



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 148 • NUMBER 008 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Monday, January 25, 2016

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, January 25, 2016

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed from December 11 consideration of the motion for an address to His Excellency the Governor General in reply to his speech at the opening of the session, of the amendment, and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking the voters in the riding of Rivière-du-Nord for placing their trust in me during the last election. During my time in office, I will represent them with humility, wisdom and dedication.

I would also like to thank the hundreds of thousands of Quebeckers who decided to put their faith in the Bloc Québécois to speak on their behalf in the House.

The Bloc Québécois is Quebec's party. Our purpose and our primary function here in the House is to stand up for Quebeckers' interests and values. We have a solid team made up of men and women of conviction. Our team will do a great job of representing the thousands of voters who chose to put their faith in our party and who believe in our mission: to fight for Quebec's independence and champion the interests of the Quebec nation.

Since its creation, our party has always acted responsibly in the work it does. Over the years, successive governments have been able to rely on our support when their policies served the interests of Quebec. Our party has also vigorously objected, and rightfully so, any time the rights of Quebeckers have been violated or ignored. For instance, the Bloc Québécois supported Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's work to create the now-defunct long gun registry. We did the same thing when it came time to ratify the Kyoto protocol in order to fight climate change.

We also supported the same Prime Minister in introducing same-sex marriage and imposing a moratorium on the criminalization of cannabis. However, governments that ignored Quebec or abused the

rights of Quebeckers remember the opposition work of the Bloc Québécois.

I am sure that no one in this House is proud of the notorious sponsorship scandal. In any case, it was because of the hard, tireless work of the Bloc Québécois and its members that Quebec and the rest of Canada learned of the extent of the corruption surrounding the government of the day.

Hundreds of thousands of Quebeckers have long put their trust in the Bloc Québécois because doing so is good not only for Quebec, but also for democracy. The reasons are clear. First, making Quebec a country is still on the table. I can assure everyone listening that our caucus' commitment to the cause remains unwavering. Another reason we are still in the House is that the Bloc Québécois has always been beyond reproach and devoted to its work.

The Bloc Québécois is not a conventional opposition party. We do not oppose something simply because we are in the opposition. That would serve no purpose or make any sense and, as such, would be disrespectful to those who gave us our mandate. The Bloc Québécois stands up for the interests of Quebec. Until Quebec becomes a country it is critical that its choices are respected. Provided the federal government's decisions reflect such respect then the Bloc Québécois will support the government's policies. One day Quebec will collaborate with Canada, side by side within the community of nations.

We watched the sad spectacle put on by the previous government for far too long. The rights of parliamentarians were violated for nearly a decade. The House of Commons was reduced to playing a supporting role to a prime minister who did not believe in parliamentary work. The public service, scientists, women and workers were muzzled and treated with disdain, and the Conservative government basically ignored the environment, when the time has long since passed for critical action on climate change.

The Conservative government worked to achieve a single goal: to use its power to remain in power. A change in direction and tone was needed. In that regard, all the parties that ran against the Conservatives in the last election can congratulate themselves for expressing and doing something about Canadians' frustration and dissatisfaction with that government by removing it from power. That is why we commended the Prime Minister's announcement in the throne speech of his intention to return to a parliamentary tradition where respect for the opposition is a given.

The Address

There is no democracy without the work of a real opposition. The Bloc Québécois supports a number of the objectives set out by the Prime Minister. We will support some of those initiatives in keeping with our tradition of working together constructively.

First of all, we are thrilled to see that the government shares our concerns about climate change. However, we are asking that the efforts to combat climate change that Quebec has been making for a long time now be taken into account in the plan that the government will be putting forward in this regard.

That being said, all states must do their part, and there is a consensus in the scientific community to that effect. Even former U.S. vice-president Al Gore recently pointed out the major efforts Quebec has made to help combat climate change. The government cannot ignore that fact. If the government wants our support, it needs a plan that takes into account the leading-edge work that the Quebec nation has done to date.

The same is true for the matter of end-of-life care. We believe that Canada must enter into an informed and thorough debate on this issue, similar to that undertaken by the Quebec National Assembly.

However, Quebec cannot be penalized for having led the way in this area. On the contrary, we believe that the government must acknowledge Quebec's invaluable contribution, get the rest of Canada up to speed and adjust the targets for each province based on the efforts made since 1990 and the Kyoto accord.

In his speech, the Prime Minister claims that he intends to strengthen the employment insurance system. We support that. We believe it is high time that employment insurance truly was an insurance program and not a tax on labour. At present this is not the case, as EI seems to be a deficit reduction tax.

For the past 20 years, the EI fund has been ransacked time and again. If the Prime Minister is serious about strengthening the program, he must agree to make the fund truly independent. We are still adding up the billions of dollars that have been looted from this fund since 1996.

It is time to put a stop to that practice and to ensure that workers have real support when they lose their jobs. There is currently no indication that the Prime Minister intends to solve this problem once and for all. We are asking him to do so.

The Bloc Québécois has always been a staunch defender of workers' rights. We urge the Prime Minister to listen to our proposals if he truly wants to find appropriate, sustainable solutions for employment insurance.

Health is another very important issue. The Prime Minister has told us that he plans on talking to the provinces to reach a new agreement. Again, we have some conditions. Ottawa will have to increase federal health funding by 6% until 25% of Quebec's system costs are covered. Ottawa must also consider that our population is aging.

The Bloc Québécois will remain opposed to any law to implement the trans-Pacific partnership or the Canada-Europe agreement if the following conditions are not met. First, supply-managed cheese and agricultural producers will have to be fully compensated for any revenue losses. In addition, the federal government will have to

provide considerable support for the next generation of farmers, to the tune of \$100 million a year in investments. Lastly, the government will have to bring in border controls to prevent milk proteins from entering.

The fiscal imbalance is still a reality, and it could doom Quebecers to decades of austerity unless something is done.

In the not-too-distant past, the Bloc Québécois was instrumental in partially addressing this issue. However, let us not kid ourselves. Everyone here is well aware that the expenses are in Quebec City, but the money is here in Ottawa.

The Prime Minister can get the Bloc's support if he acknowledges this situation and starts restoring the spending balance between the federal government and the Government of Quebec.

• (1110)

We salute the government's intention to renew its relationships with first nations. We fully support the Prime Minister's plan to tackle, at long last, the many issues they have been facing for too long. The Prime Minister said that he will initiate a nation-to-nation dialogue with aboriginal peoples. This is a noble initiative, and we will make sure that what is good for first nations is also good for the Quebec nation.

We will also support the government's plan to reduce taxes for the middle class. We believe that the middle class in Quebec and Canada must be strengthened. However, we would also like to see the government do more for low-income citizens. The middle class has been shrinking over the past 30-plus years not because the people of Quebec and Canada are getting richer, but because the number of people with low incomes is growing. If the government really wants to be progressive, it has to tackle poverty. Yes, we have to do whatever we can to strengthen the middle class, but all governments have an even more pressing duty to eradicate poverty. We would like the government to take meaningful steps toward that goal.

For all these reasons, we see many areas on which the Bloc Québécois and the Liberal government can agree and work together. The Prime Minister's wishes and goals are in line with many of the Bloc Québécois's demands and commitments. However, some important issues were ignored in the throne speech. We believe that a tax-free UCCB would be far more beneficial to Quebecers than the proposed Canada child benefit.

We also believe that scrapping Bill C-51, the Anti-terrorism Act, 2015, would be better than a lengthy process to reform it.

The Address

In terms of infrastructure development, we want to make sure that Quebec's jurisdictions will not be violated for the umpteenth time by a federal program that ignores federal-provincial jurisdictions. If the federal government is serious about coming up with solutions to modernize our infrastructure, it needs to provide the Quebec government with the resources. It is up to Quebec City to decide the best way to modernize its infrastructure, with support from and by working with the municipalities in Quebec.

Allow me to reiterate that our work has always been accountable and honourable. That said, we have a duty to work together and ensure that our constituents can get the most out of every Parliament. Ever since the Bloc Québécois has been in the House, that motivation has made our party one of the most respected parties by Quebecers. Over the years, we have even received praise and encouragement from the rest of Canada on our constructive work. Today, we are continuing in that vein with our tradition of promoting and defending Quebec's values and interests regardless of the circumstances. That is why we support, with reservations, the general scope of the Speech from the Throne.

That is also why we are asking to be heard and to join the government in a discussion with our parliamentarians in order to meet the needs of Quebecers. We have always taken this approach because we represent Quebec. Our nation is our *raison d'être*. Our nation adopted a model more than 50 years ago when a tremendous group of people set out to make Quebecers masters of their own house. This model is universally supported in Quebec. Under this model, no citizen is left behind.

We cherish a just and fair society. Modern Quebec is a society with a thirst for social justice and self-determination. However, the government in Ottawa always seems to stand in the way of the Quebec model. It has become increasingly obvious over the years that Quebec would be in a better position to develop its economy, environment, society and social programs if it alone could choose its priorities.

Earlier I mentioned that we unequivocally support the Prime Minister's efforts to engage in real nation-to-nation dialogue with our aboriginal peoples. This should set an example for the government's relations with the people of Quebec.

• (1115)

The Bloc Québécois is the standard-bearer for an ideal that is shared by millions of Quebecers and that cannot be ignored.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments by the member and the many positive comments generally about the contents of the throne speech and how the Prime Minister and the Government of Canada are approaching the upcoming budget. My question will be focused on his reference to the child tax benefit.

In his speech, he talked about the importance of dealing with the issue of child poverty. One of the policy platforms from the election that has been incorporated into the throne speech is that to get children out of poverty, we have the most generous tax plan or

benefit that would go directly to children. It is estimated that it would lift tens of thousands of children all across Canada out of poverty.

Does the member see the value of giving money on a sliding scale to those who have children, so that we would in fact lift children out of poverty in Canada? Does he see that as a positive step in the right direction?

• (1120)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that we wholeheartedly agree, and that we are committed to lifting children and Quebec families out of poverty. That has been our objective for a long time.

What I was pointing out in my previous speech was that we found the UCCB to be more beneficial for poor families and the middle class than the program that the federal government wants to implement.

There is also the issue of taxation. Benefits for families in need should not be taxed. The UCCB payments made to eligible families in 2015 will be taxed when they file their taxes in 2016. That is unacceptable. We wanted the Liberal government to make this a non-taxable benefit immediately so that families that received the UCCB in 2015 would not be subject to this unacceptable tax.

As for the rest, we clearly support the objective of eliminating poverty and helping middle-class workers.

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since it is our first day back, I would first like to wish everyone here a happy new year. I would also like to commend my colleague on his speech, which demonstrated his sincerity and commitment.

Since he spoke a lot about the middle class, I would like to remind members that, before Christmas, we came to the House somewhat hastily to pass tax credit regulations for the much talked-about middle class. However, so far, that initiative has been a bit disappointing, so I hope that the government will make the necessary adjustments. Right now, an average family with two children earning an income of \$45,000 will not benefit from those tax credits.

I would also like to check something with my colleague. Unless I missed it, he did not make any mention of the Liberals' much-vaunted promise to invest \$20 million in social housing infrastructure. In my opinion, that situation is urgent. There is a major shortage of such housing in Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, and the social housing community is very concerned about it. I would like to hear what the member has to say about that.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, since I did not talk about infrastructure investments, although this is a major concern for the Bloc Québécois and all of Quebec.

Equalization payments and the energy east pipeline have been front-page news in the newspapers as of late. I do not want to get into this right now since I do not have the time, but I will say that infrastructure investments have a big impact on equalization payments.

The Address

Quebec would rather have investments instead of equalization payments or social assistance. Our infrastructure is crumbling. We need major investments in infrastructure. Quebec's infrastructure is a big load to carry. The money is in Ottawa and the needs are in Quebec.

We are calling on the government to restore infrastructure investment programs and to allocate that money based on the provinces' objectives, not the other way around. We think that Quebec is in a better position to decide where to invest in infrastructure. We want the federal government to transfer the money required to Quebec, so that it can implement some long-overdue programs.

• (1125)

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on his first speech in the House. He covered a lot of ground and is clearly well prepared and very determined to fight for Quebecers' interests here in the House of Commons.

I would also like to take the opportunity to wish you a happy new year, Mr. Speaker, and a happy new year to all members of Parliament.

I did a bit of research on representation in the House. The legislative assemblies of every Canadian province recognize all parties that hold seats. For example, in Quebec, the three Québec solidaire members have the same rights as all other members. They have a budget and the right to speak in committee. Their speaking time in the assembly is proportional to the number of members they have.

That is the case in the other Canadian provinces as well as in Europe. The only democracy in the world that does not recognize political parties that hold seats—other than North Korea, if that can be considered a democracy—is Canada. Maybe it is time to take a close look at that. This is 2015. Social networking has opened the door to new ways of thinking. Debates about these issues should be happening here, not in the streets.

Does my colleague agree?

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I hope everyone knows that I agree entirely with my colleague from Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel. Indeed, in this age of democracy and at this time of change, which the Prime Minister promised when he was elected, recognizing a party that represents over one million voters should be a no-brainer.

How many voters does it take for members to have the right to speak in this House?

I am not sure of the exact figure, but I believe that approximately 1.1 million voters are represented by 10 members here, members who are not entitled to research budgets and not allowed to take part in question period. They actually do take part in question period, but from the opposition benches with the other parties. They are not invited to sit on committees and cannot make any proposals or amendments in committee. We find this unacceptable in a self-respecting democracy.

I call on our Prime Minister, who has been in that role for just a few months now, to rectify the situation and make sure that all

parliamentarians receive the budget they need and time to speak in the House and in committee in order to fulfill their obligations to their voters.

Whether we are talking about the Green Party, which has one member, the Bloc Québécois, which has 10, or the Liberals, NDP, and Conservatives, there is a simple way to resolve these matters through a proportionality rule. We see this as the very least the current government could do for our democracy to immediately address this situation.

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke of the need to provide infrastructure funding to the Province of Quebec. Our Minister of Finance visited Canada's provinces from coast to coast to get a clear idea of what every province needs.

What does my colleague think of our Minister of Finance's approach and how he is going about allocating the funding that every province needs?

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Mr. Speaker, the fact that the Minister of Finance is consulting people before getting ready to invest in infrastructure is commendable.

What the Bloc Québécois is saying is that investment in infrastructure should not depend on the Minister of Finance's interpretation of his visits to the provinces. What we are saying is that investment in infrastructure should be coordinated by the provincial governments.

That is how Quebec would like to see this unfold. The Government of Quebec is in great need of infrastructure investment and we would like the Minister of Finance to take that into account when he divvies up his budgets.

• (1130)

[English]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Intergovernmental Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise for the first time in the House to speak to the assembled members. I welcome them back after the break and extend my congratulations and best wishes on the new mandates they have also received from voters in their ridings. I would like to acknowledge that.

I would also acknowledge that we gather here today on the official territories of the Algonquin. A practice that has become much more common out west and has now moved east is also to acknowledge the traditional territory on which one's riding is based, in my case the traditional territories of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, and before them the Nishnawbe.

The Address

It is important when we rise to speak that we keep in mind some of the needs of our aboriginal and first nation community members and fellow citizens, because the challenges put before the House by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission will define the success of this Parliament, including the steps that we have already taken to initiate an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and the ongoing work that is being done on that. The work we are doing to fulfill the commitment to honour all recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission really give us an opportunity as a country to turn a new page. The throne speech speaks to this, but I think all of our hearts and minds speak to it as well. As we look at the events that took place over this last weekend in Saskatchewan, I think we are required to acknowledge and move forward on this agenda.

I would be remiss if I were not also to remind the House and the Speaker that I will be splitting my time with the member for Scarborough Centre. That piece of housekeeping seemed to have escaped my memory to this point. However, that is indeed what I will be doing.

I represent the riding of Spadina—Fort York. It is a new riding in downtown Toronto. It is one of 78 ridings that draw their names from our aboriginal history. “Spadina” comes from the Ojibwa word “ishpadinaa”, which means “the hill”. The hill refers to the old lake bed that is no longer in the riding. However, the street of Spadina runs up to Spadina House at the top of the hill near Casa Loma. It is an interesting street that has welcomed thousands of Canadians over time. It runs from the waterfront north into the rest of Ontario. It is an important street in so many ways because that immigrant experience defines the city that I come from. It defines my family and other families that call the riding home. It is an experience that is spoken to directly in this throne speech. It is not just the work we are doing on settling refugees and on welcoming immigrants to our city and our country, but also the work that we do to ensure that their aspirations and hopes match and meet those of multigenerational Canadians in finding a great future in the city and country. The throne speech speaks to that opportunity and lays the foundation, in my perspective, for that better future for all of us. Nowhere is that more specific than in the conversation about infrastructure.

Before I describe why the infrastructure components are so critical to my riding and this country, I would remind us all that it has been 97 days since the last election. That is all the time we have had so far. I realize that everyone wants every problem solved in the country within those 97 days. However, to put it in perspective, we were sworn in as a government just 81 days ago. To make that completely clear for all members, the election campaign was only three days shorter than that. In other words, we have now sat as a government for three days longer than the campaign. Although it has been a short period of time, it has been action-packed, with the progress on refugees, on the indigenous files, and on making sure that the budget consultations roll out and that we get into the meat and bones of this throne speech.

It really has been a short period of time. What it also highlights is that there is much time in front of us to get this work done. Therefore, I hope that we have the collaboration and co-operation of our colleagues across the House to provide good, strong criticism and also good, strong ideas coming forward to ensure that this throne

speech is not only delivered with great flourish but also delivered to Canadians with great capacity so that we can change the future and the outcomes for so many in this country.

The riding I represent is a waterfront riding. It is probably the “tallest” riding in Canada in terms of its number of condominiums. However, it is also a riding with one of the poorest postal codes in this country, with a neighbourhood that has been bypassed for the last 10 years in terms of its housing, daycare, and social service needs. We have seen services disappear from this part of the riding. As a result, that part of the riding has struggled to keep pace with the growth that has been experienced in the rest of the riding, in particular on the issue of housing.

In downtown Toronto, in the riding that I represent, we are creating or probably will create this year more housing than most ridings create in a decade.

● (1135)

The expected population growth in my riding over the next five years is 137%. If we do not find a way to speak, not just to the cultural diversity of our cities, but also to the economic diversity of our cities, if we do not find a way to invest in that growth and create opportunities for new Canadians and multi-generational Canadians, for aboriginal Canadians, for folks who are born abroad or folks who are born in the city, if we do not find a way to embed in that program affordable housing and sustain the affordability of existing housing, people will not succeed in the city that I represent, in the riding that I have been sent here to talk about.

The housing component of infrastructure spending is profoundly important for my riding. The requirement that we get that money out the door as quickly as possible is good for the people who will live in the housing, or live in the repaired housing, which is perhaps the more pressing issue in some parts of Toronto. It is also the way of getting people back to work right across the country.

There is no project more job-intensive than housing. It is not just the construction jobs that are so dearly needed in all parts of this country, but it is the architects, the planners, the folks who furnish the housing, and the work that the factories do producing that furniture. It is the work that the electricians get, it is even the work that folks tending the gardens of some of these houses get as a result of the growth we can generate from housing. However, if we do not do it for everybody and only do it for some, the social problems we leave in the wake of a poor housing program are the costs that we quite often struggle to meet in this very House.

We have to reposition the way we talk about housing in this country, so that it is not just an infrastructure program. Housing has to be seen no longer as a problem to be solved, but the tool to solve our problems. If we get housing right, not only do we build stronger families and stronger communities, but we also start to tackle greenhouse gas emissions and unemployment. We can use housing to reduce the cost of health care, post-secondary education, and transportation.

The Address

When we build good, strong housing, we build good, strong cities. The challenge we have had surrendering housing to market forces is that we are starting to see slippage on all those issues. We can see it right across this country.

We talked to the mayor of Edmonton about the largest, most significant problem facing that city. One of the big problems they had over the last 10 years was that while they were creating all kinds of six-figure salary jobs in Edmonton, they could not find a way to create housing to house people with that salary. As a result, there was a housing crisis in Edmonton that saw affluent families displacing low-income families, pushing them further and further away from the city centre. Suddenly, transportation needs emerged.

When we talk about the challenge faced by seniors trying to age in place in Atlantic Canada, we find that we have housing but no people. We need to transition that dynamic. We need to find a way to solve those problems by investing in housing that allows people to age in place and that creates jobs, creating new opportunities for families to stay in Atlantic Canada and develop those economies. This is the infrastructure program writ large. It is fundamental to the success of this country to get that housing program up and running as quickly as possible.

This throne speech reinforces our commitment made during the campaign to \$60 billion of new infrastructure money, a third of which is designated for social infrastructure, which is largely the housing program. It also talks about the \$20-billion environmental green fund. Money from that fund can also be used to rehabilitate housing, making it more energy efficient and cutting greenhouse gas emissions, and also delivering jobs and reducing the cost of housing.

When we drive solutions into the housing sector, and when we drive housing as a solution into the cities and communities across this country, the economy, the environment, the social outcomes of this country change. That is the heart and soul of this throne speech. Add to that the measures on reduction of poverty and tax relief for the middle class and tax relief and support for families. When we add it all in, it all starts to make sense. It is the foundation, the heart and the base of it all. It is building stronger housing programs to build stronger cities and communities, and delivering economic and social opportunities to millions of Canadians who live here now, as well as the millions more who are coming.

• (1140)

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on his re-election to this House.

I take issue with a couple of things that were brought up, specifically regarding poverty being at the centre of this throne speech. That may be the case, but the first move the government made was to provide a tax cut that helped those earning \$190,000 a year the most.

Could the member please tell this House how the government rationalizes that with the statement that was just made?

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, as the member said, it has been literally three days longer than the election campaign. It has been 81 days since we were sworn in, which is a very short period of time.

We take a look at the totality of the movement, and the changes that we anticipate will be introduced and hopefully supported by this House moving forward. By this time next year we will see a much more comprehensive and integrated program as described in our election platform, in the throne speech, and in the forthcoming budget, which actually addresses all of the issues to create that support.

We know that a good, strong middle class is critically important for this country. We know that the tax breaks address a range of income groups. We also know that additional measures are on their way. The child tax benefit, doubling it and making it tax-free, is one of the ways lower-income Canadians are going to benefit in a much more targeted way than the tax breaks we talk about. We also know that public housing, the savings and affordability that we drive into low and middle-income Canadian households by managing the full spectrum of the housing market comprehensively, which was spoken to in this throne speech, will also deliver that relief.

Therefore, to take one measure and criticize the entire platform and the entire throne speech is a little disingenuous. To take the first 90 days and say that is all that we will do across the full spectrum of needs in this country also does not really tell the full story. The full story is not—

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

The hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your re-election.

My colleague across the way spoke of many things, but one of the things he did not speak about was veterans. During the past election campaign, many promises were made to veterans and their families. They need to know if those promises will be kept. We know that an incredible and heartbreaking number of veterans are homeless, and we know that their families are suffering.

What does the member plan to do to make sure that those promises are met and our veterans are respected?

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, clearly, specific services for veterans that have been overlooked or depleted in the previous government need to be spoken to again; revisiting the veterans offices that were closed, and quite frankly, stopping the process of taking them to court all the time as they seek to be treated properly by a government that owes them a debt of service.

However, when I speak about housing as a solution to challenges, the jobs in the housing sector are jobs that returning service personnel are often trained for. When we talk about delivering affordable housing, many of the veterans who have financial challenges as a result of injuries they have sustained benefit from those sorts of programs.

The Address

Therefore, we may not hear the word “veterans” in front of the program, and they may not be described in particular as we describe the program, but they are part of a group of Canadians who need our support. The infrastructure programs not only promise jobs but services to those individuals. That is part of a comprehensive approach to make sure that the veterans who have served this country are served by this government.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is good to see you back in the chair.

I know my colleague is very passionate about the housing issue, but in a broader context, I want to talk about the functioning of our democracy and what has gone on over the last four years.

In committees, we have heard questions from the Conservatives about poverty. There was good work done by the human resources, skills and social development committee before the 2011 election. It put forward quality recommendations to the minister that were cast aside by the last government.

In conversation with the former NDP member, Peter Stoffer, he and I reminisced a couple of weeks ago about how committees used to get together. We could have John Cummins on one end, who would be considered a little bit to the right, and a social democrat like Stoffer on the other end, but they would come together and make a unanimous recommendation to the minister and the government to go forward and help those stakeholders.

Does my colleague see that there is potential to change what has happened over the last four years where committees have been used as a vehicle to drive home a specific ideology? Does he see some kind of hope for it in this Parliament?

• (1145)

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, I am one of many people in this chamber who has the experience of municipal council. However, one of the shocks coming to Ottawa was to see how dysfunctional and ideologically focused the committees were, as opposed to taking an opportunity to allow us as members to represent the needs and the diverse and particular concerns of our communities, to really shape legislation to make sure it worked in every corner of this country.

I believe that the committee system is fundamental to the fine-tuning of legislation. It is fundamental to the work we do as individual MPs. We have got to find a way to make those committees more successful, because they make us more successful as representatives of our communities regardless of which party we represent in this House.

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today in the House for the first time as the member of Parliament for Scarborough Centre, and in response to the Speech from the Throne. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the good people of Scarborough Centre for placing their trust in me to deliver the real change they need and deserve. I will work hard to be their strong and effective voice here in Ottawa.

I would like to thank all the hard-working volunteers who made my being here possible for their tireless dedication and support, particularly my husband Salman and my children Umaid and Usman. Today, I am also thinking of my parents. They are no longer

with us. I lost my mother during the campaign. I would not be here without the values they instilled in me that I have carried with me throughout my journey.

I am honoured to represent Scarborough Centre. Scarborough is a community of hard-working, middle-class families. We are a community of parks, community centres, and some of the best pancit and biryani one can find outside the Philippines and South Asia. We are also one of the most diverse communities in Canada. Thousands of people from around the world have chosen Scarborough as the place they want to live, work, play, raise their families, and build a better life for their children.

The families of Scarborough Centre need help making ends meet. Families are increasingly challenged to stretch each paycheque further and further. My family came to Canada 16 years ago to build a better life for our sons. We have shared the challenges of so many Scarborough families, trying to balance paying the rent and buying groceries on entry-level wages, getting to work and school on public transit, and now, preparing to send our children to university.

Scarborough families need better transit. Gridlock is crippling Toronto and cities across Canada. This is not just an economic issue; it is a quality of life issue. Time spent in traffic means lost productivity and it means time not spent with our families. For too long, Scarborough has not had a federal partner at the table when it comes to transit. This needs to change.

I am pleased to see that so many of the priorities of the families of my riding were addressed by the Speech from the Throne. I welcome the promised historic investment in public transit, green infrastructure, and social infrastructure. This means not only badly needed new transit for communities like Scarborough and funds for community and senior centres, but also support for affordable housing.

Every Canadian deserves to have access to a safe, clean, and affordable place to live, yet today too many Canadians are living on the economic edge. According to the Canadian rental housing index, 22% of rental households in Toronto are spending more than half their household income on rent and 20% are living in overcrowded conditions. The people of Scarborough welcome the historic 10-year investment in social infrastructure. They are relieved to finally again see a federal government that understands the need to invest in affordable housing.

I am also heartened to hear about the middle-class tax cut and new Canada child benefit. That, according to the parliamentary budget officer, will lift over 315,000 Canadian children out of poverty and will benefit nine out of 10 Canadian families.

As a mother whose eldest son is now applying to universities, and with a second one who is not far behind, I also welcome the government's commitment to making post-secondary education more accessible and more affordable.

The Address

There are many young people living in my riding who are having trouble finding work, especially that first important job after college or university, to begin building their work experience. The youth unemployment rate is unacceptably higher than the overall national rate. The government's youth job strategy is badly needed in my riding.

• (1150)

I welcome the four-year investment in programs that will help Canadian youth enter the workforce and that will create tens of thousands of jobs every year. The youth of Scarborough will also benefit from thousands of new green jobs, help for employers to create co-op placements for science, technology, mathematics, engineering, and business students, and the restoration of a youth service program to help youth gain work and life experience by participating in community-building projects across Canada. When it comes to investing in Canada's future, there is no better investment than our young people.

Finally, I am so pleased to see the throne speech recognize something that my neighbours in Scarborough have known for so long to be true: Canada is stronger not in spite of our differences but because of them.

We have seen some unfortunate incidents recently in Canada, including in Toronto. Two Muslim women were verbally assaulted on a subway train. One was beaten and robbed and another one was allegedly spat on, and a mosque in Peterborough was a target of arson. These are the actions of a hateful minority, and they do not represent the majority of Canadians. For every hateful individual, there were many more who stood up to condemn this violence, to say, "I will ride with you", and to say, "this is not our Canada".

I was honoured recently to join the Prime Minister and the Minister of Democratic Institutions as the community rallied together to reopen that mosque. The message that day was very clear: a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian.

In Scarborough we are Christian and Catholic, Muslim and Hindu, Buddhist and Jewish. We speak English and French but also Tamil and Tagalog, Mandarin and Cantonese, Greek and Urdu, Gujarati and Bengali. We may come from many places, but we share the important things in common: our love for our families and for this great country and our desire to build an even better Canada for our children.

We enjoy an unparalleled equality of opportunity in Canada. I immigrated to Canada 16 years ago. We first moved to a small apartment in Regent Park, where I started a catering service, making kebabs and curries, to supplement our income while taking care of two toddlers, and now, today, I stand in the House as a member of Parliament. This is the Canada that is the envy of the world, and this is the proof of what the Prime Minister says, that in Canada, better is always possible.

I look forward to working with all my hon. colleagues in this place to make the commitments in this throne speech a reality and to deliver the real change that middle-class families need and deserve.

• (1155)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my fellow member on her first speech.

In both of the last speeches I have heard about housing needs. It is true that there are needs in members' ridings. Also in my small riding of Sarnia—Lambton we have a need for shelter improvements, houses for seniors, and houses for those who are without. I am interested to understand what the government's plan is to make sure that the infrastructure spending does not just go to the big cities.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be part of a government that has promised historic infrastructure investment. We all agree that Canada is facing a massive deficit in infrastructure. We cannot ignore that and we cannot pass it to our kids. We, as the government, will do our best to work with the municipalities and provinces to identify local needs and to make sure that we have long-term predictable funding available to look after those needs.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the member for Scarborough Centre, for her excellent speech today, her first speech in the House.

My colleague mentioned day care needs, which is incredibly important to Canadians. Canadian families are suffering because they are unable to access affordable child care. They are unable to access child care in their communities that is safe and that they can access in a way that does not require them to choose between going to work and taking care of their children in the way they would like.

I would like to ask my colleague whether she would agree that we need to make child care spaces more affordable and accessible for Canadian families.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Mr. Speaker, we, as a government, totally agree. Within our promised infrastructure investment, the complement of social infrastructure will provide the funding to build more day care centres, and our middle-class tax breaks, together with the Canada child benefit, will lift 315,000 kids out of poverty and will benefit nine out of 10 Canadian families.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Breton (Shefford, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank and congratulate my colleague for her first speech in the House and wish her all the best in 2016.

In the throne speech, our government announced investments and tax cuts for the middle class. I would like to ask my colleague how these measures will stimulate the economy in her riding.

[*English*]

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Mr. Speaker, Scarborough Centre is a community of middle-class families.

Our tax breaks, together with the Canada child benefit, will provide relief to nine out of 10 Canadian families, and Scarborough Centre, which many middle-class families call home, will definitely benefit from those investments.

The Address

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am quite relieved to hear that there will be money for affordable housing, because the last federal co-op was built in my riding in 1992, and by 1993, the Liberal government of the day had completely killed the program. One can understand why I am encouraged, because right now, in my riding, there is a 10-year delay, a waiting list of 10 years, for persons living with disabilities, for seniors, and for people living in poverty, for affordable housing. One can understand why I am very anxious to know when this program will begin.

When will we start to see affordable housing in my riding, after 25 years of a lack?

• (1200)

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Mr. Speaker, our investment in infrastructure will be available as we begin. Our finance minister has been travelling through Canada consulting with Canadians on their needs and priorities, and they will be coming up in the next budget.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate you on your reappointment to the chair.

I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

As this is my first full speech in the House since the election, I want to take this opportunity to thank the people of Foothills for once again electing me as their member of Parliament. It is truly an honour to have earned the confidence of the hard-working people of southern Alberta, and in turn, I will work hard each and every day to represent them honourably, passionately, and ethically.

Most of all, I want to ensure that Canada remains the best place to live, work, and raise a family. To that end, I was incredibly disappointed listening to the Speech from the Throne in December. The Speech from the Throne should bring forward enthusiasm, optimism, and hope for all Canadians. In this regard, the government's Speech from the Throne failed. The government neglected to address key issues that are at the heart of what matters most to Canadians: jobs, growth, and the economy.

Over the past several weeks, I have spent time touring my riding speaking to community leaders, municipal councils, families, and business owners. For the first time in a very long time, the mood in Alberta is not one of enthusiasm, optimism, and hope. It is one instead of anxiety and fear.

The government's Speech from the Throne did nothing to alleviate those concerns. It did not even mention two key pillars of Canada's economic foundation: agriculture and our energy sector. As a rural Albertan, I was shocked to see that the government did not set out any plans or priorities to grow and support these important resource sectors, resource sectors that employ many Canadians, many Albertans, especially in my riding of Foothills.

For example, more than 2.2 million Canadians work in the agriculture and agri-food sector. That means that one in every eight Canadian jobs relies on this industry, and more importantly, I would argue, the vitality of almost every rural community in Canada does as well.

If a government's priorities include growing the economy, creating jobs, and strengthening the middle class, does it not make sense that Canada's agriculture industry must be a priority of the government?

Canada is the fifth-largest agricultural exporter in the world. Our agriculture industry contributes more than \$100 billion to our GDP each and every year, and that number continues to grow. Exports in 2013 reached \$46 billion, a 6% increase from 2012. Statistics Canada predicts that the average net worth of the family farm is expected to reach an all-time high this year of \$2.1 million and total family farm income has steadily increased and is predicted to reach \$135,000 in 2015.

Why, then, is the government not doing everything it possibly can to facilitate further growth in this industry? It could do so, for example, by supporting the trans-Pacific partnership trade agreement, which is among the largest trade agreements in the world's history. This landmark agreement would preserve Canada's privileged access to our largest trading partner, the United States, and would strengthen our partnership within NAFTA.

Canada is a significant global supplier of high-quality agricultural products, the best in the world, I would argue. Through the trans-Pacific partnership, Alberta's farmers and ranchers would have access to 800 million new customers, unprecedented market access that would give them wonderful opportunities in existing and emerging markets.

Our farm and ranch families are successful because they are well educated. They are innovators, inventors, conservationists, and entrepreneurs. Most of all, they are hard working. They expect to have a government that is working just as tirelessly to provide them with the regulatory framework that would allow them to compete on the world stage.

With more than 200,000 operating farms in Canada, it is clear that the family farm remains a critical foundation of Canada's economy. Instead of ignoring Canada's agricultural industry, the government should be creating new economic opportunities for Canadian farmers by opening and expanding our markets around the world.

The Liberals should be aggressively pursuing new markets for our producers while protecting supply management. They should be investing in cutting-edge agriculture and agri-food industry technology. They should be ensuring that an effective and efficient transportation system is in place, and they should be keeping our taxes low. By increasing trade and ensuring that producers have access to a global market, we would be creating more jobs, more growth, and more prosperity for all Canadians.

However, the fact remains that in the Speech from the Throne, there were exactly zero words dedicated to agriculture and zero words explaining the government's plan for an agreement on the trans-Pacific partnership trade agreement.

• (1205)

We probably know why that is the case. It is because agriculture is a lucrative resource; and the Prime Minister made it quite clear in his remarks in Davos what he thinks of Canada's resources and the innovative, world-renowned people who work in those industries.

The Address

Perhaps that is also why the Speech from the Throne did not include any plans to complete critical infrastructure projects in our energy sector, projects such as the energy east pipeline. The government remains frighteningly silent on its position on energy east, a project that would create well-paying and vital jobs for the Canadian economy.

For example, last week, when Montreal area mayors spoke out against the energy east pipeline before the project was even tabled, the Prime Minister had an outstanding opportunity to stand up and state emphatically how vital this project is, not only to Alberta's economy but to Canada's.

The Liberal government has trivialized the importance of the natural resource sector, even though it makes up 20% of Canada's nominal GDP, equalling more than \$160 billion annually. However, there is nothing trivial about the thousands of people who have lost their jobs in Alberta. There is nothing trivial about the families who are losing their homes, their businesses, and their dignity.

I met with a business owner in High River recently. He was nearly in tears as he struggled to find ways to save his small welding business. He has kept his staff on for as long as he could, despite not having any work in the oilfield. He met his payroll by using his line of credit, but once that maxed out, he had to lay off his entire staff including 10 welders. That is 10 families in a small rural community who are looking for work. That has a vital impact and a profound impact on our small rural communities.

This is just one of a dozen stories I am sure many of my colleagues have heard from around Alberta, where the mood is one of abandonment and fear. If the Liberal government remains silent, this is only going to get worse.

Groups are predicting another 185,000 job losses in Canada's energy sector in 2016, 125,000 of those in Alberta alone. The government might not like to admit it, but this is a crisis. The Liberal government needs to face reality and get involved. We cannot control oil prices, and I am not making that argument, but we can take steps to mitigate the damage.

We can avoid policies such as a federal carbon tax, which would further harm the oil and gas sector. We can renew investor confidence by supporting projects such as the energy east pipeline, which would give Canadian producers access to new markets. Again, this would not only benefit Alberta. It is estimated that construction on the energy east pipeline alone would create 1,200 full-time jobs in Alberta, but it would create another 14,000 across Canada.

The energy east pipeline is an opportunity to get Canadian products to tidewater and increase our market access in an environmentally safe and sustainable way. Pipelines are not greenhouse gas intensive and are the safest way to transport oil, with a 99.99% safety rating.

It is under the former Conservative government's leadership that the Pipeline Safety Act was introduced, ensuring a world-class pipeline safety regime.

Energy east can replace the need to import foreign crude oil into Quebec and Atlantic Canada with a secure source of Canadian crude

oil. Currently 630,000 barrels a day are imported to Quebec and Atlantic Canada from places like the Middle East and West Africa, places that are not exactly world renowned for their environmental stewardship.

In contrast, energy east would transport Canadian oil, extracted under Canadian standards, creating Canadian jobs and raising revenue for essential Canadian social projects and infrastructure.

However, the Liberal government does not bat an eye at foreign oil tankers in the St. Lawrence or eight billion litres of raw sewage being dumped into our seaway, but it turns up its nose at Canada's own natural resources. The Conservative record on supporting the natural resource sector is strong, and will continue to be.

Whether it is extracting bitumen from the oil sands, mining coal in the rugged Rocky Mountains, or growing canola on the harsh Prairies, our tenacity, ingenuity, and unmatched work ethic has led to incredible achievements in technology, innovation, and environmental stewardship right here in Canada.

Hopefully, the Liberal government will come to realize that we, as Canadians, are already very proud of what is beneath our feet, and we are already well known around the world for what is between our ears. I hope it will also stand up, shoulder to shoulder with our resource sector, and show just how proud it is as well.

• (1210)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I found the member's comments quite interesting in the sense that, if we take a look at how important the natural resources industry is for Canadians, no one would question the value. We are very much dependent on natural resources. The thing is that the Liberal Party has also recognized the importance of our environment and having that social contract with the different stakeholders.

The previous government did not do much development of that social contract in terms of protecting Canada's environment. However, when it comes to the issue of pipelines, the member is challenging the Liberal government to move forward on the pipelines. I should remind the member that the Conservative government did not build one mile, let alone one yard, of pipeline during its term in office, yet those in western Canada, in particular, but also those from coast to coast to coast, are very dependent on the future of world markets, and so forth.

My question to the member is this. Does he believe that the Conservative government lost opportunities for the development of our natural resources because of its negligence in dealing with the importance of pipelines with respect to the environment and so forth?

The Address

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting that the member says the Liberal government is in support of natural resources and understands how important they are to Canada's economy. That is certainly not the message that was received from the Prime Minister when he was in Davos last week. If anything, it was quite the opposite. His words were that the previous government made Canada world renowned for its resources, because the Conservatives supported them and were there to back them, whereas the new government wants Canada to be known for its resourcefulness; we do not want to be known for what is beneath our feet but what is between our ears, totally overlooking the incredible technological advancements in environmental stewardship, pipeline safety, and all these kinds of innovations that were done right here in Canada by Canadians and that have made our natural resource sector such an integral part of our economy. The difference between the two is that the Conservatives stood firmly behind the resource sector, whereas the Liberals would rather ignore it and hope it goes away.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saenich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member for Foothills.

I want to press the point that the shared mania, unfortunately, between the official opposition and the current government and the phrase “getting bitumen to tidewater” misses entirely the economic opportunity for processing bitumen in Canada, particularly for upgrading it in Alberta. The opposition to bitumen and diluent in pipelines will continue in my province of British Columbia and the province of Quebec. It simply poses risks with no benefits to either British Columbia or Quebec, or to Canada.

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, it is great to see the hon. member in the House.

Talking about energy east, for example, this is a pipeline that already exists, is already in the ground. The vast majority of this infrastructure is already there. It is already used for natural gas; this is not something new.

In terms of refining bitumen here in Canada, that is something that I think the private sector would do, if there were a market for it. Anytime the government gets involved in funding something like that, it never works out well. This is something on which the private sector should take the initiative. If a company does ever step forward and say it is going to take the next 20 years to build a \$20-billion refinery, then I am sure it would look at working in that regulatory process as well, but that just has not happened.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for the very thought-provoking and articulate speech. He did, quite frankly, notice in the government's Speech from the Throne a lack of mention of the agricultural sector and natural resources; and of course, we sort of focused down in terms of pipelines.

The one thing that the Speech from the Throne does talk about is the need for deficit spending.

I would like to ask my colleague what the economic impact would be, if a pipeline goes through, on government spending compared to private-sector spending and what difference it would make for his province of Alberta.

●(1215)

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member asked that question. I had the opportunity to meet with several business leaders from the oil and gas sector last week in Calgary. It was interesting. We talked about the Prime Minister's pledge to give \$1 billion to Alberta to help in this time of need, which is really just a drop in the bucket.

They met with the finance minister as well, and their response to the finance minister was that they do not need that \$1 billion. They said to get them energy east and get behind them and support them, and they will raise those dollars on their own. They said they do not need a government handout; they just need its support. That was a very clear message, and it is something we should get behind.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague from Foothills for his informative speech.

Let me begin by congratulating you, Mr. Speaker, on your election in Simcoe North, next door to my riding, and also to your position as Deputy Speaker. I look forward to working with you.

I would also like to thank my constituents from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock for placing their trust in me to represent them here. I would like to thank my campaign manager, my campaign team, the volunteers who came out, day in and day out, and knocked on doors, put up signs, and gave out literature. My provincial colleague, Laurie Scott, was there as well. Also, I offer a special thanks to John and Brenda Hymus. They are good friends of mine who were with me each and every day of this campaign, and that was something special to have.

Many members will know my predecessor, Barry Devolin. I had the opportunity to work with Barry for the past 11 years, and I would be remiss if I did not mention him. He was a mentor to me, and a role model, and I also consider him a very good friend. I would like to thank him for his ongoing support and advice.

For all of us here, it is a very humbling experience to speak in this chamber. This job has been a dream of mine for as long as I can remember, and I think I speak for everyone when I say it feels good to be here. I am honoured to do so. I am proud to report that just two weeks after the election, my constituency office was up and running. We were taking phone calls, helping constituents with everything from citizenship applications to Canada pension and Canada Revenue Agency issues and of course passports and everything in between. I want to thank my staff for working very hard and tirelessly, getting that office up as quickly as possible, and getting back to serving the constituents of Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

I should point out that this past week I was able to hold what I hope will be the first of many passport clinics in this riding. I was able to meet hundreds of my constituents as they came out to talk about not only passports but also the various issues that affect them.

The Address

Who are the people of Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock? The people there are as strong as my riding is beautiful. We put our hands to hard work, our voices to causes, and our hearts and minds to the challenges we face. We take care of our neighbours. We teach our children how to learn good things, grow crops, make good choices, and respect those who have done these things as a good deal, and to continue to put themselves forward in their community. We are a polite group. We roll up our sleeves for the good of our towns, and we of course take our weekends seriously. We hear loons and frogs when we sleep and, if we are in favour of a louder scene, we are just a quick drive from Toronto. We are farmers, machinists, protectors, environmentalists, gardeners, artists, doctors, tradespeople, and store owners. We pitch in. We take pride in our old buildings, our stretches of natural lands, and common sense. We have history, morals, and intention. We know how to enjoy life.

It is those exact people who are concerned about the direction in which the current Liberal government is taking our great nation. How many more promises will be broken as we continue this mandate? I am going to talk about some of the issues I heard while back in my riding.

Canada, under our previous Conservative government was a major player in the fight against terror across the world. The Liberal Speech from the Throne promised, “The Government will strengthen its relationship with allies, especially with our closest friend and partner, the United States”.

Despite this, the Liberal government's pledge to withdraw from the battle against ISIS has severely hurt our relations with our allies, specifically the United States. Only six months ago, then foreign affairs minister Rob Nicholson hosted an international meeting in Quebec City to discuss the military and political aspects of the mission against ISIS. Today, we are not even welcome to have a seat at that table.

The current government also claimed it “will continue to work with its allies in the fight against terrorism”. How can the Liberals claim to be strengthening our relationships and working with our allies in this fight against terrorism when they have single-handedly isolated Canada from its allies and withdrawn our forces at the exact same time our allies are stepping up their efforts? Canada has gone from a nation that, in my opinion, punched above its weight each and every time to a nation now willing to stand on the sidelines while our allies fight against terrorism.

The Liberals have proclaimed that Canada is back on the world stage. In reality, in my opinion, we are being forced to sit back while our allies battle to defend our shared values. All of this has taken place in four short months, and I fear it will continue to happen for the rest of this mandate.

• (1220)

On the issue of democratic reform, I have spoken to my constituents. They are concerned about the Liberal electoral reform. In the Speech from the Throne, the Liberals stated, “2015 will be the last federal election conducted under the first-past-the-post voting system”. The government's same minister has indicated there will be no electoral referendum. How does the Liberal government plan on restoring the trust of Canadians in public institutions when it has

already indicated that it will not give Canadians a chance to be heard through a national referendum?

Not giving Canadians a chance to be heard directly goes completely against the promise of the Liberals to restore the trust of Canadians. It is just another of the promises that the Liberals will continue to break. A committee comprised of a select number of parliamentarians studying electoral reform is not, and in my opinion never will be, a substitute for all Canadians having their voices heard directly. The Liberal committee is simply a vehicle for which they can impose their own predetermined agenda without any meaningful way to restrain them.

I will now speak to agriculture and natural resources, as did my friend from Foothills. As he mentioned quite eloquently, the Prime Minister was in Switzerland representing Canada at the World Economic Forum. He was given a chance to promote Canada to the world. Instead he left out some of the most important of our industries: natural resources and agriculture. Do not misunderstand me. Our resourcefulness innovation is an important part, and continues to be, of our prosperity in Canada. However, instead of promoting the many desirable industries and businesses that our great nation has to offer, the Prime Minister spoke just about confidence, and he was positive.

Canada is a rich nation and has a rich resource-based economy. The Prime Minister had the opportunity to promote this to the world, and instead failed to do so.

In Canada, one in five jobs are based on trade, and our Conservative government sought increased opportunities for Canadians by signing free trade agreements across the globe. We stood side by side with Canadians to promote and protect jobs.

Despite overlooking natural resources, there is no mention of Canada's world-class food supply. We are well known all over this world for the quality and security of our food production system. Many in this place will know the name Kawartha Dairy in my riding. Many people line up for long periods of time for that great ice cream. We are now seeing innovators like Mariposa Dairy in the process of completing a \$2 million expansion with its award-winning goat cheese. Grass Hill Farms in my home town of Bobcaygeon is a world leader in quality goat milk and genetic research. Its goat products are in demand all across this globe, and we need to ensure that it has access to these markets.

Let us look where we stand currently. We are in the winter. It will soon be spring. The government will be tabling its budget. What is projected for 2016 and how will be its projections create jobs? My friend from Foothills talked about the oil supply. The value of our Canadian dollar continues to drop to the weakest it has been since 2003. The Liberal government promised deficits of \$10 billion per year, necessary spending to jump-start the economy. That figure is now projected to be more like \$13 billion to \$14 billion. Why is that?

The Address

In my opinion, the Liberals said in the election campaign that tax hikes to be imposed on the richest 1% would pay for the middle-class tax cut. However, as it turns out, after some big number crunching, tax cuts for the middle class will actually not be recovered by those high-income earners. Instead, it will cost Ottawa \$1.2 billion a year. It basically means that we will have increased taxes later or spending cuts, maybe both. Future generations, my children, my grandchildren will have to pay for this.

This ideology has been known to wreck economies of many countries. It has wrecked some of the economies of our provinces. I see a big tax hike on the horizon, and I am scared about that. Since 2008, with infrastructure spending, we have seen \$200 million in Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock be invested. That has seen new arenas built, libraries, renovation, and the list goes on, all creating infrastructure and jobs. We need to continue that.

We need to work on expanding high-speed Internet. We have made a great start hitting that, going all across eastern Ontario and the country, but there are gaps. In Haliburton County there are gaps, and we need to fix those gaps. If we are not connected to the Internet, we are not connected to the world, we cannot have economic activity. We need that to succeed.

• (1225)

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to questions and comments, a general reminder for all hon. members that in the course of their speeches and discussions to avoid using the given names or family names of other hon. members.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member on his election.

The member spoke about infrastructure, deficits, and that at some point we have to invest in our communities. I have had a number of community meetings over the last few months, and every one of them has talked about the massive infrastructure deficit that we face as a country and the need for these investments, particularly digital infrastructure. I come from a rural riding, and there are huge gaps in that investment.

Would the member comment on where he thinks the money will come from in order to make these infrastructure investments and not go into any deficit, given the economic climate that exists today?

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague on his election as well. I look forward to working with him in the House.

Basically, the money comes from creating jobs and economic growth. As the government, in my opinion, our job is to have and create an environment that enables private sector growth to build, succeed, create wealth, create jobs and create a tax base, and that is how we come up with that money.

We cannot magically find this money by borrowing, because we know how that worked out for the province of Ontario. The third-biggest line item on its budget is interest on provincial debt. How does one get ahead when one continues to pay high interest rates? It

does not work for a government. It does not work for a household. It does not work for a business.

I look forward to working with the member in expanding high-speed Internet to rural parts of Ontario and in the country. Also, my encouragement, my advice, would be to create that environment that would allow private sector growth to succeed.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the last two speakers on this side of the House for talking about agriculture. Agriculture is not talked about in the throne speech, but the effect in the country is now being felt. Just 10 days ago, the largest potash company in the world laid off over 400 workers in New Brunswick.

I recently attended the Saskatoon Crop Production show at Prairieland Park. It was the biggest show in Saskatchewan. A lot of Americans come here because of the dollar, but Canadian agriculture producers are very concerned because there is no mention of agriculture in the throne speech.

Agriculture in Alberta and Ontario, as we have seen on this side of the House, has been very important. Therefore, I thank my two colleagues for bringing it up. In the last 10 days, PotashCorp of Saskatchewan has sent a message that we all have not liked the 400-plus lay-offs in New Brunswick.

• (1230)

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, my colleague's words could not be more true. In my riding, agriculture is a major part of the economy. If it is unable to flourish, I think we are in trouble. We are in trouble with agriculture as a whole if, as a nation, we are not able to feed ourselves.

However, in my opinion, we continue to have the best food supply in the world. It is great quality and we see emerging nations, as they have more disposable income, wanting our product, which is a good thing. This allows younger people who want to start a farm or take over their family farm the opportunity to make some money and produce good quality food.

I encourage the government to continue to focus on agriculture. I encourage it to help the people of my riding have the markets and allow them to get their product out. That way we can all succeed.

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the member of Parliament for Peterborough—Kawartha.

I would like to begin by congratulating you, Mr. Speaker, on your appointment as Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons. I would also like to offer my sincere congratulations to my colleagues on their election.

It is a great honour and privilege for me to take the floor of the House of Commons for the first time to represent the riding of Nickel Belt. I thank the constituents of Nickel Belt and Greater Sudbury for their support. I would like to acknowledge the unconditional support that I have received from my wife, my children, my parents, my family, my friends, and the many volunteers who supported me.

The Address

Born and raised in Nickel Belt, I understand the challenges and opportunities of small rural communities, and I believe in the people of Nickel Belt, Northern Ontario. I come from a family of public servants. My father and my uncle both served as MPs in this distinguished House. As a business person and community advocate for people with disabilities, I have a passion for enhancing the quality of life in all my surroundings.

[Translation]

Since I was elected, I have had the opportunity to travel the roads of the big, beautiful riding of Nickel Belt, which covers 30,000 km. I am proud of the priorities announced by my government in the throne speech.

[English]

As chair of the Northern Ontario Liberal caucus, I look forward to working with my colleagues to address priorities and issues all over northern Ontario. My caucus will have an active role in supporting and advocating the government's agenda on many fronts.

It has been a pleasure to have already met with the 6 mayors and over 20 councillors, as well as first nations chiefs, and many community and business leaders all across my riding. A few of the priorities have been identified.

Infrastructure investment is much needed in northern Ontario to attract private sector investment in the future. Small municipalities like West Nipissing, French River, Markstay-Warren, Killarney, and organized townships like Gogama and Cartier struggle with funding, engineering reports, and development proposals.

The Greater Sudbury municipality has shovel-ready projects like the Maley Drive extension, with provincial and municipal funding. Widening to four lanes is important on Municipal Road 35 from Azilda and Chelmsford. I look forward to advocating for these projects.

In addition, we need to look at widening Highway 144 to Timmins to four lanes. We also need to look at the Trans-Canada Highway between North Bay and Thunder Bay.

Regarding some of the priorities on social housing investment, I have already met with several community and business partners that have shovel-ready projects and are ready today to invest millions in our economy to create seniors, affordable, and social housing complexes in partnership with our local municipalities. These projects are in Chelmsford, Valley East, Capreol and West Nipissing, and are ready to meet the needs of an aging population.

On broadband Internet, we need to ensure that most Canadians have access to quality high-speed Internet. Rural municipalities across Canada and northern Ontario need to be part of an expanded fibre optic network. The survival of rural Canada depends on infrastructure investment in high-speed fibre optics.

I will work closely with the dedicated staff of FedNor and local development agencies. I was part of 12 chambers of commerce across Ontario in my previous employment. We need to strengthen investments already made in northern Ontario by FedNor. We need to look at expanding FedNor's role in broadband, innovation, and research investment in order to position northern Ontario and Canada as a world leader in the mining and supply services sector.

The Canadian mining industry is a major employer. Approximately 380,000 people across Canada work in mining. Mining is the largest private sector employer of aboriginal people in Canada on a proportional basis. Canada has one of the largest mining supply sectors globally, with more than 3,400 companies. It enjoys the highest wages in all industrial sectors in Canada, with average annual pay exceeding \$110,000.

As an economic engine, according to statistics from 2013, mining contributed \$54 billion to Canada's gross domestic product. The industry accounts for nearly 20% of the value of Canadian goods and exports. Canada's value of mineral production is nearly \$43 billion.

• (1235)

My colleague, the member of Parliament for Sudbury, and I visited the Centre for Excellence in Mining Innovation or CEMI, the Vale Living with Lakes Centre, NORCAT, MIRARCO, and Laurentian University, Collège Boréal, and Cambrian College, which are prime examples of the endless possibilities when investing in research and innovative technologies. I have also visited the Blue Sky Agency with my colleague from Nipissing—Timiskaming to look at the possibility of having more broadband across our ridings in northern Ontario.

We are committed to restoring the dialogue with our first nation communities. This is an important matter that I intend to be devoted to as a proud citizen of the Mattawa/North Bay Algonquin First Nation community, where Parliament is located. In the riding of Nickel Belt, I am developing a strong relationship with our first nation chiefs in Atikameksheng Anishnawbek, Mattagami, and Wahnapiatae first nations.

I have also had the privilege of welcoming families of Syrian refugees in the Greater Sudbury Airport. The community support is incredible. Our Prime Minister has provided leadership. The families are sponsored by St. Andrew's church and the Catholic Capreol-Valley Refugee Sponsorship Group. The efforts of many other groups, such as West Nipissing's Neighbours Without Borders, continue in the hopes of welcoming more Syrian families.

We also need to reinstate a federal immigration office in Sudbury. I assure members that northern Ontario will embrace more immigration to support our communities and meet the staffing needs of the local business community.

Let us not forget our veterans, which our government has committed to take care of, and offer the services they deserve. I am proud to have 11 Royal Canadian Legion branches in Nickel Belt and Greater Sudbury. We urgently need to invest in our veterans and utilize this opportunity to ensure that we deliver PTSD services that are world class.

The Address

[Translation]

What sets the riding of Nickel Belt and Greater Sudbury apart is that it is made up of many small but unique communities, most of them rural, each with its own beauty and charm. The riding is also home to over 300 lakes. It is really something.

I have met people from every community, and they shared their concerns and priorities with me. They have been heard, and I intend to focus my attention on issues that are close to my heart, such as the mining industry, science and technology, improved Internet access in the community, and infrastructure needs.

Our government intends to support CBC/Radio-Canada, which plays a key role in the development and growth of our communities. In 1970, my father presented a petition, here in House, signed by 20,000 people, to establish a CBC/Radio-Canada television station in Sudbury, northern Ontario. We need to continue our efforts and encourage the promotion and use of Canada's official languages. Linguistic duality is an asset for all Canadians.

I am proud of the great work that is being done by many cultural organizations, such as the Café-Heritage in Chelmsford and the Ontario Arts Council, as well as many others, particularly when it comes to the 400th anniversary celebrations of the French presence in Ontario. This reminds us that it is our responsibility to build a safe society in which all artists can flourish and develop their diversity, knowledge and determination.

• (1240)

[English]

I am a team player. Therefore, I understand the importance of knowing the needs, the dreams, aspirations, and expectations of my colleagues and the constituents of Nickel Belt and Greater Sudbury. I am thankful for this opportunity and I look forward to working with all members.

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Nickel Belt.

As the mayor of Hamilton, I dealt a lot with off-reserve aboriginal questions, including housing and poverty. I am wondering if there is a significant off-reserve component in Nickel Belt that needs to be addressed by the infrastructure program and so on.

Mr. Marc Serré: Yes, Mr. Speaker, in Nickel Belt, Greater Sudbury, we have, as I mentioned, three first nation communities, but we have invested, and also have Cambrian College, Collège Boréal, and Laurentian University, which have attracted many of our aboriginal students for higher education.

We have also looked at encouraging the private sector to build upon the hiring of aboriginal peoples, as I mentioned, in the mining sector.

I continue to work with the government and our local partners to enhance the quality of life and the education of off-reserve aboriginal people.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the hon. member for Nickel Belt's speech. I know that employment is always a big concern in his riding.

I wonder what his reaction is to his Minister of International Trade because the minister and his party expressed a lot of reservations about the trans-Pacific partnership during the election campaign. Now, the minister is saying that the trans-Pacific partnership is a done deal and will be endorsed by the government without any changes.

I know that people in my riding are certainly very concerned about its employment impacts, and also the loss of food security and the potential attacks on supply management.

I wonder what the hon. member thinks about this apparent change in the attitude of his government on the trans-Pacific partnership.

Mr. Marc Serré: Mr. Speaker, this government and I have worked for many years with the private sector. I have had my own business and have worked with chambers of commerce. That is very important in Nickel Belt, in northern Ontario, a large exporter of goods and services all over the world. We are committed to looking at expanding the supply and mining sector to export more products and expertise across the world.

This is something that we are committed to doing and we will work toward bringing this forward and working with the House to make it better for the private sector.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to my colleague's speech. He talked eloquently about the value that mining jobs bring to his constituency. As the chair of Alberta caucus, which would be equivalent to what he is purporting to be for the Liberal caucus in northern Ontario, I wonder if he would agree that mining, in all of its forms, whether it is surface mining for oil sands or bitumen in northern Alberta, is every bit as economically valuable and important to all Canadians, not just first nation Canadians, such as the Fort McKay Band, which is one of the wealthiest first nations in this country because of its proximity to that fantastic development.

Also, is he not a little concerned that there is not a single mention of the Ring of Fire in the 15-minute Speech from the Throne, which could, and might, have been written by someone in a Grade 8 social class? Given that he is caucus chair for northern Ontario, is he not concerned that neither it nor its economic opportunities were mentioned once?

Can I count upon him to be just as supportive for mining in my province of Alberta as I will be, as a Conservative, for all of these projects right across Canada, no matter where they happen to take place?

The Address

●(1245)

Mr. Marc Serré: Yes, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the resource base, natural resources are very important. I assure the member that my colleagues in the caucus of northern Ontario are working hard, looking at the priorities of the mining industry in northern Ontario. I am looking forward to working with my colleague from Alberta to develop more of a partnership and to expand the private sector role, and am looking at expediting that process.

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Nickel Belt for sharing his time with me. I really appreciate it.

It is with a great deal of pride and humility that I stand for the first time on debate in the House of Commons on this traditional territory of the Algonquin peoples. It is a moment that will be forever marked in my memory.

I would like to begin by thanking the people of Peterborough—Kawartha for the trust and support they have shown me. I intend to honour that trust with hard work, a commitment to listening to all perspectives, and a determination to act on the needs of the people of my riding.

I came to this place after a long journey. I was born on the other side of the world in a place rather different from Canada. It was a place at war, where human rights were not respected, where educating women was not allowed, and where the concept of a 31-year-old parliamentarian and cabinet minister was unthinkable.

I embarked on this journey with the most courageous person I know, my mother, who along with my two sisters left everything she knew and loved behind, and set out on a journey with the sole purpose of seeking a better life for her daughters. Our journey brought us to Peterborough, Ontario, where I found myself, an 11-year-old girl, in a strange land, with no language, with no understanding of the culture I was to live in, and with no friends. It was a journey that was made possible by the kindness of the people of Peterborough—Kawartha who sheltered us, who helped us enrol in school, who invited us to special events, who eased our loneliness, and nurtured us. I stand here a proud product of everything Peterborough does best, and I am committed to repaying that kindness through service to my community.

The list of those who have helped me arrive at this place is long, but I would like to thank my family, especially my mother and my sisters, my brother-in-law, and my six-year-old niece, Leila, the love of my life.

I would also like to thank my campaign family, a team of hundreds of women and men, young and young at heart, political veterans, and first-timers to the process, who worked tirelessly to make today possible.

I am also here because the Prime Minister presented a coherent plan for real change and provided Canadians with a positive alternative to the politics of division. The Speech from the Throne enunciates a clear path for achieving these objectives. As Minister for Democratic Institutions, I intend to seek change that would create a more open and transparent government. In that role I look forward to working with all members of the House to strengthen and modernize our democratic institutions.

In approaching this task I intend to be guided by a number of key principles: first, that the reforms we eventually choose must be designed to address the interests of all Canadians and go far beyond simply addressing the interests of the political parties we represent; second, that our reforms encourage participation among those who have felt marginalized in the past, including young people, people economically disadvantaged, minorities, and so many others; and third, that reform needs to address people who feel that their voice does not matter, people who feel that their concerns are ignored and that their hopes and aspirations do not matter. Democratic reform must include these people and it must work to ensure that in the not too distant future the membership of the House of Commons better reflects the makeup of Canadian society.

Finally, I wish to address the nature of debate in the House. It does need to represent partisan opinion but with an aim to reach a nonpartisan consensus that reflects the interests of Canadians, and not political parties. The discussion needs to be inclusive, with equal voice given to organized groups and individuals, with opportunities to engage settlers and indigenous peoples, urban and rural Canada, French and English Canada, with input from experts and academics and individuals and their lived stories, with participation from those who know this place well and Canadians for whom political participation may be new.

●(1250)

It is very important that the debate needs to be civil. It is imperative that we disagree without being disagreeable, that we seek not to drown out the voices of those who oppose us, but to engage in meaningful and respectful discussion. This principle is not just about the debates on democratic reform, but must be applied to all political debate in the House.

It is why I wholeheartedly support the Speaker's determination to stop heckling. When I witness it, I am troubled. I am taken back and reminded of the devastating impacts of taunting and bullying in our schools and the anti-bullying initiatives implemented across the country. Bullying is bullying, whether in the schoolyard or in the House. I intend to take a personal pledge not to participate in heckling and urge other members to join me. Our time here is a gift. We must use it responsibly, productively, and respectfully.

In closing, I wish to repeat a commitment that I made to the people of Peterborough—Kawartha and now would like to make to Canadians generally, that I will work hard, that I will be their voice in Parliament, that I will listen and always be open to reasoned arguments and respectful dialogue.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wish you and the minister a happy new year and congratulations to her. She has been up already, but this is her maiden speech and it was very well done. I think her whip should have given her the full time.

The Address

The minister speaks of respect. My sense is that she very much wants to be respectful and have a respectful dialogue here and with Canadians. Surely there is no greater respect to Canadians than to give us the chance to vote on whatever proposal for a new electoral system is being put forward by the government. Surely it is not respectful to say to Canadians that they gave Liberals a mandate in the election, but they do not get to have a say as whether or not what Liberals are putting forward for the next election is acceptable. When she thinks about that and when she sees the tsunami of editorial opinion that supports a referendum, she must be changing her mind from the one she held in 2015.

Surely now, she must want to have a referendum on whatever proposal the government puts forward before the next election.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Mr. Speaker, here we are in the new year with somewhat the same question from the member.

What I have heard clearly from Canadians is that there is a range of differing opinions. We intend to respect the intelligence of Canadians by engaging in a thorough and meaningful conversation across the country.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I, too would like to congratulate the Minister of Democratic Institutions on her election to the House. I had the privilege of working as an international human rights observer in Afghanistan and I know the great distance that she has come, both physically and culturally, to be here in the House. I certainly salute her and her family for their accomplishments.

I also want to congratulate her on her concern for those who have been marginalized in terms of democratic reform. I want to ask a question that New Democrats feel was missing from the Speech from the Throne and that is about the commitment to fight poverty. There are a few individual measures that the Liberals have talked about, but no overall plan. One of the things that was put forward in the last Parliament was the federal minimum wage and re-establishing that, something that the previous Liberal caucus voted for, but then tended to ridicule in the campaign. There was nothing about a boost to GIS for low-income seniors, to make sure that those who built this country do not end up living in poverty. Also, there was no commitment to close probably the biggest tax loophole there is and that is the tax loophole for CEOs who are investing in stock options and avoiding taxation.

I would like to ask the minister, with great respect, with her commitment to marginalization, where is the commitment from the government to actually systematically tackle poverty in this country?

• (1255)

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his service to my ancestral land and would like to remind him that the government is committed to addressing poverty.

Our middle-class tax cut is one example. Our initiative around providing a new benefit plan for families with children will lift hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty. Our infrastructure investments are intended to create jobs. Surely we can all agree that creating good jobs is the most effective way to lead people out of poverty.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the message the minister has put forward to Canadians and acknowledge she has done a fantastic job trying to encapsulate what Canadians believe is a very important issue.

They recognize we made a platform position of getting past the first past the post system in terms of voting, something that has served us well in the past. The need for change is there.

Can the minister provide assurances of how the government is approaching the whole notion of changing from the first past the post system to what will hopefully be a much more improved system for the next federal election?

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to point out that about 100 years ago this week the women in Manitoba fought and won the right to vote. We are in another stage of moving forward on revolutionary historic changes that will enhance our existing system.

The way we intend to go about that is through establishing an all-party parliamentary committee that will study this issue in great detail, and engage in a meaningful, thorough conversation with Canadians from coast to coast to coast before arriving at any conclusions.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to resuming debate, I have a polite reminder to hon. members. From time to time they will be having visitors here on Parliament Hill and in the galleries. I would remind them that recognizing such visitors in the galleries is reserved for the chair. Members might wish to, for example, make reference to guests who are visiting Parliament Hill today or perhaps visiting the nation's capital, but please avoid any kind of gesture that might recognize them in the galleries. That is reserved for the Speaker.

Now we are going to resume debate, the hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the two democratic issues that are on the agenda at the moment. I suspect there will be more as time goes on in Parliament, but the two are electoral reform, changes to the House and lack of change, quite frankly, that the government is proposing in the other place with regard to the appointments process. Conservatives would like to see real change here, conducted in a manner that is fully reflective of the wishes of Canadians.

It has been the long-standing policy of the Conservative Party, going back to its inception, that no changes should be made to the electoral system without the consent of Canadians, as expressed in a referendum. That has been its policy for years. I had a hand in getting that policy adopted. It was a widely held sentiment among my colleagues at the convention where that was adopted. Conservatives have always believed that the electoral system ought never to be changed without the approval of the people. There are a number of reasons for this.

The Address

First of all, this is the practice in the other countries of the Commonwealth, nations that have systems similar to our own. It was the practice in New Zealand when New Zealand looked at changing its electoral system in the 1990s, and actually did so. It was the system used by the United Kingdom when it looked at adopting single-member preferential ridings in 2011, an option that ultimately was rejected by British voters. It was the practice as well in all provinces that have, within living memory, looked at changing their electoral systems. Prince Edward Island conducted a referendum, if memory serves, in 2006, but I could be wrong on the exact year. British Columbia conducted two referenda and Ontario had a referendum on electoral reform in 2007.

No province in Canada has changed its electoral system without a referendum since the early 1950s, when a Liberal government in British Columbia changed its electoral system without a referendum and, frankly, was punished for it by the voters in the next election, who tossed out that government and put in a new government, which then changed back to the prior system. I am not saying that is what will happen in this case if the government pushes ahead. Indeed, I anticipate that if the Liberals push ahead with their plan, as now expressed, to change the electoral system without a referendum, they will engineer that system to give them a partisan advantage.

One of the things that I have emphasized over and over again when addressing this issue over the years has been the fact that it is very difficult for governments, for members in this place, to objectively participate in a non-interested manner, a non-biased manner, in discussions over electoral reform. Each of us can figure out a system under which our parties would have done better than under the status quo system, and that includes the victorious party. We can all think of certain systems that we know would have been worse for us. We are all inevitably biased by that. Even if one titanic figure of such moral greatness that he or she could set all this aside found him or herself in the position of prime minister and another person of equal moral greatness sat as minister of democratic institutions, we are surrounded by a majority of people who are just ordinary people like you and me, Mr. Speaker, and they are going to want to have that which benefits them.

This is an insurmountable problem. I have written about this on a number of occasions. Those who go to my website can see an essay I wrote in 2001 and another in 2005 on this very subject, this very problem. How do we overcome this? What should be done is very simple. Whatever proposal the government designs should be taken to the people and the people, as a whole, have no bias. Some of them are Liberals, some are Conservatives, some are New Democrats, some are Greens, some are Bloc, and some vote for the Marijuana Party. All the bases are covered when people, as a whole, vote. The people themselves, as a whole, have no bias and they will accept a system if (a) they feel a need for a change and (b) they feel that the system that is being proposed is objectively better than that which exists. However, if they think it is objectively worse, then they will not support it.

• (1300)

This is very important. We talk about the alternatives to the system we have now. We talk about the single transferable vote system, like Ireland has; the mixed member proportional system, like New

Zealand has; and the single member district with preferential voting, like Australia has.

The fact is that there is more than one alternative under each of these rubrics, and it is not difficult to figure out how I or the minister could design a system under any of these rubrics that would have a predictably dramatically different effect. That is to say, it could affect one party beneficially and harm another party in a way that was demonstrable beforehand. Eventually, over a number of elections, patterns would change and that advantage to one party and disadvantage to the others would be lost. However, initially, that could be locked into the next election.

It is not difficult at all to imagine a system, and I invite Liberals to ask me a question about what I am talking about here, that would ensure their victory in 2019. Our point is simply this: designing a system that privileges the Liberals and the people who vote Liberal and takes away from those who would vote for others is not an acceptable alternative to the status quo. The Liberals were not given a mandate for that reform, obviously. They would never be given, through a referendum, a mandate for that kind of reform. They would be given a mandate for potentially a number of alternatives that were objectively better than the status quo if the Canadian people felt that the alternatives were objectively better than the status quo. How do we test that? We test that in a referendum.

I am just going to mention that I plan to divide my time with the hon. member for Markham—Unionville.

I have laid out the groundwork for explaining why a referendum is so important. Before turning to the issue of the proposed appointments process for the other place, I want to take a moment to deal with one last thing.

One of the arguments, and apparently some people on the other side regard this as the knockout argument against referendums, is this: referendums tend to fail. When the Prime Minister was explaining last June why he would not consider using a referendum, he said it is hard to get past the plebiscite; it is hard to get people to adopt these things. Therefore, the argument is that anyone who favours a referendum is really favouring the status quo and that it is really a way of trying to kill change.

I want to say for the record that, first of all, referendums on this succeed from time to time. In British Columbia, when they held a referendum on this subject in the early 2000s, about 57% of British Columbians voted in favour of changing their electoral system. The government had set an artificially high goal of 60%. That bar was not achieved, but a referendum in which the normal majority of 50% plus one was in place could be achieved. It was achieved in New Zealand in the 1990s, so the argument that it cannot be done is just not true. It cannot be done when the system is badly designed or unfair.

Second, if the Canadian people reject a reform, is that not their legitimate right? Are we allowed to have any right we want except the right to decide on retaining the status quo? I do not think so, especially when the status quo, if the alternatives suggested by the government were rejected, would effectively potentially be a placeholder while a better alternative was found. That is the point.

The Address

In my last minute I will turn to the question of the Senate. The minister and the government have proposed a system for suggesting appointments to the Prime Minister. This system, which is just starting to be in place now, is as minimal a reform as can be imagined. It is in fact no reform. A panel of five individuals, chosen by the Prime Minister, at the Prime Minister's sole discretion, makes recommendations to the Prime Minister as to who will be appointed to the Senate. The Prime Minister chooses from among those five individuals in secret. The names of the five individuals are never revealed. The reasons for the Prime Minister's choice of an individual over others are never revealed to us. If the Prime Minister decides to set aside that entire list and just chooses whoever he likes, that is permitted. In fact, the Liberal press release emphasizes that absolute discretion is a key component of this whole process. The absolute authority of the Prime Minister is a key component.

I did ask the parliamentary secretary why all the secrecy. I was told that people might be fired from their jobs if their employers learned that they had been considered for nomination to the Senate.

• (1305)

I just want to say that this is arguably the most preposterous argument I have ever heard in 16 years in politics. I cannot imagine an employer who would fire people because they had been considered by a panel for a potential appointment to the Senate. However, I am looking forward to hearing from him or the minister a more realistic argument, and perhaps that can be provided in the question and answer period.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we can talk about democratic inputs and we can talk about democratic outputs. My friend repeatedly emphasizes democratic inputs, that in making this decision it should be by referendum. Ignored in this conversation, and what we emphasized throughout the campaign, is democratic output, and that is making sure that every vote counts.

A minority of Canadians, fewer than 40% who vote and fewer than one-quarter of Canadians who are eligible to vote, can give a government 100% of the power in this country. Does my friend think this is fair?

• (1310)

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, if that member thinks that the current system is unfair and that it is unfair for the reason he cited, then he should go to his minister and argue in favour of some form of proportional representation, and he should then ask her to put the proposed proportional representation system to a referendum. That way we would see whether Canadians think that this system is unfair and that the new system the Liberals recommend is more fair and therefore deserves their support.

Nothing the member is suggesting indicates to me that we should abandon the idea of having a referendum. Let the Canadian people make that decision about fairness and unfairness.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston has been vigorous in his support of the idea of putting any proposed reform to a referendum. He did mention in his speech the fact that part of the reason for the failure, in fact the reason for the failure of the B.C. reform, was that the government imposed a supermajority. Am I to

understand that he would be satisfied with a 50% plus one outcome for change on a referendum on a proposal from the current government?

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, it seems appropriate that I am answering a question from the member on Robbie Burns Day. His father was one of the greatest bagpipers ever to serve in the House of Commons, and his presence at these events is much missed.

To answer the question about 50% plus one, yes, in my opinion, a referendum ought to be established on the basis of a simple 50% plus one majority, as opposed to the kind of supermajority that was imposed in British Columbia, where 60% plus one had to win in a majority of ridings. That strikes me as being in its own way undemocratic in a different manner, especially when we live in a world where it is very rare for governments to get mandates on the basis of a 50% majority, and yet they govern and decide on any number of issues. We are just dealing with one specific law, and I think 50% plus one is just fine.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague gave a very eloquent speech. He made the offer to the Liberals across the way that if they wanted to ask him a question about how they could possibly rig this entire process for their immediate success in a future election, he would be happy to entertain that question. Because they did not have the courage to ask it, I will ask it for them.

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, I imagine I could think of several ways, but here is the easiest one.

In the last election, according to an exit poll conducted by Nik Nanos, we know that between 10% and 15% of voters for the Liberals, Green Party, Bloc Québécois, and the New Democrats had no second choice. They only had their own party as a choice, but it was 46% for Conservative voters. I think this is a reflection of the fact that there are many parties that lean to the left and only one candidate that leans to the right.

If we design a preferential system like the one we used, which I designed, for electing the Speaker, what happens is that one ticks off those people one supports in the order one supports them. If there are five candidates and a person only supports three, his or her vote remains valid as long as one of those three stays on the ballot and it is put on the pile for that particular candidate. That is called optional preferential.

Now, if we design something called full preferential, something different happens. Under a full preferential system, if a person votes for three candidates and there are five on the ballot, that vote is put aside as invalid, or what is called "informal" in Australia, where this system is used. It is informal and cast aside.

The Address

If that is done, and one party has many more supporters who simply do not have a second choice, and that party does not engage in an aggressive program of trying to explain to its voters who are totally unfamiliar with the system that they have to vote for all those people they hate, that they have to rank them or their ballots will be cast aside, what will happen is that a substantial number of their votes, four or five times as many of their votes as anyone else's, will be cast aside and lost. That will virtually guarantee that the party is wiped out, losing seats where it gets an absolute majority of first preferences.

This is one way the Liberals could rig the system, and of course, it is something that is very much on my mind as I watch them move forward with a plan to change the system without having a referendum first.

• (1315)

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first I want to thank my hon. colleague, the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, for splitting his time with me as I stand for the first time in the House of Commons speaking on behalf of the constituents of Markham—Unionville.

Before I begin to address the shortcomings of the government's Speech from the Throne, I want to take a moment to express my gratitude to the residents of Markham—Unionville for their faith in me and for entrusting me to represent their interests here in Ottawa. I promise here and now, and officially in *Hansard*, that I will work tirelessly to prove to them that I am worthy of the honour they have bestowed on me.

I also look forward to working with my colleagues to hold the government to account as Her Majesty's official opposition and especially on the immigration file, on which I have been appointed the deputy critic.

I want to give special thanks to my family, to Joe Reis, my campaign manager, and to all of my campaign team, who worked tirelessly to help me claim victory. Markham—Unionville is a diverse community with members from many diverse backgrounds who share the Conservative vision and elected me as their federal representative.

I want to move on to express my concerns, and those of my constituents, on the government's Speech from the Throne, delivered last month. While listening to it and then reading the speech, it often felt as though I were reading bullet points from a poorly drafted business idea. As a businessman before entering politics, I am very familiar with the business world, and I can safely tell the House that this is a very sad-looking business plan for governing Canada for the next four years. Make no mistake, based on the baseless one-liner promises in this speech, the government's lifespan will only last until 2019. However, I digress.

While the government touches on institutional openness and transparency, there is no mention of its fiscal plan and how its platitudes will be paid for. As we all know, empty promises with no spending explanations are just nice words on paper, and are not even worth the paper they are printed on. It is quite shameful that the government did not even reference its plan for fiscal responsibility or transparency in its themes, as this is an issue both close to my heart and important to my constituents.

Canadians know very well that policies need financial backing, and one cannot go without the other. Governing cannot be done halfway without financial backup, and the government has not provided any fiscal explanations in its Speech from the Throne to support its care-bear economics.

Just last week, the parliamentary budget officer released a new report on household indebtedness, highlighting this issue as one the federal government needs to address. Unfortunately, this throne speech also ignores this issue, which affects so many families in Canada today. The best way to bring down household debt levels, in my opinion, and in that of my party, is to grow our economy, with higher incomes for everyday working people and their families, and not to have the federal government go into further debt. That would only make matters worse for us all.

Furthermore, the government's plan of platitudes continues to ignore many of the industries on which the livelihoods of the residents of Markham—Unionville rest.

• (1320)

There is no mention of the automotive sector, which employs so many Ontarians, including many of my constituents, nor any of the other manufacturing sectors on which many Canadians' jobs depend. This to me is one of the biggest losses in this agenda introduced last month; and so, I stand with my caucus colleagues in rejecting the government's Speech from the Throne.

The constituents of Markham—Unionville are hard-working Canadians. I am sad to see the Liberal government ignoring their interests and those of the rest of the citizens of the greater Toronto area. The government has already made it clear that this agenda is more focused on managing savings for them. Why else would the Liberals have declared their intention to cut in half the limit that Canadians can put in their TFSA accounts?

My party and I believe that most Canadians know how to manage their own money. We will support only measures that would do exactly that, measures that would keep taxes low and keep more money in Canadians' pockets. Canadians know how to go about their lives and how to manage their own families and businesses. They know how to achieve their goals. They do not need the government to do it for them.

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Finally, I would like to touch on one of the biggest omissions in the throne speech, namely, addressing the fight against ISIS and the government's plan with respect to fighting international terrorism. While this issue may seem remote to some Canadians, some of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle directly felt it over a year ago in these very corridors. Every day Canadians hear about the international fight against ISIS or the human and material destruction that comes after, but they hear nothing on the matter from the government. It is quite shameful that the Liberal government's plan for Canada's mission against ISIS is indecisive, incoherent, and confusing to our allies and our fellow Canadians. Under the Liberal government, Canada is being forced to sit back while we let our international allies fight our common battle to defend our shared values. The biggest proof of this was the lack of an invitation to Canada to join last week's administrative level talks in Paris. The government is already developing a reputation for preferring to talk and lacking decisive action, and Canadians are embarrassed by this.

Once again, I would like to thank my hon. colleague from Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston for splitting his time with me and the residents of Markham—Unionville, whom I am honoured to serve.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my friend on his victory in October.

My friend spoke about a business plan. The Canadian public has given us a mandate to put together a business plan, and the throne speech delivered by our government last month speaks to that. It speaks to the volume of work that needs to be done in order to get the country back on track. For the last 10 years the Conservative government absolutely failed to control our debt. In the last 10 years under the Conservative government, \$160 billion has been added to our national debt. That is the business plan we are competing with, and we will do a lot better than that.

Our government is proposing to invest \$60 billion into infrastructure over the next 10 years. In total, that would be over \$100 billion over the next 10 years. Could the member for Markham—Unionville tell me what type of benefit that would pose to his riding? What kind of requests would that kind of money fulfill to improve the lives of the people of Markham—Unionville and the lives of all Ontarians and Canadians?

•(1325)

Mr. Bob Saroya: Mr. Speaker, I can answer the question in two ways: first, the government will go broke as soon as it runs out of other people's money. I come from a business background and I understand the balanced approach. When we were in a minority government and went into a recession, we ended up borrowing money and doing what we had to do at that time, but today there is no business plan. In the regular business world, the CEO of the company, in this case the Prime Minister, would get fired because there is nothing to show for it. There is no business plan as far as I am concerned, and we need a balanced business plan that can present both sides.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the conflicts that now rage in that region caused by the extensive civil war and domestic strife in Syria, the refugee crisis, and within it the threat from Daesh, sometimes called ISIS, are just one part of a very large, disturbing, and dangerous conflict.

The bombing missions started under the previous government have shown no signs whatsoever of ending the reign of ISIS and its spread of Daesh. In fact, what we are looking at is an opposing force to brutal dictator Bashar al-Assad, among many opposing forces where he also poses a threat. That bombing mission also emboldened Russia to send bombing missions into the same region of the same country and now threatens again greater instability in the region.

We are a long way from knowing that bombing missions can actually work. Would the hon. member not consider that we should put our efforts into any multilateral efforts such as those that have not begun to end the civil war in Syria?

Mr. Bob Saroya: Mr. Speaker, if we stop bombing ISIS strongholds in either Iraq or Syria, or any other place, they will be all over the place. There is no other good outcome. Our allies are working with us to keep them intact in either Syria or Iraq or diminish them. That is the only thing they understand. There is no other alternative as far as I am concerned.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to hear about the business common sense that my new colleague in the House of Commons has, and I am going to ask him if the business community in his riding, as in mine, is concerned about the direction this country is going, which is because the government has no idea where it is going? Would my colleague agree?

Mr. Bob Saroya: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. I come from a business background and as I said, business has to make sense. The books have to be balanced just as they do in families. If the family is spending more money, the family will go broke. If the nation is spending more money than it is bringing in, the nation will go broke. However, it seems this is the way we are going with the Liberal government.

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to participate in this debate on the Speech from the Throne. I am sharing my time with the hon. member for Central Nova.

Let me say at the outset that I am proud to be part of a government that intends to bring about real change in our country by focusing on things that matter most to Canadians, like growing the economy, creating jobs, strengthening the middle class, and helping those working hard to join it.

I also feel very privileged to take my seat in this place, having been given the confidence of the people of Thunder Bay—Superior North to serve as their member of Parliament, and the confidence of the Prime Minister to serve as Minister of Status of Women.

In both of these roles, I intend to fulfill my duties by working together with others in a renewed spirit of innovation, openness, and collaboration, just as the Speech from the Throne committed our government to doing. In these two roles, I am very proud to be continuing a tradition established by the Hon. Bob Andras, who in 1971 was Canada's very first minister of status of women. He also hailed from my home region, representing the ridings of Port Arthur and then Thunder Bay—Nipigon from 1965 to 1980.

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In some ways, my riding of Thunder Bay—Superior North needs no introduction. It has a distinguished history of representation in Parliament, and I intend to maintain that tradition through dedication and commitment to the people of my constituency.

For my colleagues and those Canadians watching who may not know, the riding of Thunder Bay—Superior North is in the northwestern part of the province of Ontario. It covers a vast area, nearly 90,000 square kilometres. It includes many vibrant communities like Greenstone, Marathon, Shuniah, Manitouwadge, Biigtigong Nishnaabeg, and of course part of Thunder Bay itself.

However, it is the people of this vast riding who inspired me to want to serve as their member of Parliament, and they are the reason I am so proud to be here today.

This opportunity to serve the wonderful people of Thunder Bay—Superior North continues my own professional and personal journey that has focused on community service and social advocacy. What has most often motivated me in my career, and still does today, is the desire to improve the lives of others and to help ensure that everyone has a real and fair chance to succeed.

Over the years, I have worked to enhance my community by addressing adult literacy and access to housing and reducing harm associated with substance use. Most recently I was proud to lead an organization that focused on creating a safe and welcoming place for those most excluded and vulnerable.

My experience tells me that every action we take to ensure that those who struggle the most are supported to succeed has benefits not only for the individual but for our society as a whole.

Supporting those who have been marginalized in our society, and they are far too often women, means not just helping them through a moment of crisis, even though that is the necessary and right thing to do. We must also support them so that their time of crisis does not become a lifetime of crisis, which then can lead to intergenerational challenges that will affect their families for years to come.

By supporting those who are most excluded, we enhance the prosperity of our communities and our country. As I said earlier, I believe that collaboration and respect for our fellow citizens are keys to achieving our shared goals whether they be small or large. It is only through working together that individuals, organizations, communities, and indeed countries, can succeed.

It is this same collaborative approach that our government intends to follow, and that I intend to follow as the Minister of Status of Women, as we identify innovative solutions that support women and girls to reach their full potential and participate fully in all aspects of Canadian life.

One of our first priorities is to address the urgent need to reduce and prevent gender-based violence in our society. It goes without saying that violence against women is not acceptable and should not be tolerated in our society. How we respond to this issue can make a real difference in the lives of women and their families.

Our government intends to take action. We have launched a national public inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, and in the coming weeks and months I will be meeting with experts, advocates, and colleagues to discuss

innovative ideas that can be part of a comprehensive federal strategy to reduce and prevent gender-based violence, which aligns with provincial and territorial strategies.

Our government is also committed to growing and maintaining Canada's network of shelters and transition homes across the country to meet our commitment to enhancing the safety of women and children.

The Government of Canada is also committed to taking actions that will help our country move closer to the shared goals of equality between women and men in many fields, and it is leading by example.

• (1330)

Under the Prime Minister's leadership, women now hold 50% of cabinet positions, a decision that is receiving much positive international attention. We will continue to equitably include women leaders by ensuring that the federal government's senior appointments are merit-based and demonstrate gender parity. We will ensure a gender lens is applied to the decisions we make so we fully reflect upon how these decisions will affect women.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not take a moment today to acknowledge how fortunate I feel to be sharing the honour of so many women who have sought election and served in the House of Commons over the decades. In fact, I have made history, along with many of them, as I am the first woman to be elected from the riding of Thunder Bay—Superior North in Ontario.

We need to keep in mind that diversity does not have it easily or automatically. The women in the House today, in all parties, are heirs to the women of courage who came before us and who forged the important place we now hold on Parliament Hill.

Having more women in Parliament and in positions of leadership across our country not only enhances the role women play, but it helps change the conversation about the many important issues in our region and our country. As a result, I think we can safely say that issues important to women are no longer seen as women's issues; they are simply Canadian issues, and rightfully so.

Finding lasting solutions that help Canada thrive and ensure intergenerational success will be possible if we address them, as the Speech from the Throne suggested, with a renewed spirit of innovation, openness, and collaboration.

My commitment as minister is to do just that. I believe that at the end of the day we are stronger working together than individually to achieve the kind of equality between women and men that will ensure a strong economy and a healthy inclusive society.

• (1335)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I salute the community work the minister did before coming to the House.

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I want to quickly ask her two questions.

First, as she may be aware, I put forward a bill to provide equal protections for transgendered Canadians, transgendered Canadians being some of the people who are quite often forced to use shelters and who are subject to some of the worst violence in the country. Would she join with me in urging the Minister of Justice to bring that forward as a government bill?

My second question has to do with the situation of those who are involved in sex work in Canada. Under the previous government, the Supreme Court decision that decriminalized sex work was, in effect, overturned by Bill C-36. Now many people, for whatever reason, involved in the sex trade are being subjected to discrimination and to a great deal of violence as a result of that bill.

What is the minister's position is on the recriminalization of sex work?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, those are both are very important questions.

I believe that as part of our mandate we committed to shelters that are more accessible. From my perspective, that is all women, regardless whether they were born as women or whether they are now women. As a shelter operator, there are ways that we can support shelters to ensure they are as inclusive as possible, while ensuring that safety for all is respected.

In terms of sex trade work, we know those women are incredibly vulnerable as well. We hear that over and over, not just through the murdered and missing indigenous women inquiry, but from many sectors of our country.

I look forward to hearing the recommendations of the Minister of Justice about how we can protect women in the sex trade and in other vulnerable situations.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I also want to congratulate the hon. minister on her election, although she will know that I am very sad to lose the member she replaces, but I welcome her in her new role. I also commend the minister and her colleagues for starting the inquiry into murdered and missing indigenous.

However, I want to support the decision just taken by the hon. member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, that Bill C-36 represents a threat, not just for women in the sex trade, but to any sex trade worker, which it has. I have heard first hand from groups working with sex trade workers and from sex trade workers themselves. They say that Bill C-36 has put them in more vulnerable positions than they were in even before the Supreme Court ruling. Therefore, it has done the opposite of what the Supreme Court has urged us to do.

I take the minister's point that she awaits a decision and recommendations from the Minister of Justice, but I hope this new government will pursue the repeal of Bill C-36.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, I am privileged to stand here to represent the constituents of Thunder Bay—Superior North, despite the excellent representation they had before me.

Through the inquiry on murdered and missing indigenous women, we are hearing that women in the sex trade are particularly

vulnerable. Minister Wilson-Raybould is part of the pre-inquiry consultations and is hearing the same message. I am confident that our government will move forward to review laws that further place women at risk, and I look forward to her comments about the best way to do so.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to congratulate the member on her appointment as Minister of Status of Women and her election in the riding of Thunder Bay.

The Speech from the Throne was particularly silent on natural resources and what we were doing and where we were going. I know that in the community the minister represents forestry and mining are incredibly important. I would like to hear her perspective on moving that agenda forward in spite of the silence from her government on things that are going to be very important to her constituents.

● (1340)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, it was wonderful to see the member at one of the pre-inquiry consultations and I thank her for attending.

As a member of Parliament for Thunder Bay—Superior North, the member is absolutely correct that it has been a resource extraction-based economy. However, the Liberals believe that we need to diversify our economy and move forward into other avenues of economic excellence for the community. Therefore, I am looking forward to working with the minister responsible for forestry, the Minister of Natural Resources, and the minister responsible for energy so we can move forward and find solutions to this.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we resume debate, I will provide another gentle reminder to all hon. members not to use the given or family names of other hon. members. They should use either riding names or, in the case of parliamentary secretaries or ministers, titles.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Central Nova.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am humbled beyond words to stand for the first time in this hallowed chamber as a representative for the people of Central Nova. It means the world to me to stand here in this moment and to stand with the support of those at home fills me not only with pride but with a sense of duty to the voters who have given me the opportunity to serve their interests.

I would be remiss if I failed to acknowledge the enormous contribution that my wife Sarah has made to my life and to my betterment as a person. Her unending support is more valuable to me than any material thing in this world. My family's influence on me cannot be overstated. From an early age it has taught me to be someone who can contribute to my community and to use my own judgment when faced with a difficult decision rather than to merely follow the crowd. I would not be here without my friends and supporters. Their tireless efforts in knocking on thousands of doors and working through the night time after time were an inspiration for months on end. They helped me learn a great deal about my community and myself. I thank them from the bottom of my heart.

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Central Nova is home to some of the most beautiful places on earth. The Northumberland Strait and the eastern shore include some of Canada's most pristine coasts and picturesque communities. More important, my riding is home to the greatest people I have ever met and I will ever meet. Our east coast charm and hospitality are unrivalled, and our willingness to help one another cannot be matched. In my part of the world we help each other. I am better for it; we are all better for it. If I can repay even a fraction of the debt that I owe to this incredible place by contributing in a positive way to the quality of life of the people who live at home, I will have done something meaningful.

Although Central Nova is my favourite part of the world, as a region we face common challenges, such as a flagging economy and an out migration of youth. We also face environmental obstacles, and the cost of education continues to rise at a greater pace than local wages. The local health care system carries too heavy a burden to adequately serve the needs of our aging population and vulnerable sectors of our region find it increasingly difficult to access much needed social programs.

I am proud to lend my support to the Speech from the Throne because it will put into place a framework that will allow my region to overcome these challenges so we can bring about the kind of change that will help the people of Central Nova.

In an era of globalization, world economies in places like Merigomish and Middle Musquodoboit have suffered, and many of our industrial employers have skipped town over time. Many young people and their families have left, and some of our once-thriving communities are a shell of what they once were. Everyone back home knows someone who has had to leave to make ends meet.

With the skilled workforce that lives in the riding now or that desperately wants to come back, there is no reason we cannot build things in Central Nova for customers all over the world. With the incredible educational opportunities and some improved connectivity in our region, there is no reason we cannot have a modern economy in the small towns and rural communities of Nova Scotia and the rest of Canada. There are opportunities at home and the government's proposed economic policies will ensure that more of our family members will be welcomed back.

The investment in infrastructure has the potential to spur economic growth by providing our communities with the things that they need, and hiring local people and businesses to build them. The middle-class tax cut and revision to programs that will help less fortunate Canadians, such as the EI program and Canada child care benefit, will put more money into the pockets of people who need help with the increasing costs of essentials and will lift over 300,000 Canadian children out of poverty.

In Central Nova, the struggle between the environment and the economy is very real. I believe the air we breathe is more important than the size of our wallets. The forests and shores of my homeland have long been essential contributors to the prosperity of our people. Therefore, we must manage them to ensure the prosperity of future generations. I am pleased by the government's environmental priorities because they highlight the possibilities that arise when we view the environment not as a problem that we must deal with, but as an opportunity that we get to take advantage of.

By investing in green infrastructure, we can harness energy from renewable resources. By making environmental innovation a priority, we can build a knowledge economy in every region of Canada to complement our well-known natural resources sector. We can protect the environment and grow the economy at the same time, and that is what the government intends to do.

In Nova Scotia, we have some of the finest post-secondary institutions that our country has to offer. We have to ensure that the cost of an education does not prohibit smart young women and men from studying what they wish to study. The world's greatest business solutions and scientific developments could be locked in the mind of a person who cannot afford an education, and that is unacceptable. By reducing the costs of education for low-income families, we can help eliminate the financial barrier to education and potentially to success.

● (1345)

Growing up in a family of six kids, all of whom are proud graduates of StFX University, I am all too familiar with the burdensome cost of an education. We have created a system that encourages young people to get educated at home but to take their talents elsewhere upon graduation. By providing support to students on the back end of their academic career, we can reduce the out-migration that results from economic duress.

I am very proud of the government's recent efforts to return Canada to a place of respect on the world stage by improving our human rights record internationally and at home. However, I am even more impressed by the community initiatives on the ground in my own riding. The groundswell of support for Syrian refugees from groups like SAFE and Tri-Heart in Antigonish town and county, or Safe Harbour, or CAiRN in Pictou County is remarkable. The Canadian people are eager to live up to the reputation that Canada has earned over a century and a half.

The government will also work with our indigenous communities, such as the Pictou Landing First Nation, on a nation-to-nation basis to build trust between governments. We will help provide our indigenous peoples with the tools they need so they can succeed through self-governance, rather than trying to dictate to them from the outside what is best. I am also very proud to be part of a government that will conduct a long overdue inquiry into Canada's national tragedy of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

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Health and wellness impacts the lives of all Canadians and comes as a major expense to taxpayers. By investing in initiatives such as home care and bulk purchases of pharmaceuticals, we will be allowing people to stay in their homes longer and get the treatment they need at a reduced cost. In addition, investments in social infrastructure, such as affordable housing, women's transition shelters, and recreational facilities, could help improve the social and economic determinants of health. This would further reduce the need for expensive care. Our government has also made mental health a priority. We need to work with the provinces to ensure that every region in our country has the infrastructure and the expertise to properly care for community members living with mental illness.

We have to take better care of our seniors as well. A greater proportion of Nova Scotia's population is made up of seniors than any other province. I have met countless seniors of modest means who are living in unacceptable living conditions. The problem is compounded by the fact that their rent goes up every time their government benefits increase. By investing in affordable housing we could create jobs and improve this living situation for our seniors. By improving the old age security, the guaranteed income supplement, and the Canada pension plan benefits, we could serve the interests of our senior population and provide a boost to local economies.

As a nation we have forgotten how to properly take care of our veterans. While we have been busy planning monuments, our veterans have been going without proper care. We have a sacred duty to those who have served our country. If we can afford to send our citizens to war, we can afford to take care of them when they come home.

I am proud to represent the people from Antigonish to Dutch Settlement. I am excited to advocate for the interests of every rural community, from Sherbrooke to River John. I have hope for the futures of the towns of Pictou County, as well as Musquodoboit Harbour and the rest of the eastern shore. These communities may have diverse backgrounds, but they share an interest in wanting to make their home a better place to live.

The plan outlined in the Speech from the Throne will help make this vision a reality. For this reason, I am pleased to support our government and will proudly stand in support of the Speech from the Throne.

• (1350)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member about his perspective on the energy east pipeline. There is virtually no mention in the throne speech of the importance of the energy sector. The energy east pipeline would create jobs and opportunity in my region, as well as his, so why was there no reference to the energy sector in the throne speech and what is his view of the energy east pipeline?

Mr. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, our government has been fairly clear that we support projects that can get our product to market if they are environmentally friendly and have the support of the local community. What I would like to point out, though, is that there has been a sea change in the oil and gas sector in Canada. The drop in prices highlights the need to diversify the economy. We cannot put all of our eggs in one basket. We need to be focusing on renewable

energy, as well as projects like energy east, and innovation, manufacturing, and supporting primary industry.

In the short term, we should also be considering the workers that are impacted by the downturn in the energy sector by providing them with timely access to the social programs that will help them get by.

Coming from a small rural community in Nova Scotia and having worked for a number of years in Alberta, I understand the impact the oil and gas sector can have on our national economy.

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for Central Nova on his speech. One of the points he made was to suggest that the so-called middle-class tax cut would benefit those who needed it most and would lift children out of poverty. I wonder if the member for Central Nova would acknowledge that this measure would actually provide no benefit at all to those earning less than \$45,000 per year, and that a much better way to help those who need it most would in fact be to reduce the first tax bracket, as the NDP has proposed.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question on this important issue.

I come from a riding where I have seen statistics that the median household income is less than \$45,000 a year. However, there is an important issue that I have noticed over the course of discourse in the House on the government's economic policies, which we all need to be aware of. We cannot be cherry picking individual policies here and there; we need to look at the entire platform because there is a lot of good material in there that would help people who earn far less than \$45,000.

For example, the investment in infrastructure, particularly social infrastructure, is worth noting. There will be historic investment in affordable housing for seniors, vulnerable people, and women's transition shelters. We will be changing the way the Canada child care benefit operates so that there will be more money in the pockets of people who need it, rather than giving child care cheques to millionaires. We will also be working with the provinces to boost the amount that our seniors can receive under the Canada pension plan, rolling back the old age security benefit from age 67 to 65, and boosting the guaranteed income supplement for low-income seniors who are living alone, which would impact predominantly women in Canada.

I would take on any members of the House who wanted to say that the government's platform does not include sufficient support for low-income people living in my riding.

*Statements by Members**[Translation]*

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I heard the member's response concerning the energy east pipeline. If I have understood correctly, the consent of local communities is required in order to build a pipeline. The Prime Minister said that aboriginal communities do not support a western pipeline and therefore he does not support it.

Last week, 85 mayors representing 4,100,000 people said they were opposed to the energy east pipeline. Therefore, it does not have the support of local communities. Is the member saying that he will say no to the pipeline?

[English]

Mr. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I think the member's question highlights the need for improved consultation with communities. The energy east pipeline is but one of many examples of similar projects going on around our country. I do stand by the position that if we consult with local communities and can gain their support, it is okay to put products to market in that fashion.

However, it is premature for me to say that the time is now to build or the time is now to say it is never going to happen. Until I do sufficient consultation with members of my own community and other affected communities, it is not the time to approve once and for all the decision either way.

● (1355)

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member for his maiden speech in the House. It was very eloquently put.

In the throne speech, our government emphasized infrastructure and its ability to create an environment for growth. By investing in our infrastructure, we open up our markets and boost their ability to increase productivity so they can create the growth and jobs necessary to get our country moving once again.

In the ideal environment that we are in today, where we have a low debt-to-GDP ratio and interest rates at historic lows, it makes sense to invest in our country. If we do not invest, who will?

I would like to pose a question for the hon. member as to the effect this infrastructure investment will have on his riding.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, in the last election, our government was in no small part elected based on its plan to make a serious and historic investment in infrastructure to drive growth. The plan was to drive growth so that over time we can look at the long term and balance the federal budget while getting people back to work while the economy is flagging. The goal is not to create some short-term solution by selling assets or performing accounting tricks. We will look at the long term, beyond even a four-year election cycle, and say what we can do to get our economy in each riding going again.

In my riding, we suffer from an infrastructure deficit like everywhere in the country. There is a need for improved water and sewer projects. There is a need for communities to improve the quality of their streetscapes. There is a need for infrastructure such as breakwaters in the harbour in Jeddore that will help drive primary industry by further resisting climate change.

It is quite obvious to me that these benefits will not just be for the construction workers who put up the facilities we need, but for the local accountant who gets the project down the street, and for the local restaurant owners as well. This kind of plan is exactly what Central Nova needs, and I was thrilled to be able to represent the government's platform to the constituents in my riding during this election, and they responded in kind.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS*[Translation]***RENÉ ANGÉLIL**

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, René Angélil passed away on January 14. This great Quebecker left his mark first as a singer and then as an impresario.

It is thanks to tenacious people like René Angélil that new doors were opened for Quebeckers and that anything is possible for us now.

Under the watchful eye of René Angélil, the career of Céline Dion, originally from Charlemagne in the riding of Repentigny, reached pinnacles that no Quebec artist would even have dreamed of.

We will remember René Angélil as a man of undeniable charisma and many talents. He was one of the people who defined, defended and promoted an important part of Quebec culture.

Thank you, Mr. Angélil, for making us dream. On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, we extend our deepest condolences to the friends and family of René Angélil.

* * *

MADAWASKA—RESTIGOUCHE

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish all members of Parliament a happy and constructive new year.

I want to thank all of the volunteers and voters in my riding who put their trust in me on October 19 and chose me to be their representative in the House of Commons.

Of course, I also want to take this opportunity to thank all of my family members who encouraged and supported me, starting with my parents, Hébert and Pierrette; my children, Dominik, Cloé and Olivier; and my wife, Michèle.

My riding has been struggling economically for far too long. This has contributed to out-migration, which is something we need to counteract immediately.

● (1400)

[English]

I wish to assure my constituents that, with the new government in place, I will do all in my power in the years to come to correct this situation.

*Statements by Members***ORGAN DONATION**

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, more than 200 Canadians die needlessly every year waiting for an organ transplant. Their deaths could be prevented if only more people were aware of the need and were willing to help. In 2003, I donated part of my liver to my son, Tyler, who needed a living donor. Any father would have done the same. Then his liver failed again, twice. Two grieving families came forward anonymously. Their gift allowed my son to live.

Sadly, for far too many, the outcome is not such a happy one. It seems potential donors or their families are unaware of the good they could do.

I urge all members to support the creation of a national organ donor registry to coordinate and promote organ donation across Canada.

* * *

[*Translation*]

RENÉ ANGÉLIL

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a great man passed away on January 14. René Angélil's death touched us all.

An impresario with extraordinary flair, a businessman, a philanthropist and an artist, he made the impossible possible. He gave our artists permission to dream, to believe in their dreams, to succeed and to make a name for themselves around the world. He was outstanding. He had flair and intuition along with courage, perseverance and immense determination.

Through his work, he showed everyone how it was done and paved the way for generations of creators and artists. We will truly miss this warm, loyal and tremendously kind man.

We extend our sincere condolences to his wife, Céline, his children, his family and his friends.

We came to know, respect and love you. Rest in peace, René.

* * *

TERRORIST ATTACKS IN INDONESIA AND BURKINA FASO

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on January 14 and 15, 2016, seven Quebeckers were killed in the terrorist attacks in Indonesia and Burkina Faso: Tahar Amer-Ouali, Louis Chabot, Suzanne Bernier, and Gladys Chamberland and Yves Carrier, as well as their children, Charlelie and Maude Carrier.

These Canadians epitomized the very best that Canada and all of humanity have to offer: kindness and compassion. Meanwhile, inhumane violence cost them their lives. It is hard to put such an injustice into words. I hope everyone here today will join me in sending our thoughts and extending our deepest sympathies to their loved ones.

We need to honour their memory by redoubling our efforts to build a better, fairer and more humane world.

● (1405)

[*English*]

JAMES LOADER

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today with some sadness to recognize the life of a Scarborough icon. James Loader was a staple in our community. He was a fixture at Morningside Cinemas and other theatres in the area for over 55 years. For generations, James greeted moviegoers with his friendly smile. James was a constant when everything around us seemed to constantly change. He was an ambassador of goodwill to the community.

Throughout James' career with the public health department of the City of Toronto and after his retirement, until just days before his death at the age of 83, James moonlighted as a ticket taker. He worked his last shift on New Year's Day of this year. His hard work and long hours paid off and provided a better childhood for his children, who were the centre of his life. James Loader leaves behind four children, Kevin, Russell, Patricia, and Terrence, and his two grandchildren, Nicole and Alex. He will be greatly missed.

I wish to extend my deepest condolences to James' family, friends, co-workers, and his many fans.

* * *

NORTH OKANAGAN—SHUSWAP

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today as the member for North Okanagan—Shuswap and wish everyone a happy new year.

I want to thank the many people who supported me last October and I wish to recognize that I am here to represent every constituent in my riding. I am honoured by the trust that fellow Canadians have placed in me and eager to work on their behalf here in Ottawa.

It is truly an honour to represent an area as diverse as the North Okanagan—Shuswap, from its world famous Adams River salmon run to its world-class agriculture and wine sectors, from its small manufacturing firms to its champagne powder skiing. It has much to share with Canada and the rest of the world.

I am determined to be a strong advocate representing the good people of the North Okanagan—Shuswap. Together, our hard work and perseverance will allow us to overcome present challenges and those yet to come.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CÉDRIKA PROVENCHER

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in December, the remains of Cédrika Provencher, a young girl kidnapped in 2007, were discovered in my riding, Saint-Maurice—Champlain.

Statements by Members

I offer my deepest condolences to her family and friends and the entire community, which has been shaken by this unspeakable crime. I also want to pay tribute to her loved ones for their perseverance and to the hundreds of volunteers and workers who came together over the past eight years to find Cédrika. We all have a duty to keep the children safe.

I am calling on everyone to be even more vigilant and to come together to prevent kidnappings or help bring back our children.

* * *

[English]

COURAGE POLAR BEAR DIP

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one might think it would be difficult to get hundreds of people to jump into a frozen lake and pay for the privilege, but Oakville's Todd and Trent Courage and the polar bear dip team do it every year.

Held at Coronation Park in Oakville on New Year's Day, the Courage Polar Bear Dip is Canada's largest charitable polar bear dip. Over its 31 years, it has raised an impressive \$1.4 million for World Vision clean water projects. Each year a live band and thousands of spectators cheer on over 800 dippers, including me, as we run into the frigid waters of Lake Ontario so that people across the ocean can have access to clean water of their own.

I am proud of people like Todd and Trent and the team, and those across Canada who work to make the world kinder, safer, and healthier every day, both at home and abroad.

* * *

[Translation]

ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Thetford Mines was hard hit by the closure of diamond mines, but is getting back on its feet. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business ranked Thetford Mines the third easiest city in which to do business in Quebec. The recovery is fragile and the Government of Canada must continue to support economic diversification initiatives in order to create jobs.

I would also like to mention the concerns of dairy producers in Mégantic—L'Érable. Milk proteins continue to cross the border, putting at risk our small farms, in contempt of the supply management system. Time is of the essence.

In 2016, the people of Lac-Mégantic are waiting for answers. A rail bypass for Lac-Mégantic is being studied, and we invite the new Minister of Transport to quickly meet and discuss this with the mayor of Lac-Mégantic.

As the Quebec MP representing the riding most affected by rail transportation of oil, I unequivocally support the energy east pipeline, which is a far safer means of transport.

● (1410)

[English]

STEVESTON-RICHMOND EAST HERO

Mr. Joe Peschisolido (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to pay special tribute to Ken Brodie, a 73-year-old retired mailman and long-time Richmond resident.

On December 30, Ken Brodie showed exceptional courage as he selflessly intervened in a vicious dog attack. Ken was in his garden when he heard women's cries for help in the neighbouring schoolyard. He quickly jumped over his fence and ran to action, pulling the dog from one of the women. Unfortunately, during Ken's heroic efforts, he sustained injuries as well.

On behalf of the residents of Richmond, it gives me great pleasure to stand in this house to recognize Ken Brodie for his courage and outstanding bravery.

* * *

JOHN HARVARD

Mr. Doug Eyolfson (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour the memory of John Harvard, former member of Parliament for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, who passed away on January 9 after a courageous battle with cancer at the age of 77.

Born and raised in Glenboro, Manitoba, John began an award-winning 30-year career in broadcast journalism in 1957. John then successfully ran for federal politics in 1988 and served as a member of Parliament for 16 years. In 2004, John Harvard became the 23rd lieutenant-governor of Manitoba, serving the province until 2009.

John's commitment to democracy was unshakeable to the end. In the fall of 2015, John had a friend take him to an advance poll to vote as he was not sure he would still be alive on election day.

On behalf of the constituents of Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, I offer my condolences to John Harvard's friends and family, and I thank John for his dedicated service to the people of Canada.

* * *

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, violence against women continues to be a fact of life in Canada. Carol Culleton, Nathalie Warmerdam, and Anastasia Kuzyk were killed on September 22, 2015. They were murdered by someone known to each of them. On average in Canada, one woman is killed by her intimate partner every five days.

The man arrested and accused of their murders had a long criminal history, including charges involving two of the three women. Happening in the middle of a recent federal election, their violent deaths barely caused a ripple in the national media, leaving the families and friends in the rural Ontario community where these women lived to grieve in silence.

I invite the Minister of Justice to spend some time listening to the families of these murdered women. Changing our laws to blame to the victim is just plain wrong. Let us not allow Carol, Nathalie, Anastasia, and all the other women who have been murdered by their intimate partners to have died in vain.

* * *

SHOOTING AT LA LOCHE

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the tragedy in La Loche has shaken and shocked us all. I offer the family and friends of the victims our deepest condolences. Our hearts and prayers are also with those injured in the attack. May they have a full and speedy recovery.

We must acknowledge the medical professionals and the RCMP, who all worked tirelessly in a very dangerous situation and acted with bravery.

All of Canada stands with the community of La Loche and its residents at this tragic time.

We must be determined to do whatever is necessary to offer hope and a path forward for communities like La Loche and its people. Solutions need to be built from the community members through listening to their hopes and dreams.

For now, we grieve.

[Member spoke in aboriginal language]

* * *

SHOOTING AT LA LOCHE

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this past Friday the entire country was heartbroken with the news of a mass shooting at La Loche Community School. We send our deepest condolences to the families of the victims, our thanks to the first responders for their quick actions, and our love to the entire community that continues to suffer this terrible loss.

I would like to thank, in particular, my friend and colleague, the new member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River for her incredible work in supporting her community in the aftermath of this tragedy. She is the former mayor of La Loche and had friends and family at the school. This shooting hits particularly close to home for her.

• (1415)

[Translation]

There are no words to express our heartache over this tragedy. Canadians across the country feel a profound grief, and our hearts go out to everyone affected by this tragedy.

La Loche is a small community that needs resources and assistance now and in the future. Let us work together to provide this assistance and start the healing process.

Oral Questions

TERRORIST ATTACKS IN INDONESIA AND BURKINA FASO

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in this House to address all Canadians about the tragedies that took place in Jakarta and Ouagadougou. Let us remember Tahar Amer-Ouali, a hearing aid specialist from Laval, who was sadly killed in an attack in Indonesia.

Let us also remember the victims of the attack in Burkina Faso: Louis Chabot and Suzanne Bernier, from the greater Quebec City area; and Maude Carrier, Charlelie Carrier, Gladys Chamberland and Yves Carrier, from Lac-Beauport, in the riding of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

They were all working to help and bring hope to the people of Burkina Faso. Everyone who knew them describes these individuals as generous, compassionate, and giving. No one deserves such a tragic death, and our community has lost some extraordinary people.

It is our duty to honour their memory. Let us respond to these cruel, unfair, and unfathomable attacks by working together to combat the terrorist threat and build a better world.

* * *

BURKINA FASO TERRORIST ATTACK

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today for the first time in 2016. On January 15, exactly 10 days ago, six of our own, six wonderful people from my region were tragically killed in a terrorist attack in Burkina Faso. We condemn that attack in the strongest possible way.

They lost their lives in an unspeakably violent and barbaric attack, but we can speak their names. Suzanne Bernier, Louis Chabot, Maude Carrier, Charlelie Carrier, Yves Carrier, and Gladys Chamberland embodied humanity's best qualities; they were dedicated and generous, with a zest for life. Unfortunately, they met the worst of humanity on their life's journey.

I would like to extend my sincere condolences to the victims' families, and I invite all of my colleagues in the House to honour the lives of these exceptional men and women and join me in keeping them in our thoughts and prayers.

* * *

[English]

SHOOTING AT LA LOCHE

The Speaker: I now invite the House to rise and observe a moment of silence for the victims of La Loche, Saskatchewan.

[A moment of silence observed]

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, Canadians were shocked and saddened by the news from La Loche, in Saskatchewan.

Oral Questions

● (1420)

[English]

Could the Prime Minister update the House on any new situation with the issues that happened in La Loche?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for her heartfelt words and indeed add to them personally that the entire government and indeed the country stands with the community of La Loche. Our heartfelt condolences go out to the community, to the family members, and we offer all of our support.

The RCMP and victim support services are working hard to make sure that we are giving the kind of support necessary to a community, not just in these difficult days, but in the weeks, months, and indeed years to come.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the Prime Minister was swanning around Switzerland with actors and billionaires, Conservatives were back at home listening to business owners and volunteers and regular Canadians. What we heard from them is that they are increasingly concerned that the Prime Minister has no plan for the economy.

Canadians are worried about their jobs, they are worried about the cost of groceries, and they are worried about their kids' futures. Infrastructure is not going to be enough. What is the Prime Minister's plan to get these people back to work?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for 10 years we have watched Canada not have the kind of growth to create opportunities for Canadians, which is why we were elected on a commitment to create investment in our communities, to create jobs for Canadians. Part of what I was doing in Davos was talking to leaders like Jack Ma of Alibaba and Mary Barra of GM about the challenges they are facing, and to Axel Weber of UBS, to draw in people in investing, from companies like Ubisoft, GE, and Unilever, who are already tremendously invested in Canada. We are working hard every day to create jobs for Canadians.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister went to Switzerland to hang out with the one percent, but he could not actually help running down the people back at home who are working hard every day. The natural resources sector has some of the world's leading technology, scientific innovation, and creativity, but the Prime Minister just does not get it because it is not his world. He just does not care about these jobs.

Our hearts, our thoughts, and our prayers are with the community and with the families and friends of the victims.

Does the Prime Minister understand he is insulting Canadians right across the country when he insults the natural resources sector?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it quite peculiar that the hon. member does not realize that when we talk about the resourcefulness of Canadians, we

include the natural resources sector and the people who work extremely hard to innovate, to create technologies, to build on science, to ensure that while they are working hard we are creating the very best of value to everything we have to offer the world. Resourcefulness is at the heart of everything Canadians do and will continue to be as long as we are in government.

* * *

*[Translation]***THE ECONOMY**

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that we left this government with a \$1.2 billion surplus.

The Liberals cannot even tell us how high their deficit will run and how much they are going to borrow from Canadians to pay for all their promises. They have already broken their promise to limit the deficit to \$10 billion.

Is the Minister of Finance a bad economic manager or, worse, does he just not care about the consequences?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is quite something to hear that party talk about bad economic management.

We were elected on a platform to invest in Canada to ensure a stronger future, create the growth that has been lacking for 10 years now, and create jobs for the middle class and all those who want to join it.

That is what we are going to do. We are working hard every day to provide Canadians with job prospects and that is what we will keep doing with our budget.

* * *

*[English]***NATURAL RESOURCES**

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, maybe the Prime Minister should stop using his cell phone for selfies with Leo DiCaprio and pick it up and call Denis Coderre and fight for natural resources. There are almost 100,000 people out of work in this sector.

Does the Prime Minister understand that his lack of leadership on this issue is creating divisions in the country?

● (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again it is interesting that the members opposite are criticizing us for not getting done in 10 weeks what they were unable to do in 10 years.

We are working very hard right across the country with municipal leaders and with provincial leaders to ensure we are creating the social licence, the oversight, the environmental responsibility, and the partnership with communities to get our resources to market in a responsible way, because that is what it takes in the 21st century.

*Oral Questions***INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the trans-Pacific partnership was negotiated in secret during the final days of the Conservative government. Now, after campaign promises of a more open government with real consultations, the Liberals say they will sign the Conservative-negotiated trade deal with absolutely no changes.

TPP would kill 58,000 Canadian jobs, weaken supply management, hurt our auto sector, and put Canadian innovators at a competitive disadvantage.

Why is the Prime Minister signing this bad Conservative trade deal without the consultations he promised?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question because it allows me to set something absolutely straight.

We were elected on a commitment to consult with Canadians and indeed to consult with the House of Commons before a decision was made on the trans-Pacific partnership. Indeed, not signing in the upcoming step would mean that we decided, without consulting with Parliament, not to go forward with the TPP.

Of course, we are open to consulting with Canadians and consulting with Parliament, and that is the step that brings us toward ratification or not. That is what it is all about, and that is our commitment.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals decided to sign the very controversial trans-Pacific partnership with no changes, but there have been no consultations.

Does the Prime Minister really think that people will fall for this? Does he think they will not realize that this is spin-doctoring and that he has no intention of changing a single thing? This will kill tens of thousands of good manufacturing sector jobs. It looks like the only factory that will keep operating at full capacity in Canada is the one that spits out the Prime Minister's platitudes, hollow words and clichés.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that if we are serious about wanting to consult Canadians and members of Parliament, which we are, we have to sign next week so that we can hold those consultations. If we adopted the NDP's approach and decided not to sign next week, that would mean not consulting people or analyzing whether this is a good agreement for Canadians. That is not what we are going to do. We will be accountable, which is what Canadians asked us to be when they elected us.

* * *

TAXATION

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in bad economic times, those who have the least suffer the most. In the upcoming budget, choices will have to be made. Helping families and fighting inequality must be a priority.

The parliamentary budget officer has confirmed that the Liberal tax plan primarily helps the wealthy and that most Canadians,

including the lowest-paid workers, will get absolutely nothing from the Liberal plan.

Will the Prime Minister accept the NDP's proposal, which the parliamentary budget officer—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the Liberal Party's proposal, which will be central to our budget and involves giving a new family allowance to Canadian families. This will put more money in the pockets of nine out of 10 families. The NDP criticized this proposal during the election campaign, but we want to put more money in the pockets of Canadians who really need it, and that is exactly what we are going to do with the family allowance for Canadians.

* * *

● (1430)

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what the Prime Minister just said is false, according to the parliamentary budget officer's findings last week.

[*English*]

Last year, while sitting on the board of governors of Carleton University, Michael Wernick said that a group of peaceful students protesting an increase in tuition fees had “no place in a lawful democratic society”, and then he likened them to “Brownshirts and Maoists”.

The Prime Minister just appointed the same Mr. Wernick to be the Clerk of the Privy Council, the highest position in Canada's civil service.

Will the Prime Minister ask his new Clerk of the Privy Council to apologize for these totally unacceptable remarks?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very pleased to have Michael Wernick as the new Clerk of the Privy Council.

Mr. Wernick has had a long career in the public service. We look forward to working with him to renew the professional and non-partisan public service.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over 100,000 jobs now have been lost in Alberta. Housing values are dropping. People are desperate.

Anyone who thinks this is only an Alberta problem is sadly mistaken, and now the mayor of Montreal has come out opposing energy east.

Where was the Prime Minister? He was in Davos being star-struck by Hollywood actors.

If the Prime Minister will not show his leadership, will one Liberal member of Parliament from Alberta, one of the four, stand up for western Canadian jobs?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a proud western Canadian, I will stand up for jobs in Alberta, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland.

If this were question and answer period, I would ask opposition members how many major pipelines they built in 10 years. The answer would be zero.

The reason they did not build major pipelines is that their process did not have the public confidence of Canadians.

We are talking to Canadians now, and what comes after these consultations will be Canadians' confidence in delivering these resources to market in a sustainable way.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a lesson to a new minister: never ask a question to which he does not know the answer. In fact, our government saw four major pipelines built across Canada, two of the pipelines to the U.S., with approximately 1.25 million barrels of oil per day flowing safely and responsibly to market. That is what our government did on this side of the House, and that is a fact.

We want to see more pipelines built. They create jobs and investment.

Will the Prime Minister pick up the phone, call his friend the mayor of Montreal, and tell him to smarten up and start standing up for Canadians jobs?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the major obligations of the Government of Canada is to make sure our resources end up at tidewater responsibly, and to do that we have to have processes that have the confidence of Canadians.

If we had had the confidence of Canadians, these major pipelines might have been built a long time ago, but there is none of that.

However, after we get through with a consultation process that has substance, includes indigenous peoples, and understands environmental issues, we will have a better chance than that government had.

* * *

[Translation]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, the mayor of Montreal and the metropolitan community announced that they were against the energy east project. That is bad news for the Canadian economy. We need this project for Canada's economy and for every one of Canada's natural resource sectors.

What did the Prime Minister do about this while he was in Davos? Between selfies, he showed total disrespect for our natural resources industry. It is insulting and unworthy of a Prime Minister.

Can the Prime Minister call his old friend, Denis Coderre, the mayor of Montreal, and tell him that energy east is a good project for all Canadians, all Montrealers, and all Quebecers?

[English]

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to consult with Canadians in Winnipeg and in Halifax, and in two weeks in Vancouver.

My first trip outside of Ottawa was to Calgary, where I had an excellent conversation with industry leaders who had just come to the realization that if we are to determine the best way of getting our resources to market, we will need government, environmentalists, indigenous leaders, and industry.

If we are not able to accomplish that, we will have the record about which the people across should not be very boastful.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government seems to forget that the pipeline is the safest and most environmentally friendly way to transport oil. It is important, and it is part of the equation. We know that it is very important to Quebec's economy. We are talking about 3,000 jobs and economic spinoffs of more than \$1 billion. Quebec's economy and Canada's economy need this project.

When will the Prime Minister take his position seriously? When will the Prime Minister take responsibility and call the mayor of Montreal?

• (1435)

[English]

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are aware of the importance of the resource economy to Canada. We know that 20% of our country's GDP is embedded in the natural resource sector. We are committed to developing this sector in a responsible way because we understand that tens of thousands of people are now suffering because of low commodity prices, not only in Alberta and Saskatchewan but in New Brunswick as well. We understand the importance of developing the sector responsibly.

We also understand that the consequence of this downturn has a real impact on people. We understand that and we recognize it—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle.

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have not yet brought in one new program to create even a single job. I know of a shovel-ready, massive stimulus project that would create thousands of new jobs all across this country and would not cost taxpayers a cent. It is energy east.

We know the Liberals have a habit of saying different things in different parts of the country, so will the regional minister for Saskatchewan assure the House that he clearly supports the energy east project? Will he stand today and denounce the Liberal mayor of Montreal's divisive statements?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand that the premier of Saskatchewan has actually quoted the Prime Minister on this matter. We understand that to develop our resources responsibly—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Oral Questions

The Speaker: Colleagues, let us get off to a good start. Let us restrain ourselves. I know we are excited to be back in the House. It is nice to see you all, I must say, but let us restrain ourselves and let each side have its turn and listen carefully.

The hon. Minister of Natural Resources has the floor.

Hon. Jim Carr: Mr. Speaker, Canadians want to find a responsible way to move these resources to international markets. They want to determine the safest, most economically advantageous and environmentally responsible way of moving them. The only way that these resources will move across the country is if the people of Canada have public confidence in the decisions that got us there. That is our commitment. That is what we intend to do.

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the thousands of people in my province employed in the energy sector want to hear from the Saskatchewan minister. The member for Wascana has a habit of voting against his own constituents instead of listening to the people back home in his riding. He voted to keep the wasteful gun registry. He jailed farmers under the Wheat Board, and he stayed silent while his Prime Minister killed the northern gateway.

It is never too late to kick the habit. Will he stand today, denounce the divisive statements of the Liberal mayor of Montreal, and stand up for Saskatchewan's energy sector?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would not mind having the member's voting record: the number of people who have voted for him over these last 27 years. I am sure one of the many reasons they vote for him is that he listens to them and he is responsive to what they have to say.

This government will be responsive to what Canadians tell us about moving these resources to market responsibly. That is the way we develop public confidence, and that is exactly what we are doing.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today we are in mourning and we offer our sincere condolences to the community of La Loche.

We must do more, though. Too many young people in our northern communities are growing up without hope, and they need support. The Conservatives blithely made cuts to health care services. Now, Health Canada is regularly turning down requests for mental health services for first nations, even though these services are available to other Canadians.

Will the minister put an end to this discrimination and finally help those who need these services?

• (1440)

[English]

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to this question, although obviously it is under tremendously tragic circumstances.

I want to say first of all how deeply I grieve with all Canadians for the tragedy that took place in La Loche. Immediately upon hearing the news, I spoke to the folks at the First Nations and Inuit Health

Branch to ensure that they were sending crisis workers to the community, and they did so immediately. I have been in touch on a daily basis with the folks in Saskatchewan. I have committed to people in that community that the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch will continue to provide support for mental health needs in the community in the days and months to come.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know I speak for members of all parties when I express grief for the tragedy in La Loche. However, condolences are not enough. Parliament must take action, because all too often the young people feel left alone, whether it is a suicide and violence in La Loche, or the 600 young people who gave up hope in a Mushkegowuk territory and tried to kill themselves since 2009.

My question is for the health minister. Her department routinely rejects requests for counselling services for mental health for indigenous youth. What steps will she take to guarantee that practice will end and will not continue, not just in the days and weeks ahead but in the years to come?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the matter of mental health needs in first nations and other indigenous communities is a pressing matter that I will pay full attention to. I agree with the member that up until now there have been inadequate resources and serious gaps in terms of the health outcomes and the opportunities that first nations and Inuit children have to access these resources. We will do everything in our power to make some changes in that area, and I will work in the months and years to come to make it so.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what a difference six months makes. In July, Canada was hosting an anti-ISIS meeting in Quebec City, and now we were not even invited to the anti-ISIS meeting in Paris. The Liberals' incoherent and indecisive messaging has diminished Canada's reputation on the world stage.

When will the Prime Minister provide Canadians and our allies with a detailed strategy to defeat ISIS, and will he leave our CF-18s in the fight?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, meeting with our coalition partners is extremely important. That is why in my first two weeks of taking on my mandate I hosted the Halifax security conference, where I got to meet with my counterparts from all over the world.

Oral Questions

More important, meeting with political leaders is actually to get the ground truth on the ground. That is why I went to the region twice within two months. That is how serious we take this mission.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians and her allies have grown tired of the Liberals' incoherent messaging and lack of a concrete plan to defeat ISIS. That is why we were not invited to the anti-ISIS meeting in Paris last week.

When the Minister of National Defence was first asked why he was not attending the meeting, he used his busy schedule as an excuse. Later his office confirmed that he was never even invited. When will the minister apologize for intentionally misleading Canadians?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the last two years, Canadians have not actually attended this meeting. I attended a meeting with my coalition partners, I got to meet with Defence Secretary Fallon in London, and I got to meet with my counterparts in many different countries.

More important, Canadians expect us to be responsible. That is why I am taking the time to ensure that we get this right, to ensure that we take the fight to this horrible enemy, and to ensure that we not only do it from a military manner, but also to bring in the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of International Development so we get this mission right.

* * *

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the families of the victims of the terrorist attack in Burkina Faso found out through the media that their loved ones had died. It was not until 48 hours after the attack, after the official opposition intervened, that they finally got a call from the government.

Since the attacks, we have not seen any compassion from the Prime Minister. His call to the husband of one of the victims was not worthy of a prime minister. The mother of another victim even said, and I quote, "I'm ashamed of my Prime Minister."

How does the Prime Minister justify his attitude towards the families of these victims and his government's bungling?

• (1445)

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is profoundly moved by the victims' suffering, and the Prime Minister is as well.

I want to thank the staff at our international emergency operations centre and the on-site staff in Burkina Faso, who worked heroically to help the victims' families.

I can assure the House that the victims' families will continue to receive full consular assistance, including help to bring the bodies back home. We owe them that. They have suffered a horrible tragedy, and our hearts go out to them.

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the recent attacks in which seven Canadians lost their lives were terrorist attacks. Reality is catching up with the Prime Minister. He

has to realize that we are not bystanders and that the terrorist threat is real.

Canada should not be on the sidelines when it comes to the international coalition. Canada must keep up its air strikes in order to root out terrorism. Training and humanitarian assistance are not enough to deal with these terrorists.

Can the Prime Minister reassure Canadians and tell them that we will continue to have an important role in the fight against ISIS?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Armed Forces and the air force are clearly doing an important job.

However, we believe that by reworking its approach Canada will be an even stronger and effective combatant in the fight against this horrible terrorist group. In fact, coalition members frequently ask us to provide training and to do more in other important areas to counter terrorism. We will do so together with the Iraqis and all our allies on the ground, with courage and determination.

* * *

[English]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada's veterans have suffered cuts to benefits, the closure of front-line offices and worse. Suicide rates have climbed, homelessness has increased, and yet veterans still face unacceptable waits for mental health services. The report on veterans' treatment, buried by the previous government, is still missing in action.

Our veterans need help today. They should not have to wait for the minister to get around to reopening offices. When will all veterans finally get the mental health and other services they need?

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Veterans Affairs is working hard to rectify many of the situations that she has put forward. We are going to be reopening offices. We are hiring more front-line staff. We are going to get a handle on our mental health issues. We are ensuring that our front-line staff is delivering the services in a timely manner for our men and women who have fought for this nation.

I can assure the member that we are working hard and we will see a better Veterans Affairs going forward than the one we saw under the former government.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Quebec has made it legal to charge ancillary fees for publicly insured health care services, even though this practice violates the Canada Health Act. It is unacceptable for a person's access to health care to be determined by the size of his wallet. I wrote to the minister in November to inform her of this situation, but I have still not received an answer.

What is the minister going to do to protect the accessibility of the public health care system across the country?

[English]

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have just met with my provincial and territorial colleagues and have reiterated to them that our government fully supports the principles of the Canada Health Act, which are meant to ensure that all Canadians have reasonable access to medically necessary care based upon need and not based upon the ability to pay.

I am committed to working with my provincial and territorial colleagues to uphold the Canada Health Act. I will continue to discuss this with my provincial and territorial colleagues in the months to come.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. T.J. Harvey (Tobique—Mactaquac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, having grown up in a large farming household, with all the opportunities and challenges that it provides, I have a strong place in my heart for this country's agricultural sector. I recently had the distinct pleasure of speaking with a cattle producer in my riding who operates a large feedlot. His biggest concern was the discriminatory U.S. country of origin labelling policy and its effects on his operation.

A WTO arbitrator recently ruled that Canada could levy more than \$1 billion in tariffs in retaliation for the discriminatory response.

Would the Minister of International Trade update the House on this recent development regarding this situation?

● (1450)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his hard work. I, too, am a daughter and a granddaughter of farmers and ranchers. I am delighted to report to the House that on December 18, the U.S. Congress repealed this discriminatory legislation.

We have heard a lot about western jobs today, but I am really—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Battlefords—Lloydminster.

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just like COOL, the heavy lifting has been done on TPP. Canadian business may welcome the minister's statement in the last couple of days. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Canadian Council of Chief Executives, Canadian Agri-food Trade Alliance and Canadian manufacturers have been telling the minister to ratify TPP to maintain our strong portion of global supply chains.

If she really thinks she is Canada's chief marketing officer, when will she listen to these stakeholders and ratify this important agreement?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I hope the hon. member for Battlefords—Lloydminster will join with me in supporting and cheering the repeal of COOL.

When it comes to TPP, the former government negotiated the deal in secret without consulting with Canadians. We are keeping our promise to listen to Canadians and to consult on this deal. Since being sworn in, I have been part of more than 70 consultations on this issue. Today, I wrote a letter to my colleagues in the House and in the Senate asking committees to study it.

The Conservatives did not—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Battlefords—Lloydminster.

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all welcome the opportunity to study this again. Of course, the former chair of the trade committee for the House of Commons had hearings while that negotiation was going on.

We welcome the minister's epiphany on the road from Davos to signing the TPP, but there is also a meeting of TPP ministers the day before that signing that is also very important as they study prospective new partners in the TPP. Has she been invited to that meeting, or have we been left out just like we were in Paris?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course I will be at that meeting in New Zealand. I am pleased to report to the House that I met with many of the TPP ministers at the WTO ministerial, which was held at Davos.

We are working very closely with the other TPP countries and consulting with Canadians. This is an important issue and we are working hard on it.

* * *

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, by appointing Mary Jean McFall as the chief of staff, the Minister of Agriculture is disregarding rules that were intended to protect Canadians from corruption. Ms. McFall's family is the owner of the largest egg producing corporation and she herself was listed as being the owner of \$140 million worth of egg quota in 2010.

Oral Questions

The minister makes decisions with regard to this family business on a regular basis. How can he justify her hiring and how can he justify this blatant conflict of interest?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my chief of staff has a strong agricultural background and is a pillar of her community. From day one in my office she was subject to the Conflict of Interest Act and any recommendations from the Ethics Commissioner will be followed in detail.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, following her defeat as a Liberal Party candidate, Mary Jean McFall was appointed to be the chief of staff to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. Ms. McFall is also a member of the family that owns Burnbrae Farms. In 2010, federal regulations showed that she owned nearly 140 million dollars' worth of egg quota under supply management.

Since the Minister of Agriculture has to deal with supply management issues every day, why does he think it is acceptable for his chief of staff to have a \$140-million personal interest in a company that is directly connected to supply management?

[English]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important for my chief of staff to have a strong agricultural background. As I said before, she is subject to the Conflict of Interest Act. Also, any recommendations provided by the non-partisan Ethics Commissioner will be followed.

* * *

• (1455)

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a new study reveals the TPP will cost 58,000 jobs and worsen income inequality. Many of the jobs at risk are in my community and others like it throughout southern Ontario. In spite of the reality for these families, the minister tries to hide behind technicalities, but it is simple. If she does not support the deal, why would she sign it? Therefore, will the minister stand up for Canadian jobs, or will she sign the Conservative's bad deal?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the New Democrats oppose this deal without reading it and without consulting with Canadians. We promised during the campaign to consult with Canadians and that is what we are doing. That is why since being sworn in as minister, I have already had more than 70 meetings about the TPP. That is why, today, I have written to my colleagues in the House and asked that our trade committee study the deal carefully.

The NDP knows, notwithstanding the posturing we have heard today, that signing and ratifying are very different things, and in trade deals technicalities really do matter.

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on December 10, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship told the House that he would reinstate the moratorium on deporting citizens of Zimbabwe and Haiti, but we checked, and the department has received no such instructions.

When will the minister act on his statement here in the House and reinstate the moratorium? Does he understand how excruciating this is for the people who fear deportation?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have spoken with my Quebec counterpart. We made a firm decision to allow these people to stay in Canada. That is what we decided, and that is what will happen.

* * *

[English]

THE SENATE

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is trying to dress up the same old Senate appointment system in new clothing.

I do not know exactly who it thinks it is fooling. It has announced an unelected, unaccountable board that will be making secret recommendations for an unelected Senate, and the Prime Minister will just continue to appoint whomever he pleases.

Why do the Liberals support the same old, unelected, unaccountable Senate?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians mandated us to provide real change to the Senate without opening up the Constitution.

I was pleased to announce at the beginning of December, with the House leader, the implementation of a new merit-based assessment process that is public, made available online. In a few months, for the first time ever, Canadians will be able to apply to become senators. That is real change.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that minister has a whole different definition of public than the rest of us.

The members of the Senate appointment board were chosen by the Prime Minister at his absolute discretion, in secret. Their suggestions are reviewed by the Prime Minister in secret. The names of unsuccessful candidates remain secret. The reasons why the Prime Minister will choose one candidate over another will be a secret.

Will a pattern develop as to who is being passed over by the Prime Minister? Perhaps, but that will be a secret. In fact, it appears it will remain a secret whether the Prime Minister even uses the list or casts it aside entirely.

My question is as follows. Why are these the two values at the centre of this ostensibly new process: number one, absolute secrecy; and number two, absolute authority to do whatever he wants on the part of the Prime Minister?

Oral Questions

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the advisory board will be guided by a public, merit-based criteria that will allow it to assess the nominees according to those rules.

For the first time we have opened the doors and we are reaching out to the provinces with the vacancies to be filled. Again, that is real change. It is the kind of historic change that we have not seen in the Senate for some time. We are confident it will enhance the public's confidence in this important democratic institution.

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DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the goals are public but everything the Prime Minister does with them is a secret.

On the subject of electoral reform, in the past two months we have seen a tsunami of editorials across the country calling for a referendum on electoral reform.

The Globe and Mail summarizes this near-unanimity by stating that electoral reform would be “the biggest ever change in Canadian democracy. It will change how members of Parliament are elected, how governments are formed and who forms them”.

The *Globe's* conclusion was categorical: “When it comes to a change this big and this fundamental to our democracy, the only people qualified to decide are the people themselves. This has to go to a referendum.”

Is *The Globe and Mail* not right?

• (1500)

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is committed to convening a parliamentary committee to study this and to consult broadly with Canadians.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind the members of this House that 100 years ago this week, the women of Manitoba secured the right to vote for women, and that is worthy of celebration.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, the world witnessed a horrendous terrorist attack in Jakarta, Indonesia, that took the life of one Canadian and another attack in Burkina Faso that claimed the lives of six Canadians. Our thoughts are with the victims' families.

Can the government tell the House what it is doing to support the investigations?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all Canadians are appalled by the horrendous attacks in Jakarta and Ouagadougou. The families of the Canadian victims can count on our full humanitarian and consular assistance, including repatriation of remains.

I am personally deeply aggrieved by the sudden end to the lives of the teachers who went to Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso to help a school. Let us carry on the victims' work by fighting terrorism wherever it rears its head and by doing good wherever it is needed.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week leaders from the Jewish, Sikh, and Muslim communities wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs indicating their strong support for the Office of Religious Freedom. They wrote that the office “has proven an effective advocate...raising our country's profile as a world leader in human rights promotion on the international stage.” This office is bringing people together internationally and here at home.

Will the minister commit today to keeping this vital office open?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, freedom of religion is something that we will fight for very strongly. The way we will do it is something that the government is considering. All rights must be supported together. If we isolate them, they will be weaker; if we bring them together, they will be stronger. It is the approach that government will take in order to protect freedom of religion and all human rights everywhere that Canada needs to be.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the former Conservative government slashed environmental protections and gutted pipeline reviews, leaving out first nations on issues like climate change and cutting public participation. Last fall, the Liberals promised to reverse the damage and put in place a new review process for all pipelines, including existing proposals, but, as I speak, the Kinder Morgan and energy east reviews are continuing under the Conservatives' broken rules.

Will the minister stop pushing through reviews that come from the old discredited government and make good on the Liberals' election promise to establish new, stronger rules?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have said all along that there will be a transitional process that will govern those major projects that are currently under review. That process will embody the principles that will be necessary if we are going to get approval of these very important projects for Alberta, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland. In an odd way, we are taking the member's advice.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to represent the people of Mississauga—Erin Mills in the House today. In my riding and across the country, Canadians have shown their willingness to help those who suffer and find themselves displaced from their homes and their countries. People have responded more than positively to the government's commitment to take in Syrian refugees.

Oral Questions

Can the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship update the House on the number of Syrian refugees who have arrived on Canadian soil?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to thank my colleague for all of her hard work in this area. I am also pleased to tell the House that, as of today, 13,800 Syrian refugees will have arrived in Canada.

However, more important than the numbers, we have done this well, the world has noticed, and Canadians can take great pride in welcoming 25,000 people from a vicious civil war into our wonderful country of Canada.

* * *

• (1505)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for months now, we have seen a growing wave of deadly attacks against Israelis by Palestinians, driven by the incitement of their leaders. Hamas and the Palestinian Authority make it clear they refuse to accept Israel's right to exist. Leaders of both entities have spoken openly of a third intifada, an uprising against Israel.

Can the Minister of Foreign Affairs explain his outrageously vague expression of concern yesterday and tell the House why he will not explicitly condemn the incitement?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Hamas was listed as a terrorist group in 2002 by a Liberal government. Canada will always fight terrorism and will never do anything other than condemn Hamas terrorism.

What we also want for our friend Israel is security, and for that we need a two-state solution. Any unilateral gestures, such as trying to recognize Palestine in a unilateral way instead of by the negotiations, or the settlements, are not a help for peace.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, with all this chatter about Davos, I wonder if everyone has forgotten that the previous Prime Minister used that foreign and lofty perch to cut the retirement benefits of Canadians. It may have had something to do with his earlier retirement.

However, my question is to the Minister of Fisheries.

Right now there is an abandoned derelict vessel of great concern locally. I think that Canadians across this country are concerned about derelict vessels. The *Kathryn Spirit* was abandoned by its Mexican owners and no one is making sure that the toxic material within does not leak into Lac Saint-Louis.

Could the Minister of Fisheries give us an update please?

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think one of the main priorities and mandates of the Canadian Coast Guard is to protect our marine environment.

I want to take this opportunity to assure the member, all members of this House, and the public that the *Kathryn Spirit* is not discharging any pollutants. In fact, the Quebec ministry of environment has confirmed that there is no risk of contamination.

We will continue to work with our partners to mitigate any risks that fall within our jurisdiction.

* * *

[Translation]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as opposition to TransCanada's energy east pipeline project grows, mayors in and premiers of western provinces are attacking Quebec, calling this pipeline Quebec's contribution to the Canadian economy and threatening that they will demand that Quebec pay back equalization payments. They are acting as though they own Quebec, in the name of Canadian unity.

Quebec has different values and has made different environmental choices. It is up to us Quebecers to decide what happens in our own backyard.

Will the Prime Minister respect Quebecers' right to say no to having a pipeline go through their national territory?

[English]

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are building the Canadian economy, and the Canadian economy will be built with large projects if they have the public confidence of Canadians. They have not had the public confidence of Canadians, which is why we are committed to modernizing the National Energy Board, and that modernization will proceed with a set of principles. The set of principles will include meaningful consultation with indigenous Canadians, a respect for the environment in all decisions, and an understanding that moving these resources to—

The Speaker: Order please.

The hon. member for Montcalm.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Montreal metropolitan community tabled its report based on public consultations held last fall regarding TransCanada's energy east pipeline; 82 municipalities representing four million Quebecers are against this pipeline project.

Since this project clearly does not meet the social licence requirement set by the Prime Minister, will he listen to the representatives of some four million Quebecers and honour his election promise to not go ahead with this pipeline?

• (1510)

[English]

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, major projects will proceed if Canadians feel that they have been heard and if Canadians feel as if the process enjoys their confidence. It is possible in Canada to look at environmental protection and economic development at the same time. That is the commitment of this government, and that is what we intend to do.

*Routine Proceedings***BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

[Translation]

TERRORIST ATTACKS IN INDONESIA AND BURKINA FASO

The Speaker: I would now invite all members to rise for a moment of silence in memory of the victims of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, and Jakarta, Indonesia.

[A moment of silence observed]

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[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education and Minister responsible for Youth for the Province of Nova Scotia, the Honourable Kelly Regan.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

PERFORMANCE REPORTS 2014-15

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of 93 departments and agencies, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the departmental performance reports for the 2014-15 fiscal year.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

● (1515)

[English]

The Speaker: Order, please. I want to encourage members to take their discussions outside into the lobbies or behind the curtains. We would like to proceed with routine proceedings. I invite the whips to assist me with this.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaties entitled Amendments to Annex I of the International Convention Against Doping in Sport, notified on September 22, 2015; and Amendments to Annex II of the International Convention Against Doping in Sport, notified on December 15, 2015.

An explanatory memorandum is included in each.

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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 12 petitions.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to inform colleagues that I will be designating Thursday, January 28, as the first allotted day in the winter supply period. I know my colleagues in the Conservative Party are looking forward very much to that day.

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PETITIONS**IMPAIRED DRIVING**

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to present a petition representing thousands of Canadians. The petition sadly highlights the fact that 22-year-old Cassandra Kaulius was killed by a drunk driver. A group of people who have lost loved ones through impaired driving, called Families for Justice, believes that impaired driving laws in Canada are much too lenient. The petitioners therefore call for new mandatory minimum sentencing for people who have been convicted of vehicular homicide.

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I am pleased to present a petition collected in my riding of Etobicoke Centre. The petitioners are concerned by the alarming increase in the number of tank cars transporting crude oil and other hazardous materials by rail through Canadian communities, including Etobicoke.

My constituents urge the adoption of enhanced tank car standards and more robust safety oversights, and they push for industry to invest in ways to reduce the volatility of crude and the requirement for railways and shippers to carry sufficient insurance to cover costs of derailment and spills in populated urban centres.

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QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following question will be answered today: No. 17.

Routine Proceedings

[Text]

Question No. 17—**Mr. Kennedy Stewart:**

With regard to the mandate letter of the Minister of Natural Resources, the National Energy Board (NEB) review process, and Kinder Morgan's current application to expand the Trans Mountain pipeline: (a) what "new, fair processes" will Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain application be subject in order to: (i) "restore robust oversight and thorough environmental assessments", (ii) "ensure that decisions are based on science, facts, and evidence", (iii) ensure that decisions "serve the public's interest", (iv) "provide ways for Canadians to express their views", (v) provide "opportunities for experts to meaningfully participate", (vi) "enhance the engagement of indigenous groups in reviewing and monitoring major resource development projects", (vii) "require pipeline proponents to choose the best technologies available to reduce environmental impacts"; (b) will the deadline for the NEB to issue its recommendations on Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain application be extended as a result; (c) will Canadians who were previously rejected by the NEB to be public commentators or intervenors on Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain application be given an opportunity to re-apply; (d) will the new review process take into account the potential climate change impacts of Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline expansion; (e) will the new review process take into account the economic consequences of the recent decrease in oil prices on Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline expansion; (f) will the new review process maintain the Minister's power under the National Energy Board Act to overrule the final recommendations of the NEB as to whether Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline expansion should be approved and the terms and conditions that would apply to the project?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a)(i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi), and (vii), the Minister of Natural Resources' mandate letter outlines the government's intent to introduce a new environmental assessment process to restore public trust. As noted in the question, the objectives are to restore robust oversight and thorough environmental assessments of areas under federal jurisdiction, while also working with provinces and territories to avoid duplication; to ensure that decisions are based on science, facts, and evidence, and serve the public's interest; to provide ways for Canadians to express their views and opportunities for experts to meaningfully participate, including provisions to enhance the engagement of indigenous groups in reviewing and monitoring major resource development projects; and to require project proponents to choose the best technologies available to reduce environmental impacts.

It will take some time to engage Canadians and indigenous peoples and fully implement changes to the system. In the interim, projects currently under review, including the Trans Mountain expansion project, must continue pursuant to existing legislation.

The government is developing a transition strategy for projects currently under review to provide some certainty to industry through these changes. However, current projects being considered by the NEB will not have to go back to square one. An announcement will be made in the near future regarding how the environmental process for these and other projects will evolve.

With regard to (b), (c), (d), (e), and (f), the government is developing a transition strategy for projects currently under review to provide some certainty to industry through these changes. However, current projects being considered by the NEB will not have to go back to square one. An announcement will be made in the near future regarding how the environmental process for these and other projects will evolve.

• (1520)

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURN

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, furthermore, if Questions Nos. 1-16 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 1—**Ms. Jenny Kwan:**

With regard to refugee processing in Canada: (a) how many government-assisted Syrian refugees have been resettled in Canada since January 1, 2015, broken down by (i) total, (ii) month; (b) how many applications for private sponsorship of Syrian refugees have been received since July 2013, broken down by (i) total, (ii) year; (c) how many applications for privately-sponsored Syrian refugees have been received since January 1, 2015, broken down by month; (d) how many applications for privately-sponsored Syrian refugees have been accepted since January 1, 2015, broken down by (i) total, (ii) month; (e) how many privately-sponsored Syrian refugees have arrived in Canada since January 1, 2015, broken down by (i) total, (ii) month; (f) what was the average processing time in 2014 for applications for privately-sponsored Syrian refugees; (g) what was the average processing time in 2015 for applications for privately-sponsored Syrian refugees, broken down by month; (h) how many Syrian refugees have made inland claims for refugee status at the Immigration and Refugee Board since July 2013, broken down by (i) total, (ii) year, (iii) month; (i) how many Syrian refugees have received a positive decision at the Immigration and Refugee Board since July 2013, broken down by (i) total, (ii) year, (iii) month; (j) how many applications for private sponsorship of Syrian refugees are currently waiting to be processed; (k) what criteria has the government enumerated for prioritizing resettlement on the basis of religion or ethnicity; (l) what instructions have been given to processing officers regarding religion or ethnicity of Syrian refugees; (m) what is the projected budget for the government's resettling of 25 000 government-assisted Syrian refugees, broken down by (i) program, (ii) year; (n) what is the projected budget for the processing and transport of privately-sponsored Syrian refugees, broken down by (i) program, (ii) year; (o) over the next two years, how many Syrian refugees does the government plan to resettle each year, broken down by (i) government-assisted refugees, (ii) privately-sponsored refugees; (p) how many government-assisted Iraqi refugees have been resettled in Canada since January 1, 2015, broken down by (i) total, (ii) month; (q) how many applications for private sponsorship of Iraqi refugees have been received since July 2013, broken down by (i) total, (ii) year; (r) how many applications for privately-sponsored Iraqi refugees have been received since January 1, 2015 broken down by month; (s) how many applications for privately-sponsored Iraqi refugees have been accepted since January 1, 2015, broken down by (i) total, (ii) month; (t) how many privately-sponsored Iraqi refugees have arrived in Canada since January 1, 2015, broken down by (i) total, (ii) month; (u) how many Iraqi refugees have made inland claims for refugee status at the Immigration and Refugee Board since July 2013, broken down by (i) total, (ii) year, (iii) month; (v) how many Iraqi refugees have received a positive decision at the Immigration and Refugee Board since July 2013, broken down by (i) total, (ii) year, (iii) month; (w) how many applications for private sponsorship of Iraqi refugees are currently waiting to be processed; (x) over the next two years, how many Iraqi refugees does the government plan to resettle each year, broken down by (i) government-assisted, (ii) privately-sponsored; (y) what was the average processing time for all refugee applications in 2014 and 2015, broken down by (i) year, (ii) processing centre, (iii) government-assisted refugees, (iv) privately-sponsored refugees; (z) how many refugees has Canada accepted in 2013 and 2014, broken down by (i) country of origin, (ii) year; and (aa) how many total refugees does Canada intend to resettle in 2016?

Routine Proceedings

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2—Ms. Jenny Kwan:

With regard to the International Mobility Program: (a) how many applications were received for work permits in 2015, broken down by (i) total, (ii) month; (b) how many applications for work permits were approved in 2015, broken down by (i) total, (ii) month; (c) how many employers using the International Mobility Program have been subject to an investigation for compliance in 2015, broken down by (i) month, (ii) province; (d) how many investigations have revealed non-compliance by employers, broken down by (i) month, (ii) issues identified, (iii) industry of the employer; (e) how many employers have had to take steps to be considered compliant following an investigation, broken down by (i) month, (ii) type of actions required, (iii) industry of the employer; (f) how many employers have received penalties for non-compliance as a result of an investigation, broken down by (i) month, (ii) type of penalty, (iii) industry of the employer; (g) how many investigations have involved an on-site visit, broken down by month; and (h) how many Citizenship and Immigration Canada staff are currently assigned to conduct investigations for compliance?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 3—Ms. Jenny Kwan:

With regard to applications to Citizenship and Immigration Canada: (a) how many applications for permanent residence are currently waiting to be processed, broken down by (i) total number, (ii) parents and grandparents, (iii) spouse, common-law partner or dependent child, (iv) Federal Skilled Workers pre-2008, (v) Federal Skilled Workers post-2008, (vi) Provincial Nominees, (vii) Investors, (viii) Entrepreneurs, (ix) Start-Up Visa, (x) Self-Employed Persons, (xi) Canadian Experience Class, (xii) Live in Caregivers, (xiii) humanitarian and compassionate; (b) how many applications for citizenship are currently waiting to be processed; (c) how many applications have been received to the Express Entry pool; (d) how many Express Entry applicants have been invited to submit an application for permanent residence; (e) how many draws have there been for Express Entry and what has been the cut-off point for each Express Entry draw; (f) what has been the point cut-off for each Express Entry draw; and (g) how many refugee applications are currently waiting to be processed, not including applications from Syrian refugees?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 4—Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle:

With regard to Employment and Social Development Canada and the Social Security Tribunal: (a) how many appeals are currently waiting to be heard at the Income Security Section (ISS), broken down by (i) total, (ii) Canada Pension Plan retirement pensions and survivors benefits, (iii) Canada Pension Plan Disability benefits, (iv) Old Age Security; (b) how many appeals have been heard by the ISS in 2015, (i) total, broken down by (ii) Canada Pension plan retirement pensions and survivors benefits, (iii) Canada Pension Plan disability benefits, (iv) Old Age Security; (c) how many appeals heard by the ISS were allowed in 2015, (i) total, broken down by (ii) Canada Pension plan retirement pensions and survivors benefits, (iii) Canada Pension Plan disability benefits, and (iv) Old Age Security; (d) how many appeals heard by the ISS were dismissed in 2015, (i) in total, broken down by (ii) Canada Pension plan retirement pensions and survivors benefits, (iii) Canada Pension Plan disability benefits, and (iv) Old Age Security; (e) how many appeals to the ISS were summarily dismissed in 2015, (i) in total, broken down by (ii) Canada Pension plan retirement pensions and survivors benefits, (iii) Canada Pension Plan disability benefits, (iv) Old Age Security; (f) how many appeals at the ISS have been heard in person in 2015, broken down by (i) appeals allowed, (ii) appeals dismissed; (g) how many appeals at the ISS have been heard by teleconference in 2015, broken down by (i) appeals allowed, (ii) appeals dismissed; (h) how many appeals at the ISS have been heard by videoconference in 2015, broken down by (i) appeals allowed, (ii) appeals dismissed; (i) how many appeals at the ISS have been heard in writing in 2015, broken down by (i) appeals allowed, (ii) appeals dismissed; (j) how many members hired in the Employment Insurance Section (EIS) are currently assigned to the ISS; (k) how many income security appeals are currently waiting to be heard by the Appeal Division (AD), (i) total, broken down by (ii) Canada Pension plan retirement pensions and survivors benefits, (iii) Canada Pension Plan disability benefits, (iv) Old Age Security; (l) how many income security appeals have been heard by the AD in 2015, (i) total, broken down by (ii) Canada Pension plan retirement pensions and survivors benefits, (iii) Canada Pension Plan disability benefits, (iv) Old Age Security; (m) how many income security appeals heard by the AD were allowed in 2015, (i) in total, broken down by (ii) Canada Pension plan retirement pensions and survivors benefits, (iii) Canada Pension Plan disability

benefits, and (iv) Old Age Security; (n) how many income security appeals heard by the AD were dismissed in 2015, (i) in total, broken down by (ii) Canada Pension plan retirement pensions and survivors benefits, (iii) Canada Pension Plan disability benefits, and (iv) Old Age Security; (o) how many income security appeals to the AD were summarily dismissed in 2015, (i) in total, broken down by (ii) Canada Pension plan retirement pensions and survivors benefits, (iii) Canada Pension Plan disability benefits, (iv) Old Age Security; (p) how many income security appeals at the AD have been heard in person in 2015, broken down by (i) appeals allowed, (ii) appeals dismissed; (q) how many income security appeals at the AD have been heard in by videoconference in 2015, broken down by (ii) appeals allowed, (iii) appeals dismissed; (r) how many income security appeals at the AD have been heard by teleconference in 2015, broken down by (i) appeals allowed, (ii) appeals dismissed; (s) how many income security appeals at the AD have been heard in writing in 2015, broken down by (i) appeals allowed, (ii) appeals dismissed; (t) how many appeals are currently waiting to be heard at the Employment Insurance Section (EIS); (u) how many appeals have been heard by the EIS in 2015, broken down by (i) total, (ii) month; (v) how many appeals heard by the EIS were allowed in 2015; (w) how many appeals heard by the EIS were dismissed in 2015; (x) how many appeals to the EIS were summarily dismissed in 2015; (y) how many appeals at the EIS have been heard in person 2015, broken down by (i) appeals allowed, (ii) appeals dismissed; (z) how many appeals at the EIS have been heard by videoconference in 2015, broken down by (i) appeals allowed, (ii) appeals dismissed; (aa) how many appeals at the EIS have been heard by teleconference in 2015, broken down by (i) appeals allowed, (ii) appeals dismissed; (bb) how many appeals at the EIS have been heard in writing in 2015, broken down by (i) appeals allowed, (ii) appeals dismissed; (cc) how many EI appeals are currently waiting to be heard by the AD; (dd) how many EI appeals have been heard by the AD in 2015; (ee) how many EI appeals heard by the AD were allowed in 2015; (ff) how many EI appeals heard by the AD were dismissed in 2015; (gg) how many EI appeals to the AD were summarily dismissed in 2015; (hh) how many EI appeals at the AD have been heard in person in 2015, broken down by (i) appeals allowed, (ii) appeals dismissed; (ii) how many EI appeals at the AD have been heard by videoconference in 2015, broken down by (i) appeals allowed, (ii) appeals dismissed; (jj) how many EI appeals at the AD have been heard by teleconference in 2015, broken down by (i) appeals allowed, (ii) appeals dismissed; (kk) how many EI appeals at the AD have been heard in writing in 2015, broken down by (i) appeals allowed, (ii) appeals dismissed; (ll) how many legacy appeals are currently waiting to be heard at the ISS; (mm) how many legacy appeals are currently waiting to be heard at the EIS; (nn) how many legacy income security appeals are currently waiting to be heard at the AD; (oo) how many legacy Employment Insurance appeals are currently waiting to be heard at the AD; (pp) how many requests has the Tribunal received for an expedited hearing due to terminal illness in 2015, broken down by (i) month, (ii) requests granted, (iii) requests not granted; (qq) how many requests has the Tribunal received for an expedited hearing due to financial hardship in 2015, broken down by (i) month, (ii) section, (iii) requests granted, (iv) requests not granted; (rr) when will performance standards for the Tribunal be put in place; (ss) how many casefiles have been reviewed by the special unit created within the department to review backlogged social security appeals; (tt) how many settlements have been offered; (uu) how many settlements have been accepted; (vv) how much has been spent on the special unit within the department; (ww) what is the expected end date for the special unit within the department; (xx) for 2014 and 2015, what is the average amount of time for the Department to reach a decision on an application for Canada Pension Plan Disability benefits, broken down by month; and (yy) for 2014 and 2015, what is the average amount of time for the Department to reach a decision on a reconsideration of an application for Canada Pension Plan Disability benefits, broken down by month?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 5—Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:

With regard to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation: (a) how many long-term operating agreements for social housing units are currently in existence, broken down by province; (b) for each agreement, (i) what is the name of the agreement holder, (ii) when does the agreement expire; and (c) since 1995, how many long-term operating agreements have expired, broken down by year?

(Return tabled)

Routine Proceedings

Question No. 6—Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:

With regard to government funding allocated to the constituency of Hochelaga for each fiscal year from 2004-2005 to 2015-2016: (a) what is the total amount of funding per (i) department, (ii) agency, (iii) all other government bodies, (iv) program; and (b) how many jobs is this funding directly responsible for, broken down by (i) full-time positions, (ii) part-time positions?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 7—Mr. Kennedy Stewart:

With regard to federal funding for scientific research and the mandate letter for the Minister of Science: (a) for each fiscal year since 2005-2006, what was the government's total financial support for "fundamental research to support new discoveries," broken down by department or agency; (b) what performance measures or indicators is the government using to examine and evaluate "options to strengthen the recognition of, and support for, fundamental research to support new discoveries"; (c) what is the complete and detailed list of all research programs or facilities whose federal funding was decreased or eliminated since February 6, 2006; (d) for each research program or facility in (c), (i) was it intramural or extramural, (ii) by what dollar amount was its funding decreased, (iii) what percentage of its total funding did this decrease represent, (iv) on what date(s) was its funding decreased, (v) was it required to close or shut-down as a result; and (e) for each research program or facility in (c), will the current government restore its funding to previous levels?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 8—Mr. Kennedy Stewart:

With regard to Statistics Canada: (a) what is the complete and detailed list of all surveys, data products, tables, and publications whose collection, measurement, or reporting was discontinued between February 6, 2006 and November 4, 2015; and (b) for each item listed in (a), (i) on what date was it first established, (ii) on what date was it discontinued, (iii) what was the rationale for its discontinuation, (iv) by what process was this decision reached, (v) how many Canadians had been accessing its data on an annual basis, (vi) what was the cost-savings from its discontinuation; and (c) will the current government reinstate its collection, measurement, or reporting?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 9—Mr. Kennedy Stewart:

With regard to the National Research Council (NRC): (a) of the \$67 million allocated in Budget 2012 to "support the National Research Council in refocusing on business-led, industry-relevant research," what are the details about the money spent, broken down by (i) fiscal year, (ii) organizational priority, (iii) strategic outcome, (iv) program; (b) of the \$121 million allocated in Budget 2013 to "invest in the National Research Council's strategic focus to help the growth of innovative businesses in Canada," what is the complete and detailed accounting of how this money was spent, broken down by (i) fiscal year, (ii) organizational priority, (iii) strategic outcome, (iv) program; (c) of the \$119.2 million allocated in Budget 2015 to "support the industry-partnered research and development activities of the National Research Council," what is the complete and detailed accounting of how this money was spent, broken down by (i) fiscal year, (ii) organizational priority, (iii) strategic outcome, (iv) program; (d) for each year since 2011, what performance measures or indicators has the government used to track and evaluate the effectiveness of NRC programs; (e) for each performance measure or indicator in (d), what was its target value during each year since 2011, broken down by program; (f) for each performance measure or indicator in (d), what was its actual reported value during each year since 2011, broken down by program; (g) for each year since 2011, what was the NRC's target for staff utilization on programs, comparing total hours worked on projects to total hours paid, broken down by (i) division and (ii) portfolio; (h) for each year since 2011, what was the NRC's actual staff utilization on programs, comparing total hours worked on projects to total hours paid, broken down by (i) division and (ii) portfolio; (i) for each year since 2011, what was the NRC's number of projects delivered on, under or over budget, comparing planned to actual costs, broken down by (i) division and (ii) portfolio; (j) for each year since 2011, what was the NRC's utilization of equipment, facilities, and services, comparing practical capacity to actual use, broken down by (i) division, (ii) portfolio; (k) for each year since 2005, how many peer-reviewed publications have NRC researchers published; (l) for each year since 2005, how many patents have NRC researchers produced; (m) for each year since 2005, what has been the NRC's licensing and royalty revenue from clients; (n) what has

been the annual cost of the NRC's Concierge Service for each year since it was launched; (o) how many small and medium-sized enterprises have accessed the NRC's Concierge Service during each year since it was launched; (p) of the small and medium-sized enterprises in (o), (i) how many have invested in technology deployment as a result of accessing the NRC's Concierge Service, (ii) what has been the dollar value of these investments for each company, and (iii) how much private-sector jobs did these investments create; (q) for each year since 2005, what was the NRC's total expenditures on fundamental or basic research; (r) for each year since 2005, what was the NRC's total number of full-time equivalent staff supporting fundamental or basic research; and (s) what is the current government's position with respect to the reforms undertaken since 2013 to refocus the NRC into an industry-focused, research and technology organization?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 10—Mr. Alistair MacGregor:

With regard to Service Canada, Old Age Security and Canada Pension Plan call centres for 2015, year-to-date: (a) what was the volume of calls, broken down by (i) Canadian region, (ii) province, (iii) month; (b) what was the number of calls that received a high volume message, broken down by (i) Canadian region, (ii) province, (iii) month; (c) what were the Service Level standards achieved for calls answered by an agent, broken down by (i) Canadian region, (ii) province, (iii) month; (d) what were the service standards for call-backs; (e) what were the service standards achieved for call-backs broken down by (i) Canadian region, (ii) province, (iii) month; (f) what was the average number of days for a call-back by an agent, broken down by (i) Canadian region, (ii) province, (iii) month; (g) what was the number and percentage of term employees, and the number and percentage of indeterminate employees, broken down by (i) Canadian region, (ii) province, (iii) month; (h) what is the rate of sick leave use among call centre employees, broken down by month; (i) what is the number of call centre employees on long term disability; and (j) what is the rate of overtime and the number of overtime hours worked by call centre employees, broken down by month?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 11—Mr. Don Davies:

With regard to the Federal Tobacco Control Strategy (FTCS) in fiscal year 2014-2015: (a) what was the budget for the FTCS; (b) how much of that budget was spent within the fiscal year; (c) how much was spent on each of the following components of the FTCS, (i) mass media, (ii) policy and regulatory development, (iii) research, (iv) surveillance, (v) enforcement, (vi) grants and contributions, (vii) programs for Aboriginals of Canada; and (d) were any other activities not listed in (c) funded by the FTCS and, if so, how much was spent on each of these activities?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 12—Mr. Pierre Nantel:

With regard to the Copyright Board of Canada, as of December 10, 2015: (a) how many people are employed by the Board, broken down by Treasury Board classification group; (b) is the working committee on its operations, procedures, and processes, that was tasked with examining possible improvements to the Board's current practices and procedures with a view to reducing uncertainty and streamlining the processes, still active; (c) if the answer to (b) is affirmative, when does it expect to complete its work, (i) what are its preliminary recommendations, (ii) which persons or organizations within the government were consulted in this regard, (iii) was an outside consultant hired, (iv) if so, at what cost as of December 10, 2015; (d) if the answer to (b) is negative, (i) what are its final recommendations, (ii) which persons or organizations within the government were consulted in this regard, (iii) was an outside consultant hired, (iv) if so, at what final cost, (v) when does the government plan to implement the working committee's recommendations; (e) was the Minister of Industry's office consulted by this working committee, (i) if so, how many times, (ii) which office members were contacted with the respective contact dates; and (f) has the appeal of the "Tariff 8" decision of June 2014 by Re:Sound been heard, (i) if so, what was the court's decision, (ii) if not, when is the appeal scheduled to be heard?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 13—Mr. Pierre Nantel:**

With regard to the Canadian Museum of History: (a) as part of the transformation of the former Canadian Museum of Civilizations into the Canadian Museum of History, (i) what are the objectives, phases and components planned by this transformation since 2011 in terms of renovations, rebranding, changes to exhibits, the creation of new exhibits including the Canadian History Hall and their subcomponents, (ii) what was the original schedule for these objectives, phases, components and subcomponents, (iii) what is the schedule for the completed objectives, phases, components and subcomponents, with regard to the completion dates, (iv) what is the current projected schedule for the objectives, phases, components and subcomponents to be completed, (v) what were the originally projected costs for the objectives, phases, components and subcomponents, (vi) what are the costs incurred to date, broken down by objective, phase, component or subcomponent, (vii) what are the currently projected additional costs, broken down by objective, phase, component or subcomponent; (b) since 2012, what amounts from the private, corporate or community sector, whether they be sponsors, partners or corporate donors, have been received by the Museum, (i) to which exhibits, services or objectives were these amounts allocated, with these amounts broken down by amount donor; (c) since 2012, what is the nature of each service contract used by the Museum for services that used to be performed by Museum employees before 2012; (d) how many employees, permanent or on contract, have been assigned to research duties, particularly in the Research Division, their numbers broken down (i) by year since 2012-2013, (ii) by position, (iii) by scientific field, (iv) by division; (e) since 2012-2013, what meetings, telephone calls, museum visits and any other contact have taken place between museum representatives and members of ministers' offices or representatives from their respective offices, including the Office of the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Prime Minister's Office, broken down by meeting subject; (f) for all exhibitions since 2012, by exhibition, what was (i) the total number of visitors, (ii) the total revenue amount, (iii) the budget at the start of planning stage, (iv) total expenditures; (g) since 2012-2013, (i) what were the museum's annual revenues, (ii) what are the museum's projected annual revenues for the next five years, (h) excluding the Canadian War Museum, what is the total number of visitors expected each year at the museum over the next five years; (i) since 2012, which groups such as associations, professional associations, groups representing First Nations and experts were met with and consulted as part of creating the content for the new Museum, particularly with regard to the Canadian History Hall; (j) regarding the costs related to changing the museum's name such as signage, logos and branding, (i) what is the current budget set aside for these costs, (ii) what is the total projected cost over the next five years; (k) since 2012-2013, what is the museum's total cost of advertising such as billboard advertising and advertising in newspapers, on the radio, on television and on the Internet, (i) by year, (ii) by type of advertising; (l) for each instance when external legal services were provided to the museum over the past three years (i) which firms or individuals provided these legal services to the museum, (ii) when, (iii) for how long, (iv) what was the nature of these services, (v) what was the purpose of these services, (vi) what was the total cost, per instance, of these services provided to the museum; and (m) for each project or exhibition created by the museum or for those since 2012-2013 that were not presented within the museum building, (i) what was the subject, (ii) where was the project or exhibition presented, (iii) what was the total cost for each project or exhibition?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 14—Mr. Pierre Nantel:

With regard to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), as of December 10, 2015: (a) has the Governor in Council given its approval for moving the Maison de Radio-Canada (MRC) building in Montreal, which must be approved by the Governor in Council in accordance with section 48(2) of the Broadcasting Act and from which real property transactions may arise; (b) what were the project specifications given to the firm Avison Young regarding the possible options for moving the MRC into leased space in Montreal, (i) how much did the CBC pay to the firm Avison Young to carry out this project, (ii) what were the eight options considered in carrying out this project, (iii) what was the estimated leasing and maintenance costs for each of these eight options, (iv) was the Department of Heritage made aware of these eight options, (v) was the Treasury Board Secretariat made aware of these eight options, (vi) was the Canada Lands Company (CLC) made aware of these eight options and, if not, for which reasons; (c) what were the criteria and technical specifications that the CBC provided to the firm Avison Young concerning the desired features of the new MRC; (d) what has been the CBC's comparative cost-benefit analysis for the various projects considered by the CBC such as leasing new space downtown, partially renovating the existing MRC, or constructing smaller space on the current MRC grounds, for each aspect of the

project, namely (i) design, (ii) financing, (iii) construction, (iv) rental, (v) maintenance, (vi) management; (e) which experts and professional associations did the CBC consult with respect to this real property transaction; (f) what are the maintenance costs for the Maison de Radio-Canada in Montreal for the year 2014-2015, broken down by (i) mortgage, (ii) property taxes, (iii) maintenance, (iv) renovations; (g) what is the CBC's inventory of photo archives, broken down by city; (h) what is the total value of the CBC's photo archives; (i) what is the CBC's inventory of audio archives, broken down by city; (j) what is the total value of the CBC's audio archives; (k) what is the CBC's inventory of video archives, broken down by city; (l) what is the total value of the CBC's video archives; (m) what is the inventory of paper-based archives (such as books and music scores) held by the CBC, broken down by city; (n) what is the total value of these paper-based archives; (o) what is the CBC's inventory of technical equipment, broken down by city; (p) what is the total value of this technical equipment; and (q) who are the bidders who acquired CBC assets since January 1, 2008, broken down by (i) year, (ii) type of asset purchased, (iii) transaction value?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 15—Mr. Don Davies:

With regard to thalidomide: (a) how many tax-free pensions are being awarded at the level of (i) \$100 000, (ii) \$75 000 (iii) \$25 000; (b) how many recipients have asked for a reassessment of their benefit level, in total, and broken down by (i) applications approved, (ii) applications denied; (c) how many applications have been received for assistance from the Extraordinary Medical Assistance Fund, in total, and broken down by (i) applications approved, (ii) applications denied; (d) what are the criteria for receiving assistance from the Extraordinary Medical Assistance Fund; (e) who is responsible for administering the Extraordinary Medical Assistance Fund; (f) how many new individuals have identified themselves as thalidomide survivors; and (g) how many new individuals have been accepted as thalidomide survivors and will begin receiving support payments?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 16—Mr. Don Davies :

With regard to Health Canada: for the last ten years, (a) how many pharmaceutical manufacturing companies inspected in Canada have received a "proposal to suspend" letter, broken down by year; (b) how many pharmaceutical manufacturing companies inspected in Canada have received an "immediate suspension", broken down by year; (c) how many pharmaceutical manufacturing companies inspected in Canada that were not sent a proposal to suspend letter or were not subject to a suspension has Health Canada worked with following an inspection to bring about compliance, broken down by year; (d) how many pharmaceutical manufacturing companies inspected in Canada have been subject to a re-inspection within six months, broken down by year; (e) how many pharmaceutical manufacturing companies inspected internationally have received a "proposal to suspend" letter, broken down by year; (f) how many pharmaceutical manufacturing companies inspected internationally have received an "immediate suspension," broken down by year; (g) how many pharmaceutical manufacturing companies inspected internationally that were not sent a proposal to suspend letter or were not subject to a suspension has Health Canada worked with following an inspection to bring about compliance, broken down by year; (h) how many pharmaceutical manufacturing companies inspected internationally have been subject to a re-inspection within six months, broken down by year; (i) how many import alerts has Health Canada issued with regard to non-compliant health products, broken down by year; (j) which companies have been subject to an import alert; (k) how many voluntary quarantine requests has Health Canada issued, broken down by year; (l) which companies have been subject to a voluntary quarantine request; (m) how many "Notice of Intent to Suspend" letters have been issued to clinical trials, broken down by year; (n) how many "immediate suspensions" has Health Canada issued to clinical trials, broken down by year; (o) how many complaints have been received regarding off-label prescriptions of drugs, broken down by year; and (p) how many cases has Health Canada referred to the Public Prosecution Service of Canada for off-label prescriptions of drugs?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, finally, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

The Address

Some hon. members: Agreed.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

[English]

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed consideration of the motion for an address to His Excellency the Governor General in reply to his speech at the opening of the session, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Barrie—Innisfil.

As this is my first opportunity to stand in the House, I would like to begin by thanking the people of Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte for electing me as their member of Parliament this term.

The riding is large and diverse. We have internationally recognized wetlands in the Minesing Wetlands, incredible agricultural production in Springwater and Oro-Medonte, and an urban core in Barrie that resides on the shores of the beautiful Lake Simcoe. It is a downtown that is in transition, growing up and working to help those in our community who are less fortunate.

Moreover, it was an incredibly close election and I would like to formally stand in the House today and congratulate all of the candidates, but particularly Brian Tamblyn, on a hard-fought, respectful race.

Most importantly, I would like to stand to thank my wife Erica, our entire family who supported us, and our amazing children. We had our second child just four weeks before the election was called, which was an incredibly exciting time for us.

For my constituents, I ask the following in holding their team in Ottawa to account. If our office does not respond from a position of service, please demand it. If I talk of our successes without defining new goals and service, please request it. When I speak of being an MP as though it is who I am rather than the position I serve in, please correct it.

As a new generation of MPs was elected to govern and define this country, I take particular notice of the need to reach out to new generations of Canadians. It is, after all, our responsibility to engage Canadians as much as it is their responsibility to vote and elect governments. I am a younger parliamentarian, and my office is looking for new ways to reach out to all generations and create interest in the business that is conducted in the House.

Therefore, I offer the following. It is an honour to stand in the House and address its hon. members, in a place that is full of diverse opinions—some minions, visionaries, and tax spenders—a place that is built on the bedrock of the Canadian shield, that represents from east to west those who keep us safe in our urban core to those who perseveringly work their fields. All that we yield is because of these people, no matter their creed or faith from mosque, to synagogue, to steple. We strive to take care of our feeble, sick, and weak, and offer

a home to those who seek refuge in times and places way too far and often far too bleak.

It is impossible for us to understand that, having grown up in this land, we have won the most important lottery by merely being where we stand. So as I look upon the Speech from the Throne from beginning to end, I relish the tone, but it is the details that I wish to hone. This speech is not merely to reprimand or oppose, but rather the opposite. It is to highlight opportunities; it is to propose.

Where we now engage and debilitate our enemies from the sky, this throne speech seeks to cut and run without explaining a single reason why.

There is no compromise or plan to justify. The government is leaving Canada's allies, refugees who seek home, and our military high and dry.

Even after the events just weeks ago, when our CF-18s assisted in the defence of Mosul, the government refuses to see what we all know, that this mission requires a multi-faceted approach: settlement of refugees here at home, betterment of camps where new refugees go, humanitarian aid, training of soldiers to defend against terrorist raids, and the engagement of CF-18s to stem supply flow.

After all the speeches, glamour, and promises faded, we found out that the government had set expectations without basis, failing to hit its own targets on resettlement, betraying both those who voted for it and those refugees who seek betterment.

Back at home, little is different; the government promised tax cuts that would be cost neutral and middle class spirited. As it turns out neither is true. There is a \$2 billion hole in the budget; and if people earn \$190,000 a year—guess what—this tax cut really benefits them. For seniors who need to reinvest after being taxed on a RRIF, the government is taking away room in their TFSA only to offer them a legalized spliff.

Like an automobile driving off a cliff, the government proceeded with tax cuts in haste, only to realize that it is the top 10% of income earners who benefit most from the reduced tax rate. Those who are without have been left confused and irate; an entire section of population has been neglected, forgotten, and wondering if real change has lost its fate, or whether it is just going to come far too late.

● (1525)

I stand today asking, not just because I am an MP but because growing up in government housing, on our welfare system, and with help from my community is what makes me who I am. What all of us who have grown up with little crave to see is great employment, more jobs, and incredible opportunity, an economy that is not growing based on how much a government can spend but one that is stable and strong, supported by a government that lends, that sees trends and delivers help to business and employers that are glowing, not arbitrarily blowing money and subsidizing those that leave liabilities on balance sheets growing.

The Address

When the Liberal leader believes that transitioning away from manufacturing is his government mandate, he has caused a manufacturing earthquake, like the movement of a tectonic plate in southern Ontario.

While our dollar weakens and there is pain in the energy sector, we ask the Liberal government to listen to its southern Ontario electors. We understand that, for some, this is positive news; for most exporters the low dollar is in fact like sweet nectar. However, if there was ever a time for the government to act and support manufacturing jobs, the time to do so is now, before the opportunity is robbed.

With so much competition for made goods, products, and employment, why has only a single private sector vendor received a repayable loan through a FedDev anointment? Even this was approved by the Conservative government back in July, which raises the question: what is the government not doing for the Canadian workforce and why? I know from experience that, when FedDev invests, the economy digests. It is driven, creates jobs, helps families, and puts back out three times more than it was originally given.

When I look back to those who stood and announced over \$4 million in repayable loans from a podium resulting in a Canadian success story, an expansion of product lines, and an increase to over 800 jobs in Oro-Medonte at Napoleon, or the stable funding to help start-ups like gShift in Barrie, I find the fact that the government has not unilaterally invested a single dollar in the private sector in four months with FedDev is scary.

It is correctly written in the throne speech that the economy and the environment are in fact compatible. However, where are there measurable targets that the government has made actionable? I think of the conservation that was introduced across this vibrant land, and in the House was read, or at home the funding that has turned Lake Simcoe back to life. As has been said, if we had done nothing this lake would be dead. Instead, the previous government expanded its focus, doubled the funding, helped Lake Simcoe, Nottawasaga, and southeastern Georgian Bay, even as the provincial Liberal policies threatened to choke us.

If the Liberal government is supporting agriculture, it sure did not show us it does, as there was not a single mention of those who work endlessly to provide our rural and urban areas with food, not a single word of the challenges facing the agricultural industry, specifically those farms that are family owned, or the difficulty transitioning between generations and maintaining the family farm as the family home.

As I look across this incredible building I think of the people, the parliamentarians, and the soldiers whose will and dedication was unyielding, of the mines of history that have been navigated with absolute precision, of the governments that knew standing up for those without a voice was not a choice but an automatic decision. That is where I believe we stand today as the government seeks to form itself in a new way, without a referendum asking those whom it represents if it may. Our democracy is as brittle as we make it if we fail to properly engage it, but it is as strong as our country is vast if we humbly approach the people with humility and ask. I would therefore request of colleagues that they change their course, respect

those who have elected them, and not try to take this Parliament with political force.

It is an honour to stand and deliver this speech in prose. As members can see, I have many issues. This is a Speech from the Throne that I must oppose.

• (1530)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Fredericton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech. I heard my colleague opposite mention low-income families.

[*English*]

He talked about lower income families and the struggling situation in which some might find themselves. I wonder if the member opposite might share his view on the Liberal government's plan to invest in a new monthly tax-free Canada child benefit that will deliver the most to families who need it most, while also helping middle-class families, and asking those who have done very well over the years to contribute a little more so that families from the lower and middle income situations, and households right across the country, can help their young children grow and develop into happy and healthy citizens.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Madam Speaker, what I have seen so far from this government, whether in the throne speech or in the motion that was passed before the Christmas break, is not that the government is helping people in need, those earning less than \$45,000 a year. What I have seen is an increase in the benefits to those earning \$190,000 a year. Those are the people who are reaping the most from the motion the member's government has put forward. To quote my friend and colleague from earlier this day, it is a little bit disingenuous for the government to continually speak out of one side of its mouth, when the people they have benefited the most are those earning \$190,000 a year.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to highlight the issues the member did not bring up when he was speaking about poverty. I would like to ask the member a question about the poverty our seniors are struggling with right now. Seniors in Canada cannot afford their prescription medication. They cannot afford to pay their rent. They cannot afford to buy food.

Would the member support the return of the OAS to age 65 from 67? It was put at that level by his government. Would he also support an increase to the Canada pension plan to elevate seniors in our communities out of poverty?

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Madam Speaker, obviously this was an issue that I heard much about during the election as I was pounding on doors, attending seniors' residences, et cetera.

One of the things I was proud to speak of during the election was the concept put forward by the Conservative Party that would have allowed widowed seniors and single seniors to take advantage of a new tax cut. That had incredible support in the community. It is something I will continue to support as an elected member of Parliament.

The Address

I am certainly open to looking at other options, but that was something that I saw right away would certainly help seniors, who are among the most sensitive in our society when it comes to income.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, while we are talking about seniors, let us also talk about folks with mobility issues. There has been no sign from the Liberal government that it will restore home mail delivery, and that is a profound concern to us on this side. I wonder if the member believes that it should be restored to what it was before the post office began to tinker.

• (1535)

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Madam Speaker, one of the reasons my family and I grew up in government housing was that my mother was hit by a car and was permanently disabled.

I completely understand where the member is coming from. I also understand that Canada Post is an arm's-length organization, and certainly we need to rely on the experts to make the decisions on the future of that asset.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to begin today by thanking the good people of Barrie—Innisfil for their confidence in electing me as their first member of Parliament in the new riding of Barrie—Innisfil. I also want to thank my family—my wife Liane and my sons Jeff, Court, Mitchell, and Matthew—for all their love and support.

I have big shoes to fill. With riding redistribution and now representing Barrie and Innisfil, I have replaced two very hard-working and well-respected members of Parliament in these communities: Mr. Patrick Brown, now leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, and the current member for York—Simcoe. They both work tirelessly for their constituents. I will continue to do the same as the member for Barrie—Innisfil.

Barrie—Innisfil is a diverse mix of urban and rural. It is home to large employers, like auto parts manufacturer Matsui, and one of the largest onion farms in all of Canada, Horodinsky Farms.

Barrie—Innisfil is a key driver of central Ontario's economic engine and is a growing player in the Canadian economy. Barrie—Innisfil has one of the lowest unemployment rates in Ontario and is entrepreneurial to its very core. As the mayor of Barrie, Mr. Jeff Lehman, often states, entrepreneurialism is rooted into the DNA of our area. Meanwhile, Mayor Gord Wauchope, of Innisfil, is leading his council with a vision to create an economic development corridor along Highway 400 that starts in Innisfil and leads into Barrie. If ever there was a poster child for investments in infrastructure, Barrie—Innisfil certainly is one as we begin our next phase of significant growth.

I would also like to point out that we like our business taxes low. We do not like government red tape delaying projects or getting in the way of our entrepreneurial spirit.

Barrie—Innisfil is also blessed to be situated on the waters of Lake Simcoe and Kempenfelt Bay. It is a 365-day-a-year destination, attracting tourists from all over North America. These waters alone inject \$200 million annually into our local economy through tourism

and recreation. Suffice to say, we are very sensitive to the need to preserve and protect this jewel in central Ontario.

We are also a growing and increasingly diverse community with a large and proud Filipino and South Asian community, many of whom I am proud to call not just my constituents but my friends.

The Liberal government's Speech from the Throne sets Canada on a path to higher deficits, higher debt, and higher taxes. While the new government's list was long when it comes to spending on grand schemes, it was short on detail and how these commitments would roll out.

As the official opposition critic for urban affairs, I would like to talk today about infrastructure and the serious challenges communities face, including my communities of Barrie and Innisfil. With less than 10% of the overall tax revenues at their disposal and nearly 90% of the burden to fund infrastructure, municipalities across Canada need more help to meet their obligations. My riding of Barrie—Innisfil is no exception, and as a former long-time city councillor in Barrie, I understand all too well the battle being waged at the local level to combat infrastructure deficits.

Allow me to give a little more detail and background on the riding. In 2006, the Ontario government passed the Places to Grow Act, and the city of Barrie was targeted by the province to realize a near 100% increase in population by 2031. Three years later, the same government at Queen's Park passed the Barrie-Innisfil Boundary Adjustment Act, and the city's boundaries increased the municipality's area by 30% overnight. Twenty-three square kilometres of largely rural and unserviced land from the township of Innisfil was annexed into Barrie, many say kicking and screaming. With the direction to grow rapidly, to increase transit, and to follow intensification guidelines, the Ontario Liberal government largely left Barrie and Innisfil to their own devices when it came to how to pay for all this growth and how to face the very real problems that rapid growth brings.

In the years that followed, all levels of government have made many efforts to address the needs of the Barrie—Innisfil area, but so much more needs to be done. I have met with the mayors of both Barrie and Innisfil numerous times on the issue of infrastructure funding, and they are not ashamed to say that they could use more help. The city of Barrie currently has nine significant shovel-ready projects for this year that will cost \$52 million, and the town of Innisfil has no fewer than a dozen pressing improvements needing funding in 2016.

The previous Conservative government made significant investment in the Barrie—Innisfil area. Barrie received significant funding for projects like the Highway 400, Duckworth interchange, the new wellness centre at Georgian College, and the Lampman Lane Community Centre refurbishment.

• (1540)

Federal infrastructure monies helped secure a central fire station in Barrie. Monies flowed for a new transit facility, and significant federal commitments helped build two new GO stations and a GO service that had disappeared many years ago, which was restored for the commuters of Barrie-Innisfil.

The Address

I also cannot overstate how critical the previous Conservative government's investment in the Lake Simcoe clean-up fund has been for our environment and to our local economy. Unprecedented federal investments totalling \$60 million were partnered with local municipalities, conservation authorities, and stakeholders to take action to protect and preserve these valuable waters.

In the 1990s, the average phosphorous load levels for Lake Simcoe were well over 100 tons per year. The Lake Simcoe/southeastern Georgian Bay clean-up fund was the catalyst to improve environmental monitoring, conserve critical aquatic habitat, and reduce the discharge of phosphorous from point and non-point sources.

The plan was a success, as the latest data shows. Annual phosphorous loads have significantly decreased. As a member whose riding benefits from a clean Lake Simcoe economically and recreationally, I am asking the government to continue the partnerships with so many cities and towns and people who have invested so much of their time and money to keep our local waterways clean beyond 2017, when the current funding is scheduled to end.

However, the strongest commitment made by the former government was to enhance the former temporary gas fund after taking office and to later index it and make it permanent. I want to spend the remaining time I have to speak about this and to make a suggestion to the government.

This funding stream was instrumental to communities across the country, and certainly to a city like Barrie. Prior to 2006, the city of Barrie was receiving less than \$2 million annually. By 2010, the amount had quadrupled to \$8 million. The gas tax fund provides predictable, long-term stable funding for Canadian municipalities to help them build and realize their local public infrastructure and to create jobs and long-term prosperity.

The Canadian economy is facing strong headwinds. The Liberal government has publicly stated that it will be making short-term investments in infrastructure of roughly \$2 billion over the next two years, which ironically is an amount equal to the total amount cities and towns across the country currently receive annually from the federal gas tax fund.

I suggest strongly to the government that if it is going to follow through with its stated promise of \$2 billion in new funding for infrastructure that it consider releasing the money immediately, doubling the federal gas tax transfers to municipalities this year.

I make the suggestion for a few reasons. I believe that all parties acknowledge that our economy has reversed its course. In addition, the criteria and formula already exist and there would be no need to reinvent the wheel. Municipalities know how much to expect in 2016 and have already budgeted for it in their capital and operating plans.

A one-time doubling of the transfer would mean, for example, that the city of Barrie would receive \$16 million in this coming year and the town of Innisfil \$3.4 million to put toward projects already identified as being shovel ready, and to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities' point, shovel worthy.

The most important point I would like to make is that by doing this now, the government will be putting money into the hands of local councils that have already completed their budget process. Having already identified priority projects in their asset management programs, municipalities are now heading into the tender process before the construction season starts and before labour and material costs inevitably rise, as they do during construction season.

Again, if the government intends to spend \$2 billion on infrastructure quickly, doubling the federal gas tax fund is an efficient and equitable way to move quickly on an issue of national importance. It is also the fairest way to distribute sorely needed funds for infrastructure to ridings across the country and to thereby avoid any potential criticism of partisan decision-making.

It is the right way to do it, and it is the fair way to do it. The template is there. The government just has to follow it. I am aware, as I believe all Canadians are, that the Liberal election platform relating to infrastructure was ambitious. Doubling the fund now would help municipalities tackle their biggest issues, stimulate a sagging economy, and give the new government some room to work out their long-term infrastructure policies moving forward.

• (1545)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Intergovernmental Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure and with absolute respect that I welcome the member opposite. It is nice to hear a municipal voice coming from the party opposite.

I recall when I was first elected, every time I spoke as a former city councillor, what came across from the opposition side was, "Go back to city council if you want to fix those sorts of issues". I am glad that we now understand that federal partnership is fundamental to building stronger communities and stronger cities. I am also glad that the gas tax, one of the great initiatives of the Liberal Party in the government of Paul Martin, is being celebrated as such.

My concern is this. One of the challenges we saw in simply transferring dollars to municipalities and not ensuring the money was spent in infrastructure was that quite often dollars like that would land in some municipalities, not all but some, and then be used by councillors to cut taxes rather than to make the investments we needed to grow the economy, to build stronger communities and ensure the infrastructure that was critically needed was built.

By simply advocating for a transfer of dollars to municipalities without any conditions, without any framework or national infrastructure program, how would the member opposite ensure that people on those city councils would not simply use the money to cut taxes and avoid the infrastructure deficit we are trying to address?

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, it is precisely for that reason that I make this suggestion now. Most councils across cities and towns have already set their operating and capital budgets. They have already identified, as I said earlier, in their asset management program what projects they will do.

The Address

The member mentioned the framework. The framework is already set, the criteria is already set in the gas tax fund to allocate those funds for specific projects. If municipalities were given that money, they could certainly apply it and stimulate the economy to the extent that the government wants and certainly that we want as members of the opposition.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Madam Speaker, obviously, my colleague's riding is well positioned to benefit from the impact of the falling dollar on exports.

Infrastructure aside, does he not think that action must be taken to encourage exports, since that is what most of these companies seem to focus on?

[*English*]

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, obviously with the low Canadian dollar, it does help exports in manufacturing. What helps businesses across the country is a low tax regimen, cutting red tape and ensuring that government does not get in the way of their business, that we actually stand behind them and push them forward.

I think of what the Conservative government did in the past. What worries me is taxation and the increase of corporate taxation. The Conservatives kept that tax environment low and encouraged manufacturing right across the country, not just in a specific region.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Madam Speaker, first, I congratulate the member for Barrie—Innisfil with whom I had the opportunity and honour to serve on Barrie council for eight years.

I ask a follow-up question on Lake Simcoe. A lot of funding and new dollars as well as other infrastructure items were invested by the federal government, which had a positive effect on Lake Simcoe.

Following 2017, is there a route the hon. member wants the federal government to take in terms of spending the funding or increasing it?

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, a lot of work has been done over the last nine years in the previous Conservative government among all members who surround that particular lake and those waters. We saw an unprecedented funding, as I suggested in my remarks, of \$60 million. A lot of the intake for those projects will stop very soon. We are looking for an extension beyond 2017 for additional funding.

We have seen phosphorus levels decrease. We have seen investments by surrounding municipalities and stakeholders to ensure we get that lake to the degree it is right now, and those phosphorus levels have been decreased significantly.

• (1550)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to inform you that I will be splitting my time with the member for St. John's East.

It is an honour to stand in the House at the beginning of week one in the new year to address my distinguished colleagues. I look forward to the year ahead of us as we work together to build our country and communities.

[*Translation*]

During the break, I met with people from all over the riding of Toronto—Danforth, and I spoke with many business improvement associations about their priorities.

I also had the opportunity to meet with the representatives of creative industries based in my riding, who shared with me their hopes and concerns. The pre-budget consultations gave me the opportunity to meet a wide range of voters who spoke to me about the priorities that they felt the government should focus on.

Many of the ideas that I would like to talk about in the House today were raised and advocated by the voters that I met with during the Christmas break.

[*English*]

I look forward to working with my colleagues in the House to ensure that the concerns of the residents of Toronto—Danforth and Canadians are addressed by our new government. I look forward to hearing more stories from constituents and learning from their experiences as we discuss issues that face our communities and our country.

Today, I am here to address the House regarding two ways in which the Speech from the Throne looks toward our future. The first relates to green infrastructure and the second relates to food security.

In my riding, green infrastructure takes the form of climate change resilience. Infrastructure spending in Toronto—Danforth that addresses vulnerabilities in existing systems has the potential to unlock one of Canada's most underutilized urban environments. I am referring to Toronto's Port Lands and the re-naturalization of the mouth of the Don River.

[*Translation*]

The Don River winds its way across Toronto. My riding is bounded by the Don River on the west, the Don River and Taylor Creek on the north, and Lake Ontario on the south. The banks of the Don River are home to many parks, natural ecosystems, creative spaces such as the Evergreen Brick Works, and heritage sites such as Todmorden Mills.

[*English*]

The Don also meanders through the history of Canada. Before the arrival of European settlers, it was an important transitway and resource for countless generations of indigenous Canadians. Five thousand years ago, indigenous Canadians were camping and hunting on the eastern side of the Don. Before Confederation, Canada's Parliament met from time to time on its western bank. The river has always been a special place.

As Toronto grew, the valley of the Don went from wilderness to urban space. It slowly filled with factories, mills, and garbage dumps. The demands of the expanding city meant that the mouth of the Don had to be changed to facilitate transport and commerce. Initially, the river spilled into a natural estuary. Over time, fill was deposited that changed the lakeshore significantly. During the last century, the watercourse was diverted at a 90° angle through a concrete channel. This created a usable industrial space, but not a human one.

*The Address**[Translation]*

This unnatural diversion of the river has created risks for my riding, but at the same time, green infrastructure could unlock the potential of the Port Lands.

• (1555)

[English]

The risks are as follows. The shape of the river, made by machines and concrete, puts approximately three square kilometres of land and more than 600 homes at risk of flooding. Some of this land is industrial, some is residential, and much of it lays fallow awaiting regeneration. If the Don River's current configuration were exposed to a rain event like hurricane Hazel, which occurred in 1954, where nearly 20 centimetres of rain fell on southern Ontario over the course of one evening, the results could be catastrophic. This is the place where an important part of Canada's movie and television production industry is quartered. This is a vibrant neighbourhood with families and businesses.

[Translation]

During our discussions, voters spoke about pressing needs in areas such as affordable housing and public transit. However, they also expressed a strong desire to see us lay the foundations of the future today. We need to establish infrastructure that will build a future focused on creativity, innovation, and economic development.

Canada's 150th anniversary is coming up, and now is the time to think about our country's future and about the next 150 years. The work ahead involves re-naturalizing the mouth of the Don River and developing the Port Lands.

[English]

Last night, I had the pleasure of meeting with the secretary general for the Bureau International des Expositions who is currently visiting the city of Toronto at the mayor's invitation. The secretary general is visiting with a group of people who are exploring the possibility of hosting a World Expo in 2025 in Toronto.

A World Expo has a great deal of potential as an opportunity to showcase Canadian creativity and innovation to the world. The favoured site, if a bid were to be made, is the Port Lands. This is one example of how people are looking at this urban space as part of the future of Toronto and our country at large.

Yet, without a significant investment in flood protection, the parts of the community that are already in place are at risk and nothing further can be developed for fear of flooding. We put our best foot forward by investing in social infrastructure, physical infrastructure and community development rather than the risked costs, made greater by climate change events, of flood clean-up.

[Translation]

What are we proposing? In short, we are proposing that the mouth of the Don River be re-naturalized. This is an example of green infrastructure, an example of how infrastructure can take climate change into account and be good for urban development. Investments in green infrastructure will protect neighbourhoods and the undeveloped Port Lands from floods and will lay the groundwork for the future of these largely unused and abandoned lands.

[English]

The second and final matter which I would like to discuss in the House today is food security.

In the Speech from the Throne, our government committed to support the health and well-being of Canadians. One of the ways that this can be accomplished is through ensuring food security for all Canadians. Indeed, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food is tasked in his mandate letter to develop a food policy that promotes healthy living and safe food.

What does food security mean? It means giving Canadians reliable access to high quality, affordable, and nutritious food.

[Translation]

We all need healthy food to live well. That is a fundamental need for everyone. When we have access to healthy food, we are able to concentrate better at work or at school, and we are less dependent on the health care system.

Food safety has a direct impact on Canadians' well-being and on our economy.

[English]

The cost of fresh food can push people to rely on less nutritious options that can be high in sugars, fats, and salt. In the north and in remote communities in particular, the cost of healthy nutrient rich food is prohibitive. Many diet-related illnesses can be directly linked to food insecurity. Conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular illness, dental diseases, and obesity often stem from diet. The cumulative effect of food insecurity is tremendous, and some estimates put the cost to the Canadian health care system in the billions of dollars each year.

A food secure Canada is an achievable goal and the benefits would not only be measured in dollars saved. In Toronto—Danforth many people are working on food security issues to build the health of our community, be it through the Riverdale Food Working Group, the South Riverdale Community Health Centre, our local East York, LesHeville, Withrow Park and Good Food farmers' markets, or local school nutrition programs. We can build on these great first steps.

Food security also benefits the environment. Sustainable farming practices are less harmful to water and soil. Furthermore, efforts to reduce food wastage would limit the amount of good edible organics going to landfill. Locally, I worked with Second Harvest to create the Danforth Hunger Squad to divert healthy edible food from being wasted and to support new Canadians by bringing food to Newcomer Women's Services. I also worked with the farmers at the Withrow Park Farmers' market to gather healthy, local, organic produce to bring to a food bank at the Eastview Community Centre.

The possibilities available to achieve the goals set out in the Speech from the Throne, specifically ensuring the health and well-being of all Canadians, are endless. Food security is one of them, and I look forward to working with my colleagues in the House to achieve it.

The Address

•(1600)

I have discussed two matters of importance to Canadians and my constituents. The Speech from the Throne clearly looks to the future.

I look forward to working with my colleagues on these issues.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, in my time knocking on doors in Elmwood—Transcona one of the stories that stuck with me most was that of a woman in East Kildonan who invited me into her living room in her apartment. She is living on CPP. We moved the discussion from the living room into the kitchen, where she opened her fridge and cupboards to show me that they were literally bare. Improving the CPP is a really urgent issue for her. Every year her rent goes up but her income does not. That is why I was disappointed after the latest meetings of ministers of finance from around Canada that the federal Minister of Finance had nothing to say about a timeline for increasing the CPP.

I am wondering if in the internal conversations of the government caucus there have been concrete suggestions about a timeline, and if so, if the hon. member could enlighten us now.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Madam Speaker, there are many ways to tackle issues of food security. I am particularly proud of the Canada child benefit, which is essentially a way of creating a guaranteed annual income for children. It is a way of ensuring that there will be more access to food on the table for children in need across this country. It is means-tested so that the people who are most in need will get the most benefit.

[Translation]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the member for Toronto—Danforth for her excellent speech. She made some very interesting points on climate change, infrastructure, and local food.

[English]

I am concerned that the Speech from the Throne does not make any direct reference to the question of food security, to local food, and food sustainability. I am encouraged by the member's focus on this coming from local projects in Toronto—Danforth. There are many projects within Saanich—Gulf Islands that involve local food security, for instance, efforts on Salt Spring Island to have shared funding for storage and transport and shared processing facilities, so that many farmers can use the same high-tech, high-standard equipment to make jams and jellies and sell them and so on and meet CFIA standards.

I am wondering if the member for Toronto—Danforth has any insight on whether her government is willing to consider support for local sustainable agriculture and projects such as these.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Madam Speaker, these are interesting questions.

I was particularly excited to see in the mandate letter for the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food that food policy was the second issue listed as a priority.

There will be a lot of opportunities for us to work together on these issues. I look forward to working with my colleague on food security issues in the future.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's comments and her reference to the child benefit program that the federal government is bringing forward. There is no doubt that we will literally be lifting tens of thousands of children out of poverty through this federal initiative. What better way to get good quality food into the mouths of our children than by supporting them through a program of this nature.

Could my colleague comment on how lifting children out of poverty would assist in their eating more nutritious food as a direct result?

•(1605)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Madam Speaker, a guaranteed income for children will allow them to have more opportunities to access nutritious food. It will allow them to pay attention in school and concentrate. It will allow them to have more opportunities. Having access to that basic need is exactly what will help them put their best foot forward. It is just a basic need of all of us. We all share it.

Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of the Speech from the Throne. However, I would first like to thank the people of St. John's East for placing their trust in me. The election was closely contested and so I also thank the former member, Mr. Jack Harris, including for his years of public service. He was a member of the 33rd, 40th, and the 41st Parliaments. He was a long-time member of the Newfoundland House of Assembly and, of course, he was also the long-time leader of the New Democratic Party of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I would also like to thank all of my incredible volunteers and supporters throughout the historically long campaign.

In particular, I would like to thank my wife, Dr. Sarah Noble, for her steadfast support and wise counsel, not only during the campaign but also in our life together; my children, for their understanding, love, and homemade campaign signs; and my parents for being exemplary role models.

My mother is an environmentalist who has fought for tougher environmental assessment standards and against the importation of foreign garbage for incineration in Newfoundland and Labrador.

My father practised law for 39 years, taking on many cases in support of human rights and the impoverished and presented himself as a candidate for the Liberal Party of Canada in 1974, when I was only a one-year old. Although he inspired me to run, he never pushed me toward it and actively discouraged me a couple of years ago when he learned that I was interested. However, when he found out that he could not dissuade me from my lifelong dream of representing the people of St. John's East, he jumped in with both feet and was my biggest supporter. I thank him.

I would also like to thank all the people of St. John's East, including the 24,000 people who voted for the other candidates.

The Address

I will work here to ensure that St. John's East is able to fully benefit from the ambitious platform outlined in the Speech from the Throne, upon which the Liberal Party of Canada campaigned and won the election.

During January, I participated in many public and private sessions as part of pre-budget consultations. I can assure the House that the people of Canada are optimistic that the Speech from the Throne and the ministerial mandate letters incorporated therein by reference chart the right course for Canada. These will also benefit the people of St. John's East.

I would like to highlight for the House how St. John's East participates in Confederation and highlight its hopes in the government's priorities in the following areas: infrastructure to help the middle class; putting climate change and environmental science at the heart of resource development; research and innovation; and support for our cultural institutions.

The electoral district of St. John's East has existed in one form or another since Newfoundland and Labrador joined Confederation.

As urbanization has pulled a greater concentration of citizens into St. John's and the surrounding municipalities, we have compressed geographically, but we are still very economically diverse. Our over 80,000 constituents live in both 19th century mansions and public housing or on the streets. New subdivisions like Kenmount Terrace have public transit needs, while the former mining town of Bell Island has an aging population, very serious ferry troubles, and food security issues. We host the provincial seat of government, the main campus of Memorial University of Newfoundland, and the St. John's International Airport.

While we face serious challenges, we also have great opportunities, especially in infrastructure. The timing has never been better to invest in Canada's infrastructure. Although we inherited a recession, a \$3-billion deficit, and a mounting infrastructure deficit, we campaigned and won on a platform of being honest with Canadians about the state of our economy and on investing in public infrastructure as a means to spur economic growth and improve Canada's lagging productivity.

Our government has committed to increasing planned infrastructure investment from \$65 billion to \$125 billion over the next decade. This historic investment in our nation could not have come at a better time. With \$20 billion in three areas—public transit, green infrastructure, and social infrastructure—it will be the largest infrastructure investment in Canada's history.

The attendees at our public consultations have identified many projects to drive economic growth now.

In respect of public transit, the suburban municipal regions around St. John's are already investigating the expansion of their public transit service so that people can get into St. John's more easily. They have had successful pilot projects completed. Transit hubs in those areas, feeding into St. John's, would get people moving again.

•(1610)

In respect of green infrastructure, Newfoundland and Labrador is already undertaking a megaproject at Muskrat Falls in Labrador, with financial backing from Canada. The continued federal support

for and completion of Muskrat Falls will mean that renewable energy can power 100 percent of Newfoundland and Labrador's on-grid electricity needs. This project will replace electricity in St. John's East, currently serviced by the oil-fired Holyrood generating facility. The Gull Island area of the same river has an opportunity to provide an additional 2,250 megawatts of clean energy to the North American distribution system.

Federal government participation in ways to get clean energy resources to market would be appreciated by all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and indeed all Canadians.

In respect of public infrastructure, housing, especially senior housing and affordable housing for young families, is a constant concern. It is an issue my constituency office discusses on a weekly if not daily basis. Our party has heard their pleas and I am proud to say that our Prime Minister announced that the government will build 500 new affordable housing units in St. John's. This is a good start towards addressing the social ills inadequate housing has been shown to cause, and we welcome the support to those in my riding struggling with housing needs.

Responding to climate change is of importance to the people of St. John's East. After almost a decade of being forgotten, the environment will again be at the core of natural resource development. The Speech from the Throne helps chart a course to restoring Canada's international reputation on environmental matters and helping us earn back lost market share in green technology research, development, and commercialization.

The fishery, mining, and energy sectors in my province are keen to participate in projects and to see new and innovative ideas developed in collaboration with universities and government. Here I had the good fortune to meet with C-Core, a leading-edge ice and geotechnical engineering research institution at Memorial University of Newfoundland. It is interested in the applied research needed to understand how oil spilled from increased ship traffic or offshore development in the north will interact with sea ice, and how such spills can be contained and remediated.

Newfoundland and Labrador is an ideal place to carry on such research. My community is excited by the promised investment by the government in research an innovation, and in university, incubator, industry collaborations. These will be at the heart of answering the sea-ice oil dynamics questions that will determine whether and how we can safely pursue shipping in the Northwest Passage.

*The Address**[Translation]*

From January 7 to 9, I participated in the 69th Canadian Conference for Fisheries Research, which was held in my riding. Canadian experts on oceans, fresh water, and fisheries are working hard to help us find ways to manage these resources sustainably, and I salute their efforts. I am looking forward to seeing many of them again at the International Marine Conservation Congress in St. John's in July.

In the department's mandate letter, the government promised that Canada would restore and strengthen the environmental laws that protect Canada's waterways, land, and air so that this generation and future generations can have a healthy environment.

The people of St. John's East are very keen to be part of this work.

[English]

Research and innovation is not limited to climate change. Commercialization of research drives productivity. Research and development are crucial in our plan for a more competitive Canadian economy.

Also of particular concern to St. John's East is support for the arts. Our vibrant arts and culture scene rivals any in Canada. Theatre, live music, public art, arts festivals and radio, and movie and television production are a prominent part of daily life for many in my home town.

• (1615)

[Translation]

After a decade of cuts to the arts, my constituents are pleased that the government will increase funding for the Canada Council for the Arts by \$90 million per year for the next two years from \$180 million to \$360 million.

[English]

As part of our government's ambitious infrastructure spending, there will be renewed investment in cultural infrastructure to build the spaces and places artists and communities will use to promote our culture.

By our increasing CBC funding by \$150 million over the next two years, the CBC will be able to better perform a mandate it has been hampered in doing over the past decade, promoting Canadian culture, identity, bilingualism, and heritage.

I am very grateful to have the support of the people of St. John's East and the privilege to serve them in this august chamber. I promise to work diligently with my colleagues in all the seats of the House to help see the Speech from the Throne fulfilled and to usher in a new era for Canada, where no one is left behind.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to have a positive relationship in terms of moving ahead on an important agenda. I note that, in the last election, the Liberals promised to negotiate a new health accord with provinces and territories, which is very important. Tomorrow, the Canadian Health Coalition will be on the Hill and its members will be very interested in what my colleagues in the House have to say.

I want to remind folks that in the next 20 years, there will be 10 million seniors in Canada, and they have to be accommodated. Their health needs have to be met.

Will the government move ahead in terms of providing home care, in-hospital care, long-term care facilities, and palliative care, and will it take care of those 250,000 seniors now living in poverty by moving forward with its promise to boost the guaranteed income supplement?

Mr. Nick Whalen: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague's question is very important and is something I heard a lot during the campaign, during the recent break, and during my consultations. Seniors' poverty is a real issue throughout the country and also in St. John's East.

In respect to home care, hospital care, renewed facilities, and 200,000 seniors living in poverty, I am pleased to announce that during the election our party committed to increasing the GIS for single seniors living in poverty, so that they would have 10% more funds available to help them deal with the rising cost of food and medications.

Our government is committed to negotiating, discussing, and involving aboriginal communities, municipalities, and provinces in the discussions needed to move forward with an agenda that includes better health care and better support for seniors. We cannot do it alone. We have to do it with consultations, and we need the social licence.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Speaker, congratulations to the hon. member. I have a couple of questions. The CRTC today held meetings with broadcasters saying that, by the year 2020, half the local stations now existing in Canada will no longer exist.

It is interesting that you are going to put more money into arts and culture, which we all like, but you also mentioned the CBC. Today, Rogers announced it will be reducing its staff by 200 members as of February. Bell Media announced that in November and December 380 employees left. We have had two newspapers disappear in the last week, one today in Guelph and the other in Nanaimo, B.C.

On behalf of the deputy critic for heritage, I am wondering, with the increase in CBC funding, where you are going to put this money. On this side of the House we are very anxious when we see the media in Canada evaporate, yet you are putting more money toward the CBC.

• (1620)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would like to remind the member that he is to address the questions to the Chair and not to individual members. Thank you very much.

The hon. member for St. John's East.

The Address

Mr. Nick Whalen: Madam Speaker, obviously everyone is concerned when the cultural heritage of the country is threatened, as it has been for the past 10 years. Restoring funding to the CBC is important for it to carry out its core mandate, in which it has been hampered in providing local news coverage for places from coast to coast. It has been unable to do it and has seen a loss of employment and loss of functioning facilities over the course of the last 10 years.

We would love to see a growth in the private sector newspaper and news media as well. It is important for them to make their own personal decisions regarding how best to staff their enterprises.

However, in terms of the government's support for the CBC and for arts funding, it is very important to encourage the type of non-partisan high-quality public broadcasting from coast to coast, and the support I talked about was also for primary arts funding. These are the creators, producers, directors, and actors who go on to help staff and provide support to the commercial enterprises that we all hope to protect as well.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, before I begin, I wish to notify you that I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for North Island—Powell River.

Although this is not the first time I have spoken in this honourable House, it is my first official speech as I take my turn in participating in the debate on the reply to the Speech from the Throne. I would like to start by thanking the great people of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford for the trust and responsibility they have placed on my shoulders. It is truly an honour to stand here in our nation's Parliament and represent my community. I will work hard during the course of this 42nd Parliament to make sure my riding has the federal representation it deserves.

I would also like to take time to acknowledge my family and my friends. One year ago today, I was nominated as the NDP candidate, and it was their love and support that kept me going through what seemed to be a never-ending campaign year.

I come to the House as a member of the progressive opposition, the New Democratic Party, where I will be constructively holding to account the new Liberal government to ensure it follows through on its promises to Canadians. As our former leader, Jack Layton, once said:

I've always favoured proposition over opposition. But we will oppose the government when it's off track...

We'll support positive suggestions that we'll bring forward and support the government when it's making progress.

The Liberals were given their governing mandate based on ambitious commitments, and I sincerely hope they will fulfill them. The Speech from the Throne expanded on some of these commitments. I certainly appreciated seeing the references to first nations, the Canada pension plan, post-secondary education, employment insurance, and climate change.

The leader of the NDP's subamendment to the reply to the Speech from the Throne included proposals to present realistic, structured, and concrete changes to benefit some of Canada's most vulnerable citizens, such as increasing the guaranteed income supplement,

reducing taxes on the first income tax bracket, introducing a \$15 an hour federal minimum wage, and reforming the employment insurance program. While it is unfortunate that the House voted against the subamendment, I am proud of our leader for carrying on the tradition of offering proposals that would truly help our fellow Canadians.

My riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford covers 4,700 square kilometres of spectacular Vancouver Island in beautiful British Columbia. It is home to ancient first nations cultures, including the Pacheedaht and the Ditidaht on the west coast, the Malahat to the south, the Halalt, Penelakut, and the Chemainus to the north, and the largest band in British Columbia, Cowichan Tribes.

Many of these first nation communities saw record turnouts during the election because they were inspired to bring about much-needed change to our federal government. During the election, the Liberals made specific promises toward a new nation-to-nation relationship and substantial investment in first nations education and child and family services. Repairing our relationship with Canada's indigenous peoples and working toward true reconciliation must be a priority for the government, and it is something that we in the NDP will be pushing for in the coming months.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the wonderful communities that make up my riding: Chemainus, Crofton, the District of North Cowichan, the city of Duncan, the town of Lake Cowichan, Port Renfrew, Cowichan Bay, Cobble Hill, Shawnigan Lake, Mill Bay, the District of Highlands, and the city of Langford. Each of these places has a proud history and is filled with wonderful people who give true meaning to the word "community".

There are many issues that are extremely important to the constituents of my riding. Many of the mills on Vancouver Island have been closing down, and the families that depend on them for jobs have suffered because of the continuing increase in the export of raw logs. We need to see an investment and innovation in value-added manufacturing for our wood sector to make sure good jobs stay in local communities.

With respect to climate change, we are already seeing the effects in my riding, with summer droughts and low snow packs that are seriously affecting local rivers. In particular, the Cowichan River dropped to dangerously low flow rates, endangering the salmon spawning runs and risking the shutdown of the local Catalyst pulp mill in Crofton.

I will be pressing the new government for investment to raise the weir in Lake Cowichan so that our community can hold back more water supply for the Cowichan River during these summer droughts.

• (1625)

The time for talk is over. We need serious and firm emission reduction targets to combat climate change, and we need a plan to get us there.

The Address

Continuing on the theme of water, the community of Shawnigan Lake is rallying against a contaminated soil dump that threatens its watershed. Although it is the provincial government that is responsible for the granting of the permit, I would like to see the federal government take a leadership role in protecting our water resources, as there are serious risks to fish and fish habitat that are supposed to be protected under the federal Fisheries Act.

Agriculture and food security are two issues also of great importance to the residents of my riding. The Cowichan Valley is blessed with a beautiful climate that is roughly translated as “the warm land” in the Hul’qumi’num language, and there is a very real connection between local farmers, the food they produce, and consumers. Over the last several years, the NDP has developed a pan-Canadian food strategy, “from farm to fork”, and I know that my constituents would certainly like to see the government work on the recommendations of this strategy.

Many of my constituents also actively campaigned against the previous government's Bill C-51, and sadly, there has been no indication from the Liberal government on repealing this horrendous Conservative legislation. More than 100 of Canada's brightest legal experts from institutions across the country expressed their deep concern about Bill C-51. They called it a dangerous piece of legislation in terms of its potential impacts on the rule of law, constitutionally and internationally protected rights, and the health of Canada's democracy.

In the south end of my riding, the city of Langford is home to many young families who cannot afford to live in Victoria. Not only are they struggling with high housing costs, but many are juggling the need to find work with finding adequate child care. It is not just the high costs of child care but the lack of available spots. Unfortunately, the Liberal child benefit does nothing to address the lack of child care spots in this country.

I am honoured to stand here as the NDP's critic for seniors' issues. The population of seniors is expected to grow significantly over the next two decades, and we urgently need a plan in place to meet their needs and ensure that everyone can age with dignity. A national strategy on aging, one that covers health care, home-based and hospice palliative care, affordable housing, financial security, and quality of life, is needed for Canada's seniors.

On a final note, I would like to take the time to acknowledge that it is Robbie Burns Day here in Canada and that Canadians all across the country will be celebrating. Burns was a friend of the underdog and the oppressed in every form, and his poetry was drawn from the everyday experiences of the common person. His poem about a mouse whose home was unwittingly destroyed played a part in shaping speeches given by Canadian social democratic politicians, including our first leader, the great Tommy Douglas. The tale of Mouseland that Tommy Douglas made famous was the story of electing people from the common folk to represent their interests instead of a government filled with people who were there simply to be in power.

Yes, there are many things that the Liberals have promised, and I will be here with my colleagues fighting every day to hold them to account. New Democrats will also champion our vision, a vision of a Canada without inequality. We are a social democratic party that

believes that seniors must be taken care of and that we can offer a better future for our children. We will fight for reconciliation with our indigenous peoples and work to protect our environment. My constituents can count on me to stand up for their interests and to work with them in building a better Canada. I know I have the great support of my hon. colleagues in the House, and I am thankful for the opportunity to speak on the Speech from the Throne.

• (1630)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member made reference to child care, and I applaud him for his comments. In order to achieve a child care program that would be universal across Canada, the government has to work with the provinces. The last time that was done was actually during Paul Martin's government. Paul Martin had an agreement with the provinces that would have seen enhanced child care. Unfortunately, that was defeated by the combined opposition back then.

Today, we have a Liberal Prime Minister who is very progressive in his thinking about the need to get children out of poverty. The biggest step in doing that is to introduce the Canada child benefit, which would put more money in the hands of parents and children than ever before.

I am wondering if the member can reflect on how important it is that the Government of Canada give directly to those children through the child benefit program and how that is going to benefit children from coast to coast to coast, that one initiative, which would deliver children out of poverty.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, I would like to offer a bit of a correction on the hon. member's comments.

The previous Liberal government had a majority running from 1993 to about 2004. I am not sure exactly why you did not get the job done during that time, and instead blame it on a minority Parliament.

I am a father of three and a half-year-old twins, and there are many young families in my riding. When I was out knocking on doors all last year, the one thing I kept hearing over and over again was the need for affordable child care and spots. Many families are simply facing a situation where they cannot afford to get a second job. Getting that second job that only pays minimum wage simply does not match the costs of child care.

While I certainly welcome any financial assistance that comes to young families, I personally do not think it goes far enough, and we have the research to back that up.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order, please. I want to remind the member and all members of the House that when they are speaking in the House, they are addressing their comments to the Speaker and not to individual members.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, as a fellow British Columbian, I would like to welcome the new member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

The Address

He talked about the need for reconciliation. I think all members in the House agree that we need to move forward in our relationship with first nations. There are 94 recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the government has said that it will move ahead with all 94.

In our pursuit of reconciliation, will the member join me in calling on the government to release a full costing analysis of the implications of moving forward with all 94 recommendations? Many of them are excellent, but some would be leading us down a particularly difficult path.

● (1635)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, looking at the costs of every program is important. It is important that we as parliamentarians do our due diligence in holding the government to account. However, I do not think that is the end-all in our pursuit of reconciliation with Canada's indigenous peoples.

I am blessed in my riding with many different first nations bands. I have listened to their council and I include them among many of my friends.

With Canada's history over a century long of the mistreatment of our first peoples, we need to go above and beyond looking at a simple price tag and go the full way. Through that renewed relationship with Canada's first peoples, we are going to see a lot more economic benefits flowing their way, and many of them are speaking to me about that.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. 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 Langley—Aldergrove, Taxation; the hon. member for Calgary—Nose Hill, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship; the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, Indigenous Affairs.

[*English*]

Resuming debate, the hon. member for North Island—Powell River.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford on his excellent first speech in the House. It is great to work with such a talented parliamentarian.

I will start by thanking my constituents for putting their trust in me. I am grateful for the privilege of representing North Island—Powell River. I, like many of my fellow members, know that my riding is the most beautiful in all of the country.

I also take this opportunity to thank my family, which has shown such support for me in following my passion to this role. If it were not for Henry, Kai, Rebecca and Darren's support, I would certainly not be here today.

The riding I represent is the third largest in British Columbia. It includes North Vancouver Island and goes over to the mainland to Powell River and up part of the coast. A riding made of coastal communities, access is often by multiple ferries and some communities only by boat or float plane. It is one of the most

amazing and challenging ridings to travel. It is also one of great diversity and includes over 20 Indigenous communities that span Kwakwaka'wakw, Nuu-chah-nulth and Coast Salish territories.

Across my riding there are many communities, the largest being over 30,000 and the smallest comprised of just a small handful of people. Whether it be members living in Lund, Comox, Woss, Campbell River, Cortes Island, Port Hardy, Port Alice, and the many other communities of the riding I have the privilege to represent, the people are hard-working, dedicated to their communities and proud of the region we share.

Over the next four years in Parliament, I will work hard in my riding to be a strong voice for the people of my riding to Ottawa. North Island—Powell River has faced multiple challenges in the changing Canadian economy. The history of our region is built from resource-based economies: fishing, mining and forestry. The beauty of our region also welcomes tourists from across the country and around the world.

Through the changing global economy, the people in these communities have persevered. Whether it was municipalities and regional districts working toward creative solutions, one parent choosing to travel far away for work so the family could remain, or whether it was people creating small businesses, exploring new industries and creating innovative solutions with historic industries, the people of North Island—Powell River have rallied around one another. Through good times and hard times, the people of my riding know that we are all in this together. We take care of one another and work collaboratively to create long-term solutions. It is no wonder I am proud to stand here representing the riding in which I live.

North Island—Powell River has seen a decrease of good paying jobs and an increasing amount of people struggling to get ahead. Single people are stretching to afford housing and increasingly have to live in overcrowded situations. Child poverty is a major concern and too many children are going to school hungry. Too many parents are worried about where their next meal will come from. These are stories of families that have a parent or parents working more than one job and often more than two jobs. The cost of housing, child care, food and the basics of everyday life are adding up and it is becoming increasingly hard.

It is these hard-working people who are the backbone of our country and their continued struggle shows a lack of focused attention to this riding and to many of the small and rural communities across Canada which have been left behind.

My riding wants to see tax cuts that benefit the most vulnerable of the country, a concrete housing strategy, to see the leadership of a \$15 federal minimum wage, as too many Canadians are working full time and living below the poverty line. It is time to see tax dollars stop leaving the country through stock option loopholes and see that money being invested into preventing child poverty in our country. They are our future and we must support them.

The Address

In North Island—Powell River health care is a growing concern. Many of our communities struggle to secure family doctors and health care professionals. With long distances and multiple ferries, many of my constituents struggle to access the basic services they require.

• (1640)

We are looking to hear a commitment to cancelling the former government's plan to cut funding to health care and to see increased communication across federal and provincial governments to address the issues that are unique to small and remote communities in our country.

Seniors are very concerned about health care as well. They face challenges of affording prescriptions and in accessing the services they need in their community. Many of the seniors in my riding are feeling pressured to move to larger centres. As one constituent said to me, "If I move, who will help me? I have lived in this community for over 40 years, paid my taxes and worked hard. If I moved, I would be completely alone."

My constituents are relying on me to work towards a strategy for seniors, a coordinated one that supports seniors in the care they need at home, in the hospital, in long-term care facilities through to palliative care. The life of seniors is becoming increasingly hard and poverty for this group is growing in my riding. It is time that there is an increase to the guaranteed income supplement to help lift many seniors from poverty and to support them in a way that they have supported this country.

The many indigenous communities across my riding are asking me questions. As one elder, Rupert Wilson, said to me, "Nation to nation, show me what that really means." Across Canada we know that it is time to accept ownership of a history with indigenous people that is painful.

The process of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission must be used to increase understanding across Canada of the history of colonization and residential schools. To move forward toward reconciliation, it is time to commit to clarity on funding for first nation education. In North Island—Powell River, the history of the relationship between government and the communities has not been one that has built trust.

The lack of discussion in the House on Bill C-51 has not helped to increase this trust either. Both indigenous and non-indigenous communities are sharing concerns about the lack of commitment to action in this area. This bill must be reversed as it is an invasion of privacy and civil liberties.

In a riding full of raw nature, living with the changing tides of the ocean and the beauty of the forest, my constituents are concerned about the environment. Many people who have worked for years in resource industries are close watchers of the environment around them and they are concerned. The impacts of climate change are visible in our riding. We watch the amount of snow on the mountains in the summer, the number of salmon that return up the rivers, and the noticeable warming of the ocean. Young people have stopped me in the street to share concerns about the environment. They know that this is what they will inherit.

People in my riding know that the economy and the environment can and must work together. Practical, clear, and firm targets are important to us. It is time that Canada became a leader again in addressing climate change. It is time to set hard targets and meet them, to have an environmental assessment process that is rigorous and includes meaningful consultation with first nations, and a process to connect with the communities that will be impacted.

I am very proud to stand here as the voice of North Island—Powell River, and I will be a voice that represents the people I serve.

• (1645)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member made reference to being a very proud member. One of the things I am very proud of is the new relationship that the current Prime Minister has established with Canada's indigenous people and first nations. In fact, one of the things we have come out with, in a very powerful way, with a sense of co-operation and wanting to consult, is the recognition that we need to have the public inquiry in regards to the murdered and missing women and girls of our indigenous people. When in opposition, we argued for this for many years, and today we have that.

Would the member provide some comment on how important it is that we reinforce a positive relationship with the federal government and our indigenous people, in particular our first nations, and that having the public inquiry is a great step in that direction?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to remember the hard work that Libby Davies did for this party in bringing forth the need to have an inquiry on murdered and missing women.

We are happy to see that moving forward. It is a great story. However, what is important to our riding and to many remote ridings is how we ensure we connect to those remote communities so we get those stories heard.

We want to see a plan on how we will include the people who need to be part of this discussion. We are waiting for that. We have had the announcement and now we wait for what the actual structure will look like.

It is important that those voices are heard. It is important that we have a strategy that includes those communities. We look forward to working with our members to see that happen.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have not heard a better and more comprehensive statement of the challenges faced in a riding by any MP who has stood up on the throne speech.

I had the opportunity of meeting the new member for North Island—Powell River in her capacity as a community development worker. She has now listed all of the challenges in her riding. I wonder if she could tell us something about the innovative ways that communities in her riding are meeting those challenges.

The Address

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, I will always stand in absolute pride of the amazing work that people in my riding do. They are innovators. They are strong people. I am very impressed by the work that they do.

As I travel across the riding I am again humbled by the great innovation of communities. I would like to share the example of Powell River, where small businesses are collaborating. It is a community that can only be accessed by ferry or plane. The people have found a way to support each other and their economy.

I look at the communities of Port Alice, Port McNeil, and Port Hardy that came together and created a community forest. They are accessing some funds so that they can provide support for their communities as they face massive challenges.

I look at the 'Namgis first nation, which, with funding from multiple stakeholders including the federal government, is right now doing an on-land fish farm project. It is almost breaking even and looking at having a prosperous future.

We are excited to see these activities happening. I am excited to see a federal government that will work with them in a positive way and I will be here to make sure that happens.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I am particularly grateful to my colleague from North Island—Powell River for raising the issue of Bill C-51 as a critical issue for this Parliament to work on. She made excellent points: this legislation is an invasion of privacy and civil liberties. It is far worse than that. Bill C-51 actually makes Canadians less safe because it puts into concrete those very things that we were warned about in the commission of inquiry into the Air India disaster and terrorist attack on this soil. We have been warned not to approve systems that allow intelligence agencies to operate without talking to each other.

I would like to ask for her comments on that aspect of Bill C-51.
• (1650)

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, Bill C-51 is a huge concern across my riding. People are very passionate about it and have protested against it. I will stand here in the House and make sure that something is done.

Hon. Robert Nault (Kenora, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member from Vaudreuil—Soulanges.

I am grateful for this opportunity, as this is my first speech in the House in 12 years. I was the member of Parliament for Kenora—Rainy River from 1988 to 2004, so for some 16-plus years I had the great privilege of sitting in the House on both sides, through the first term of my mandate as the member of Parliament when Brian Mulroney was in power and then of course under the Chrétien government. Therefore, it is a great honour for me to have the chance to stand here in this place again. It is a great honour for those of us who spend a lot of time thinking about the business of the nation, so I am thankful for this opportunity to speak.

Before I get into the remarks about the Speech from the Throne, I want to thank the people in the Kenora riding for their support. As members know, historically the Kenora riding has been a very tight race between three parties, and sometimes just two. In this election it was no different. The former minister of natural resources under the previous government and the leader of the NDP and I went at it for I

believe it was 11 weeks. That was an interesting campaign and we had a good chance to talk about the issues in the north.

Before I talk about the north, I want to first thank my family and my wife Lana for letting me do this again. This is a great place to work if one believes in improving the lives of those in the region one comes from, and I know this cannot be done without one's family. When I first came here in 1988 I had no children. When I left I had two children, one who was 10 and one who was six. Now they are grown up, and I am very proud of both Samantha and Daniel, who played a big part in my campaign.

I am here because I belong to a particular party, but I am also here because I am a northerner and a rural Canadian. As members might know, sometimes we spend a lot of time in this place talking about issues that are more urban than rural because it is a fact of life that there are many more urban Canadians than there are rural Canadians. Therefore, I am here representing the views of northerners and some of the unique issues that we face.

I am also here to say that I do not think I would have run in this campaign if it was not for a leader and a party that had put forward an agenda for real change. Real change has to take place every so often in this country, every so many generations, because people insist that those changes take place. Therefore, I want to thank the leader and the Prime Minister of Canada for giving me the opportunity to be here to talk about real change.

In the last campaign, over 70% of people in our region voted for change. That means they were not happy with the previous government, and they certainly were not happy with the direction that we were going in, so here we are at the very beginning of a new mandate with a new government talking about real change.

I strongly recommend to the members of Parliament who are on their first tour of duty and just starting out to go out and ask their constituents what they mean by “real change”. We cannot just assume that everybody has the same view. For the last number of months since I was elected I have been out there talking to people, to mayors, to councillors, to different organizations, whether with respect to health care or education, and obviously with first nations, about what they expect from this government. What is most interesting about what we are hearing from people is that they want a government that is active, that cares, that wants to do things, and that believes it can make a real change.

In a region like mine, we see a lack of infrastructure and a lack of development. It is a part of the world where 42 first nations live and where over 20 of those first nations still do not have roads and are still looking for a basic piece of infrastructure that most Canadians take for granted. Then we in this place wonder why first nations people struggle and we talk about it on a regular basis.

The Address

•(1655)

It is pretty simple. If people's homes and driveways cannot be accessed on a day-to-day basis, it is very difficult to build an economy. It is very difficult to build sewer and water. It is very difficult to build infrastructure. When we talk about infrastructure, I want to remind my colleagues not to forget the importance of regions like northern Ontario where we are still struggling to get basic infrastructure in place.

When the Prime Minister and the Liberal members talk about major infrastructure development, they have to understand how important that is to those first nations and the north. They have to understand the importance of what we are trying to achieve in the north when we talk about basic infrastructure.

Why did I run? It is because I think northern Ontario, under the previous government, has fallen further and further behind. All first nations in the region had their capital funding cut. All first nations in the region had their provincial territorial organizations cut; they organize all the work that these communities do. We know that is happening, and we say to the party opposite that that is not going to hold for very long because communities need to grow.

I ran on real change. I ran on frustration, because of a particular view that I think all Canadians share, that the basic principle of government is that we look after our elderly and our children, and make decisions that are best for our country in the long term.

When I talked to veterans in my region, they were angry at the government for making major cuts and making their lives so difficult that they could not take it anymore. They felt they had to start going out. They were talking about demonstrating. I knew we were in trouble as a nation.

There was the cutting of funding to the Experimental Lakes in my region, one of the most successful research facilities in the world. It was cut by that government of the day, saving them a total of \$1.5 million. It embarrassed us all around the world. Scientists could not figure out how anyone in their right mind would do something like that to a facility that was making such a difference for our environment.

We can look at things like health care. The previous prime minister's decision to have an 11-week campaign gave me the opportunity to go door to door and talk to a lot of people. The number one issue for many people in regions like mine is health care, and issues related to health care, such how we are going to deal with seniors, elders, and home care.

In the short time that I have left, I just want the House to know that this government, like any other government that runs on major, real change, is not going to do it in the first 100 days and is not going to do it in the first term. It takes a decade to make the kinds of changes that we are promoting here on this side of the House.

I, like everyone else on this side of the House, think the platform that we ran on was the right one, but we have to take our time to get it right and make sure we put in place those long-term changes that will improve the lives of this generation and the next generation to come.

I am honoured to be in this House. I have sat in almost every position one can think of except Speaker. I have been a minister, a parliamentary secretary, and a committee chair. All the things I have done in this House have taught me one thing, and that is that if we work together and remind ourselves that the election is over and now it is time to govern, we will make some very good decisions for the people we represent.

•(1700)

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I did take note of the fact that my colleague mentioned on numerous occasions that he was a member of the previous Liberal government, and then he spoke about the need to support our first nation communities. I would like to ask a question based on the fact that it was that previous Liberal government that imposed a debilitating 2% cap on first nations spending, and of course, it was followed by further cuts by the government that has now been replaced.

My concern is that we have seen promises in regard to an immediate inquiry into the cases of missing and murdered indigenous women, a promise of funding for education in first nation communities, and equitable funding for child and family services. I need absolute reassurance from the member that these promises and commitments are going to be fulfilled. I base that concern on the experiences of the past.

Hon. Robert Nault: Madam Speaker, the questions from the opposition are always whether we are going to meet the commitments we made during the campaign. It is obvious that if we did not, eventually we would be defeated and would go and sit on the other side. I could say for the sake of argument that when we were in government the last time, we put a 2% cap on the amount of first nation budgets on a yearly basis. However, in fairness to the people who were there then, when we took over from our friend Brian Mulroney, and I was there and most of the people in the House today were not there, we inherited a \$42-billion deficit, deficits that had been run for a whole decade and an economy that was in complete collapse, almost as bad as what we have inherited today.

I would say to the members opposite to be careful that they do not overemphasize the fact that we have not made all our commitments happen in 100 days, because circumstances dictate how to operate as a government. Yes, I expect that we will fulfill our commitments. How and when will depend on the financial situation we are in. Just to remind everyone, when Brian Mulroney was in power, he made those commitments but never fulfilled them, and we had to clean up that mess.

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Speaker, one of the major platforms of the government is to have a great amount of infrastructure funding. The member referred to some of it in his comments to the House this afternoon.

Everyone in the House represents different types of ridings. We represent big cities, small cities, small towns, rural communities, and areas for indigenous peoples. With the amount of money that is planned to be spent by the government on infrastructure, is the member aware of the strategy the government will be imposing as to which communities will get what and when?

The Address

Hon. Robert Nault: Madam Speaker, I come from a region that is still waiting for the Trans-Canada Highway to be twinned, so I hope that part of our strategy is to start twinning the highway in northern Ontario so we can have a twinned highway, like most other Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

I hope that the budget will allow us, as part of our strategy, to build all-weather roads to the first nations, and power grids by the way, because they are still on diesel-generated plants.

The member should know that the decisions this government will make will come and flow through the budget. I recommend that he be very patient, like the rest of us, and when the budget comes, it will lay out exactly what we are attempting to do, and then we will start to move, in the new fiscal year, with the major spending commitments.

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Youth), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to be here, in this historic chamber, to deliver my first speech as the member of Parliament for Vaudreuil—Soulanges.

I want to thank the people of Vaudreuil—Soulanges for their support and for giving me the opportunity to represent them here in Parliament for this term. I also want to thank my wife Paula, who was always there for me during the long campaign, my son Anderson, who every day gives me the energy I need to continue, my mother Louisa, as well as Jean-Paul and Alain, my brother Alexandre, and everyone else in my family who helped me become the voice for my community here in Ottawa.

[*English*]

I would like to thank the great people of Vaudreuil—Soulanges for giving me the honour to address this House today and to represent them and be their voice here in this historic chamber during the 42nd Parliament.

[*Translation*]

In short, the Speech from the Throne has been very well received by my constituents. I have had the opportunity to discuss it with a number of them since it was read by His Excellency the Governor General. I have received many positive comments and words of encouragement for this government.

I would add that this government's agenda represents the values of my constituents and Canadians, especially when it comes to equality of opportunity. This has contributed to making Canada one of the most prosperous countries in the world, a country chosen every year by hundreds of thousands of people seeking a better life.

I am convinced that this government's agenda, as expressed in the Speech from the Throne, will enable the people from Vaudreuil—Soulanges and Canadians across the country to achieve their full potential.

In the past 10 years, population growth in Vaudreuil—Soulanges has been among the highest in the country. Tens of thousands of people have chosen to make a life in our region. Many of them came for the wealth of our natural heritage. I am talking about the panoramic vistas of Mont Rigaud and the orchards of L'Île-Perrot. I

am talking about the shores of Hudson, Vaudreuil-sur-le-Lac, and Les Cèdres, and all the farmland that dots our region.

That is why I join the people of Vaudreuil—Soulanges in the goal of building a stronger economy that respects our environment.

My constituents in Vaudreuil—Soulanges are looking forward to having a more robust environmental assessment system, one that will give their municipal representatives and aboriginal communities a voice in the project development process.

My constituents applaud the government's promise to invest historic amounts in sustainable and green technologies and infrastructure, and in Canada's capacity for mitigating climate change. All this will contribute to growing our economy while protecting and preserving our environment. This government recognizes that our natural wealth is above all the heritage of future generations and that we must do everything we can to protect it.

[*English*]

Our community has had the privilege of welcoming so many new families over the last decade, predominantly young families, like my own, with young children. These families have come from the island of Montreal, from all across the provinces of Quebec and Ontario, and from all around the world. They are proud to add to the richness of culture and history that blankets our region. Our community is proud to celebrate this diversity through annual cultural festivities in the cities of Pincourt and Vaudreuil, and the citizens of my riding applaud this government's statement from the Speech from the Throne: We are as Canadians stronger “because of our differences, not in spite of them”.

I also want to state that the families that make up my riding are incredibly hard-working families. They are owners of small businesses. They are farmers, health care workers, teachers, aerospace workers, pilots, public servants, and of course, the hardest job of all, parents and grandparents. Like most Canadians, they are working longer hours yet still find it hard to make ends meet and provide for their children and grandchildren. That is why they welcome this government's pledge to increase support for lower-income seniors and to reduce taxes for middle-class families, both of which would put more money in the pockets of those who need it and less in the pockets of those who do not.

They also welcome this government's plan to introduce a more progressive Canada child benefit, a plan that, according to the parliamentary budget officer, would lift over 300,000 children out of poverty, many of whom live in my community.

• (1710)

[*Translation*]

In Canada, more than one million children, or about one in five, currently live in poverty. I am proud of this government, which has decided to tackle this unacceptable situation. In doing so, we are continuing the work started by other Canadians before us, who had the courage and confidence to invest in the next generations, who are the future of our country. I believe that my honourable colleagues would agree that this is the best way to prepare ourselves for future challenges.

The Address

That is why this government will implement an ambitious plan to address issues affecting Canada's youth. As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister for Youth, these issues are definitely very important to me and I can identify with them. In fact, my mother was a single parent, and today I am the father of a 14-month-old little boy to whom I wish to leave a legacy he will be proud of.

[English]

With this in mind, I look forward to working with the Prime Minister to increase the voice our youth has within the walls of Parliament by creating the first ever youth advisory council to the Prime Minister. I look forward to ensuring that we increase the opportunities we offer youth to serve their country, both locally and abroad. I look forward to implementing our plan to reduce the economic burden for all Canadian youth who pursue post-secondary education, and I look forward to providing economic opportunity by reducing the economic burden of unemployed youth on their families by increasing the capacity of the government summer job program over the next three years.

[Translation]

The idea is that if we focus our efforts on channelling the collective energy, innovation, and creativity of our Canadian youth, our country will be better off. This principle has always been one of the drivers of our country's success, and it will help us realize our full potential.

[English]

I take this opportunity to note that at one point in our history, we stood up and recognized that if we wanted our country to thrive, we needed to provide every single woman with the same rights and privileges as men. At one point in our history, we rose up to make the case for universal, primary, and secondary education to ensure that we empowered the next generation with the tools necessary to meet the challenges of its time.

Yes, at one point in our history, we recognized that providing equal universal health care for all Canadians was necessary to ensure that we met the basic needs of our population. This ensured that the thoughts of Canadians were focused not on how they would pay for their health care costs or the health care costs of their family members but instead on growing strong families, building more prosperous businesses, creating or assisting community groups, and serving our country in other ways.

These are just some of the ideas and plans that have been put in place over our 149-year history and that have helped Canadians build a Canada that every single one of us in the House can be proud of.

• (1715)

[Translation]

When we invest in Canadians, we set the stage for a stronger and more prosperous country for our current and future generations. For these and many other reasons, I am proud of the direction taken by our government since October 19.

[English]

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would first like to congratulate my hon.

colleague for his speech today, but I believe that there are some concerns that have been raised and need to continue to be raised.

Actions speak louder than words. Obviously, we have only been here for about four months, but in those four months, one of the actions we have seen is a tax break that benefits those who earn \$190,000 while it does not benefit at all those who earn less than \$45,000. As the member said, he has heard from his constituents that they liked the throne speech. If governments were judged on words alone, they would continue to be elected over and over again.

Why did the government put a priority on helping those earning over \$190,000 a year over those earning less than \$45,000 a year?

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from across the aisle for his question and accolades.

We have put in place many measures that will help lower-income families, many of which would have helped my mother when she was raising my brother and I on her own, particularly a significant increase to the Canada child benefit, which will lift over 300,000 children in this country out of poverty. We are also putting in place measures to increase the amount of funding that we provide to lower-income seniors. The list is very lengthy.

I am very proud of the measures this government has proposed to help those most vulnerable, struggling families in this country, and I look forward to working with this government to ensure that these are put in place.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Madam Speaker, congratulations to the member across on his excellent speech. I was pleased to hear him mention seniors and health care because some of that was missing from the throne speech.

We are deeply concerned that there is no commitment to cancel the Conservatives' planned cuts to health care. Reversing these dangerous cuts is critical to strengthening our health care in Canada.

Will the government commit to a strategy to provide the care that seniors need, at home, in hospitals, in long-term care facilities, and through palliative care?

Will the government cancel the Conservatives' planned cuts to health care in Canada?

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Madam Speaker, health care is an issue that is of personal concern to me. I have been diagnosed with cancer twice in my life and I understand all too well the wait times that some of face in the various provinces across the country.

One of the things that I am very proud of is the fact that our Prime Minister has stated clearly and categorically that we will once again play a proactive role in working with the provinces to ensure that we are offering the best possible support to the provincial systems in offering quality health care to all Canadians.

I look forward to seeing what this government will do over our mandate to ensure that that happens.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. who made such a great presentation on youth. It is so exciting to see the government focusing on youth and having an advisory council for youth.

The Address

I wonder whether the member has any plans to address youth unemployment and youth mental health issues, working with the provinces to try to correct the situation with youth in terms of employment and mental health.

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Madam Speaker, one of the things I am most proud of in working with the Prime Minister is to see the utmost importance he places on the quality of health care, the quality of opportunity for our youth across the country. He has basically given me a mandate to work with him in whatever capacity I can to ensure that we are providing quality health care, quality care in terms of mental care, and ensuring that we are providing opportunities for youth to find jobs.

One of the things we are starting off with is ensuring that we double the number of jobs sponsored by the Government of Canada for youth throughout the summer. That is something that will help lift the burden off families which unfortunately are having to take care of youth who cannot find jobs. It will help those families. It will help those youth attend university and find the jobs that this country needs to get us out of this economic crisis.

• (1720)

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Sarnia—Lambton.

It is a pleasure to rise in the House this evening. It is my first opportunity to rise in the House for a speech since the election. First, I would like to thank the residents of Huron—Bruce counties for their confidence in me in re-electing me for a third time. It is a tremendous honour. It is an honour that all members of the House, whether they have been here for many years or are just newly elected, will come to understand. This time, it being a 79-day election, or really almost a two-year election, it certainly put a lot of miles on the feet. For those at home who might be interested, we logged about 400 plus miles knocking on doors. That took a few treads off the shoes.

I should also thank volunteers, my staff, and family for the tremendous help as well. I could not do it without them.

This is the first Speech from the Throne that we have heard from a Liberal government in many years. Two of its themes are a strong economy and a strong environment. One thing that investors looking to reinvest in our country, or new investors, look for is certainty. The Speech from the Throne and the actions taken by the government in the first few months certainly would not give any investor certainty or confidence to make Canada a place to invest. It would probably be in spite of the government that they would make those investments.

There are a couple of points that are open to debate. One is the deficit. During the election campaign the Prime Minister talked about a target deficit ratio he had in mind, and almost immediately after being elected the Liberals admitted they would blow right through that and would actually measure their success by a different means, which would be a ratio. That would not give too many investors a lot of confidence. In addition to that was a price on carbon. It has been a long-standing commitment of the Liberal Party to put a price on carbon. This is at a time when the resource sector in our country, and really around the world, is on its knees and looking for a bit of good news. The news of a carbon tax is not reassuring. We are starting to see some themes in these respects.

In addition to that is the review of environmental assessments. We heard the Prime Minister mention them in the House today and abroad when he was travelling. We can all debate what an environmental assessment looks like today compared to what it looked like just a few years ago, but if we look back to a few years ago at the height of the economic downturn, projects received funding from the federal and provincial governments. They went through two levels of environmental assessment, federal and provincial. We all agreed, and the provinces agreed at that time too, that if the provincial environmental assessment was suitable, we should cut the red tape and stick strictly to the provincial environmental assessment. It has worked out quite well. I know that in my riding it has worked out well. The municipalities, the engineers, and the contractors understand that red tape has been removed. However, when we hear the Prime Minister talk about environmental assessments, we need answers. The economy needs answers. Business needs answers.

When we look at environmental assessments of large projects that would warrant a federal environmental assessment, we hear there is a new day, a new time for these assessments. That is a cause for concern. There are environmental assessments that have already been undertaken, for example, of the northern gateway project. I have the numbers for the latter. There were 180 days of hearings, 80 expert witnesses, on top of many deputizations that took place. As well, the panel had 30,000 pages to review. Any business looking to make investments in our country, whether on a pipeline, opening a mine, or whatever it may be, even a green hydroelectric project, is going to look at this and the words of the Prime Minister. If they are looking for certainty and reasonableness and a threshold to satisfy both what they are trying to do and the environmental concerns, they are going to have second thoughts.

• (1725)

When we are looking now at a carbon tax on the horizon and environmental assessments that may not even improve the current system, but just add layers of red tape that were previously eliminated, it is a concern. When we look at what we also heard about in the election campaign, the Navigable Waters Protection Act, it directly affects my riding. We have many in my riding, none of which are navigable except maybe by a kayak or a canoe. Now we would turn back the clock and ask Transport Canada to look at every project that may involve a river that has no navigation, by kayak or raft, and waste valuable resources at Transport Canada to ask them if there are any concerns. This would not improve the environment, the economy, or red tape. This would add layers and burden to the system. For the economy, we are off to a bad start.

The Address

In addition to that, we are asking business owners who want to add more staff or set up new shops in this country to increase their payroll taxes via a proposed addition or new form of the Canada pension plan. In my province of Ontario, the premier has talked about this, and it is disastrous. It would get rid of jobs. It is one more thing that would have business owners take a look and say they will take a pass. It is unfortunate to have this pessimistic view, but people are going to be in the board room, likely as we speak, trying to make decisions on where they are going to allocate their capital for the rest of this year and next year and years beyond, and they are going to have a lot of questions.

If we look at Australia, I do not know if the liberal party in Australia has eliminated the carbon tax that the labour party brought in there, but it was certainly one of the policies that they had. Why? It was because they saw what it did to the country.

Another thing I want to talk about is that brain drain. It has been many years since we have talked about the brain drain, but it will be on the horizon again. We know that many of the professionals in this country, especially in small communities like mine, are valued. We value these professions: the doctors and dentists and so on. With the Liberals' proposed increased tax rates on these professionals, and with the way the dollar is relative to the United States currency, this will cause a brain drain once again, something that was corrected over the last decade. We are now going to be having discussions in the near future about brain drain.

In addition, one of the pledges that the Liberals made in their platform was tax relief for the middle class and hikes in the top tax bracket. This was supposed to be revenue neutral. Shortly after that the Liberals took office, they were again shown to be wrong: it was not revenue neutral. It was at least \$1 billion to the wrong side of the ledger, which again gives no confidence to the market.

The energy east pipeline is basically turning out to be a bungled mess politically. For the Prime Minister and some of his Liberal mayors throughout the countryside, it is causing issues. I have lots to talk about here. Perhaps in question time there will be lots of questions to bring up.

Another item I want to talk about is Canada's position in the world. In 90 days, the Liberals have diminished our place on the world stage. Now, we are not asked to meet with NATO countries in Paris to work out a plan to rid the world of ISIS, and that is a shame. Hopefully, we will get more questions.

• (1730)

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was glad to hear my hon. colleague across the way end with Canada's reputation in the world. Frankly, it is a matter of great pride and privilege that I and my colleagues throughout the House have had the opportunity to be on hand to help welcome the tens of thousands, now over 13,000, refugees who have landed in our country. We have demonstrated to the world that a compassionate and caring Canada is back. We have demonstrated to citizens that they should be proud and inviting once again, that despite our differences, we are much stronger when we work together in communities, provinces, and throughout the country. In my mind, that has signalled to the world that Canada is willing to, once again, be a human rights leader, a promoter of peace and democracy building.

I would ask the member opposite what he thinks the invitation, welcoming, and resettlement effort for Syrian refugees speaks to as it relates to Canada's role in the world.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Speaker, the member would be happy to know that the Conservative government welcomed more refugees than any other government. We are quite happy to have these productive people come to our country and get away from the tyranny in which they were involved.

Unfortunately, in 90 days, the Liberals have created a two-tier refugee system. Over the Christmas break when the House was not sitting, a resident from one of my communities commented on how upset he was because his community was trying to welcome a family from Ethiopia and that application had been put on the back burner. That is unfortunate. The people who the resident was welcoming have to repay a loan. The Liberals have waived the loan for the Syrian refugees and have created a two-tier system.

In 90 days, the Liberals have diminished our place on the world stage to the point now where the Liberal strategy is coats, campfires, and cannabis, the three Cs. Those are the three ways the Liberals have to solve the world's issues and it is a failure and a flop. We used to have a place at the table and now we do not. What a shame.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for bringing up some very critical issues on how the new government is dealing with the economy. We all know that investors and money go where they are wanted. I listened with great interest about the environmental assessment process. As a government, Conservatives ensured that the environment was absolutely protected, but got rid of the unnecessary duplications.

I would like to use the example that the Kinder Morgan pipeline knew what the rules of the game were. It has been very actively going through the National Energy Board process, following what was in place for it to get to a yes or no or a yes with conditions. I would like to hear from the hon. member what it means to a company like that when the rules can, all of a sudden, be changed in a very arbitrary and unfair fashion.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Speaker, businesses do not have an infinite amount of money and time to decide where they are going to deploy their capital. They have to decide because they are responsible to their shareholders. More times than not, when there is uncertainty created by the government, they will take a pass.

The environmental assessment process is very rigorous. There has been an environmental assessment process going on in my riding since I have been elected, for seven and a half years, and there is still no yes or no answer. That, to me, would seem a very onerous and rigorous system and one maybe in some cases is warranted. However, if the average is that long, that certainly will not work.

The Address

If anything, I believe the Liberal government should find ways to make the environmental assessment process work quicker, better, and faster, so companies that are looking to invest in our country know they have certainty. Right now, unfortunately, the Liberal government has raised a multitude of red flags that will have investors scratching their heads and looking to see where else to invest.

• (1735)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to wish you and everyone here a happy new year.

Today, I would like to talk about the throne speech. It was not very long and the text was so concise in many areas that I would have liked to have the government provide more details. I will read the passages that are too vague and tell you what I think should have been said.

[*English*]

Let us begin in the section of the speech where it says:

And recognizing that public investment is needed to create and support economic growth, job creation and economic prosperity, the Government will make significant new investments in public transit, green infrastructure, and social infrastructure.

I hope that when the government says “public transit”, it means that all the money will not go just to big cities but that it will be spent in rural communities as well. People in my riding of Sarnia—Lambton have no public transportation to get from the country to the city, and our connectivity to other cities needs to be enhanced.

When the government says “green infrastructure”, I hope it is including support for our nuclear industry in Ontario, which we are dependent on if we do not want to see brownouts. Our nuclear industry can help reduce our carbon footprint at an economical price as well as generate export opportunities for Canada’s CANDU technology.

I hope that green infrastructure also includes the infrastructure at universities, colleges, and centres of excellence that promote clean tech. I hope it includes water infrastructure so that all Canadians can have a safe source of drinking water. However, I hope it does not include any more green energy priced at five times the alternate rate.

I hope that in social infrastructure, the government is including rural Internet. We have areas within my riding that have no and slow Internet, and that acts as a barrier to economic development and competitiveness.

I hope that the government is also including housing in social infrastructure. My riding has infrastructure needs, from homeless shelters to subsidized housing to seniors housing, and I am sure that this is true across the country.

One thing not mentioned in this infrastructure strategy to support economic growth are upgrades to trade routes. In Sarnia, we have an opportunity to create an oversize-load corridor to ship large equipment and fabricated modules globally, but funding support would be needed.

The trade corridor in the north will need support as well, as we can see from the most recent Nipigon bridge failure.

[*Translation*]

I also expected the sections on economic growth to mention science and innovation. I was hoping that the government would provide a detailed explanation of how it will encourage innovation, from basic research all the way to marketing, with a view to creating jobs.

I thought the government would announce targets to focus our efforts and enhance our position as a world leader in strategic research.

I thought that it would do more than just talk about clean technologies, health sciences, and climate change. I thought that it would also focus on the sectors that today represent nearly half of our GDP, namely the agricultural, forestry, mining, fossil fuel, energy, and aerospace industries, not to mention areas where there is a future, such as genomics, nanoparticles, and big data.

[*English*]

I then turn to the page in the throne speech that talks about a clean environment and a strong economy. Having just gone through the section on openness and transparency and hearing continually how the government will consult broadly on issues, I was disturbed last week to hear Perrin Beatty, the CEO of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, say that they do not feel they have been adequately consulted on the plans to implement carbon pricing and that he is concerned about the impact on the business sector.

As a riding that is heavily invested in fossil fuel production, I am also concerned that the government is supporting provinces to implement carbon pricing mechanisms like cap and trade that have been shown to make money for those trading credits but that do nothing for the planet. During a period when this industry is struggling with low oil prices and demand, this could be the tipping point.

When I read that the government will introduce a new environmental assessment process, I was hoping I would see words that would give me confidence that we will see a balance between ensuring that environmental diligence happens and allowing businesses to implement economic development, like pipelines, sometime this century.

Patricia Mohr, who is the chief strategist for Scotiabank on hydrocarbons, has clearly stated that if we do not get pipelines built to the east and the west in this country to export oil, this will become a very poor country indeed.

Moving along to the diversity section of the throne speech, one of Canada’s strengths, I am happy to see that we want to make it easier for immigrants to build successful lives in Canada. Hopefully this means that when we get engineers and doctors to come to our great country, we can accredit them from a list of known and approved university and country standards so that they do not have to drive taxis for years.

The Address

Hopefully that means that when they apply for permanent resident status, we do not make them wait for years, with multiple interventions from Service Canada once they qualify.

● (1740)

[*Translation*]

I am glad to see that there will be an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women, but I hope that this inquiry will seek solutions instead of repeating what we already know.

In the throne speech, the government said that we must do more to support veterans. I agree, but I would also like the government to think about seniors, those who worked their whole lives here and who are now envious of the medical and dental care offered to Syrian refugees. These people cannot afford that care on their fixed incomes.

[*English*]

Next, I come to the section on security and opportunity. I see that the government plans to strengthen its relationship with its allies. From the lack of inclusion in Barack Obama's list of allies in his latest speeches to the non-invitation to Paris to talk about stepping up the fight against ISIS, it is clear that the Liberal government has to change from its campaign promises based on the new information and the new reality we are seeing.

I would also quote from the speech where it says “And to expand economic opportunities for all Canadians, the Government will negotiate beneficial trade agreements”. I hope this means that it will successfully sign the TPP and the EU agreement, both of which are being made with countries that share our human rights viewpoint. The government needs to clarify whether we really care about human rights. If so, how can we be entertaining making trade agreements with Iran and China? Either we only care about the jobs and economic benefit for Canada, in which case the government should just say that, or we really care about human rights violations, and we will either not engage with countries that are clear chronic violators or we will impose punitive measures for human rights violation into our agreements.

I want to talk about a few other things in the throne speech.

In his introduction, the Governor General brings this whole speech, the plan for the next four years in this country, as a representative of Her Majesty the Queen. Our Westminster style of Parliament is based on allegiance to the Queen. How then can we allow someone who has lived in Canada for 13 years, who has seen how our government is based, who knows this and wants to be a Canadian citizen, to swear their oath pledging allegiance to the Queen one day and then the next day revoke that allegiance and still retain their citizenship? Will we also allow individuals to revoke the other part of the oath where they pledge to obey Canadian law? My view is that, when people take the pledge to join this great country, they should not be able to pick and choose which parts they like. It is not a buffet.

Finally, the prelude to the throne speech says that Canada succeeds in large part because diverse perspectives and different opinions are celebrated here, not silenced. Is this true? Are we not more and more unable to express what we think because it is unpopular? A male colleague in the House said he was afraid to

express his views for fear of being labelled a racist or a chauvinist, of which he is neither. I have heard Christians in our country say they are afraid to express their views for fear of being mocked—in our democracy that is supposed to have freedom of religion. The freedom of speech is so fundamental to our democracy. Although all Canadians may not agree on our opinions, we need to be able to say what we think and allow each other to do that without the punishment of bullying behaviours, but with respect.

The throne speech says that in Parliament all members will be honoured, respected, and heard, and I hope these words from the throne speech at least are true.

● (1745)

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share my colleague's conviction on human rights.

I have a question with respect to Saudi Arabia. As the member is aware, the previous government made an arms deal with Saudi Arabia, by which a very sizeable amount of weapons is going to be shipped to Saudi Arabia. I am wondering if my colleague has an opinion as to whether or not the current government should continue with that deal.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, obviously we cannot change the past. In the go-forward position, all we can do is the right thing. Once we have committed to a contract, it is hard to break it without breach of contract. That being said, some kind of punitive action is needed in these situations, because it is not just that we want to do business with them; they also want to do business with us, and we have control over that.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton for her great opening speech and for her election.

Just last week in my riding, gas prices hit an all-time high. In Qualicum Beach it was \$1.16 a litre, and \$1.12 in Parksville. It was the highest in the country, more than even the Northwest Territories. A recent Bank of Canada report shows that record low oil prices that are rocking the Canadian economy are not being felt at the pump. In British Columbia, with an increase in MSP, it is affecting people and making inequality higher and higher.

Will the member join me in calling for a gas ombudsman to protect seniors, working families, and small business owners from gas gouging at the pump? Canadians need help and they are looking for the government. Will the member join me in calling on the government for someone to protect consumers and Canadians from what is happening to us at the pump?

The Address

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, obviously I also am extremely concerned about the high price of gas, considering that oil prices are in the toilet. When it comes to the things that go into gas pricing, we know about provincial and other taxes. Above and beyond that it is the companies that set the price of gasoline. I used to work for one of those companies. That said, people are really struggling. We see those on fixed incomes and seniors struggling in this area and certainly I would support having lower gas prices for everyone.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is great to see you back in the House of Commons. Congratulations on your electoral victory and your current posting.

First of all, I want to thank my colleague for her astute comments. She is obviously a very savvy and professional businesswoman who brings great esteem to the House in that capacity. Before I go further, I would like to pay homage to her predecessor, Pat Davidson, who was a great MP for Samia Lambton for almost 10 years.

I am going to ask a question on the commonalities between our respective ridings that both host some of the largest petrochemical installations with Nova Chemicals and so on. I represent the fine people who live and work at Joffre and some of my friends started working for Nova Chemicals in Calgary and are now living and working in Samia.

I would like to ask the member what the importance and significance is of pipelines, energy mobility, and access to markets for these products that do all this great value added in our respective ridings, the value that those jobs bring, and her concern about the near absence of energy and petrochemicals in the Speech from the Throne.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, obviously, I am not pleased to see energy not mentioned in the throne speech. It is an extremely important part of our GDP. When it comes to pipelines, I referred in my speech to Patricia Mohr who is the global hydrocarbon strategist for Scotiabank. If we look at our GDP and where we are going to grow, there is nothing that we can immediately substitute in the fossil fuel industry.

There is \$160 billion of opportunity in the upgrading of products that if we do not upgrade, one million barrels a day are being shipped down to the U.S. in place of the Keystone XL pipeline that was not approved. It is now going in a more dangerous way by rail. The U.S. will then upgrade those products into the solvents that we bring back. We are certainly losing opportunities. Pipelines are a great answer and I would encourage the government to spend the infrastructure money on energy east.

• (1750)

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am going to share my time with another hon. member.

[*Translation*]

It is a real honour for me to represent the people of Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, who voted overwhelmingly for change on October 19.

[*English*]

Saint Boniface—Saint Vital is the birthplace and the resting place of the father of Manitoba and leader of the Métis Nation, Louis Riel. Mr. Riel is very well known, but aside from the leader himself, there are literally thousands of other lesser-known and some completely

unknown Métis who were born, raised, lived, worked, and today are buried in the cemeteries along the Red River in Saint Boniface—Saint Vital.

Today, I am proud to say that there are many citizens, young and old alike, who are reclaiming their Métis identity that has been historically oppressed and taken away by the powers that were in Manitoba of that era.

[*Translation*]

Saint Boniface—Saint Vital is also a franco-Métis community, and without a doubt the most vibrant one in all of western Canada. Institutions like the Université de Saint-Boniface, the Centre culturel franco-manitobain, the Cercle Molière, the Maison Gabrielle-Roy, Riel House, the Saint-Boniface Museum, and the Union nationale métisse, among many others, help ensure that residents can remain proud and retain their language for years to come.

[*English*]

Saint Boniface—Saint Vital is also one of the most diverse communities in the city of Winnipeg. We have some of the oldest, most historic communities in the city. We have some communities that are facing some real poverty challenges, as well as some of the wealthiest neighbourhoods in the entire city.

Immigration has been a positive force in my constituency. There are many communities and neighbourhoods that boast a wide variety of new Canadians, including many of East Indian and Sikh descent, and many eastern Europeans.

[*Translation*]

More and more French-speaking Africans are living in Saint-Boniface because they want to study at the Université de Saint-Boniface. This is great news, and I hope this will continue for a long time.

[*English*]

All of this to say that the citizens of Saint Boniface—Saint Vital voted overwhelmingly to rebuild our cities through Canada's largest ever infrastructure program that is reflected in the throne speech. The citizens of my area voted overwhelmingly for a renewed middle class who will benefit from a middle-income tax cut as reflected in the throne speech. The citizens of my constituency voted for an enhanced, more generous and tax-free Canada child benefit that will raise over 300,000 children out of poverty. The citizens of my constituency voted for a Canada that recognizes that climate change is real and needs to be addressed in an intelligent, comprehensive fashion so that our future citizens, our sons, daughters and grandchildren, do not bear the brunt of the short-sighted, myopic policy of today.

As a former city councillor for many years, I can tell members that our cities from coast to coast are in desperate need of funding for the most basic of infrastructure. Regional roads, residential streets, sidewalks, back lanes, bridges, underground infrastructure, community centres and more all need the investment of the federal government.

The Address

I will give members a real-time city of Winnipeg example.

The city currently spends over \$1 billion a year on infrastructure, underground and above ground, which is not nearly enough. A report, several years old now, said that the city should actually be spending an extra \$400 million annually just to maintain the infrastructure at its current level. I repeat that this would not improve the infrastructure, but it would prevent further decay.

The time is right for federal investment in Canada's infrastructure and I am proud that the throne speech speaks about getting the ball rolling. We will create thousands of jobs across Canada in the construction sector of this great country, and with interest rates at historic low levels, there has never been a better time than now to borrow to invest in publicly owned infrastructure.

The citizens of my constituency also voted for leadership in developing and improving the relationship with our Métis, first nation, and Inuit citizens. Whether we recognize it or not, there are too many indigenous citizens represented in poverty statistics, on unemployment lines, on welfare rolls, in hospitals, in child welfare rolls. We need to turn that around. Canada needs to work with indigenous communities and indigenous leadership to improve indigenous health care, indigenous education, and indigenous employment.

The city I represent is the indigenous capital of Canada. We have more Métis, first nation, and Inuit people in Winnipeg today than Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, and the Yukon Territory combined. The fastest growing populations in Winnipeg today are young Métis, first nation, and Inuit people. Canada needs to partner on a nation-to-nation basis to create opportunities for those young indigenous populations. The throne speech lays out the framework for addressing these challenges.

The citizens of Saint Boniface—Saint Vital voted for the Government of Canada to finally put forth a critical path to resolve the Manitoba Métis land claims issue of 1870 as per the decision of the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court decision was clear and unambiguous. The court ruled that the Government of Canada at the time acted inconsistently with the honour of the crown when it bungled land distribution to Métis families as negotiated by the provisional government as Manitoba entered Confederation. Thanks to strong leadership and 30 years of challenge by the Manitoba Métis Federation, we now have a clear legal ruling and finally have a federal government that promises to make good on the Supreme Court decision. I am proud to stand as a member of that government.

• (1755)

[*Translation*]

The citizens of Saint Boniface—Saint Vital also voted for justice for the Métis people of Manitoba and Canada and for a federal government that will follow a critical path to resolve the land claims of 1870 as per the 2013 Supreme Court decision. Employment is a major issue for our Métis youth, and our people demand better of the federal government.

The throne speech laid out a positive and encouraging plan and highlighted many of the elements I spoke about. I am proud to support these important initiatives. My constituents are pleased that our great country is finally moving toward a positive plan that will

create jobs, rebuild our cities and communities, and fight poverty and climate change.

[*English*]

The throne speech of 2015 lays out a positive, hopeful agenda. It outlines actions on many of the initiatives I have identified.

I am proud to support these important initiatives, and the people I represent are proud of our great country finally moving in a positive direction that creates jobs, rebuilds cities, addresses poverty, addresses indigenous issues as well as climate change.

As a final clarification, I am sharing my time with the member for Steveston—Richmond East.

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

Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege and opportunity to know the member for Saint Boniface—Saint Vital and have seen much of his good deeds as a city councillor. It is great to see him being a part of the House of Commons. I know he will be a very strong advocate for the Saint Boniface community, which he very boastfully talks about, and justifiably so.

My question for the member is in regard to what he feels is the most important issue for his constituents today. Could he provide a comment from his personal perspective, thinking as a former city councillor and now as a member of Parliament? How does he see the relationship with the city of Winnipeg and how important it is that the Government of Canada work closely with our municipalities going forward, especially on programs like the infrastructure?

• (1800)

Mr. Dan Vandal: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that in the last eight months I quite literally knocked on thousands and thousands of doors in Saint Boniface and Saint Vital. Many of the issues were paramount to the citizens I now represent, not the least of which was infrastructure funding.

As the hon. member has mentioned, I was a city councillor for many years. I was chair of public works and infrastructure renewal at the city of Winnipeg. I know that people care and people want better infrastructure for the taxes they are paying, whether it is transportation infrastructure at Marion and Archibald, or the Waverley Underpass, or the many other priorities in the city of Winnipeg, or simply better residential streets for citizens who live all over the community, better regional streets, which not only is needed but it enhances productivity. As high a priority as any to the people I have spoken with is infrastructure renewal.

The Address

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Saint Boniface—Saint Vital makes reference to infrastructure. Another major platform issue from the last election is trying to address the needs of Canada's middle class, and that has been done through tax breaks to the middle class. It has also been done through the Canada child benefit.

Perhaps he could comment on those two platform issues.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Again, Mr. Speaker, after my intensive consultations of the last six months, the middle-income tax cut was very well received at the doors.

I also know there were some questions in the past about what we were doing for people who were struggling to join the middle class. That is where the Canada child benefit comes in. It is more generous and is tax free. That was a huge attraction for many of the young families to which I spoke. It will put more money in the pockets of young families. In fact, it will raise 300,000 children out of poverty over the long term.

If we couple that with a 10% increase in the guaranteed income supplement for seniors, we will be doing an incredible job when those initiatives are rolled out all across Canada.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will ask a similar question to one that I asked of the NDP. I know that we all believe that we have to move forward with reconciliation in our relationships with indigenous communities.

With respect to the 94 recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, would the member not agree that any government should not only analyze their implications but also provide all parliamentarians with the costs? I think we absolutely agree that it is important to move forward with many of the recommendations, but is that not a responsibility of any government?

Mr. Dan Vandal: Mr. Speaker, I was very proud when the government said it was going to implement all 94 recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It is very important and groundbreaking work that the commission did. I think that once the report flows through the systems of the House of Commons, it will be analyzed very closely, in all degrees and in all aspects.

Mr. Joe Peschisolido (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to stand in this House for the first time to discuss and debate the Speech from the Throne.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my *nonno* and *nonna*. Bless them. They are not here any longer. They took care of me. They raised me. They gave me values and principles that I hold dear. My mum and dad, Loreto and Margherita Peschisolido, came from a small town, Ceprano, just south of Rome. My mum worked at a dry cleaner. My dad started out picking up stuff on streets, and they owned some stores and whatnot. They gave me everything, but while they were away working and doing business, my grandma and my granddad, my *nonno* and *nonna*, took care of me and in many ways I am here because of them.

In my riding of Steveston—Richmond East, I have many folks like my parents, grandparents, and I who come from a variety of parts of the world. I perhaps have the most diverse riding in all of Canada, be it ethnically or socioeconomically.

● (1805)

[*Translation*]

I am proud to be the MP for a riding like Steveston—Richmond East, which is home to people from all over the world, people of Chinese origin and people of English origin.

[*English*]

If a person or his or her parents or grandparents are originally from England, the Philippines or Punjab, we would probably find them in Steveston—Richmond East.

I am also blessed to have a riding that is very diverse economically. I have an airport just a bit north of my riding. I have a harbour. I have a port. The Speech from the Throne talked about reinstating the Kitsilano Coast Guard station, and that was done. For a place like Steveston—Richmond East, where we have the south and north arms of the Fraser River and a lot of boaters going out on the water, to have the security that there is now a Coast Guard station not that far is a good thing. We promised that during the campaign, it was in the Speech from the Throne, and it has been done.

I talked about my parents and my *nonno* and *nonna*. There are a lot of folks in Steveston—Richmond East who are waiting for their parents or for their spouses. We talked about changing and revamping our immigration system in the Speech from the Throne. We should not have a system where depending on where one is coming from in the world it takes four to nine years to bring one's parents and grandparents here or where one has to wait two years before putting in an application to ask for a spouse to come over. I do not know how I would have dealt with not having my mom and dad around, or my *nonno* and *nonna*. I do not think anyone should have to be in that situation. Therefore, the Speech from the Throne spoke to a commitment to doubling the funds, and the processing of family members. We need to do that. It is wrong for individuals to wait four to nine years to bring their parents and grandparents over.

I discussed a bit about the port and the airport in Steveston—Richmond East. One of the things that we talked about in the Speech from the Throne is the fancy word “co-operative federalism”. Basically, it means that we will be talking to one another. I have been blessed to have the opportunity to sit down with His Worship Malcolm Brodie. I have had the opportunity to sit down with the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly in British Columbia and to talk to the MLA for Steveston to discuss a variety of issues.

We also had the fancy word “stakeholders” in the Speech from the Throne. That basically means community groups and people. I have had the opportunity to go out and talk to a whole slew of folks.

The Address

One thing we talked about was infrastructure spending. In the Speech from the Throne we talked about implementing that. Infrastructure spending will go to transit. There are a lot of folks in Steveston—Richmond East who want to get to work and do not want to drive. There are bottlenecks. In the campaign and in the Speech from the Throne, we do not dictate how we will use this infrastructure money for transit. I have had the opportunity to sit down with His Worship Malcolm Brodie and the councillors as well to talk about ideas on the best way to get rid of those bottlenecks.

I have had great conversations with the food bank, with Pathways and with other organizations to see how we can also use money from the infrastructure spending to get the economy going because we need to kick start our economy. We also talked about how we could help those who needed social housing, or who needed help with a bit more than just a roof over their heads, or who maybe needed a bit of help on some issues of abuse, alcohol or mental health problems.

That is the type of approach that this government will take. I look forward to spending at least another four years as the member of Parliament for Steveston—Richmond East, speaking to the good folks there and hearing what they would like to see moving forward.

The last thing I would like to talk about is the nature of Steveston—Richmond East. To paraphrase Ronald Reagan and some parts of the Bible, I believe that Steveston—Richmond East acts as a beacon to the world, a land of a wonderful light on a hill, although we are not on a hill but on an estuary. We have folks from everywhere. We have folks who have different faiths. We have No. 5 Road in Steveston—Richmond East. We call it “highway to heaven”, where we have churches, synagogues, mosques and temples, and where people from different faiths and backgrounds get together. Sometimes, the human condition is such that there is conflict. Our role, as members of Parliament, is to ensure that if we cannot eliminate the conflict at least we can manage it. I believe our co-operative federalism approach will be taken in dealing with the good people of Steveston—Richmond East.

● (1810)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It being 6:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the amendment to the amendment and the amendment now before the House.

● (1815)

[*English*]

The question is on the subamendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the subamendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Call in the members.

● (1845)

(The House divided on the amendment to the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(*Division No. 8*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultatif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Ambrose	Anderson
Arnold	Barlow
Bergen	Berthold
Bezan	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Boucher
Boudrias	Brassard
Brown	Calkins
Carrie	Clarke
Clement	Cooper
Deltell	Diotte
Doherty	Dreeshen
Egliniski	Falk
Fast	Fortin
Généreux	Genius
Gill	Gladu
Godin	Gourde
Harder	Harper
Hoback	Jeneroux
Kelly	Kenney
Kent	Kitchen
Kmiec	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Liepert	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacKenzie
Marcil	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)	Nater
Nicholson	Nuttall
Obhrai	O'Toole
Pauzé	Plamondon
Poillievre	Raïtt
Rayes	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Ritz	Saroya
Scheer	Schmale
Shields	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Ste-Marie	Strahl
Stubbs	Sweet
Thériault	Tilson
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vecchio	Viersen
Wagantall	Warawa
Warkentin	Watts
Waugh	Webber
Wong	Yurdiga
Zimmer — 95	

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Baylis	Beech
Bélangier	Benson

Bibeau
 Blaikie
 Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
 Bossio
 Boutin-Sweet
 Breton
 Brosseau
 Cannings
 Carr
 Casey (Charlottetown)
 Champagne
 Chen
 Christopherson
 Cullen
 Dabrusin
 Davies
 Dhaliwal
 Di Iorio
 Donnelly
 Dubé
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Dusseault
 Dzerowicz
 Ehsassi
 Ellis
 Eyking
 Fergus
 Finnigan
 Fonseca
 Fragiskatos
 Fraser (Central Nova)
 Fuhr
 Garrison
 Goldsmith-Jones
 Gould
 Grewal
 Hardcastle
 Harvey
 Holland
 Hughes
 Hutchings
 Johns
 Jones
 Jowhari
 Kang
 Khera
 Lametti
 Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
 LeBlanc
 Lefebvre
 Leslie
 Lightbound
 Long
 Ludwig
 MacGregor
 Malcolmson
 Masse (Windsor West)
 Mathysen
 May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
 McCrimmon
 McGuinty
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
 Mendès
 Mihychuk
 Soeurs)
 Monsef
 Morneau
 Mulcair
 Nassif
 O'Connell
 Oliver
 Paradis
 Peterson
 Philpott
 Poissant
 Qualtrough
 Rankin
 Rioux
 Rodriguez
 Rota
 Ruimy
 Saganash
 Saini
 Samson

Bittle
 Blair
 Boissonnault
 Boulterice
 Bratina
 Brison
 Caesar-Chavannes
 Caron
 Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
 Chagger
 Chan
 Choquette
 Cormier
 Cuzner
 Damoff
 DeCoursey
 Dhillon
 Dion
 Drouin
 Duclos
 Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
 Duvall
 Easter
 El-Khoury
 Erskine-Smith
 Eyolfson
 Fillmore
 Fisher
 Foote
 Fraser (West Nova)
 Freeland
 Gameau
 Gerretsen
 Goodale
 Graham
 Hajdu
 Hardie
 Hehr
 Housefather
 Husson
 Iacono
 Joly
 Jordan
 Julian
 Khalid
 Kwan
 Lamoureux
 Laverdière
 Leboutillier
 Lemieux
 Levitt
 Lockhart
 Longfield
 MacAulay (Cardigan)
 MacKinnon (Gatineau)
 Maloney
 Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
 May (Cambridge)
 McCallum
 McDonald
 McKenna
 McLeod (Northwest Territories)
 Mendicino
 Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-
 Moore
 Morrissey
 Nantel
 Nault
 Oliphant
 Ouellette
 Peschisolido
 Petitpas Taylor
 Picard
 Quach
 Ramsey
 Ratansi
 Robillard
 Romanado
 Rudd
 Rusnak
 Sahota
 Sajjan
 Sangha

Sansoucy
 Scarpaleggia
 Schulte
 Sgro
 Sheehan
 Sidhu (Brampton South)
 Simms
 Sorbara
 Stetski
 Tabbara
 Tassi
 Trudel
 Vandenbeld
 Virani
 Whalen
 Wilson-Raybould
 Young

The Address

Sarai
 Schiefke
 Serré
 Shanahan
 Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
 Sikand
 Sohi
 Spengemann
 Stewart
 Tan
 Tootoo
 Vandal
 Vaughan
 Weir
 Wilkinson
 Wrzesnewskyj
 Zahid— 216

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the subamendment defeated.

The next question is on the amendment.

• (1855)

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(*Division No. 9*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif
 Albrecht
 Ambrose
 Arnold
 Bergen
 Bezan
 Block
 Brassard
 Calkins
 Clarke
 Cooper
 Diotte
 Dreeshen
 Falk
 Généreux
 Gladu
 Gourde
 Harper
 Jeneroux
 Kenney
 Kitchen
 Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
 Lobb
 MacKenzie
 McColeman
 Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
 Nicholson
 Obhrai
 Poilievre
 Rayes
 Rempel
 Ritz
 Scheer
 Shields
 Sorenson
 Strahl
 Sweet
 Van Kesteren
 Vecchio
 Wagantall
 Warkentin
 Waugh
 Wong
 Zimmer— 87

Albas
 Allison
 Anderson
 Barlow
 Berthold
 Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
 Boucher
 Brown
 Carrie
 Clement
 Deltell
 Doherty
 Egliński
 Fast
 Genuis
 Godin
 Harder
 Hoback
 Kelly
 Kent
 Kmiec
 Liepert
 Lukiwski
 McCauley (Edmonton West)
 McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
 Nater
 Nuttall
 O'Toole
 Raitt
 Reid
 Richards
 Saroya
 Schmale
 Sopuck
 Stanton
 Stubbs
 Tilson
 Van Loan
 Viersen
 Warawa
 Watts
 Webber
 Yurdiga

Adjournment Proceedings

NAYS

Members

Aldag
 Alleslev
 Anandasangaree
 Arseneault
 Ashton
 Badawey
 Baylis
 Bélanger
 Bibeau
 Blaikie
 Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
 Bossio
 Boulерice
 Bratina
 Brison
 Caesar-Chavannes
 Caron
 Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
 Chagger
 Chan
 Choquette
 Cormier
 Cuzner
 Damoff
 DeCoursey
 Dhillion
 Dion
 Drouin
 Duclos
 Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
 Duvall
 Easter
 El-Khoury
 Erskine-Smith
 Eyolfson
 Fillmore
 Fisher
 Foote
 Fragiskatos
 Fraser (Central Nova)
 Fuhr
 Garrison
 Gill
 Goodale
 Graham
 Hajdu
 Hardie
 Hehr
 Housefather
 Husson
 Iacono
 Joly
 Jordan
 Julian
 Khalid
 Kwan
 Lamoureux
 Laverdière
 Lebouthillier
 Lemieux
 Levitt
 Lockhart
 Longfield
 MacAulay (Cardigan)
 MacKinnon (Gatineau)
 Maloney
 Masse (Windsor West)
 Mathysen
 May (Saanic—Gulf Islands)
 McCrimmon
 McGuinty
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
 Mendès
 Mihychuk
 Soeurs)
 Monsef
 Morneau
 Mulcair
 Nassif
 O'Connell

Alghabra
 Amos
 Angus
 Arya
 Ayoub
 Bagnell
 Beech
 Benson
 Bittle
 Blair
 Boissonnault
 Boudrias
 Boutin-Sweet
 Breton
 Brosseau
 Cannings
 Carr
 Casey (Charlottetown)
 Champagne
 Chen
 Christopherson
 Cullen
 Dabrusin
 Davies
 Dhaliwal
 Di Iorio
 Donnelly
 Dubé
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Dusseault
 Dzerowicz
 Ehsassi
 Ellis
 Eyking
 Fergus
 Finnigan
 Fonseca
 Fortin
 Fraser (West Nova)
 Freeland
 Garneau
 Gerretsen
 Goldsmith-Jones
 Gould
 Grewal
 Hardcastle
 Harvey
 Holland
 Hughes
 Hutchings
 Johns
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 Jowhari
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 Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
 LeBlanc
 Lefebvre
 Leslie
 Lightbound
 Long
 Ludwig
 MacGregor
 Malcolmson
 Marci
 Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
 May (Cambridge)
 McCallum
 McDonald
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 McLeod (Northwest Territories)
 Mendicino
 Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-
 Moore
 Morrissey
 Nantel
 Nault
 Oliphant

Oliver
 Paradis
 Peschisolido
 Petitpas Taylor
 Picard
 Poissant
 Qualtrough
 Rankin
 Rioux
 Rodriguez
 Rota
 Ruimy
 Saganash
 Saini
 Samson
 Sansoucy
 Scarpaleggia
 Schulte
 Sgro
 Sheehan
 Sidhu (Brampton South)
 Simms
 Sorbara
 Ste-Marie
 Stewart
 Tan
 Thériault
 Trudel
 Vandenbeld
 Virani
 Whalen
 Wilson-Raybould
 Young

Ouellette
 Pauzé
 Peterson
 Philpott
 Plamondon
 Quach
 Ramsey
 Ratansi
 Robillard
 Romanado
 Rudd
 Rusnak
 Sahota
 Sajjan
 Sangha
 Sarai
 Schiefke
 Seré
 Shanahan
 Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
 Sikand
 Sohi
 Spengemann
 Stetski
 Tabbara
 Tassi
 Tootoo
 Vandal
 Vaughan
 Weir
 Wilkinson
 Wrzesnewskyj
 Zahid — 224

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the amendment defeated.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

● (1900)

[*English*]

TAXATION

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to speak during the adjournment proceedings this evening.

On December 8, I asked the Prime Minister, and received an answer from—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order, please. I will interrupt the hon. member for a moment. If I can ask everyone to take their discussions outside into the lobby.

The hon. member for Langley.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, I asked a very important question about seniors. The government had just announced, with great fanfare, that it was going to be increasing the amount of taxes Canadian seniors pay. It was not good news for Canadian seniors back in December.

Adjournment Proceedings

On December 8, I asked the Prime Minister, and I received an answer from the Minister of Finance that they were balancing their election promises, that the government was going to reduce the amount Canadian seniors could contribute to their tax-free savings plans. Over half of the tax-free savings plans in Canada are used by seniors. They put money away so that they can save it to support themselves.

It is good to see seniors contributing by putting money away. Right now in Canada, every sixth person is a senior. In 14 short years, one in four Canadians will be a senior. A very large percentage of the Canadian population will be seniors. There is a dramatic foundational shift in Canada.

It is important that seniors continue to be productive citizens within Canada but also that they prepare while they age. That is why it is so important and why so many seniors contribute to tax-free savings plans. The government said it was going to take that away, because it had made a lot of promises to Canadians, and it was going to balance what it was doing on the backs of Canadian seniors.

During the election, Liberals made a lot of promises. They promised that they were going to do a lot for seniors.

Just a few days ago, the organization known as CARP was outraged. It said, "Finance ministers will not move CPP reform forward", as had been promised. "CARP members are outraged—all Canadians should be". It said that the government is not going to do what it promised it would do. What was that promise? It was going to make these changes to help seniors within three months of the election, which would have been January 19, just a week ago. Liberals have just told seniors that they are not going to keep those promises. Organizations like CARP are outraged, and rightly so.

The question remaining is why the government is trying to keep these promises on the backs of Canadian seniors. It is just not right. The other major concern I am hearing from Canadians is that the government does not have a minister for seniors. It is important. When one in six Canadians is a senior, why does the government not have any representation for seniors?

Will the government appoint a minister for seniors, and will it stop attacking the savings accounts of Canadian seniors?

• (1905)

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to speak here today. I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his very important question on seniors and our middle class.

[*Translation*]

The previous government's plan to nearly double the tax-free savings account, or TFSA, contribution limit would have helped the wealthiest Canadians save more and would have cost the federal treasury hundreds of millions of dollars over the next five years and tens of billions in the long term. This government made a different choice. We have a plan to grow the economy, and we have already gotten the ball rolling.

We will implement initiatives that will help the greatest number of Canadians succeed. During the election campaign, we talked about the middle class, and those are the people we want to help. In

December, we started by cutting taxes for the middle class. In the 2016 budget, we will introduce a Canada child benefit that will make things better for nine out of 10 families in this country.

We also know that only 6.7% of Canadians who can contribute to a TFSA hit the limit in 2013. Doubling the annual contribution limit does not help the 93% of Canadians who cannot max out their TFSAs. I can assure Canadians that the limit for 2015 is still \$10,000 and that the change will not be retroactive.

I would also like to take this opportunity to tell my hon. colleague that we conducted pre-budget consultations all over the country, from Moncton to Yellowknife. Along with the Minister of Finance, we hosted approximately 20 meetings with hundreds of Canadians. We also heard from over 100,000 Canadians who shared their opinions online.

People want us to focus on the middle class and talk about innovation, productivity and smart infrastructure, infrastructure that will move our country forward. People also spoke to us about exports.

After travelling all over the country, we know that Canadians want a responsible government that will invest in the middle class and make sure that Canada's economy continues to grow. That is exactly what we are doing when we invest in the middle class, as we did in December by lowering taxes for the middle class. That is exactly what we did when we created our Canada child benefit. We are putting more money in the pockets of Canadians in order to grow the economy.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for telling us about what they are going to do for the middle class. It is important. He also said that his government had quite different priorities than the former Conservative government that increased the age of credit amount by \$2,000, introduced pension income splitting, saving seniors taxes, the home accessibility tax credit for seniors, and on and on. The former government lowered taxes for seniors. The new government is now raising taxes for seniors. That is why in the poll that CARP has just conducted, 84% of respondents are outraged and angry with the government for breaking its promises.

Therefore, will the government keep its promises that it made to seniors and will it appoint a minister for seniors' issues?

[*Translation*]

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question.

Adjournment Proceedings

That is precisely what we are doing. We are investing in the middle class. What my colleague said is not exactly true. In December, we cut taxes for the middle class. What we did fulfills one of the many promises that we intend to keep, such as creating the Canada child benefit, which will benefit nine million people in Canada. Indeed, nine out of 10 families will benefit.

That is precisely what got us elected. We told Canadians that our priority was to invest in the middle class and provide benefits to Canadian families in order to lift hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty. That is how we do things. That is exactly what we told Canadians during the election campaign, and that is exactly what we are doing today.

• (1910)

[English]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak in the House today about a very important topic, one that I think all Canadians can agree upon. That is Canada's response to the refugee crisis in the Middle East.

Certainly, I think all sides of the House, all parties, agree that this is a humanitarian crisis of great scale and one that Canada should have a role in responding to. However, the question is how do we respond to that?

During the campaign, the Liberals focused on an escalating series of numbers and landed on 25,000, and I think somewhat arbitrarily, by the end of 2015. Of course they were not able to make that commitment.

Now the question becomes how refugees are being cared for when they come to Canada.

Over recent weeks, there have been questions around the provision of affordable long-term housing, which is a big concern for many municipalities and refugee agencies, language training services, the cost associated with various programs and their sustainability, and who will bear that burden. We are seeing more and more of this. Today, there is an article posted by CBC News, entitled, "Syrians 'feel hopeless' as government-sponsored refugees in Toronto", and there is a quote from a refugee. Through a translator, the refugee said:

We were told that when we arrived to the hotel...we would only be staying for three to four days maximum. However, things have been changed and we've been here for 10 to 11 days, and we've been told it could be even longer. The problem is that we have kids and we would rather be outside in a settled house than sitting at a hotel...

A wide variety of people commented in this article, talking about the fact that the government really did not think through the plan on how it was going to manage this.

I think we will be hearing more on this, and that is very unfortunate. I think we are all willing to work with the governments on this. However, today in the House of Commons the minister responded to a question from a government member, again on the number of refugees who had come to Canada. He responded, "However, more than the numbers, we have done this well".

That is a little blind, given the article that came out today and the reports we hear from different municipalities and agencies within these municipalities requesting pauses on the arrival of refugees. This mismanagement is very important, both when we think about accountability to Canadians as well as ensuring the success of refugees when they arrive in our country.

Last year, the government staged a photo op at Pearson Airport for the first arrivals of Syrian refugees to Canada. Given the amount of mismanagement and the overriding cost, would the government tell the House exactly how much was spent on that photo op, both for lighting, as production-quality lighting was set up there, staffing, transportation and the number of full-time equivalent hours that were put into designing the photo op? I would love to have that number. I certainly do not think the government has been forthcoming with it. Why did it decide that spending the amount of time it did on staging a photo op was more important than dealing with some of these very pressing issues, such as looking at the issue of long-term housing for refugees?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in terms of the effort we are undertaking, all of my hon. colleagues have been impressed and inspired by how much Canadians from coast to coast to coast have embraced the new arrivals with warm and open hearts through these cold winter days. We have always said that it is not simply a federal government project—and we have heard that line repeated by the minister—but it is truly a national effort, a partnership among individuals, organizations, and different levels of government from communities across this country.

Our partners in the private and public sectors and governmental and non-governmental organizations of all sizes in places large and small have contributed their time, their energy, and their resources to make our national project a reality, but they have also maintained and even increased their level of commitment and enthusiasm over these many weeks, which is apropos of what the minister was saying today during question period.

I have no doubt that the enthusiasm will take us through to the end of next month and beyond, when we expect to surpass our initial goals. As for the federal government, our efforts are proceeding at full pace. The minister has frequently talked about these efforts as a building wave, and we are seeing now that this wave is virtually at a full crest. Whether it is the identification and processing of refugees from Lebanon, Jordan, and now Turkey, the flights to Canada, the welcomes in Toronto and Montreal, or the settlement and community integration in every corner of the country, all systems are working at their full capacity.

From the very beginning, we have been committed to being transparent with Canadians about the progress of our national effort, including any setbacks or hurdles or challenges we have faced along the way, some of which were mentioned in the comments of my friend, the member for Calgary Nose Hill. Her original question for which we are here in adjournment proceedings related to the specific numbers and about how the process was proceeding. I propose to give some of those numbers now, and then I will address some of her comments forthwith.

As of today, the numbers are 13,512 who have been admitted into Canada since November 4. Of those, 7,691 are government-assisted, 4,985 are privately sponsored, and 836 are what we call blended visas. In addition to this, there are 5,660 applications that have been finalized overseas, which include 4,000 visa holders who have not yet arrived in this country. In grand total, that is 19,172 refugees who have either arrived in our country or have been approved but have not yet travelled to Canada. There is also a total of 15,000 additional applications currently in progress.

This leads us to the optimistic perspective that we are well on track to reach our targets. That is thanks to the Government of Canada's proactive outreach and co-operation with the governments of Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon, which have helped to expedite the exit permits. It is an ambitious commitment, but it is a commitment that was warmly received by Canadians last year. It has been warmly received by Canadians in terms of their participation and co-operation in getting behind this national effort. Further information on the latest numbers is available on the IRCC website.

I have a couple of specific responses to the member for Calgary Nose Hill. The comment was made that we reached the 25,000 target arbitrarily—far from it. A lot of input was put into achieving that number. We are committed to achieving it, and we will be achieving it by February 29.

Some hurdles have been identified by my friend from Calgary Nose Hill in terms of housing, language training, and the associated costs. We have been fully conversant with all of the costs that have been provided. We are working with the settlement agencies to resolve the housing issues.

• (1915)

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, my colleague opposite said earlier this month that it is clearly a fact that we are treating Syrians differently from refugees from other parts of the world. Therefore, given that the government has, through some criteria that are unknown to us, decided that this cohort is different from others, could the member tell us when it will be tabling the immigration levels report and what feedback it has received from the provinces in reports saying that they will, in fact, be lowering the number of provincial nominee programs in light of the Syrian refugee initiative?

Mr. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, in terms of the differential treatment of Syrian refugees, that is absolutely correct. We are doing dedicated airlifts. We have provided 54 flights thus far, and the flights continue. It is no different from what any other of the major parties committed to during the campaign and it is no different from what we are doing now.

There is a humanitarian crisis, which my friend identified in her initial comments. It is the largest migration of individuals the world has seen since World War II. The European Union has identified it as such and so has the UNHCR. We are treating them differently because their crisis is severe. The civil war is severe.

Turning to what we are doing to address some of the hurdles that were identified earlier, my friend took issue in her original comments with the fact that the minister has claimed we have done things well. My friend does not need to take my word for it. She can take the word of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, who

said that Canada is a shining example in this regard, because of its leadership symbolically and the mechanisms it is putting in place to successfully receive individuals and integrate them into our communities.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am really pleased to have this opportunity to rise during adjournment proceedings today.

This is in follow-up to my question of December 7, 2015. On that day I asked the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs to tell Canadians the full costs of implementing the 94 recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Not only did I not get a cost, which I had asked for, but I also asked if they had analyzed the implications. This is an important area that I felt we needed a more fulsome discussion of.

The commission, of course, was created by the Conservative government in 2007. A year later the former prime minister, the hon. member for Calgary Heritage, stood in the House and apologized to former students and their families for the Canadian government's role in the operation of the residential schools.

There is no doubt that the school system had a profoundly lasting and damaging impact on aboriginal culture, heritage, and language. There is no place, as has been noted a number of times, in Canada for the attitudes that inspired the Indian residential school system to ever prevail again.

Of course, it took extraordinary courage for the survivors who came forward to share their painful memories. It is a testament to their resilience as individuals and to the strength of their culture. The scars are a long way from healing. The work of the commission is a step towards that goal.

The Prime Minister has promised Canadians a transparent government. He has promised Canadians that his government will implement each of those 94 recommendations.

While many of the recommendations are excellent and necessary, I believe the government needs to appropriately calculate and share with Parliament the full cost and implications of them with Canadian taxpayers, including for example the implications of our accepting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and what impact that might have and what the assessment is of that in terms of Canada's economic future.

The declaration calls on countries not just to consult and accommodate indigenous people on laws and projects that might affect them, as Canada has been doing, but also to obtain their full consent.

Adjournment Proceedings

There are many legal minds who have suggested that this will give a veto. Implementing this declaration was in the minister's mandate letter. Is it the intention of the federal government to give a veto over specific development projects? Obviously, indigenous people have the right to be consulted, but I do believe it is important for the federal government to maintain its final authority. Otherwise there is no clear process to follow. Legislation and projects may be stonewalled indefinitely, whether they involve natural resources or tourism. These projects are vital as we struggle with difficult times. They are vital for our economy. We need to have clarity around what that means. We cannot operate with that level of ambiguity.

In addition, there were many far-reaching recommendations, from money for truth and reconciliation centres, to monuments, athletic programs, and CBC/Radio Canada.

Again, we absolutely need to move forward on these important recommendations, but there are some that perhaps need a second view. We need to share with Canadians fully the costs and the implications.

• (1920)

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to respond to the question put forth by the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

For all of my colleagues here I think it is clear and understood that the Prime Minister has said no relationship is more important to him and to Canada than the one with indigenous peoples. We have come to recognize each and every day that the relationship Canada has with indigenous peoples is vitally important not just to our shared economic interests but to our respective identities as a nation. It is way past the time for a renewed relationship based on trust, respect, and the true spirit of co-operation. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action provide all Canadians with a renewed path going forward for Canada's unfinished journey of healing and reconciliation with our indigenous peoples.

As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, I would like to acknowledge the hard work and tremendous efforts that have been displayed by the commissioners and the commission throughout this mandate, as well as by all of the staff who worked so diligently on this. The final report is a monumental achievement, and that has been recognized by all Canadians.

For many of those former students and their families, it is also a testament to the courage that they have shown in sharing their stories. We want to acknowledge them and their suffering. We admire their strength, we want to move forward, inspired by their words and their hope for change, in a new direction for a new culture that can be shared between Canada's indigenous people, our country, and our government. This will provide that path forward for federal and provincial governments and all Canadians so that we can build on these efforts toward reconciliation. Our government is committed to working in partnership with the survivors, with first nations, the Métis and Inuit people, along with the provinces and territories, the parties to the Indian residential school settlement agreement, and other key partners, to implement the *Truth and Reconciliation*

Commission of Canada: Calls to Action. Doing so will take time, but we are committed to getting this right.

Currently, the government is working with all of these partners to design an engagement strategy that we will have prepared for the spring of 2016 and developing a national reconciliation framework. This framework will be informed by the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action* and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. On an issue as important as reconciliation with indigenous peoples, it is more important to do things right rather than do them quickly. It is important that reconciliation not be done independently by government but that it be done in partnership with all of those who are involved.

Therefore, I say to my colleague that we want to engage all parties, we want to encourage all people, we want to ensure that this collaborative framework is done properly so that we can have real reconciliation with indigenous people in Canada.

• (1925)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I remember that when the report was tabled in June of last year, which was a very significant day, no one had time to read the 94 recommendations or analyze them. At that time, the leader of the third party came in and said, "I accept all 94 recommendations. We're going to move forward with them." Perhaps a third party leader can do that.

The government has a responsibility to analyze the implications and the costs of each of those 94 recommendations, and share with Canadians what that would mean. Will it mean a veto in terms of natural resource projects? Is the government giving up its right to have final decisions in terms of projects? Canadians need to know that.

It would not be fair for the government to not move forward in an open, honest, and transparent manner with all Canadians as we move forward. I agree it is an important process. The government has to be open, accountable, and transparent.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the concerns that the member opposite has displayed on this issue.

First, I would never underestimate the due diligence of the Prime Minister of Canada. The Prime Minister and the government will be led by action. This is a government that has made a commitment to reconcile the differences that we have had with the indigenous people of Canada for many generations and decades.

We have started that process on truth and reconciliation and that call to action. We are committed to that process. We are committed to doing it in partnership with indigenous groups across Canada. We will not do it in isolation of those who are the first peoples of this country, because in doing so, governments have failed.

Adjournment Proceedings

We plan on getting this right and we plan on taking the time that is necessary to work with the indigenous people of this country to build a stronger nation-to-nation relationship going forward that will benefit all Canadians.

•(1930)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): 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 7:30 p.m.)

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