measures from a tax and redistribution of wealth point of view.

The first is that those who are making more than \$200,000 a year will be expected to pay more in taxes with a special tax increase. I believe even those individuals would acknowledge that they want to continue to contribute to being a part of making Canada a great country. That is one tax increase. The monies derived from that tax increase will go a long way in providing the middle-class tax break, which is estimated to benefit nine million Canadians. The vast majority of those nine million people are not making the type of money that the opposition is trying to portray, of \$170,000, \$180,000, and so forth. We are talking about hard-working middle-class families making anywhere in the range of \$45,000 to \$190,000, or a bit more than that.

Government Orders

Then we have the Canada child benefit program. That is something that I believe is virtually revolutionary. It is quite significant that this particular program will kick in on July 1, Canada Day. I would argue that if there is one aspect of the budget that I feel the most proud of, it is that program. History will reflect on this budget to say that we created a Canada child tax benefit program that lifted hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty in every region of this great country. That is something that we should all be proud of.

That is why I am suggesting to members that, from a tax and poverty-related issue, I cannot understand why any New Democrat would vote against this budget implementation. I do not know how many times I have heard the Conservatives stand in their place and say that they support tax decreases. This budget provides that tax decrease that they want to see happen, yet I suspect they will no doubt vote against this budget. I believe the New Democrats will end up voting against this piece of legislation because of the process. We have heard them talking about it not really being a budget bill.

I would suggest to them, because I have been here for the last five years, that I know what is and what is not a massive budget bill. When I look at this bill, every measure, every change is what is required to implement the budget that was presented to this House not that long ago. We know that Canadians from every region of this country are supporting this budget. They understand that what was promised during the election is being delivered in this budget. That is why I believe that the New Democratic members should seriously look at how they might want to vote on this particular budget implementation bill. If they believe that we need to put emphasis in areas that they have talked about, and some have spoken passionately about indigenous people, first nations, the Métis and Inuit nations and so forth, these are communities that this budget has allocated hundreds of millions, going into the billions of dollars, over the next few years to resolve many of the problems that the opposition members have talked about for years. If not this budget, I do not know what they would vote for.

● (1740)

I recall the election platforms that were presented, and there was quite a bit of difference. The Liberal Party was the only party that indicated right from the beginning that we were not going to have a balanced budget. The reason is that we believe it is time for Canada to invest in our infrastructure, to do more for Canada's middle class. We believe that if we have a healthier middle class and we can allow for growth within the middle class, support the middle class, that we will have a healthier economy. A healthier middle class means a healthier economy.

A number of questions that have come forward from the Conservatives lately have been about small businesses. They talk about the small business tax. What they do not seem to realize is that the most important thing a small business wants is customers. They want business.

If we have a redistribution of hundreds of millions of dollars that goes into the billions, what do we think the middle class and the others—in particular, I am thinking of the Canada child benefit program—are going to do with the money? They are not going to be hoarding it. They are going to be spending the money. That means

they are going to go to the retail outlets. That means they are going to be doing things, ideally within Canada, but whatever their decision, the point is that the disposable income of Canada's middle class is going to be going up under this budget. By doing that, we would see more money then being invested in our small businesses.

I, like everyone else, have many small businesses in the community that I represent. I can tell members that the small business community as a whole is very supportive and is encouraged by what they are seeing with respect to this budget.

When the Conservatives stand to say that this budget is not doing anything for small businesses, they are wrong. They are not recognizing the reality and the potential strength of the middle class in terms of driving Canada's economy.

We recognize within government that the backbone in terms of growth and creation of jobs is our small business sector. We recognize that fact. However, we also recognize the importance of that middle class. By supporting the middle class, we are supporting small businesses. We are supporting the Canadian economy.

From many years of sitting in opposition, I watched as government created deficit after deficit. In fact, it would have been about two weeks from now a year ago, when I stood in my place and indicated that I did not believe for a moment that the government had a balanced budget.

When the Conservatives first came into government, they inherited a multi-billion dollar surplus. We know that because the books did actually show that. At the end of the fiscal year, the books actually showed that. They converted that multi-billion dollar surplus into a multi-billion dollar deficit, even prior to the recession taking place, and they have not balanced the books since. Year after year, they had a deficit. Then, lo and behold, we were into an election year and the Conservatives said, “Now, we're going to get a balanced budget.”

I questioned that, and I indicated that there was no balanced budget, that they were just cooking the books to try to deceive Canadians. In fact, back in July, I think it was, the Bank of Canada governor indicated there was going to be a deficit, so no one should be surprised. Then the Conservatives said, “Well, for this particular month, it's a surplus.”

● (1745)

Conservatives talk a lot about small businesses. When we talk to small businesses, they tell us what matters is at the end of the year. We know at the end of the year that there is going to be a deficit. The good news is that previous Liberal administrations, whether it was Jean Chrétien or Paul Martin, were able to deliver balanced budgets. The only party in the last 50 years that has been unable to produce a balanced budget is the Conservative Party. That is the reality.

When we look at where the Government of Canada is going today, it is pretty straightforward. We understand and believe in Canada's middle class, therefore we are investing by giving significant tax breaks for them. We understand and appreciate the issue of poverty, and we are lifting hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty as a direct result of the Canada child benefit program.

We understand that there are communities throughout our great country that are in need of infrastructure dollars, and we are providing those infrastructure dollars, not six or seven years from now, but in this fiscal year. We know and appreciate that by investing in Canada today, it is going to make a world of difference going forward. We have had independent stakeholders who have been clear on the fact that this is a progressive budget, that it will allow the Canadian economy to grow.

One of the issues I have always been very passionate on is the issue of health care. Within this budget document, we have seen a commitment to a health care accord. The last time we had one that was signed off by working with the provinces was in 2004. It expired in 2014, and the government then did absolutely nothing. Once again, we have seen a government demonstrate that it believes in a health care accord, and the Minister of Health is proactively working with provincial counterparts to see if we can come up with something going forward.

We have had a substantial commitment going forward in terms of palliative care. In the last couple of days, we have had a great deal of debate about palliative care. One of the ways that we can ensure there is good quality palliative care being delivered in all regions of the country is to work with the provinces.

I was a health care critic many years ago in the province of Manitoba. We had to recognize that if we were going to deliver a program, one of the best ways is by working with the different stakeholders, and that means the provinces. We have given a \$3-billion commitment going forward to deal with palliative care, recognizing that it is an important issue. It goes beyond palliative care. I would ask members to take a look at the cost of medicine, at home care services.

As Liberals, we believe in our health care system. We believe that the federal government does have a role to play. We will work with the different stakeholders to continue to push forward a health care system that Canadians will continue to be proud of. When I ask constituents and others what makes them feel good about being Canadian, quite often they will respond by saying that they love our health care system. We want to develop a social program for health care because it is the right thing to do.

There is so much more that one could talk about, but at the end of the day, we are giving substantial increases to our seniors, in particular the guaranteed annual income. Imagine being a single senior living at a fairly low level, and getting somewhere in the neighbourhood of a \$900 increase through this budget.

• (1750)

That is a \$900 increase. That is a substantial amount of money for a senior who is on a fixed income.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, prior to coming here, I was a small business owner, working day and night with my husband, employing four other people, working very hard as a small business owner in Canada. As we know, small business is a huge economic driver in this country, and the way we do that is by being able to invest in our businesses.

The individual across the way indicated that people who are small business owners in his riding are happy. I just need to quote the

Private Members' Business

Canadian Federation of Independent Business' responses to the government's budget:

In reacting to the 2016 federal budget presented today, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business...is deeply troubled that the federal government broke an election commitment....

I will not read them all: corporate tax rate promise; giant deficits with no exit plan; commitment to expand CPP/QPP payroll hike; youth employment hiring credit cancelled.

It does not sound to me as if small businesses in Canada are happy. However, I ask if the member across would be willing to give me the names of those businesses in his riding. I would be really pleased to get a balanced approach to this situation.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I invite the member to come out to Winnipeg North, and we could visit some small businesses together. She should give me a call, and we will see what we can make in terms of a connection.

I used to be a store manager. When I think from a store manager's perspective, with a number of employees, the most important thing I want is to see customers walking into my store, because I know if customers are walking into the store, they are buying products. If they are buying products, that means I need people to put that product on shelves.

If we look at the hundreds of millions of dollars we are giving, in terms of disposable income, we will have a healthier middle class going to stores like I used to manage, to restaurants, and to many other small businesses in every region of the country, wanting to purchase things, whether it is goods or services. That is healthy for Canada and for the economy. I will suggest that is what small businesses really want. They want more business, and this budget will deliver more business to businesses in every region of our country—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): We will have to break. When we resume debate on this bill, the hon. member for Winnipeg North will have seven minutes and 30 seconds remaining, and the questions can be resumed then.

It being 5:43 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should ensure that: (a) before making decisions on infrastructure funding proposals, where federal funding exceeds \$500 000, an analysis of their impact on greenhouse gas emissions is considered; and (b) where appropriate, funding priority be given to proposals which help to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Private Members' Business

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a distinct honour to rise in the chamber today to introduce my private member's Motion No. 45. I would like to begin by thanking my seconder, the hon. member for Pontiac, and all my other hon. colleagues in all corners of the House who have agreed to sign on and second this motion.

As one of Canada's primary coastal cities, my riding of Halifax stands on the front line in the battle against climate change. The impact of greenhouse gas emissions if not curbed will have serious repercussions for Halifax, for Nova Scotia, and all of the communities that we so love.

A decade ago, the three orders of government and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities jointly funded a study called "Climate Smart", a climate risk management strategy for Halifax that painted a very sobering picture of my city if climate change was not addressed.

Here is some of what that picture looks like.

Halifax's status and viability as a great Canadian port city, a key economic driver in my riding, my province, and in Eastern Canada, will be put at risk as changes in ice patterns jeopardize year-round shipping to Halifax through the Northwest Passage. Our port infrastructure will be damaged, at times irreversibly. Our local economy, and therefore the national economy, will suffer. Sea level rise will threaten the quality and quantity of our drinking water. The existing strain on our health care system will intensify as injuries from extreme weather events increase in number, and high humidity leads to higher frequency of respiratory ailments like asthma and allergies.

Climate change will harm marine habitat as well, and by extension the commercial viability of some of our most critical fish stocks, like salmon and cod. This is in a province where the fishery accounts for 10% of our GDP.

Transportation infrastructure found mostly along the coast will quickly deteriorate, and increased costs for road and rail maintenance will become a larger and larger strain on public resources.

This is the potential story of climate change in Halifax. However, the implications of uncurbed greenhouse gas emissions are equally dire right across Canada, where we are surrounded by more than 200,000 kilometres of coastline and where many upon many communities and cities lie.

The impacts do not stop at our borders. In January of this year, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, a federal department roughly the equivalent of our own Department of Infrastructure and Communities, announced grants totalling \$1 billion in 13 states to help communities in dire need address climate change. One of those grants is for something new, but also something we are going to be hearing of more and more in the months and years ahead. It is a grant to pay for the resettlement of the United States' first climate refugees from the inundated shores of Louisiana. We are not talking about some far off land. We are talking about government funded relocation of climate refugees right here on this land mass that we share with the United States.

Of this, *The New York Times* wrote earlier this week:

Around the globe, governments are confronting the reality that as human-caused climate change warms the planet, rising sea levels, stronger storms, increased

flooding, harsher droughts and dwindling freshwater supplies could drive the world's most vulnerable people from their homes.

Just last week, Sally Jewell, the U.S. secretary of the Interior and former Mobil Oil executive said, while visiting Ottawa, "...the changes are underway and they are very rapid. We will have climate refugees".

To bring it back home, we are told that a 2° Celsius increase in global mean temperature could mean that Nova Scotia becomes an island. That is the same 2° the Paris climate accord sets out to limit us to. Just imagine the costs to government of having to extend a lifeline to the island of Nova Scotia.

We can avoid those terrible human and financial costs, but we need to act now to protect our environment, to protect our communities, and to build a resilient Canada that is prepared to adapt to the climate change that is already well under way.

I come to this House from a 20-year career as city planner. It is a career that has been dedicated to building livable, sustainable and resilient communities, in various urban, suburban and rural locales across Canada and in the northeastern U.S., but primarily, and for the past 11 years, in my home town of Halifax.

I am proud to have been a co-founder, and founding vice president, of a national organization called the Council for Canadian Urbanism. The Council for Canadian Urbanism, or CanU, was created 10 years ago by city planners, urban designers, and architects from public, private and academic practice across Canada. In 2013, in a historic moment, these community builders from across the country met in Halifax to ratify and sign the Charter for Canadian Urbanism, a copy of which hangs proudly in my office both here and at home in Halifax.

• (1755)

The charter is instructive in many ways for the members of the House, and today I would like to read this relevant excerpt:

Canada's cities and communities urgently require more progressive and creative approaches in order to become more successful, sustainable, creative, livable, healthy and resilient. Implementing a better Canadian Urbanism is key to addressing our most critical challenges, including climate change, ecological integrity, economic health and global competitiveness, energy resiliency, affordability and homelessness, public health, and social inclusiveness.

It is clear that the way we build our communities, the kind of infrastructure we deploy, and how we make infrastructure funding decisions will, in large measure, determine how we face climate change and whether we win or lose the battle against it.

That brings me to my private member's motion, Motion No. 45.

Quite simply, Motion No. 45 proposes that greenhouse gas emission analyses be undertaken for infrastructure projects seeking federal funding, and where appropriate, prioritize this funding for those that mitigate the impacts of climate change.

If passed, I believe the positive impacts of Motion No. 45 will be profound and numerous, and I would like to use my time today to talk about just four of them.

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First is the way in which it would increase government's capacity to make evidence-based decisions. Canadians expect us to ensure decisions are based on science, facts, and evidence, as written in the Prime Minister's mandate letter to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. To this end, we must increase data-collection capacity, a directive in the Prime Minister's mandate letter to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities. Motion No. 45 would further both of those goals.

The scientific evidence makes it clear: we must reduce greenhouse gas emissions. By having important data on GHG profiles of infrastructure proposals, as Motion No. 45 would require, our government would have the science, the facts, and the evidence to make better-informed decisions when making infrastructure-funding choices. That is a win for evidence-based decision-making, and that is a win for the environment.

Second is the way in which Motion No. 45 would help grow a strong economy while protecting the environment. Since the start of this 42nd Parliament and the Speech from the Throne, our government has recognized that a clean environment and a strong economy go hand in hand. We cannot have one without the other. Protecting the environment and growing the economy are not incompatible goals. In fact, our future success demands that we do both.

Because infrastructure spending represents a critical piece of our government's plan to grow the economy, we must ensure that the environmental impact of projects is a key consideration in the rollout of this historic investment program. The onus is on us here in this chamber to heed the call for environmentally responsible infrastructure spending, not only because it is the best hope of adapting to and combatting climate change, but also because projects with lower greenhouse gas emissions are more cost-efficient. They make use of renewable resources, and with current technologies moving away from carbon-based energy, they will last longer into the future.

In contrast, infrastructure projects with high greenhouse gas emissions and a lack of climate change resiliency further increase the many costs we know to be associated with the impacts of climate change.

Our investment in infrastructure is an investment in the future. By investing in a way that also contributes to mitigating and adapting to climate change, we have the ability to significantly amplify the outcomes of that tremendous investment. Simply put, when we invest taxpayer dollars intentionally and intelligently, we enhance our longevity and resilience, and this is not just environmental resilience, but it is economic resilience too. It helps to build an economy that works for the future, and that is what Canadians want.

The third impact of Motion No. 45 is the way in which the motion would foster environmental consciousness in government. If passed, my private member's motion would contribute to a government that keeps environmental costs and consequences in mind for all decisions. That is a government that recognizes infrastructure spending decisions can no longer be made based solely on a short-term bottom line.

Projects must not only be shovel-ready, but they must be shovel-appropriate. For that reason, we must consider whether the

infrastructure investments we are making today might have future risks that outweigh their immediate benefits.

It was only this past January that the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and the Minister of Natural Resources announced a set of five interim principles for major projects designed to restore trust in the environmental assessment process. Among these principles was a commitment to assess the direct and upstream greenhouse gas emissions of major projects.

These interim principles represent a return of a government that takes climate change seriously, and Motion No. 45 is a natural complement to and accelerator of this effort.

The fourth positive impact of Motion No. 45, and the last that I will address today, is the way in which the motion would assist us in fulfilling our international commitments.

● (1800)

It was only recently that the Prime Minister signed the Paris climate agreement thereby agreeing to take domestic measures as soon as possible to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in an effort to keep the global temperature from rising more than 2°C.

To contribute to this effort and regain Canada's environmental credibility in the world, we must consider the environmental impacts of our government's historic infrastructure spending program. This is both an opportunity and a responsibility when it comes to our international standing and the global response to climate change.

In the same way that greenhouse gas emissions transcend the boundaries of the places where they originate, so too would the benefits of greener infrastructure. If we prioritize greenhouse gas reductions in our infrastructure spending, the positive benefits of that extend across the country, from our bustling urban centres to our beautiful rural communities to our beloved national parks, and yes, even beyond our country's borders. Motion No. 45 would position Canada to be an active and respected global partner in the worldwide fight against climate change.

At the outset of my remarks today, I painted a bleak picture of my riding of Halifax, a picture of what could happen to my beloved city if meaningful action is not taken to reduce GHGs. But there is another possibility. It is a future for Halifax where air and water are clean, where we consciously mitigate against climate change with every decision we make, where the infrastructure we build is resilient against climate change and sea level rise, where we live in healthy, walkable, and vibrant communities, and where looking after the environment is the surest way to ensure sustainable economic prosperity. That is the future I am working for as the member of Parliament for Halifax, for my community, and for all Canadian communities.

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I must applaud the environmental organizations in my city for their work calling on government to address climate change, organizations like the Ecology Action Centre, the Dalhousie University Sustainability Office, the Citizens' Climate Lobby, NSPIRG working groups, the Canadian Youth Climate Coalition, and Sierra Club Atlantic, to name just a few, as well as numerous clean tech and green tech entrepreneurs in Halifax like CarbonCure, Green Power Labs, LightSail Energy, SabrTech, and Scotian WindFields Inc. There are so many more. I am very proud to heed the call today of those climate leaders.

I am so proud of this government and this cabinet for putting a stake in the ground to say that Canada is back as a global climate change champion. The work of the Prime Minister and many others in Paris and around the world has made us proud, but moreover, they have provided hope for the future for our children and for our children's children, and that has made us grateful.

Some might worry that the environmental assessment process like the one I propose is too ambitious, but I ask them to remember that there was once a time when Canada's environmental assessment process was rigorous and respected. In the decade since then we have lost time but it is not too late to make up for lost ground. It is more important now than ever before to take decisive and meaningful action to combat climate change. My motion represents that opportunity.

If agreed to, Motion No. 45 would send a clear message to Canadians that the government is committed to building a Canada they can be proud of and one that they will feel confident leaving to their children.

• (1805)

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know the member's motives are pure here, however, I did want to highlight the fact that his Prime Minister has made a clear commitment to a new era of co-operative federalism.

As the member will know, there is somewhere in the order of 4,000 municipalities across the country that would be implicated with this decision. There are 13 provinces and territories across the country. Before one would embark upon a motion like this, which would have significant implications for municipalities and the provinces, one would think the member would have consulted with all of those organizations.

There is a pre-eminent association across Canada that reflects and represents most of Canada's municipalities: the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. Has the member consulted with the FCM? Does he have its written support for his motion, given how significant the impact would be on municipalities? Has he also consulted with the provinces and territories and secured their support for the motion?

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Mr. Speaker, this kind of motion is nothing new for the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, nor for provincial governments or municipalities. Ten years ago the then Liberal government created the integrated community sustainability plan program, which linked gas tax funding for municipalities with the requirement that municipalities create an integrated sustainability plan, referred to in many cities, including my own, as a regional plan, sometimes for 20 years and sometimes for 30 years. Those

went away for awhile and unfortunately now Canada is lagging behind in the climate change fight.

These groups that we are discussing, the FCM and local communities, are very familiar with this kind of approach of accounting for carbon and I believe are looking forward to this. Over the course of the summer, I will be getting those recommendations.

• (1810)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think the answer to my Conservative colleague who asked the question earlier was no, but we never sacrifice the good while seeking the perfect. It is always exciting to introduce a motion, especially one that can help us deal with an issue that has long been ignored and neglected in this country by successive governments that have not even, in some cases, attempted to meet our climate change obligations and promises that have been made.

Part of the history that is important in this is that prior to 2009, all federal investments had to receive an environmental analysis of what their impact would be. Bill C-10, which was promoted by the Conservatives back then and supported by the Liberals removed that \$10 million and then it was gone entirely.

My question is twofold. One, I do not look at the motion now and understand what the analysis would mean, whether GHGs would be analyzed or assessed, and I do not see any prioritization of projects that actually have a lower GHG impact. Is this something that my friend is contemplating, to promote up the projects that actually have greater environmental benefit than another, if two are of comparable size?

If it is good that environmental assessments are done on federal infrastructure projects, would it also be good to have a transparent analysis on all resource projects that the federal government assesses so that Canadians could understand what the GHG impacts would be, both upstream and downstream?

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question and the history, which is very interesting.

Embedded in the motion is this idea that there would be some prioritization of infrastructure projects that help to achieve our country's greenhouse gas reduction goals. A motion like this is going to have to have an implementation plan and that is the kind of detail that would be sorted out in the implementation plan.

I will take this opportunity to make one thing clear. There are projects in this country, like roads, bridges, and such, that are critically important to the prosperity and even the safety and health of our communities. This motion is not saying no to funding those, but that we should understand what the carbon profile is, what the GHG profile is. We should account for those. How else can we responsibly try to achieve our GHG reduction goals that we have committed to internationally?

Further, there is also a low threshold for municipalities that may be proposing small projects of inconsequential carbon load, particularly small municipalities that may not have the resources to conduct a full-blown analysis on the carbon profile.

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Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this private member's motion today.

Communities across the country are looking for a clear, defined infrastructure plan from their federal government. Currently, there are many mixed messages coming from the government on infrastructure funding, and even more uncertainty as to when municipalities will actually see this funding. This motion from the member for Halifax does nothing but cast further uncertainty on the future of infrastructure in Canada.

Let me start by first addressing the beginning portion of this motion.

I would like to first say that we are all concerned with greenhouse gases. We are all looking forward to the plan from the minister on climate change. One of the things the former government did was implement, in 2009, the green infrastructure fund. We are all on the same page.

However, we have to drill down just a little further. As part of the phase one of the Liberal infrastructure spending, the Minister of Infrastructure's top priorities for the next three years were road repair, rehabilitation, and maintenance. With this motion, phase one of this plan will not be able to proceed. Placing mandatory GHG emission screens on municipalities will do nothing to speed up the infrastructure funding approvals nor the construction. That is something the Liberal government claims is a top priority for them, and it is certainly a top priority for many of us.

Instead, the motion will place an extra burden on small and rural communities across Canada. These communities will now have to find additional funds to go through this process. Furthermore, many Canadian municipalities already have their own environmental screens in place. The FCM released a report early in 2016. Over 90% of the surveyed Canadian municipalities either already had or were developing policies and plans to mitigate climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The additional screening required by this motion will now mean that municipalities will have to spend more taxpayers' money on something they are already doing, before their projects are even approved. This does not take into consideration the administration costs that would potentially be burdened upon communities.

However, what is even more troubling about this specific motion is the second portion. This states that projects that mitigate climate change will be chosen over other infrastructure projects. This is contrary to the Liberals' own policy. It directly contradicts the Minister of Infrastructure's own priorities, as I stated, of road repairs, maintenance, and rehabilitation, which is the priority over the next three years.

This would mean that Canadian cities would not, and could not, build new roads, bridges, or upgrade any highways, roads like those spoken about earlier by a member, to get to isolated communities, like the east side road to connect those people in rural communities. These projects are vital to the Canadian economy, but they would not meet the definition of mitigating climate change.

Furthermore, I would be curious to find out how this motion fits in with the larger context of the Liberals' pan-Canadian national climate change framework, which we hope to see the details of. We do not know if this motion is a piece of that plan or not a piece of that plan.

This private member's motion is really counter to what is being put forward by the Minister of Infrastructure. Also, in supporting the vital trade corridors between provinces and, in fact, between Canada and the United States, we are talking about bridges. This motion jeopardizes those road repairs, buildings, and it will certainly impact, as I stated earlier, small and rural communities and their access to their share of infrastructure funding.

● (1815)

There is no doubt in anybody's mind that we need to be protecting our environment, and that is critical for this generation and for future generations. However, we also have to have the responsibility to ensure that we have a strong economy, we are creating jobs, and we are building those trade corridors. We also need to ensure that we have fiscal prudence, responsibility in spending, and really well-thought-out public policy.

With the massive amount of debt that is projected to be added to Canada's debt load, I feel that passing this motion would just add to that.

We need a comprehensive plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. There is no doubt about that. We are patiently awaiting the pan-Canadian national climate change plan from the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. I do believe that this would be within that context in some form, but again, I am not sure if it is isolated or part of it. That was unclear.

As it stands right now, I will not be supporting the bill.

● (1820)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in this place and attempt as best I can to speak on behalf of the people of northwestern British Columbia, beautiful Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

In particular, when talking about climate change, for us, the realities and impacts of climate change are an incredibly intimate and real phenomenon. It is not some esoteric exercise. It is not some group of academics speaking and musing about graphs and parts per million. It is real and it is in the forests that we live around and from which we generate our economy. It is in the oceans and the rivers that provide us with sustenance and other forms of work.

Over the last number of years we have been raising the call many times. We have seen the pine beetle infestation across northern British Columbia that has then gone into Alberta and unfortunately into other forests in other provinces. It has had an enormously devastating effect. We have also seen the impact of forest fires that have come at times that have never been seen before with an intensity unlike the fires that we were used to in the past. We have had to grapple with what this means, what these changes mean.

For our colleagues who represent the far north, the changes have been even more dramatic, more impactful on their lives, particularly for those who gain sustenance and their livelihood from the natural environment.

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While this is an issue that connects all of us, I think it touches us in different ways, so legitimate and real action after so many years of disappointment on the issue of climate change is welcome and of course we will be supporting the motion.

We have some recommendations for improvement that I think the member for Halifax should welcome, simply because they put a little more specificity to what it is I think he is trying to achieve, it puts a little more teeth into it.

For those who do not follow this, and why would they, the difference between motions and bills is quite significant in terms of what their impact is. A motion is a call upon government to do such and such a thing and a bill changes law. A bill brings with it the strength and bearing of law but a motion is quicker, so there is some advantage because it does not have to proceed through so many stages like a bill does. These are the choices each of us makes when introducing private members' business.

I referred to it earlier, but the history on this particular question of how we build things, how we fund things as a federal government, and that connection to the environment and to climate change has been a bit of an unfortunate one. There was a bill introduced a number of years ago, back in 2009, in fact, Bill C-10. There was a minority Parliament and I can remember the then Prime Minister threatening the then official opposition that if they defeated any bill, that was a confidence bill.

The Conservatives started very early on to attach the notion of confidence to virtually every piece of legislation. They never fully confirmed it, but they hinted at it, and that hint was enough for the now Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was then the leader, to blink more than 140 or 150 times to vote with the then governing party and pass legislation.

One of the bills that unfortunately got past with the Conservatives and the Liberals playing the sidecar role was Bill C-10. Up until that point, every time the government funded anything, any infrastructure project, it had some kind of an environmental analysis, a lens that we passed through in order to understand what the impacts would be on the environment. It seemed logical. It was 2009. After all, we were a modern country, a very thoughtful country. Then Bill C-10 went through and said it is so bothersome, so quarrelsome to ask these annoying questions about what impact a bridge or a road might have, or funding a new thing here, there, or anywhere, so it was stripped down and eventually it was tossed out completely, which was unfortunate.

This motion tends to put some of that back together. We would have some other suggestions around bills like Bill C-51 and some others, more than just dalliances that the previous government rammed through that we would like to pull back and restore some sanity to Canadian law again, but this is a start and it is important to start somewhere.

I do believe that this government has a strong and clear mandate to take significant action when it comes to climate change. I think the so-called debate that went on was so reminiscent of those debates that my friends will remember from the seventies, eighties, and nineties about smoking. There was a debate about whether smoking caused cancer and there were just enough scientists willing to sell

out their souls to say that it was in doubt and that maybe smoking does not actually affect our health and maybe second-hand smoke is not so bad either. On and on it went and it delayed action.

• (1825)

That exact same strategy was taken out, to great effect, by Exxon and large companies. It has now been revealed in the last couple of weeks that, since the late 1970s, Exxon knew clearly that the burning of fossil fuels contributed to climate change and that climate change was an issue and a problem that actually threatened some of its facilities, as it turned out, and that is why it was so concerned because of sea level rise and big impactful storms.

All that is going on. The dance of deniability went on a long time and not just in industry, but it was true within governments because it is a hard thing to get at. It is a hard thing to actually look at and address. Therefore when we look at this piece of legislation, we say, all right, there would be some analysis applied, and there would be some attempt at understanding what the greenhouse gas impact would be when the federal government writes a cheque; and when Canadian taxpayers pay for something, we would ask what the impact would be on this other question, not just the questions of whether we are putting some people to work and whether it is good infrastructure for our economy. Those are all very important questions.

Also, if we look at sustainable development, we need that second and third pillar. Is it socially sustainable? Is it good for people, as radical a notion as that is? Also the third one, the environment leg we need to stick onto the stool asks if it irreparably continues to harm our planet. I know, that is another radical notion.

Here are the questions, and this is where we will be looking to get a bit more specific with my friend. An analysis is fine, but what does it mean? Does it mean that, if a project exceeds a certain amount of greenhouse gases, it will not be funded? Does it mean that a project that mitigates and reduces greenhouse gas in its construction and implementation is promoted up the chain ahead of other projects? Who needs to know this? I will say this about my Conservative colleagues. They never miss an opportunity to shoot down an effort when dealing with climate change, but they also asked an important question earlier, which is that our municipalities and all those people who write the funding proposals, our regional districts and our mayors and councils who put the proposals together, are going to want to know what this motion would do to their proposal. I think that is a very fair question.

Councils can only fund so much. They can only ask for so much. They can only do so much. If this motion says that everything that mitigates or reduces greenhouse gas emissions will rocket to the top, or if there is a per tonnage limit, that there can only be so many tonnes of greenhouse gases emitted in a project per dollar spent, some sort of transparent, open calculus, so that people who are trying to build these things can understand, that would be very helpful.

Similarly, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and the Minister of Natural Resources attempted to bring clarity to the natural resource sector and unfortunately sowed a whole bunch of confusion around this same topic. This was a curiosity for me to see infrastructure but not resources, because in Canada's profile of emissions, the lion's share comes from transportation and resource extraction. Those are the big ones we have to deal with, and governments have sometimes tried.

When talking about the resource sector, the Liberals said they are the champs and are going to consider greenhouse gas emissions when looking at mines, pipelines, and all of that. Our first question, and that of industry, environment groups, and first nations, was this. It is great that they are going to consider it, but how are they going to consider it? Is it the first priority? Is it second? Is there a greenhouse gas limit to every project? Is there not? Industry, which is looking to invest billions of dollars in this or that, would like to know.

Environment groups and environmentally thoughtful Canadians would also like to know, and these are fair questions; yet all we have is vagueness, which allows people to feel uncertain and worried about things. This is why New Democrats and our leader from Outremont have pressed time and time again to say that the government went to Paris, it urged the world to go to 1.5 degrees below pre-industrial levels of greenhouse gas emissions, the world congratulated it, and then we asked what Canada's target is.

I was in Paris and asked government officials if they did any analysis of what that 1.5 degrees meant and how they would translate that into a target for Canada. The shocking answer was no. They made the 1.5 degree commitment but did not analyze what it meant. I had a Kyoto flashback. I have seen this movie somewhere before, where the government makes a bold pronouncement to the world and says Canada is there, or back, or coming again, or some other catchy phrase. Then when we ask about analysis, and how it will do this big thing, the government says it will get to that later.

We still have hope. New Democrats are hopeful people, and we ultimately want good things to happen. As we wish for ourselves, we wish for others. We want the government to succeed on this one because it does matter to our kids, and their kids, and generations to follow.

In this, the motion moves us a little way down the road, so we will be supporting it and looking for more brighter and bigger things coming from the government.

• (1830)

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to rise in the House to speak to Motion No. 45 concerning infrastructure investments and climate changes, proposed by my colleague, the member for Halifax.

Let me begin by saying that the objective of the motion to achieve concrete outcomes for our climate through infrastructure investments is a critically important one for the government. Indeed, implementing measures outlined in my colleague's motion represents a significant opportunity for our government. Ensuring an analysis of GHG impacts of relevant infrastructure investments is undertaken, considered, and factored into investment decision-making is a way

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for our government to concretely advance mandate priorities on clean growth and climate change.

The link between climate change and infrastructure has been made repeatedly by our government. For instance, the relationship was referenced in our election platform, in mandate letters to both the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, as well as to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities and, most recently, in budget 2016. That budget stated that phase two of our government's infrastructure plan will go hand in hand with the transition to a low carbon economy.

Infrastructure was also identified as an early action under the Vancouver declaration on clean growth and climate change, agreed to by the Prime Minister and premiers a few months ago. The significance of the declaration cannot be understated. The declaration charts a course for collaborative efforts to develop a comprehensive national climate change plan that responds to international commitments that Canada made under the Paris Agreement, an agreement that the Prime Minister and many other world leaders signed recently in New York.

Federal, provincial, territorial working groups have been established to identify specific actions to grow Canada's economy while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change. These working groups will develop reports identifying options for action in four areas: first, clean technology, innovation, and jobs; second, carbon pricing mechanisms; third, specific mitigation opportunities; and, fourth, adaptation and climate resilience.

These reports will help inform the development of a national approach to climate change and clean growth, which first ministers are to finalized this fall. Infrastructure investments are likely to feature in the options identified in these reports.

There are many ways that infrastructure can advance Canada's climate change objectives. In terms of climate change adaptation, infrastructure that is designed, built, and operated with the existing and projected impacts of a changing climate can help in enhancing Canada's overall resilience. For instance, infrastructure that accounts for and is better able to withstand the impacts of extreme weather events helps to address vulnerabilities and better protect communities from the impacts of climate change.

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In terms of climate change mitigation, which is the focus of the motion, infrastructure can also play an important role. The construction and operation of infrastructure assets often has a direct implication for GHG emissions. Much of Canada's public infrastructure is comprised of assets with long lifespans that can lock in emission levels.

Ensuring that an analysis of GHG is undertaken and considered in specific cases could help avoid locking in higher levels of emissions. For instance, climate change mitigation efforts can be supported by making investments in our built environment that reflect the latest standards in energy efficiency. Whether it is new construction or retrofits of existing stock, investments in buildings that meet stringent energy efficiency standards will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, lower heating and cooling costs, and create jobs.

• (1835)

Moreover, infrastructure investments can also help to address barriers to reducing emissions in key sectors of our economy. For instance, strategic investments in electricity transmission infrastructure could bring increasing shares of lower and non-emitting sources of electricity to jurisdictions that have higher-emitting sources. Investments in innovative storage infrastructure could also increase shares of non-emitting, but intermittent, forms of electricity in Canada's grid, like wind and solar.

To use another example, investments in alternative, lower-emitting fuel infrastructure and infrastructure for electric vehicles could support the increased uptake of lower and non-emitting forms of transportation, particularly along key travel corridors.

These examples demonstrate that applying GHG impact analysis to infrastructure projects can concretely help to advance the government's commitment on climate change.

Nonetheless, GHG impact analysis is not suited to all infrastructure investments equally. Currently, the threshold of the motion is broad and would apply GHG impact analysis to all legacy infrastructure funding and investments, as well as investments under phase one of the government's infrastructure plan, including many initiatives that do not have meaningful climate change implications.

For instance, this analysis would not be relevant for service-based infrastructure investments in initiatives like early learning and child care. It would also not be relevant for projects where GHG impacts are minimal and, for instance, only associated with the construction phase of a project.

These GHG impacts are marginal relative to Canada's overall emissions profile. Subjecting these types of initiatives to additional reviews would run counter to efforts to streamline the infrastructure approval processes, which our government has committed to doing. Consequently, it may be appropriate to focus the application of the motion to areas relevant to consideration of GHG impacts.

Options to focus the application of the motion could be explored with provinces, territories, municipalities, and other partners in the course of planned engagement on the development of the approach for phase two of our infrastructure plan. As owners and operators of large portions of public infrastructure across Canada, other levels of government must be invited to help shape how best to implement the next phase of investments.

Phase 2 of our government's infrastructure plan is meant to transition Canada toward a low-carbon economy and implementing Motion No. 45 would help ensure that the government's future infrastructure investments would support this transition.

Moving Canada toward a cleaner, lower-carbon climate resilient economy and society will require a significant level of effort from all levels of government, as well as from individual Canadians. As a result, we will need to leverage all the tools available to us. Infrastructure will be a central part of that.

Implementing Motion No. 45 will help ensure federal infrastructure investments are deployed to advance work under the Vancouver declaration, as well as Canada's international commitments under the Paris agreement. Importantly, it will also help to begin factoring climate change considerations into infrastructure investment decision-making as part of the normal course of business going forward.

I want to thank the hon. member for Halifax for bringing forward this important motion for our consideration. However, to give the government greater flexibility with regard to the implementation of Motion No. 45, I will propose the following amendment. I move:

That the motion be amended by replacing all of the words after the words "funding proposals" with the following:

"an analysis of their impact on greenhouse gas emissions is undertaken for those projects exceeding an appropriate threshold to be established in an implementation plan; (b) where appropriate, funding priority be given to proposals which help to mitigate the impacts of climate change; and (c) that an implementation plan be developed."

I would urge all members of Parliament to vote in support of the amended motion, given the significant opportunity it represents for the government to advance Canada's clean growth and climate change agenda.

I am thankful for the opportunity to speak to this motion.

• (1840)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It is my duty to inform hon. members that, pursuant to Standing Order 93(3), no amendment may be proposed to a private member's motion or the motion for second reading of a private member's bill unless the sponsor of the item indicates his or her consent.

Therefore, I ask the hon. member for Halifax if he consents to this amendment.

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Mr. Speaker, I consent.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Very good.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Abbotsford.

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Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to engage in this debate. For viewers of this debate and other MPs in this House, I want to begin my comments by framing what the motion is all about .

The motion does two things. First, it calls upon the federal government to impose a full greenhouse gas emission impact study for every single federally funded infrastructure project over the value of \$500,000. Second, it calls upon the federal government to give priority to infrastructure proposals which specifically mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, notwithstanding the clearly expressed preferences of municipalities or provincial governments.

I do not question the motive behind this motion. It has to do with ensuring governments at all levels exercise wise environmental stewardship. We can all agree on that.

Sadly, the wording of this motion is reflective of how Liberal governments cannot resist the urge to overreach and increase red tape by interfering in the affairs of cash-strapped local and provincial governments, and in the lives of ordinary Canadians.

What this motion is about is essentially a big government solution for a perceived local government challenge. Essentially, when we talk about big government, we are talking about big costs. Who bears the cost of this? That is where my criticisms are focused.

First, these additional costs for municipalities will be imposed without guaranteeing any value for the money that is spent.

Second, the decisions on local infrastructure priorities will no longer be made exclusively on the merits of the projects and the needs of local communities.

Third, what the motion really does, if the government follows through on it, is it indirectly intrudes on provincial and municipal jurisdiction. Why do I say that? Most of these projects will be cost-shared, either fifty-fifty between the federal government and the municipality or the provincial government, or a tripartite funding agreement, one-third, one-third, one-third.

Most of these projects will actually be funded one-third, one-third, one-third, with the federal government only contributing one-third of the cost and yet imposing upon municipalities the requirement to embark upon a very expensive greenhouse gas emission assessment process.

The large majority of these projects, of course, are going to take place in the 4,000 municipalities across this country. I asked a question earlier of the sponsor of this bill, whether he had actually consulted with those municipalities and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. He did not actually give me a straight answer, but it was pretty clear that the answer was a big resounding no. It was the same thing with the provinces and territories. Were they consulted? It appears they were not.

Who bears the expense and cost of this? It is going to be the provinces, territories, and the municipalities across Canada.

We talked about partnerships. I will talk a little about Abbotsford, the city I represent.

We have a recently completed project, funded under our previous Conservative government, the Mill Lake Spray Park. It was a small project. It does not have serious greenhouse gas emission impacts, but that project would be captured by this motion and would have to go through the expensive review process. We are talking about not only upstream, but downstream greenhouse gas emission impacts as well. This is horrifically expensive. We are talking about a significant amount of research that has to be done. We are talking about a lot of time spent putting together the information to make this assessment, and tremendous costs to local communities.

We have to understand that the priority setting that takes place for these projects, the design and engineering, the costing, and all of the other fundamental work on these projects is done at the local level. They will be the ones who will have to pay the cost for this ill-advised motion. These requirements capture most of the infrastructure projects that will be built by municipalities across Canada.

I am a former city councillor. I spent nine years as a city councillor, as well as five years on a local school board. I have become keenly sensitive to the pressures that municipalities face. They are stretched to the max. Many of them no longer have any ability to raise tax revenues to meet the demands of their residents.

● (1845)

In fact, this all goes back to the 13 long dark years of the former Liberal government under Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin. What did they do? After years of accumulating national debt they realized there was a problem. However, instead of making the tough decisions, controlling spending, as we in the Conservative government did, and controlling the growth of government, they looked for an easy target. That easy target was the provinces and territories. They downloaded billions of dollars. It was somewhere around \$20 billion a year of federal government transfers, which were intended to support the provinces in providing health care, social services, and education. The provinces were left with this crater in their budgets. What did they in turn do? They looked for the next target, which was municipalities.

I remember, in one year alone we had approximately \$3 million of cutbacks of provincial transfers dumped on us in the municipality in Abbotsford. The impact was so significant. Many municipalities across the country have yet to recover from that. In fact, our former Conservative government tried to address that. We actually went out of our way to double the amount of gas tax funding for municipalities. On top of that, we made that gas tax program permanent to try to help our municipalities grapple with these demands for services but a declining tax base.

We can see where this all comes down. I asked whether the motion's sponsor had actually consulted with our municipalities across the country. It is pretty clear he did not. The reason I wanted him to advise us of that is that our municipalities across the country have made it very clear. In fact the 2015 Federation of Canadian Municipalities' report on local climate action across Canada highlighted the disparity between municipalities with capacity to undertake detailed environmental analyses and those that lack the human resources, scientific, and planning expertise to afford to do that.

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That is the case here. The motion is imposing additional burdens on our municipalities, and many of the projects that are captured under the motion should never actually require these assessments to be done.

This is an example of top-down government, a failure to respect the knowledge and wisdom of local communities. It is all being done in the absence of the long promised pan-Canadian framework on climate change, which the Prime Minister promised in Paris he would deliver within 90 days in Vancouver. I was in Vancouver. Was it delivered? No, it was not.

We have these ad hoc environmental initiatives and greenhouse gas emission reduction initiatives being implemented by the Liberal government willy-nilly without an overarching national climate change plan. In fact, they are spending \$2.65 billion in foreign countries, without us even having a national climate change plan in place.

Therefore, the bottom line is this. All Canadians expect their government to take action on protecting our environment and meeting our environmental challenges. However, those efforts should never displace investment in critical infrastructure driven by the priorities of the municipalities, the provinces, and the territories. As governments address those environmental commitments, we need to be selective in determining which projects merit greenhouse gas emission assessments and which do not. Otherwise, we are wasting taxpayers' dollars. Of course, the motion does not in any way contain those safeguards.

I will conclude. It is very simple. Of the many effective tools government has available to address greenhouse gas emissions, this motion is not and should not be one of those tools.

• (1850)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to speak to Motion No. 45 concerning infrastructure projects and assessing their impact on greenhouse gas emissions. I will support the motion moved by the Liberal member for Halifax at second reading.

Beginning in 2011, I worked with my colleague, Megan Leslie, who is also from Halifax and did excellent work on environmental issues. She continues to work in this area, and she is an inspiration to me. I am pleased to be able to continue working in this place to advance environmental issues.

This important motion represents a first step. However, it is unfortunate that it is just a motion and not a bill, because it does not require the government to take action. That is disappointing, especially since the Liberal government supported the Conservative government when it did not want to make the environmental assessments mandatory for green infrastructure funding.

We in the NDP believe that a serious plan is essential in order to combat climate change. As far back as 2007, Jack Layton introduced a bill on climate change accountability that would have required the government, regardless of its political stripe, to be accountable in that regard. It was extremely important. Unfortunately, that bill was never passed because circumstances—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): 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.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on January 27, I asked whether the member for Regina—Wascana would stand up and support the economy of western Canada and the hundreds of thousands of western Canadians who work in resource sector jobs.

This topic is especially important given that western Canada is presently suffering from structurally low prices for resource products, which is affecting the hundreds of thousands of workers and their families. Unfortunately, the Liberal government and the lone Liberal member from Saskatchewan have been silent on their plan to support this region.

The Liberal plan for the struggling sectors of western Canada's economy is to provide a temporary bump in employment insurance to folks who are out of work, rather than support getting resources to market, which would create real new opportunities and new jobs.

Western Canadians are not asking for a government handout; they need a federal government that supports the west, because we have a dynamic and innovative economy that is struggling because of a drop in demand for goods. Canadian companies from western Canada are innovative and have exported incredible technologies around the world. Unfortunately, western Canada's economies cannot succeed by just being innovative. The reality is that Alberta and Saskatchewan are both landlocked provinces that need a willing partner in the federal government to facilitate getting resources to market. A willing and proactive federal government is the only way to overcome the not-in-my-backyard mentality that has become too prevalent in a federation like Canada, where the success of one region truly is the success of the entire country.

Imposing a crude oil moratorium on B.C.'s west coast will not help get Canadian resources to some of the world's fastest growing economies.

According to internal documents, 64 major resource projects are presently waiting for approval, just from Transport Canada. The Minister of the Environment likes to talk about the Woodfibre LNG project getting approval from her department. However, it is still waiting for approval from Transport Canada.

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What was most worrisome in the Minister of Finance's response on behalf of the member for Regina—Wascana was that he happily admitted that he was “working diligently to figure out the priorities of Canadians”. Quite frankly, one does not need to be the head of the C.D. Howe Institute to know that the greatest long-term problem facing western Canada's economy is the challenge of getting resources to market, whether down south to the United States, west to Asia, or even east to Ontario, Quebec, and Atlantic Canada. Sadly, this budget has only added to the regulatory debt load that companies face, making it more difficult to get resources to market.

Will the member for Regina—Wascana today stand up and state what specific actions he intends to take to help get resources to market and get Saskatchewan workers back to work?

● (1855)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to note that the member believes we need to have a proactive government, a government that is prepared to get engaged and get the job done.

I want to talk a bit about the pipeline issue.

My colleague from Wascana, representing Saskatchewan, has done an outstanding job in ensuring that we recognize how important our natural resources and other commodities are to not only Saskatchewan but to all of the Prairie provinces.

It is especially nice for me to stand in my place as a member of Parliament from the Prairie provinces. I am familiar with just how important our natural resources are. I am sympathetic to the issue of being landlocked. I have lived in Saskatchewan and Alberta, and Manitoba is my current home. I am sensitive to the issue.

The Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of Finance have talked a great deal about this issue. The Prime Minister of Canada has talked a great deal about the needs of our western provinces. Pipelines are just one example. The member said that we need a proactive government to get our resources to market. It is really important that the member reflect on the 10 years of being in government and the Conservatives failure to get one inch of pipeline to tidewaters.

In recognizing the importance of building that social contract of moving forward on the pipeline file, one of the first things our government did was to have the Minister of Natural Resources, working with cabinet and the Prime Minister, come forward with what would be an effective tool in managing western Canada oil resources, particularly in Saskatchewan and Alberta, and make a commitment to do what we could. We can not do any worse than what the Conservative government did when it was in office. We have put in place a system that shows we will have greater potential to get our natural resources to tidewater.

We see the disaster taking place in Fort McMurray, which both myself and the Prime Minister referenced earlier. As a priority, we have committed infrastructure dollars to that area.

We have recognized, unlike the former government, that we need to invest in Canada's infrastructure. If we invest in Canada's

infrastructure, as we have advocated, it will help get our natural resources get to market.

This government has listened, canvassed and been very thorough in trying to ensure we do what we can with regard to our natural resources. This government has clearly demonstrated that we support our prairie provinces. I would suggest the member join my colleague from Wascana and this government in recognizing the valuable role we have played in just six months.

● (1900)

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the member opposite, we have seen all too often over the past six months members across the way all too willing to pat themselves on the back before they have actually accomplished anything.

The northern gateway project received approval to go ahead from the National Energy Board, with 209 conditions after thousands of hours of consultations. How many more conditions can be placed on a project before social license can be attained?

There is no single resource or product in which Canada has a worldwide monopoly. Our country has been blessed with an abundance of natural resources, but a lot of these resources need to be shipped long distances to get to market. Every day the federal government is not proactively helping get resources to market, we become slightly less competitive internationally.

Is the minister willing to come out and say that he will champion any project that receives the approval of the National Energy Board, or will he dither on this matter as the Prime Minister—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, there has been no greater champion in terms of building on Canada's, particularly western Canada's, infrastructure than the current government. Not only are we making promises to build the infrastructure, but we are already starting to build the infrastructure. The money is there, put in place, and we are encouraging it. This is something that the previous government did not do.

Even in the follow-up question that the member put to the government, she made reference that the government needs to do something. I want to emphasize that in six short months, this government has done more to try to deal with the natural resources.

Where I do agree with the member is that we are a country that has been blessed with wonderful natural resources. The job of government is to work with the different stakeholders, build that social licence, and build the infrastructure that—

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

ASBESTOS

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on February 2, I asked the Minister of Public Services and Procurement to stop using asbestos in federal public buildings.

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Asbestos has been called the greatest industrial killer that the world has ever known, and New Democrats have been fighting hard to get this carcinogenic and toxic material out of buildings and people's lives. This known carcinogen has claimed the lives of thousands of Canadian workers, and so it is shocking to learn that while the federal government is spending millions to remove it from buildings, it is installing asbestos in other buildings.

I was very encouraged when the minister replied that the government would undertake a review of this issue. It was quietly announced at the end of March that as of February 1, 2016, the federal government has officially banned the use of asbestos-containing materials in all construction and major renovations.

The NDP applauds this move. It is a good first step in a decade-long struggle to remove asbestos from workplaces and buildings. However, Canadians are left wondering what will it take for the government to finally remove this cancer-causing substance once and for all.

Last week, on April 28, the National Day of Mourning, I called on the government to join a growing list of countries, including Australia, Britain, Japan, and Sweden, that have already banned the deadly killer, and so has the Canadian Cancer Society, the Canadian Labour Congress, and many more organizations.

Over 150,000 workers in Canada are currently exposed to asbestos, especially in the areas of specialty trade contractors, building construction, auto repairs, maintenance, ship and boat building, and remediation and waste management. Many Canadians, including children, are unknowingly exposed to asbestos every day. It is found in schools, hospitals, homes, and building materials.

Canadians dying of cancer caused mainly by workplace exposure to asbestos has risen 60% between 2000 and 2012, according to Statistics Canada. Since 1996, there have been 5,000 approved death claims stemming from asbestos exposure, making it by far the top source of workplace death in Canada. However, statistics show that asbestos imports in Canada continue to rise.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer classifies all commercial forms of asbestos as carcinogenic. Its evidence shows that there is no safe form of asbestos, nor a threshold that it considers safe.

When pipes and tiles containing asbestos are cut to size, fibres are often released. Materials naturally break down over time, and warning labels fade. It is impossible to monitor all workplaces to ensure that younger and newer workers in particular are wearing protective gear. When there are rushed deadlines or precarious, informal jobs, proper procedures often fall by the wayside. Younger, less experienced workers are less likely to complain.

The World Health Organization bluntly said that "All types of asbestos cause lung cancer, mesothelioma, cancer of the larynx and ovary, and asbestosis..". Yet, Health Canada's website continues to play down the risk of asbestos exposure. It never clearly states that all forms of asbestos cause cancer, but rather "Asbestos poses health risks only when fibres are present in the air that people breathe."

Why does the government continue to allow Health Canada to post misleading information about the safety of asbestos? The

minister has said she has heard the concerns expressed by Canadians over the continued use of asbestos and that "The health and safety of our building occupants and visitors are a priority."

If that is true, when will the government ban the use of asbestos entirely?

• (1905)

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate on this important issue. Until recently, asbestos was widely used for many centuries in thousands of building construction products in Canada and around the world. This included insulation for walls, ceilings, and plumbing fixtures.

However, an increasing body of scientific evidence has shown us that asbestos creates serious health risks. Health Canada advises us that breathing in asbestos fibres can cause cancer and other diseases.

[*Translation*]

One of the government's main responsibilities is to protect the health and safety of its citizens, especially when it comes to the presence of asbestos in old buildings. Therefore, as soon as asbestos is detected in a government building, immediate action must be taken to eliminate the risks.

In the case of buildings that belong to Public Services and Procurement Canada, these measures are taken in strict conformity with all legislative requirements, and this includes asbestos management plans and corrective action, such as removal of the asbestos dust and encapsulation.

Asbestos is removed or encapsulated when there is risk to health and safety or there is a requirement for maintenance or renovation that results in the unavoidable disturbance of asbestos-containing materials.

Furthermore, Public Services and Procurement Canada conducts annual inspections and reports on asbestos-containing materials identified within buildings. The government has always managed current asbestos-related issues, in accordance with the changing regulatory and legislative framework of the past few decades.

• (1910)

[*English*]

That is why whenever the presence of asbestos is identified in a government building, immediate action is taken to remediate the risks. In the case of buildings owned by Public Services and Procurement Canada, this action is taken in strict conformity to all legislative requirements. This includes asbestos management plans and corrective actions such as asbestos abatement and encapsulation.

Asbestos is removed or encapsulated when there is a risk to health and safety or there is a requirement for maintenance or renovation. It is true that asbestos-containing materials are still used across the construction industry in limited applications where it does not easily break apart and thus cannot be inhaled.

The government takes the health and safety of its buildings, occupants, and visitors very seriously and strictly conforms to the legislative requirements for health and safety. To minimize the risk to building occupants, asbestos is removed when there is a health and safety hazard and when undertaking building recapitalization.

As of April 1, 2016, Public Services and Procurement no longer uses asbestos in Public Services and Procurement Canada's new construction and major renovation projects. This follows a review on the use of asbestos in future Public Services and Procurement Canada new construction and major renovation projects.

Ms. Sheri Benson: Mr. Speaker, any Canadian who works in or visits a building that contains asbestos really does have the right to know that they may be exposed to harmful substances.

With the recently announced registry of federal buildings containing asbestos, at least workers can verify if their workplace will expose them to asbestos. I call on the minister to make this registry accessible to all Canadians without delay.

At the same time, I hope the minister is also planning to create a nationwide registry listing any facility that contains asbestos, not just the buildings owned and operated by the federal government.

It is an undeniable fact that asbestos is responsible for thousands of deaths and it is unconscionable for the government to continue importing and using it in any form. When will the government ban all asbestos?

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Speaker, allow me to summarize the government's position. We take the health and safety of our buildings' occupants and visitors very seriously. Whenever the presence of friable asbestos is identified, immediate action is taken to remediate the situation.

[Translation]

Public Services and Procurement Canada strictly adheres to the legislative health and safety requirements, and these buildings have strict asbestos management plans.

[English]

As of April 1, 2016, Public Services and Procurement Canada no longer uses asbestos in Public Services and Procurement Canada's new construction and major renovation projects.

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on April 13, I asked the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard a question about the \$6-million allocation in the Liberals' 2016 budget to protect the waters of Newfoundland from a shipwreck.

Meanwhile, I have been asking questions in the House and sending letters to the minister about the *Kathryn Spirit* for five years now. After the election, I informed the Minister of Transport, the

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Minister of the Environment, and the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard of this shipwreck as quickly as possible. I reminded them that the Mexican company that owns the wreck had declared bankruptcy, and that so far, the federal government had not allocated any money to remove the shipwreck from Lake Saint-Louis, at Beauharnois. This lake is a drinking water reservoir for the greater Montreal area and, especially, for the people of Beauharnois.

All the minister was able to tell me was that a working group was created in February and that he could therefore say nothing more. The fact that the minister himself is unable to make decisions worries me.

However, I understand that a working group is a step in the right direction. It is certainly better than what the Conservatives came up with in the previous five years. On April 11, the working group informed us that the wreck had been there for so long and was in such bad shape that the group had ruled out the option of towing the vessel out of Lake Saint-Louis. The only remaining option is to dismantle it in Lake Saint-Louis. Three options were put forward.

The cost of the three approaches to in situ dismantling ranges from \$10 million to \$15 million, so we need to know whether the federal government is planning to pay for it. Obviously, the people of Beauharnois will not be able to foot the \$10-million or \$15-million bill to have the vessel dismantled.

The minister's response is therefore completely unsatisfactory. The fact that the minister is incapable of reacting to the situation and reassuring Canadians shows a complete lack of responsibility. Canadians have no idea when the government plans to go ahead with dismantling the wreckage. They are wondering if the ship will continue deteriorating in Lake Saint-Louis, if it will continue to list, if it will take on more water after every winter, and if there will be fluid leaks. It is very troubling.

I would remind the House that I have been raising this issue for five years now. This shipwreck is over 153 metres long and contains over 12,000 tonnes of rusted metal. There was asbestos in the boat and oil in the engine room. Several thousand people have mobilized and signed a petition calling on the federal government to invest in this file.

Other issues related to security have also been raised. For instance, the people want to know whether any Coast Guard officers—

• (1915)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard.

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Salaberry—Suroît for her interest in the *Kathryn Spirit*.

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As we know, the Canadian Coast Guard plays a vital role in saving human lives and protecting our waters. It is responsible for responding to all incidents of pollution caused by a vessel in Canada.

As some members know, since 2011 the *Kathryn Spirit* has been moored at the edge of Lake Saint-Louis, which is in the St. Lawrence Seaway. In 2012, this vessel was sold to a Mexican business that planned to tow it to Mexico, where it would be dismantled properly.

Transport Canada and the Canadian Coast Guard carried out regular inspections of the vessel to mitigate the risks of pollution. In 2013, in response to reports of pollution, the Canadian Coast Guard investigated and conducted an operation to remove the pollutants from the vessel.

Unfortunately, the company declared bankruptcy in the fall of 2015 and announced that it was abandoning the vessel.

Although the risk of pollution is low, an inspection carried out by Transport Canada in January 2016 indicated that structural problems would pose serious challenges to towing the vessel to another location.

That is why the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard was very proactive on this file. On February 1, 2016, at the request of the minister, senior officials at Transport Canada and the Canadian Coast Guard met the mayors of Montreal and Beauharnois to discuss the *Kathryn Spirit*.

I am pleased to inform the House that following those discussions, a joint working group made up of federal, provincial, and municipal government representatives was set up. The partners will work together on developing options for a lasting and safe solution that responds to the concerns of local residents.

The working group met twice in March and April, and mid-year recommendations will be presented at the beginning of summer 2016. We look forward to reviewing their findings. I assure the House that we are committed to working with the municipalities of Montreal and Beauharnois to ensure that this problem is resolved.

I was assured that the *Kathryn Spirit* is not discharging any pollutants at this time. Representatives from the Canadian Coast Guard will continue to monitor the ship and are prepared to intervene at a moment's notice if the situation changes.

The Canadian Coast Guard takes its mandate to protect the marine environment very seriously. Our government understands that Canadians have serious concerns about abandoned ships and it is taking every necessary step to protect the environment.

I want to thank the Canadian Coast Guard, Transport Canada, and our partners for all the work that has been done to resolve the problem of the *Kathryn Spirit*, which is docked on Lake Saint-Louis in Beauharnois.

● (1920)

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, it is very frustrating for me to hear the parliamentary secretary repeat the same old thing. He has announced absolutely nothing new.

We still do not know if the federal government is willing to spend any money to cover the \$10 million or \$15 million it is going to cost to dismantle the ship. We also do not know how frequently the Canadian Coast Guard is monitoring the ship.

The only thing we have learned since March is that once a week, a helicopter checks on the ship from the air. We do not know if the engine room has been inspected or how many times the hull has been inspected. We do not know if the ship is still taking on water. In fact, in March, contaminated water seeped into the ship. We do not know what happened.

We do not know what is happening, and the only thing the government has to say is that a working group is looking into the matter.

We know the group is doing its work, but what is the government doing? What is it promising?

Mr. Serge Cormier: Mr. Speaker, once again, I want to reassure the public.

The Canadian Coast Guard is very serious about its mandate to keep pollutants out of the environment, and it is ready to intervene at any time.

We have also been meeting with the member for Salaberry—Suroît to update her on developments from the beginning. The member had a meeting with the minister. We have been keeping her updated on this file from the very beginning.

By the way, I would also like to thank the member for Châteauguay—Lacolle and the member for Vaudreuil—Soulanges for their work on this file.

As I said earlier, with the creation of the working group, there have been some very productive discussions to come up with options and solutions for dealing with the problem of the *Kathryn Spirit*. Once again, the working group met twice, in March and April. The mid-year recommendations will be presented at the beginning of the summer.

We are anxious to hear the working group's findings, and we will continue to work with our colleagues—

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

(The House adjourned at 7:23 p.m.)

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