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(HANSARD)

Thursday, May 4, 2017

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, May 4, 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's responses to six petitions.

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 30th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

The committee advises that, pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), the Subcommittee on Private Members' Business of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs met to consider the order for the second reading of private members' bills originating in the Senate, and recommends that the items listed herein, which it has determined should not be designated non-votable, be considered by the House.

The committee also advises that, pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), the Subcommittee on Private Members' Business of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs met to consider the items on the order of precedence for Monday, April 10, 2017, and recommends that the items listed herein, which it has determined should not be designated non-votable, be considered by the House.

[*English*]

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), the report is deemed adopted.

PETITIONS

HOME CHILDREN

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present another petition from Canadian citizens who call to Parliament's attention the British home children. Thousands were brought to Canada over decades. They were taken from their families in Britain, many simply because they were poor, and were brought to Canada where they were, many times, put in inappropriate personal living circumstances and used as cheap labour. The petitioners call on Parliament to offer an unequivocal, sincere, and public apology here to those home children and their descendants.

HIV/AIDS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two petitions. The first is from members of my riding, as well as a number of residents from Winnipeg. They are calling on the government to adopt a national AIDS strategy, based on the proven principle of treatment as prevention.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from many of my own constituents, as well as some from Kirkland Lake, Ontario. They call on the House to pass legislation to ensure that consumers know what they are purchasing and have ingredient labels that specifically list genetically modified organisms. Consumers have a right to know when they are purchasing GMO products.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2017, NO. 1**

The House resumed from May 3 consideration of the motion that Bill C-44, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2017 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: We are resuming debate. We have five minutes for questions and comments, following the speech of the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Multiculturalism.

• (1010)

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is so much in this budget implementation bill that is bad for Canadians and for the future of the economy of Canada. There is so much that Canadians have to be concerned about. However, what is interesting, and a lot of Canadians are not noticing, are the changes to the power—

The Deputy Speaker: Is the audio not working?

The audio is now working, and the translation is working now. The hon. member may continue.

Hon. Candice Bergen: We will try that again, Mr. Speaker.

As I was saying, there is so much in this budget implementation bill that is not good for Canadians, especially for the economy, and not good in what it does for jobs. The so-called infrastructure bank is really bad for rural communities that are looking for infrastructure money. However, what I am concerned about at this point is the changes and the power that is being taken away from the parliamentary budget officer.

When we were in government, sometimes the parliamentary budget officer would talk about things with which he or his office disagreed. He would talk about things we were doing. That was what his job was. Now the government is taking away the power of the parliamentary budget officer to do that job. It is very concerning, especially for a government that is supposed to be open, that is supposed to be transparent, and that is supposed to be more available for scrutiny and for accountability.

I wonder if my hon. colleague could comment on where the benefit is to Canadians and to democracy by neutralizing and almost neutering the parliamentary budget officer.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage (Multiculturalism), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the outset, I will provide two responses. In terms of what the government, through the budget, is doing for jobs and for infrastructure, it is making historic investments that are actually having results for Canadians right around the country.

Canadians elected us on a platform of investment in the economy, and that is exactly what we are doing. We are doing that, and the results are already starting to be shown in terms of the jobless rate, the unemployment rate in this country, which has gone from 7.1% to 6.7% under our watch, and that will continue to decline.

In terms of transparency and accountability, this is a very valid point raised by the member opposite. It is an important point. It is a point that our government believes in. That is why we have made efforts to render more accountability, both in this chamber and at committees, and for parliamentarians across the board.

In terms of the parliamentary budget officer, we believe in a robust role for that office, because that kind of accountability is exactly the kind of accountability that needs to be exercised over any government, whether it is this government or any other government of a different stripe.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague. He speaks about jobs and how there will be jobs in the budget. Does the member understand that the 2% excise tax that the government is putting on to wine in Canada will kill Canadian wineries, will kill Canadian wine jobs?

I have more than 18 wineries in my region. They are thriving. They have a complete supply chain, where they go from growing the product to retailing the product. They have tourism, they have restaurants, and they are providing jobs in many regions in our country.

Can the member speak to why his government has chosen to target wineries and Canadian wines, in particular because we have just signed the CETA trade agreement that will hurt them. Why are we costing jobs in our wine regions?

Mr. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Essex for her question and for her advocacy in this chamber.

In terms of the winery economy, the vintners of Canada are an important aspect of our economy, as are all of our alcohol producers and alcohol distributors. The actual tax that is proposed in this budget will amount to a tax of what I understand to be 1¢ per bottle. That tax, while it may be significant, is not overall disproportionate to the amount of economic generation that will be created through that revenue generation, through that Excise Tax Act change.

Let us continue with the CTA. The efforts we are making with the Canada trade agreement to reduce interprovincial trade barriers will have an impact across the country, including on alcohol and wine distribution throughout the country.

With respect to the Excise Tax Act, I would actually underscore another change to be made to the Excise Tax Act, which I think benefits the exact same constituents who the member for Essex and I care about; for example, the people who are employed in the taxi industry. By changing the Excise Tax Act and how it considers ride-sharing services, such as Uber, what we are doing is levelling the playing field between Uber services and taxicab services so that all ride-sharing agreements are taxed in the same manner, which will again increase the equity that I think both of us agree should be pursued.

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to participate in this debate on budget 2017. Canadians have now had the opportunity to review much of what is in the budget, and I believe there is a growing recognition that it will do a great deal to support gender equality and the economic advancement of women in this country.

Government Orders

Before looking at the budget itself, it is important to note that, as Canada marks the 150th anniversary of its founding this year, women are positioned for tremendous economic success this year and into the future. Women already represent nearly half of the workforce and continue to advance in many sectors of the Canadian economy. In the public, private, and non-profit sectors, women hold many leadership positions. The areas of the economy where women are under-represented are slowly becoming fewer. Our country has a significant pool of talented women with the skills and abilities needed for a range of economic opportunities, which is a clear competitive advantage. Canada ranks first out of 145 countries in female educational attainment, according to the World Economic Forum. Women now make up the majority of enrolments in college programs, and the proportion of women is even greater among graduates. Since the early 1990s, women have made up the majority of full-time students enrolled in undergraduate university programs.

However, we also know that our work to advance women into the economic opportunities they desire is far from done. One area where action is needed is in closing the gender wage gap. The fact is that women earn 87¢ for every dollar earned by men, largely as a result of wage inequality between women and men within occupations. In 2016, Canada ranked 35th overall in the global gender gap, a drop from 30th in 2015. We are going to change that.

While women are making inroads into all industries and occupations, they are still concentrated in lower-paying sectors, such as retail, health care, and social services. Women are overrepresented in part-time work and are less likely to reach more senior positions. In 2014, women held just 11.9% of construction jobs, 19.2% of forestry, fishing, mining, and oil and gas jobs, and 29.4% of agricultural jobs.

Let us not forget the most recent statistics from the Canadian Board Diversity Council's 2016 report card. It indicates that women hold just 21.5% of the FP 500 board seats, which is a competitive disadvantage for the corporate sector and the economy.

There are also some things we do not know yet about the gender wage gap. Many studies suggest that more than half of the gender wage gap is due to unexplained factors that we either have not yet learned how to measure or are the result of issues such as patriarchy and the systemic bias and discriminatory practices toward women in the workplace.

Given the challenge presented by the gender wage gap in Canada, the federal government is determined to play a leadership role in closing it. This includes a number of commitments made as part of budget 2017, which build on important steps taken in budget 2016 and additional actions by this government over the past year. Allow me to briefly describe some of these.

Budget 2017 includes a major commitment over the next 11 years for new investments of \$7 billion in early learning and child care and over \$11.2 billion in a national housing strategy. These investments in early learning and child care, in particular, will support access to child care and allow greater participation in work, education, or training, particularly by mothers.

A new employment insurance caregiving benefit will allow more caregivers, the majority of whom are women, to balance their work

and family responsibilities. The government will create more flexible work arrangements for federally regulated employees, including flexible start and finish times, the ability to work from home, and new unpaid leaves to help manage family responsibilities. These actions, as part of budget 2017, represent tremendous opportunities to support women and girls reaching their full potential, and help close the gender wage gap in Canada.

• (1015)

We also cannot ignore the tremendous step forward that budget 2017 represents for openness and transparency by including a groundbreaking gender statement, not as an annex but as a full chapter in the budget itself. The gender statement raises the bar in our understanding of how public policies affect women and men differently.

Let me also remind Canadians about some of the measures announced prior to the budget that support economic opportunities for women and help us close the gender wage gap. These include advancing a national poverty reduction strategy; enhancing the use of gender-based analysis to ensure decisions about policies, programs, and legislation advance gender equality; introducing the new Canada child benefit; putting in place a new merit-based, open, and transparent approach in order to select high-quality candidates for some 4,000 Governor in Council and ministerial appointments with gender diversity as a key goal; and finally, introducing legislation to modernize Canada's federal corporate governance framework, which includes using the comply or explain approach to improve gender diversity on corporate boards, which is badly needed.

I am proud of the many actions being taken by the Government of Canada as part of budget 2017, along with the measures we have put in place beyond the budget itself to support women's economic success and help close the gender wage gap in this country. Not only will women and their families benefit greatly from these actions; all Canadians will benefit as we work together to build an inclusive, prosperous country that strengthens the middle class from coast to coast.

• (1020)

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the things my colleague spoke about was pay equity, but unfortunately women are going to have to wait another year. I am not sure why the Liberals think women in Canada need to wait to have pay equity addressed. Why we cannot have legislation now is beyond me. Why this measure cannot be included now is beyond me.

Government Orders

I appreciate that the budget has a lens applied to it that speaks of women, but let us be clear: the six economic sectors that are priorities in this budget are male-dominated sectors.

While the budget does provide some aspirational language on where we need to go—and gender being addressed in any budget is a positive step, and I am pleased to see it in this budget—the funding for status of women remains dramatically low, the lowest of any other ministerial portfolio, the lowest it has been. It stays at an amount that has been called “budget dust” because it is 0.1%. In a budget with a gender focus, why was there no increase to the status of women ministry?

Mr. Terry Duguid: Mr. Speaker, reflecting on the last 10 years, funding to Status of Women Canada was cut rather dramatically by the previous government, and we have restored funding to that ministry. We have opened regional offices. Winnipeg is now a centre for Status of Women Canada, admittedly on a part-time basis.

With reference to the member's question on pay equity, we made a solid commitment in our platform, and it has been referenced many times in the House. We will be bringing forward proactive pay equity legislation in 2018.

As my mother would say, “If something is worth doing, it is worth doing right”, and to do right by Canadian women, we will take the time to do it right.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I have two comments for my hon. colleague, and hopefully I will get a response to the second.

I feel honour bound to say that when the Harper administration brought in the tax credit for the use of buses, the Green Party opposed it because it did not put a single additional bus on the road. It did give a tax credit to people who were taking public transit anyway and who were already in an income bracket that would allow them to benefit from a tax credit. The credit was valuable to many people, but it did not contribute toward reducing greenhouse gases. An analysis of that bus tax credit showed that the cost per tonne in the reduction of greenhouse gases was so inefficient that it cost \$1,000 per tonne, so I cannot now attack the present Liberal administration for removing something that I criticized the previous government for bringing in, but the public transit issue does merit more examination in the budget.

My second point is that \$20 billion has been promised for public transit, but only somewhat less than \$1 billion of that will be available before 2019. I would ask my hon. colleague the parliamentary secretary why we are not taking the climate crisis more seriously and spending the money sooner to help people find it more convenient to take public transit.

•(1025)

Mr. Terry Duguid: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. friend from Saanich—Gulf Islands for her advocacy on climate change. I know that as part of the Canadian delegation, she was an important part of the discussion in bringing the Paris climate agreement about.

I agree with her that the tax credit for transit ridership was ineffective. It did not reduce greenhouse gases and did not improve ridership.

I will also echo something the hon. member said. We are going to be investing, over the next 10 years, \$28.7 billion in transit. That is a staggering amount of money after very little funding over the last 10 years. Again, we need the time to plan. In Winnipeg, for instance, the southwest transit corridor is being completed. It is in the planning stages now, and it will be ready for investment in 2018-2019.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to rise and participate in debate, and more so in this case. However, if I might be indulged for just a moment, I would like to share a little news with this place.

First of all, about a year ago we had a vote in this place on whether or not the Supreme Court was the best body to hear a case out of New Brunswick, the Comeau case. Many might remember that it was the case of a man who bought both spirits and beer in Quebec and transported these items home to New Brunswick. He was fined for crossing a border with a Canadian-made product, and I and many people in this place have taken issue with these unfair and inequitable trade barriers.

I am happy to say today that the Supreme Court has announced that it will be hearing the Comeau case. I want to show appreciation for all the members who supported that motion and I do hope the Liberal government members will reconsider their opposition to it. I also hope they will argue for a restored section 121 of our charter, our free trade clause, because I believe it is a constitutional right. I believe we are one country, not just as a political unit but as an economic one, and I hope the Minister of Justice and associated ministers will take that position and argue for a liberalized opening of trade in Canada.

I am very happy to join the debate on this particular budget and the related implementation bill. Obviously, over on the opposition side of this place, there is an expectation that there will be some disagreement over measures proposed in a budget implementation bill. However, I also do not believe it is productive to re-fight an election, and likewise it is my view that it is counterproductive to oppose everything simply for the sake of opposing, as we often saw in the previous Parliament.

However, it is my intent today to raise a few issues that I have serious concerns with. For starters, let us all agree that this is, for all intents and purposes, an omnibus budget bill. From my own perspective, having sat on the government side of this place, I recognize that when a government is trying to implement a broad fiscal agenda, as much as it would be ideal to debate every measure on a stand-alone basis, that expectation is just not realistic, so I am willing to give some consideration for the Liberals to use an omnibus budget bill.

Government Orders

However, where I will call out the Liberals is on promising during the election to not use an omnibus bill, and yet here we are, debating an omnibus piece of legislation. This is exactly the type of hypocrisy that drives cynicism among Canadian voters in our political system, which ironically is yet another campaign theme the Prime Minister was all too happy to rally against during the election campaign but on which he now adds fuel to the fire.

Getting back to the budget, there is a very troubling aspect to this budget implementation bill, and that is the fact that this budget mentions items that are not actually budgeted for. Let me give a few examples.

The budget had a line item of “helping working adults upgrade their skills”. This sounds like something that most Canadians would support. However, how much actual money did the Liberals budget for in the 2017 budget? Zero. There is nothing in the 2017 budget to actually fund that item, nothing. There is only a promise to do so in the 2019 election year.

Another curious item in this budget is “investing in skills innovation”. Once again, it sounds like something most Canadians would support. Would anyone here like to take a guess at how much actual money the Liberals have budgeted to pay for this in the 2017 budget? How about zero? That is right: zero, as in nothing. Once again, there is a promise the Liberals might spend something in the 2019 election year, which I would say is no coincidence.

Another line item in this budget is “expanding the youth employment strategy”. Who would not support that, but wait—let us guess how much money the Liberals budgeted in 2017. Once again the answer is zero. There is not a dime. I cannot say, “Not a penny”, because of course there is no longer a penny, but let us guess what year the Liberals promised they might actually spend money on a youth employment strategy.

If members guessed the 2019 election year, they must have a crystal ball because, of course, that is the right answer.

● (1030)

Let just think about that for a moment. Unemployed youth who need jobs today will have to wait until 2019, when the Liberals need to be re-elected. Let us seriously think about that. At the same time, we can ask why they even bother putting line items in a 2017 budget for measures not even budgeted within the 2017 budget. This is from a Liberal government that promised that better is always possible, just not until 2019, apparently, when it needs to be re-elected.

I recognize that this budget comes from the finance minister and not from the majority of members sitting on the government side of the House. I mention this because I believe that many would agree that fluffing up a budget with items not in the budget is not raising the bar in this place. Yes, we all know that a budget implementation bill will always be heavy on government messaging, but this budget takes it a step further by playing politics with the lives of Canadians.

I can cite many more examples of line items in this budget that are actually not budgeted for 2017. In those cases, surprise, surprise, there is money for those things, but guess when: 2019. Again, that adds to the cynicism.

Here is my other major criticism. As much as there are line items in this budget that we know are not actually budgeted for, guess what is missing from the budget. There is absolutely no time line, if ever, for the Liberal finance minister to return Canada to a balanced budget.

Let us recap. Here is a Liberal government that looked Canadians in the eye and said, “We will return to a balanced budget in 2019.” At some level, even the Liberals must realize why a balanced budget is a good thing to have. Otherwise, why did they bother to promise to deliver this to Canadians by 2019? No one ever forced the Liberals to make such a promise, yet they did. Here we are today, and I seriously challenge any member of this House, the government side included, to get the finance minister to even mention the words “balanced budget”, let alone in what decade he intends to honour the Liberal promise to deliver one to Canadians.

Here is what we do know. Back in October last year, the finance minister's own department projected that not until 2051 would Canada return to balance. What did the finance minister do? He intentionally withheld that information from Canadians until December 23 of last year. What kind of finance minister does that? Why has “balanced budget” become a dirty word to this finance minister? These are all troubling questions.

It is not unlike the fact that this budget proposes to run a deficit in 2017 that is almost three times larger than what the Liberals originally promised to get elected. Though I have sat on the government side of the House, it was never under a government that made so many promises to Canadians it clearly had no intention of keeping.

I can tell members that in my riding, even many who voted Liberal are seriously disappointed. They feel duped, betrayed, and beyond that. I am not going to use any unparliamentary language.

There are a few points I will mention about this budget. It is well known that the Liberal government has eliminated some of the targeted tax incentives enacted by the previous government. Let us call them what they are often called: boutique tax credits. Curiously, the Liberal government eliminated a tax credit that helped families with kids in fitness activities. It killed the tax credit that helped make public transit more affordable, and then it turned around and introduced a tax credit that helps teachers pay for school supplies.

It would be one thing to eliminate all targeted tax credits equally, but essentially, what the Liberal government is doing is sending a message that targeted tax credits are wrong if enacted by a Conservative government but okay if enacted by a Liberal one. That is just partisan politics at its worst.

Government Orders

Before I leave the topic, let me just say this. I have heard from some teachers, particularly those who teach at the elementary level, that this tax credit will help them, and that is a good thing. However, I have also heard from families and from those who are disabled that eliminating the children's fitness credit and the public transit tax credit will hurt them, and these are not good things. Some are actually shocked that the Liberals would cancel a tax credit designed to support public transit solely because of Liberal ideology, because we all know that increasing public transit use helps to decrease our carbon footprint. Of course, when it comes to doing that, we know that the present Liberal government only supports tax increases on carbon to make life less affordable for the same middle-class families it professes to want to help.

● (1035)

Another point I would like to raise is about the so-called infrastructure bank. This one, I will be frank, scares the heck out of me. I will explain why. We are hearing that the mandate for the infrastructure bank would be to fund only projects with a price tag of \$100 million or more. There is not a single city in my riding, and I would submit, in the ridings of a large number of members in this place, that has the population base to support any project even close to that magnitude. About the only major cities in Canada that can support these types of projects just happen to be the ones that elected the most Liberals, and how convenient that is. The problem is that the small and smaller rural communities in ridings such as mine would have to help pay for them, and they are strongly opposed to that.

The Canadian Press reported that the finance minister admitted that global investors will only invest in large transformational projects that produce enough revenue from which they can earn a high rate of return on their investments. In other words, the Liberal government would be borrowing money it does not have, at reduced rates, so that Canadian taxpayers could finance and subsidize high rates of return for private international investors.

What is more disappointing about this scheme is that taxpayers in rural, smaller, and even mid-sized communities would be taking on this debt. They would be helping to pay the high interest to pay these private investors, and they would not even be eligible or able to afford the projects in question because of the pricey \$100 million minimum price tag. Worse is that the Liberals would borrow roughly \$32 billion to use as seed money for the creation of the investment bank. It is money that will not be spent on building infrastructure today in the very same municipalities that will not be able to participate in this expensive program.

The infrastructure bank, in my view, would be detrimental not just to my region but to many regions across this great country, and the person in charge of it is a finance minister who refuses to even say the words "balanced budget". What could go wrong? Article after article I have read has come out opposed to the scheme. Comments range from it being not needed to being a disaster waiting to happen, but of course, the Liberals' attitude of "we know best" prevails.

I would be very curious to know how many Liberal MPs from smaller rural areas think the infrastructure bank is a great idea, because the citizens they represent would pay for it but would not benefit from it. As one senior citizen in my riding pointed out, the

federal government used to sell Canada savings bonds to raise capital for things like building infrastructure and paid the interest to Canadians, so those returns stayed in Canada, but not anymore. Now the lucrative interest financed by Canadian taxpayers would instead be paid to big-league international players. I suppose that is helpful when one is a celebrity Prime Minister throwing taxpayer-financed parties in Davos with global elites. I will leave it to the Liberal members in this place to explain why they think that is a great idea.

There are other areas of concern I have with this budget implementation act. Yesterday morning, the parliamentary budget office issued its latest report. We know that the Liberal government is not happy with the PBO, who caught and exposed the Liberals for trying to hide the fact that they did indeed inherit a balanced budget from the previous government. Let us not forget that it was also a recent PBO report that revealed that the Liberals' promised infrastructure spending to date has largely been smoke and mirrors. What are the Liberals doing? In the words of the PBO, the Liberals are limiting "the PBO's ability to initiate reports and members' ability to request cost estimates of certain proposals". Basically, the current so-called transparent Liberal government is going to restrict what the PBO can and cannot investigate.

It is no secret that the PBO has been a thorn in the side of government since the Conservatives created this critically important office. The former government had battles with the PBO, but unlike the current government, it never changed the rules to muzzle it.

● (1040)

A government is free to disagree with the PBO as much as the former government did, and it was justifiably scrutinized and held to account for doing so. However, we know that the Liberals realize that the optics of battling the PBO are not sunny enough. They are not sunny ways. The Liberals are, instead, muzzling him and limiting the scope of what can be scrutinized and who can authorize said scrutinizing.

The Liberal government has, increasingly, become known for saying one thing, typically in flowery language, but quietly doing the opposite. It is a sad state of affairs to see the Liberals being so sensitive to criticism and scrutiny that they resort to muzzling and manipulation.

It was quite something to recently see a former leader of the opposition point out that the former prime minister gave answers to questions without using platitudes and non-answers, as the current Prime Minister does. The muzzling of the PBO will only further destroy transparency and credibility, again fuelling the cynicism people have about our political system, something the government had promised to do differently.

Government Orders

It is important to recognize when we are actually becoming part of the problem. I understand that politicians will try to present in the best light, but they should, in presenting in the best light, actually shine on substance and then let the people decide.

The bottom line is that this Liberal budget implementation act is sending Canada in the wrong direction. We have massive amounts of new Liberal-created debt on the way, with no plan whatsoever for how and when it can be paid for. At the end of the day, all this newly created Liberal debt is going to have to be repaid, and it will be our kids and grandkids stuck with those bills, all at a time when we know that our demographics in Canada are changing. This was revealed yesterday. There are more older people than younger people in Canada, and we all know that many people are expecting to be supported by their government as they age. We are adding more debt for the very same people we are going to be asking to help those individuals as they age.

This is not something that just showed up. This is something we cannot put a positive spin on. We have this problem. The Japanese are ahead of us on this. We have to ask ourselves if we can continue to push our economy in a direction where we cannot pay the bills and will be pushing them onto fewer and fewer people.

The fact is that the fastest-growing segment in our society is those aged 65 and over. We know that in Canada, the ratio of those still in the workforce versus those who are retiring is changing and that 20 years from now, the number of those working is going to be much smaller than the number of those who are retired. That is why all expert evidence says that Canada needs to raise the age of eligibility for old age security, precisely as the previous government did, yet this so-called evidence-based decision-making Liberal government overturned that.

Briefly, I am looking for answers. I like accountability, but if the Liberals do not like the ideas of the previous government, they should put forward something, not just platitudes. That is why I support the Supreme Court case going ahead. It may be a chance for us to become not just a political unit but an economic one. It will help us offset these challenges as we age.

This is a great country, and it needs to stay great. It needs to stay great by remembering the founding principles of the Fathers of Confederation. They said that this country is built on hard work and sacrifice. Sacrifice should not be political sacrifice, where a good policy is eliminated just to get elected. Sure, all parties will dance close to that edge, but as a group, we need to start taking responsibility for where our country will be and what country our kids and grandkids will inherit.

I will be part of the solution, but I also need other members of Parliament to work with us to propose those solutions.

● (1045)

I will not simply oppose. There is lots to oppose in here. There are also some good things. However, we are going to have to do it in a way that, at the end of the day, gives us that solid footing to move forward. The government has yet to show it wants to take that step. In many ways it has taken us back.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, in British Columbia, for his intervention. He is a friend who used to sit with me on the finance committee. Let us dissect what he said.

He belongs to a party that was in government for nine years, one that inherited a positive financial situation from the previous government, Mr. Martin's government. His party inherited a budget surplus and a situation where we were paying down Canada's debt, and it immediately turned that into a deficit, even before the financial crisis. The Conservatives ran a deficit for years and years.

Let us assume that the member and his party now want to promise Canadians a budget surplus. We on this side of the House believe that we were elected with a mandate to renew our country, to cut taxes for the middle class and, since my colleague talked about sacrifices, to raise taxes for the wealthiest 1% of Canadians.

What the member failed to do was clearly and accurately list all the tax hikes and budget cuts his party would impose in order to eliminate the deficit if it were to return to power.

I wonder if my colleague could clarify that.

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, it is important to differentiate two things. First, when our government decided to go into deficit, we were very transparent on it. The G20 was involved. There was a commitment in 2011 that we would return back to balance. We did that by initiating a deficit reduction action plan. We looked at the things we were doing and how we could improve upon them in a way that did not harm Canadians. Unlike the Liberals in the 1990s who cut health care and provincial transfers, we maintained those while bringing ourselves back into balance.

When we made the commitment in 2011 that we would return back to balance, we did it. That is something the current government cannot say. It is embarking on large deficit spending without giving any clear certainty to anyone. The member was there for the pre-budget consultations. We heard that the finance minister needed to show that it was a credible budget, and was asked if he could show a return to balance. So far, we cannot even get him to say the words "balanced budget".

● (1050)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, again, it is a bit rich of the Liberals to introduce an omnibus bill after criticizing the Conservatives for doing the same. During the election campaign, the Liberals promised that they would not introduce omnibus bills, but here we are with a nearly 300-page bill that amends 30 laws.

Government Orders

The agriculture sector is essential to the Canadian economy. It represents one in eight jobs. In my riding, Salaberry—Suroît, the sector accounts for \$100 million in annual revenue, which sustains more than 350 family farms. However, the budget does not include any of the compensation that was promised to dairy farmers.

In the current context, with Mr. Trump denouncing Canada's dairy farmers and threatening to renegotiate NAFTA, we fail to see why the Liberals have not decided to make offsetting investments. The compensation that the Conservatives promised was 10 times greater than what the Liberals promised. Now we find absolutely nothing to protect and compensate our dairy farmers and to show them that they are important to us.

What does my colleague think of that?

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, yes, the previous government had faults. All governments have faults. No one is perfect. A government is made up of people. I would also say that the people in the previous government made commitments to the people and followed through on them. What is creating more cynicism than anything else is when a government promises it is going to do things differently and continually breaks its word.

Why make promises at all if the government is not going to keep them? That is a big contrast between the Liberals and the Conservatives. The New Democrats have always been very good at opposing and calling things out, and I hope they will continue to do that.

The government says that better is always possible. I agree, and in many of these cases, particularly what the member has said, better is possible. The government needs to consider how to do that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think that the member is quite right in saying that everyone makes mistakes. They made a big one this time.

I would like to come back to the omnibus bill that my colleague from Salaberry—Suroît mentioned. Under this omnibus bill, there is a parliamentary budget officer, but he or she will report to the Speaker and will, obviously, be under the influence of the Liberal government. That is pretty shameful. It is worrisome that the person in that position will find that this is very different from what the government promised. I have here a copy of the Liberal Party platform. On page 15, in the paragraph on the Canada infrastructure bank, it reads:

We will establish the Canadian Infrastructure Bank to provide low-cost financing for new infrastructure projects.

The federal government can use its strong credit rating and lending authority to make it easier and more affordable for municipalities to build the projects their communities need.

That is really quite unbelievable, when we now know full well that the government will have to guarantee all mutual funds and other investors a major return.

My colleague alluded to a mistake, so here is my question. Does he not believe that it was quite a big mistake to have done away with the public transit tax credit? Back home in Longueuil, the elimination of that tax credit means a loss of \$250 for most people

who use public transit. For ordinary Canadians, \$250 a year is a lot of money. Considering how good the Liberals are at communicating, did they simply make a mistake by letting this measure go through or did they purposely commit this shameful act that will hurt public transit users?

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, many of the small areas where I am from do not have the large infrastructure projects that would be able to take advantage of the infrastructure bank as it is written. Oftentimes the only support they get, beyond maybe a grant for an addition of a new line of transit, because most of it is bus, is that they would get some money back for using that system. Again, that publicly funded system needs to have users.

The interesting thing is that the Liberals are cancelling that, as well as taking more of those tax dollars from rural areas and basically transferring them to the large projects in the urban areas. Some people might say that is just way things are, that the big people take advantage of the small people, but it is worse than that. The ones who are going to be charging prohibitively high interest rates so that they can get the return are going to be these high finance international financiers.

Again, we all lose in that kind of scenario. That is something government members really need to consider, and they need to speak to the Minister of Finance about these concerns.

• (1055)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola particularly for his advocacy on behalf of those with agricultural operations, farmers who happen to grow grapes or hops. There is the local growth in wineries and craft breweries. They are now being hit by a 2% excise tax that is set with a built-in escalator to continue to grow over time. It poses a real threat to those businesses.

I do want to make a quick parenthetical comment that the previous administration under Stephen Harper broke plenty of promises. Stephen Harper's 2006 campaign platform included a pledge to shorten wait times in our health care system and never to tax income trusts. I could go on. It is a very difficult thing to have a good memory and remember another one of Mr. Harper's famous promises, that Canada would never ship bitumen to countries with lower environmental standards for refining. He forgot about that when he started pushing the exports to China.

That said, comments on the excise tax would be great.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to comment on a few things.

As members know, in 2006, there was obviously a period of minority governments, so no one party in here could make promises and then follow through with everything. In 2011, we were elected with a majority mandate. There were about 108 different promises, and I think the final tally was over 104 were consistently done.

Government Orders

I am a big believer in things like income trusts. If a party gets elected under a certain knowledge, comes into power, and says that it needs to revisit things, it needs to explain itself. Mr. Flaherty and Mr. Harper did explain for the government, and there was a political price for that, but that is how our system works. That is important.

I would also point out that one of the disturbing parts about the escalator is that it never has to come back to this place. It will just go up 2% a year, regardless of whether there is inflation or not. Worse than that, because it is *ad valorem*, it depends on what the value is, but it is also subject to GST, so there will be a tax on a tax. Remember, the higher the price, the less will be consumed. Canadians do consume a lot of wine, but seven out of every 10 bottles of wine in this country are not Canadian wines. When we do this, we actually harm an industry that has the potential to grow.

What the government should be considering is how to unleash the industry. For example, with respect to microbreweries, I was told by one owner in Nova Scotia that back in 2006 there were 60 to 80 microbreweries across the country and now there are over 800. Why? The reason is the excise changes that took place in 2007. That shows leadership. That shows that governments can get out of the way and allow private industry to become something greater. That is something we need to think more about in this place considering our demographics.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague from Alfred-Pellan.

It is such a pleasure to rise in the House to speak on behalf of the residents of my riding of Davenport on budget 2017, which was released on March 22. It is a good budget and a lot of positive benefit is in it for the people in my riding.

It is not a big spend budget like 2016, but it is a responsible budget and a targeted budget. It is the next step in the government's ambitious plan to make smart investments that will create jobs, grow our economy, and provide more support for the middle class and those working hard to join it.

I will be targeting my comments very specifically to a few key areas, which are jobs and economy, transit, affordable housing and health care. These are the key areas that are of great interest to the people of Davenport.

I have been blessed over the last couple of months to hold a number of community pop-up offices around the riding. I have heard very loud and clear from the residents of Davenport that their top issue is jobs and economy.

People are worried about being able to afford a decent living, both today and moving forward. Some have part-time work and want full-time work, some have full-time work but some changes are happening within their industry and they might be losing their jobs, and some are on contract. However, all of them are worried about their jobs. They want better paying jobs and they want more predictable pay.

I was very pleased to see a focus on innovation and skills in budget 2017. The reason I am so excited is that this will help better prepare Canadians for the workforce of today and tomorrow.

A number of initiatives will help people to upgrade their skills: more co-op and work-integrated learning; more support for adult workers who are trying to go back to school or to upgrade their skills while supporting their families; and more support for families that are caregivers, that are trying to take care of their children. Then there is also a huge section around trying to help new immigrants, new Canadians, newcomers who have wonderful foreign credentials, to get them into the workforce a lot quicker.

I will go through a list of key initiatives that I think are important, which I have pointed out to the residents of Davenport, and will be beneficial not only to those in Davenport but also to all Canadians. I will go through all the numbers. Whenever we talk about numbers, \$2.7 billion here and \$132 million there, people's eyes get a little bit glassy, so I will just go through certain key initiatives.

We are providing quite a bit of money for skills training and employment supports for unemployed and underemployed Canadians under the Labour Market Transfer Agreement. We are giving about \$3 billion for that, and this is super important. I just had a conversation with someone a couple of days ago. He told me he had three jobs and he would really like to have one. I told him I had good news, that we had put some money into budget 2017 that would help him improve his skills so he could hopefully have one job that would support his life.

We are putting a substantial amount of money into making the EI program more flexible to enable the unemployed to pursue self-funded training, while remaining eligible for EI benefits. This has always been a puzzle to me, the fact that those who were on EI looking for jobs and wanted to self-improve would have lost their benefits if they did their own training. I am glad we have fixed that.

We have also put a substantial amount of money, almost half a billion dollars, to extend eligibility for student financial assistance for both part-time students and students with dependent children. We want to make it easier for adult learners to qualify for student financial assistance.

So many people tell me they have to support their families and wonder how they can improve their skills while they do that. This will help to support them to do that. It helps them to access financial support to go back to schools on a part-time basis, upgrade their skills and move into a profession that either pays more or a profession that gives them more happiness.

There are also a number of supports we provide that will help families to take care of their families. We have a new EI caregiving benefit that will provide a substantial amount of money for adult and child care.

We have also made adjustments to provide EI parental benefits for up to 18 months. We have also put some money to allow expectant mothers to claim EI for up to 12 weeks prior to their due date. The last thing is that we have also put a substantial amount of money, \$7 billion, to create a number of spaces for high-quality affordable child care.

Government Orders

● (1100)

I will mention one last thing.

A wonderful woman talked to me last Saturday at my last pop-up. She is a young doctor from Mexico City and has just come here. She told me she would love to be a doctor in Canada. She had married a Canadian and was now a permanent resident. She wanted to know how she could use her skills to serve the Canadian population. Our government has put \$30 million over five years in the budget to help those with foreign credentials, like doctors, get recognized, to help them get Canadian experience, and to help them to start working and contributing to the Canadian economy as soon as possible.

We have put a tremendous amount of money into transit. I represent a downtown west riding, an urban riding in Toronto. One of the biggest irritants for the residents of my riding is transit. They want to have reliable transit. They want it to be accessible and affordable. They are also very big supporters of active transportation such as bicycling. They can cut across traffic, go through bike paths and lanes, and Ontario Hydro routes, so they can cross the city in a more expedited way. As an environmentalist, I love the idea of more dollars being put into transit, because there would be less pollution, less CO₂ emissions, and there would be a huge economic benefit. It moves both people and goods around seamlessly.

Budget 2017 has announced \$20.1 billion over 11 years to team up with the provinces and territories to build new urban transit networks and service extensions. I hope that will translate into a downtown relief line in Toronto. We desperately need additional ways to move people across the downtown core. This money will also help to finish up the work around the Eglinton LRT. In addition to this \$20 billion investment, our government is also putting an additional \$5 billion into transit from Canada's infrastructure bank.

That is an additional \$25 billion in addition to the \$3.4 billion announced last year in the 2016 budget to improve and expand our public transit networks to get people around, to ensure they are accessible, reliable, and affordable, which is a key issue for the residents of Davenport. These investments will transform the way Canadians move, work, and live.

Another key area I am really proud of in our investments in budget 2017 is affordable housing. People in Davenport say they not only need affordable housing but they also need to be able to afford to live in Toronto, because it has become so expensive. I am delighted the federal government is stepping up to the plate. I want to give huge kudos to our Minister of Families, Children and Social Development for his leadership on this. We started last year with \$2.2 billion over two years to give Canadians more access to affordable housing, to give more loans and financing tools so we could develop more affordable rental units. That also allowed for the renewing of co-op agreements of which I have two or three in my riding. They were very happy to see that money coming from the federal government.

Budget 2017 announces a historic \$11 billion over 10 years. That is historic because it is 10-year funding. This is wonderful news because it will allow cities to plan ahead. It will also provide a lot of stability. The agreements are being negotiated now with municipalities across the country. In Toronto, this will translate into a

number of new affordable housing units. It will renovate existing units, provide more rent subsidies, and provide more affordable housing spaces.

Also, there are \$11 billion in additional money for mental health and home care over 10 years. In Ontario, this will translate to \$4.2 billion over the next decade, \$2.3 billion for home care and \$1.9 billion for mental health supports. It is extraordinarily important. These additional dollars have been a long time coming in terms of an additional focus on mental health. I am looking for more dollars to support ethnic communities to help them get the support and the resources they need for home care. More people want to be taken care of at home. I am delighted with this investment at the national level.

Budget 2017 is a good budget for Canadians. It is a good budget for residents of Davenport.

● (1105)

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is certainly looking for the good in this omnibus bill, bringing to light some of the things she sees as benefits. One of the things that has been swept under the carpet in this bill, though, is the elephant in the room, and that is the infrastructure bank that would be created by this budget. The Liberals certainly did not campaign on this and they really are not speaking about in the House, although it would change and have a serious impact on the lives of Canadians.

The member spoke about affordability and the importance of working people and families to get a break, to be able to afford and make their lives better for themselves. Bill C-44 would establish the Canada infrastructure bank. Could the member explain to us what Canadians would have to gain from this bank, other than the privatization of infrastructure they paid for with their taxes and potentially the new user fees they would pay?

● (1110)

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, first, I do not agree with the premise that this budget bill is an omnibus bill. I do not believe that to be so. Everything in the budget is about the budget. I personally do not support omnibus bills, so I do not agree that this is the case.

Second, with respect to the infrastructure bank, I believe we are now up to about \$180 billion over 12 years in investment in infrastructure. We are trying to invest not only in public transit but also to build up the infrastructure that will allow us to have the backbone for a strong economy, both today and in the future.

Government Orders

Therefore, the infrastructure bank is all tapping into some private sector dollars to help us further leverage the \$180 billion we are putting into infrastructure investment.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to bring up some of the factors we are facing in Alberta. We are in the midst of a jobs crisis there. Despite what the government is saying, it is not getting any better. Hundreds of thousands of people are out of jobs still. Then infrastructure minister keeps making announcement after announcement in my hometown of Edmonton. For example, he made one announcement on a project that does not even start construction until 2023. The Liberals can promise anything under that auspice.

The budget also goes through a number of different promises on the infrastructure side of things. I am curious as to what the member thinks. Why would we not start the construction now as opposed to waiting 10 or sometimes 15 years down the road?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, I have a bit of a confession to make. A number of people in my riding of Davenport are not big supporters of pipeline approval. I have explained to them that I fully support the approval of pipelines. We have to support the economy of Canada. We are a resource-based economy. Therefore, it is our responsibility always to think about the best interest of Canadians. Two new pipelines are bringing resources to tidewater already. Those will create thousands of new jobs both today and tomorrow and that will benefit not only Alberta but B.C. and a number of other provinces.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Davenport has just said something that I am sure she believes to be true, but is she aware that the National Energy Board refused to hear evidence from Unifor that building the Kinder Morgan pipeline would cost Canadian jobs by shipping out raw product, likely leading to the closing of the Chevron refinery in Burnaby?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, I do not know all the details of all the pipelines that have been approved. I know two have been approved. They are very positive in bringing our resources to tidewater, bringing in trade jobs, and being helpful to the overall economy.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. This is about the relevance of the answers both to the previous speaker's question and to this question. The issue was the budget implementation bill, and the question that was being addressed had to do with infrastructure. Now we are talking about something that is completely off topic, and I would ask that the members be brought to order.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Calgary Rocky Ridge for his intervention. Indeed the issue of relevance does come up, as is often compelled by the exchange during the period for questions and comments. Admittedly, the particular issue that was posed by the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands may not have a direct link to the issue that is before the House in a direct sense; however, when these items come up in the course of an exchange under questions and comments, and a topic has been touched upon, we normally allow other commentary on that particular issue if it has been raised either in the speech of the hon. member or during questions and comments.

This often tips us into a different area. We watch closely, but usually in a section on questions and comments we do allow a fair bit of liberty, unless that continues in a string for an exceedingly long time. Then we will try to get back on subject.

However, the hon. member is certainly correct and right to bring notice to this House.

● (1115)

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, the reason I am talking about pipelines is that budget 2017 is very much about growing our economy, providing more opportunities for the middle class and for workers across this country, both today and tomorrow.

In answer to the original question from the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, I have comfort in the fact that we have put a new process in place that takes both environmental and economic concerns into account. I have a lot of confidence in that process. It is a thoughtful process, and I think it is one that will actually help us to make the best decisions for Canada moving forward.

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to wish my wife, Rana, a happy wedding anniversary.

[*Translation*]

I am pleased and proud today to speak to budget 2017, which is the logical follow-up to last year's budget. It includes targeted measures to help the middle class deal with everyday challenges, to lighten the tax burden for those who need more money in their pockets, to create good jobs, to allow young people to have the career of their dreams without being stopped by the financial stress, and to allow families to take care of a sick family member. This budget meets the needs of communities such as Laval, whether it is the needs of entrepreneurs, or the need for public transit, infrastructure, or social housing.

I will begin by talking about the challenges of the middle class struggling with the famous work-life balance. In general, what do we want out of life? We want to have a good job or to start a business; we want to be able to pay our rent, hydro bill, and other bills, and hope that there will be a little left over that we can save for retirement or our children's education; and we also want to look after our elderly parents. In short we want quality of life.

For the Prime Minister, my colleagues, and I, our constituent's quality of life is very important. Consequently, we cut taxes for the middle class and increased them for the wealthiest 1% in order to create a more just society and a fairer tax system. We created the tax-free Canada child benefit, which is income-tested. This means that families can benefit fully from the money they receive. We lowered the retirement age to 65 and increased Canada pension plan benefits to ensure that more seniors who have worked all their lives and contributed to our economy can retire with dignity, which they deserve.

*Government Orders**[English]*

In this budget, we put in place something dear to my heart. We helped the caregivers by establishing a unique and simpler tax credit for those who take care of loved ones suffering from a serious illness. I have been a caregiver for my mother for several years. I know the level of commitment and compassion it requires. Having to deal with different sorts of tax credits to fit with our specific situation can be confusing and stressful. In a time when we want to put all our efforts into caring and loving a person who needs us, we should not be stressed about our financial situation. The caregivers deserve a break, and the help we propose will do exactly that. The new Canada caregiver credit will simplify and improve the existing system. It will apply to caregivers whether or not they live with the family member, and it will raise the income threshold for eligibility.

We also created a new EI caregiving benefit. It will give up to 15 weeks of EI to a person who has to be away from work to support and care for an ill loved one.

● (1120)

[Translation]

In addition to helping caregivers, we continue to help families through measures supporting children. Parents have many concerns when it comes to their children, but finding day care they trust and paying for their children's education are two of the biggest ones. Our government believes it is critical that all Canadians have access to quality affordable child care spaces. Quebec is a model, of course, but the shortage of subsidized spaces is a common problem for people in my riding.

That is why Quebec's share of the Canada social transfer will be \$79 million higher than last year's amount. A total of \$3 billion will be transferred to Quebec to support post-secondary education, social assistance, and child care.

We also improved the Canada student loans and grant programs to make them more accessible. Plans were also made regarding certain amounts and specific programs to address students' various needs. Quebec will be given the planned amounts to invest in its own loans and scholarships system.

[English]

I want to talk about transport. Since I am a member of the committee on transport and infrastructure, I am interested in the investments done in transport. It is a challenge to have an efficient, safe, and green transportation system. It also has to support trade. This is why we put in place a national trade corridor fund to build stronger, more efficient transportation corridors to international markets. It will help our businesses compete, grow, and create more jobs. The fund will target investments for congestion and inefficiencies at marine ports, such as Montreal, which is critical to the success of Canada's trade agreement with the European Union.

[Translation]

I would now like to focus on the region that I represent, Alfred-Pellan, in Laval, a diverse, vibrant, and innovative city. I am proud to be one of this city's representatives and just as proud of the fact that the measures announced pertaining to innovation will help Laval

continue to be a leader in the technology, digital, agrifood, and science sectors.

I am very proud to announce recent investments of more than \$8 million in Collège Montmorency de Laval for the construction of a new building devoted to research and technology transfers. This is a tangible measure in support of science and technology.

Workers in Laval are also going to benefit from our initiatives. We will support as many as 10,000 workplace learning opportunities per year so that businesses can train the workforce of the future. Businesspeople in Alfred-Pellan have often expressed this need.

Laval could take part in the smart cities challenge to get the money to fund its new technology initiatives, such as the projects of the Société de transport de Laval, one of the country's most innovative transit corporations, by using applications that enhance the efficiency of their transportation system as well as client services.

Speaking of public transit, we will support the next phase of public transit projects with a \$20-billion investment to improve service and create more efficient, greener transportation networks. I am committed to supporting our transit corporation to help it achieve its goals.

In addition to money for public transit, we are investing in infrastructure. Our programs have already helped Laval improve its drinking water. Laval will continue to have access to the funds allocated for its infrastructure projects.

There is also a great need for social housing in Alfred-Pellan. That is why we are going to develop a national affordable housing strategy and invest \$11 billion so that more single mothers, people living alone, and seniors can access safe, affordable housing. This will help Laval provide housing to the families that need it most.

I will conclude by reiterating my support for the people of Alfred-Pellan and Laval, local elected officials, businesses, and, most importantly, the people. My job gives me the opportunity to meet people from all walks of life, to talk to them about issues that matter to them, to celebrate their successes, and to support them in their endeavours. They are the reason my government and I are working on targeted measures for families, innovation, efficiency, and infrastructure. By making major investments now while interest rates are low, we can build a solid foundation for a prosperous, green future full of possibilities.

● (1125)

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech, and I would also like to wish him a happy anniversary.

Government Orders

I listened carefully to his remarks. He said that he was a member of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, which leads me to raise a problem that we have in my riding of Jonquière regarding the Bagotville airport. It is a small airport, but it allows us to attract tourists from Europe.

We have a lot of infrastructure to develop, for example, in Monts-Valin, in order to expand our tourism market. We applied to have our fjord designated as a UNESCO world heritage site. We are hopeful that the Saguenay will be recognized by UNESCO. That would give us great pride.

However, this airport will require specific restructuring and a lot of renovations. The government is always extolling the virtues of its infrastructure bank, but this bank, which will be created through a private partnership, will not deal in small airports. I would like to know what the government intends to do about that.

Will the government implement a real plan to help these small airports in my community, like the one in Bagotville, so that they can be open to the world?

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Our government presented a budget that builds on last year's budget. Our measures will improve the quality of life of middle-class Canadians and put more money in their pockets by creating jobs and a fairer tax system through measures linked to innovation and training. Furthermore, we are stimulating the economy with our ambitious infrastructure plan and targeted spending on health, child care services, affordable housing, help for families, and much more.

Consequently, that is definitely something that will be considered in due course. Once the infrastructure bank is finally set up, there may be something for small airports. Many improvements have been made in terms of infrastructure and there will surely be many more.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague said that there have been a number of investments in technology in his riding. I am happy for him. I wish that were my riding because I would like to see my constituents benefit from that much investment.

In their budget, the Liberals talk about wanting to help the middle class prosper. We have been hearing a lot about high-speed Internet lately. It is now considered a basic need for working, going to school, staying in touch with people, and paying the bills. The connect to innovate program was available until April, but there is no more money for it. The program's 2016 budget was not renewed this year.

We know that some rural and remote ridings, like mine, do not have high-speed Internet. In Soulanges, the Coop CSUR, a social economy organization, wants to get its municipalities connected, but that has turned out to be a herculean task. For months, the organization has dedicated one person to filling out the 16 forms. The forms are never-ending.

Moreover, many municipalities are not even included in last mile infrastructure projects. This is very complex. High-speed Internet should be a basic service, but there is no more money going into it.

How can it be that there are still people living in rural communities in Canada in 2017 who do not have high-speed Internet access?

• (1130)

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Our infrastructure program is very ambitious and modern. We have created programs for public transit, rural and northern communities, social infrastructure, and many other things. Our program also targets infrastructure relating to trade and transportation, a very important issue for Canada and for the regions.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Abbotsford. He will remain in our thoughts and prayers as he continues to recover and face other medical interventions in the coming weeks and months. We pray for his full recovery.

We are here to debate the budget, and I have looked carefully at the budget. The reality is that Canadians are waking up to a nightmare of out-of-control spending and no accountability. The government knows what to say, but what it says and what it does are two totally different things.

The media have critiqued the budget. John Ivison said:

Much in the budget appears to be bureaucratic tinkering. A number of Canada's innovation programs are to be "streamlined" into a super-sounding Strategic Innovation Fund, but simply merging the automobile and aerospace funds and giving them a new name is not the cutting edge of innovation.

It is just tinkering.

Andrew Coyne said, "No money, no ideas, but a wealth of bafflegab and buzzwords from the Liberals".

He went on to say: "But of course it isn't just that they've run out of money: they've run out of ideas. Or at least, good ideas."

Canadians have woken up to the nightmare that the Liberal government, halfway through its term, has not kept its promises and has created a huge mess for Canadians. I am going to focus on the mess the Liberals have created for Canadian seniors.

In the previous Parliament, we had a minister for seniors. I, and in fact the experts, the seniors advocates in our country, the NGOs, have all told the government that people are aging and that we need to prepare for that. Right now in Canada, one in six Canadians is a senior. A year ago we reached the point that there were more seniors in Canada than there were youth.

Government Orders

There is a major shift in the Canadian population. There are more and more Canadian seniors. People are aging, and we need to prepare for that, so we asked the government to please appoint a minister for seniors and begin work on a national seniors strategy. To this point, halfway through its term, there has been nothing. The Liberals have actually refused to appoint a minister for seniors, so it is not surprising to see a budget that continues to ignore seniors. No one is standing up and speaking out within the Liberal cabinet to say, "Wait a minute; we are not properly taking care of seniors."

What happened in the budget was, again, a little bafflegab, and every once in a while it would mention the word "senior", but there is nothing new for seniors—well, that is not quite correct: there are a lot of seniors on fixed incomes who ride on public transit, and there had been an arrangement whereby they would pay for 12 months and get two months' credit, so it only cost them 10 months; the Liberal government has now taken that away, and the cost for seniors now in Canada has gone up dramatically, because they have lost that bus pass tax credit.

Why is the government refusing to appoint a minister for seniors? Why is it refusing to listen to seniors and their unique needs? Why is it refusing to prepare for the aging population?

It was a year and a half ago that I introduced at HUMA committee a call for a study on a national seniors strategy. The committee, under the direction of the Prime Minister, refused to do that. He controls everything. We were told we could not study that now.

•(1135)

Conservatives in the committee, along with our NDP colleagues and friends, have continued to ask for a study on a national seniors strategy so that we can get ready to take care of the aging population. Right now, one in six Canadians is a senior. In five and a half years, it will be one in five Canadians, and in 12 years it will be one in four. That is in 12 years. We are not ready for that and we need to get ready for it. Again, the Liberals are totally ignoring their responsibilities in taking care of Canadian seniors.

I had a very good meeting with the Greater Langley Chamber of Commerce last week. The president of the chamber, a lawyer, brought to my attention another major problem with this budget. In fact, he wrote a letter to the Canadian Bar Association about it, and I will read it to the House.

He talks about WIP, work in progress. It is one of those little poison pills the Liberals have snuck into this budget, and most Canadians are not aware that the government has done this.

If someone is in a serious car accident and is injured, it may be a number of years before the person gets a settlement for the injuries he or she sustained. The tradition is that the individual would retain a lawyer over the two-year, three-year, five-year process of getting compensation for the injuries. The lawyer would say that he or she would not need to be provided a retainer and would take one-third of the settlement. That is the norm.

The Liberal hungry-for-tax-increases government would tax the work in progress. It would tax the legal firm for every hour that it spends helping the person. The legal office would pay the money up front for MRIs, physiotherapy, or any tests to help the individual and would get paid nothing until the settlement, which may be three,

four, or five years down the road. It would be taxed by the Liberal government for WIP, work in progress.

Scott Johnston wrote:

The elimination of the election for billed-based accounting and implementing taxation of work-in-progress will have a deleterious effect on all of our firm's contingency files for personal injury and estate litigation claims. Forcing the payment of tax before a bill is issued and the funds are actually received by the firm causes a colossal cash-flow debacle. Most of our contingency files carry on for years before settlement or judgment meaning that the firm will have to self-finance tax payments on hours recorded for clients over frequently an extended period of duration without actual receipt of the cash to remit such tax payments.

Legal firms across this country are going to have to fund the Liberal government's tax grab.

The letter continues:

This may cause lawyers working under contingency fee agreements generally in the profession to "cherry-pick" cases to select only "quick settlement" files,

—and this is the most important point—

therefore denying access to justice for impecunious litigants with more challenging and protracted matters.

The irony is that the Liberal government has mandated this study on poverty reduction in the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, which it is studying and working on right now. At the same time, the government is saying that people who need the help of lawyers to help them in their impoverished and difficult situations, particularly in state litigations or vehicle crashes, with this change, lawyers will likely not be able to help them, denying justice to the impoverished.

•(1140)

What the Liberal government says on one hand and what it does on the other are totally different. I hope the government will listen to Canadians and reverse this hard-headed, stubborn plan to tax our poor and desperate people.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it somewhat ironic the member would talk about defending Canada's poor and low-income earners, in particular, our seniors. One of the examples he uses is the bus tax credit. In order to claim the bus tax credit, people have to have a certain income. For most low-income seniors and non-seniors, taking the bus often means putting in some change. It often means using a daily pass that is provided. Not all low-income seniors benefited. I would suggest that a minority would have actually benefited by that. Nor did that tax credit put additional buses on our roads or assist in providing the necessary infrastructure to expand our public transit system.

Government Orders

We have seen a government that has recognized it is better to spend the billions and has assigned billions of dollars going forward into improving our public transit system and looking at changing the way in which we can support some of the seniors and low-income earners the member across the way talks about. For example, there is the increase in Canada's GIS. The member across the way from the Conservative Party voted against that increase. The member made reference to poverty. The Canada child benefit program was substantially increased, and the member across the way voted against that.

I wonder how he would reconcile the statements he made with what I just said.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, I made notes of what the member said. He said "I would suggest that" or "maybe that", which are all hypothetical comments.

In fact, the Liberal government has hurt Canadian seniors. The Liberals have ignored Canadians in poverty. They are taking away tax breaks for Canadians. They are increasing taxes on Canadians in any way they can imagine. It is hurting Canadians. Canadians are waking up to the nightmare they now find themselves in. It has to stop. The Liberal government has to stop saying one thing and doing something totally different. When the Liberals say what the right thing to do is, and they know what the right thing is to do, then why would they do the wrong thing? They need to stop that.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member and I are on the all-party caucus on seniors care, and I appreciate his work on that.

I have done over 11 town halls across my riding, specifically on seniors issues. I have heard devastating stories from seniors who are very concerned about the impacts of aging and very concerned about the cost of medication. They really support the idea of having a national seniors strategy that would start to address these issues so that they could feel comforted that they will have a positive future, one where they are not at risk of losing their homes, where they are not making decisions between housing and medication.

I would like to hear the member's thoughts on how we would not only do the socially right thing, but the economically right thing, by creating a national seniors strategy.

• (1145)

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my NDP colleague for her commitment to seniors. It is an honour to work with her. It is an honour to work within the Conservative Party, which actually had a minister for seniors. If we do not have someone leading the discussion on meeting those needs, it will not happen. If we do not have a target to hit, we will not hit it. I appreciate her encouragement.

There is another major problem that Canadian seniors, and in fact all Canadians, are facing. It is not a misspeak; it is a falsehood when the Prime Minister would say the carbon tax is revenue neutral federally. We now know that is not the case. In fact, there is a report from the Library of Parliament which shows that millions of new dollars are coming out of the pockets of Canadian seniors, of Canadian families, of the middle class, those who are struggling, because the government is going to charge a tax, GST, on top of that mandated price on carbon.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Langley—Aldergrove for his good work. He and I served on the city council together in Abbotsford. He knows budgets, and I am so pleased that he pointed out the gaping holes in the Liberals' 2017 budget.

As the member of Parliament for Abbotsford, I have made it my priority to bring the concerns of my constituents to Ottawa and to hold the Liberal government accountable for its actions.

Since the election of the Liberal government in 2015, our Conservative caucus has fought hard to maintain balanced budgets, avoid deficits, lower taxes for Canadians, and support our small businesses. These are the bedrock of a strong and growing economy. Sadly, the recent budget does none of these things. In fact, the Liberals have thoroughly disappointed Canadians by littering their path with reckless spending and broken promise after broken promise.

For the second year in a row, the Liberals have blown past their pledge to limit the deficit to \$10 billion per year, running huge deficits of \$30 billion, and driving our country further and further into debt. Who has to repay that debt? It is our children and our grandchildren. Effectively, what we are doing is spending recklessly on ourselves today and letting future generations pick up the tab.

As for balanced budgets, good luck with that promise. Remember the Prime Minister promising to balance the budget by 2019? Now the Department of Finance predicts that we will not see balanced budgets until, wait for it, the year 2055. There will be no balanced budgets for 40 years. That is a disgraceful performance.

Let us not forget that our Conservative government under Stephen Harper left the Liberals with a balanced budget in 2015, having carefully shepherded Canada's economy through the worst global economic recession since the Great Depression. That leads me to the obvious question: how can the Liberal government afford all this spending? The answer of course is higher taxes. That is, after all, what tax-and-spend Liberals do.

The Liberals have also completely abandoned our small businesses, which are the key drivers of our economy and create the majority of jobs in Canada. Budget 2017 does absolutely nothing to help those businesses. In fact, the Liberal budget mentions small business only six times. Let us contrast that with the last Conservative budget, in which small businesses were mentioned almost 200 times, and in which we laid out concrete steps the government would take to support their growth and success, including lowering the small business tax rate to 9%. It is surprising just how quickly the Liberal government has made a mess of our tax system and the supports we implemented for small businesses.

Government Orders

Just this week, I met with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, which is still demanding that the Liberals make good on their promise to cut the small business tax rate to 9%. With new payroll and CPP taxes on the horizon, small businesses are worried that many of the policies implemented by our former Conservative government will be reversed. Why is this significant? Canadian businesses do not just compete locally, they compete in a North American and increasingly global marketplace. As the former minister of international trade, I know that. I have travelled all around the world. I have seen how Canadians are working hard to try to compete within the global marketplace. The Liberals are undermining that effort. Liberal tax and economic policies are chasing away investors and undermining our competitive advantage in the North American marketplace.

Also, the election of President Trump has really thrown a spanner into the works. The new president has announced that he is reducing the U.S. corporate tax rate from 35% down to 15%, and re-energizing the coal industry to deliver cheaper electricity to manufacturers. In Canada, we are going in the opposite direction, increasing taxes on our businesses and foisting astronomically expensive electricity costs on our job creators in places like Ontario.

Kevin Libin, writing in the *National Post* last week, commented:

As our G7 competitors have trimmed away at corporate tax rates, Canada's average rates only grew, moving us from one of the most attractive to one of the least attractive in just a few years. Trump's tax plan will make us look much, much worse.

• (1150)

That is disgraceful, to take a country that was a leader in competitiveness when it comes to taxes and lose that competitive advantage.

This does not end well. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce implored the federal government to reduce business costs and improve Canada's economic competitiveness. In fact, CEO Perrin Beatty had this to say:

Investment crosses borders like light through glass. If we continue to allow a growing gap between what it costs to do business in Canada and the costs our competitors face, businesses will be forced to locate their activities elsewhere.

Let me repeat: they will "locate their activities elsewhere."

One organization that reached out to my office is the recently formed Coalition of Concerned Manufacturers of Ontario. They include the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Baking Association of Canada, Food and Beverage Ontario, and a host of mostly mid-sized manufacturers across the province of Ontario.

In speaking about the direction of the government, their founder, Jocelyn Bamford, said that they are standing on a beach with a giant wave called cap and trade barrelling down on them, and the government still doesn't realize that this tsunami will destroy manufacturing and small businesses in Ontario. She said that businesses are terrified of what the federal government is doing. She said that the government is supposed to help businesses, but its policies are causing them to consider moving their growth to other jurisdictions. Let me repeat that they are considering moving their growth to other jurisdictions. That means to other countries.

In the last 10 years, her company has experienced more than a doubling of its energy costs, undermining her company's ability to do business. In her words, "We don't worry about our competition anymore. We fear the government." That is the Liberal government she is talking about.

For so many manufacturers across Canada, the high cost of energy and the impact of carbon taxes are enough for them to look south to more favourable jurisdictions in which to do business and grow. That is shocking.

What the Prime Minister is doing is dramatically tilting the playing field against Canadians. This is about competitiveness and about the ability of our businesses to compete on a level playing field in North America and within the global marketplace, and the Liberal government is failing on every account.

Is the Prime Minister listening? Canadian businesses cannot afford reckless policies that drive capital and small businesses out of our country.

Will the government reverse its decision to impose a massive carbon tax on Canadians? Will the Prime Minister fulfill his election promise to reduce taxes on our small businesses?

Hard-working middle-class Canadians and their families, and let us not forget those working hard to join them, are also suffering. The Liberals have piled it on by raising taxes on everything from public transit, to Uber, to beer and wine sales. They are even taking away the children's fitness tax credit. It is unbelievable.

Not only that, the Prime Minister is significantly increasing the fees that Canadians pay for a wide variety of federal services, including things such as campsites and fishing licences. If we want to take our grandchildren fishing, the Liberals are jacking up the fees to make it less likely that Canadian families will get a chance to go fishing. They are also jacking up the fees on passport applications.

Here is another little dirty Liberal secret. Remember the massive carbon tax that the Prime Minister wants to force Canadians to pay? Well, he is also planning to have Canadians pay the GST on that carbon tax. Members heard that right: the Liberals want Canadians to pay a tax on a tax. In fact, it is already happening in B.C. where we are being charged a federal GST on the amount of carbon tax being charged by the provincial government. It is insanity.

Government Orders

The bottom line is the government is nickel and diming Canadians to death to pay for the Prime Minister's out-of-control spending on his own vanity projects, like the \$2.65 billion he spent on environmental projects outside of our country when the money could and should have stayed in Canada. There is a whole host of these. Is there any Canadian supervision over how that money is spent? I have asked about it and have been told there is very little supervision, very little monitoring to make sure those billions of dollars being spent abroad actually do what they were intended to do.

• (1155)

The Liberals have failed Canadians miserably. They have saddled us with more debt, more deficits, and more taxes than at any other time in our history. I repeat, this will not end well for us and for future generations. Is the Prime Minister listening?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the member across the way has demonstrated, and quite well, that the Conservative Party really and truly has lost touch with Canadians. In fact, the Conservatives are not even listening to what Canadians want.

The member across the way said tax, deficit, and debt. When the Minister of Finance came up with the largest decrease in income tax for Canada's middle class—nine million Canadians benefited, hundreds of millions of dollars were put in the pockets of Canadians—what did the Conservatives do? They voted against it.

When it comes to deficit, we can never achieve, in this very short timeframe, the amount of debt that Stephan Harper achieved, over \$150 billion. We do not need to take a lesson from the Conservatives on the deficit.

Would the member not agree that Canadians want this government to invest in Canada's infrastructure? That is one of the things, I would suggest, the Conservatives need to rethink, and they need to vote in favour of Canada's infrastructure program.

Hon. Ed Fast: That is really funny, Mr. Speaker. This is a government that promised to invest \$120 billion for infrastructure. Do members remember that promise? In their budgets, the Liberals pushed virtually all that spending off 10 years, to the end of the 10-year cycle. Why? It is because they really do not want to spend that money.

When we were in government, every single penny we promised to spend on infrastructure was spent on critical infrastructure, including our gateways, the Asia-Pacific gateway, the continental gateways, inland ports. We invested heavily to make sure Canada maintained its effectiveness.

What are the Liberals doing? They are investing in make-work projects. They have pushed off all of their infrastructure spending commitments 10 years down the road so they will not have to live by them. It is shameful, this record. All Canadians have to do is check this budget and check what the Liberals are spending on infrastructure. It is there, boldly standing out as a failed policy of the Liberal government.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

He talked about competitiveness from a business and economic perspective. We do not often see eye to eye on this topic, but the Liberals recently increased the excise tax on wine products by 2% in their budget. This will affect our wine producers' ability to compete.

Given that free trade agreements will leave the door wide open to wine imports, our own vintners are sounding the alarm. They are saying that this is unfair to them and they will lose a lot of money as a result.

Does my colleague think the Liberals should do more to protect them and get rid of this tax? Does he think it is a mistake to add a tax, let alone one that will increase every year in line with the consumer price index?

• (1200)

[*English*]

Hon. Ed Fast: The simple answer, Mr. Speaker, is no. We Canadians believe in fair competition. We believe in free trade. I want to remind the member of back when the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement was being negotiated. Does she remember that? Remember how our wine growers were saying, "This is the end of our industry because we will not be protected against California wine anymore. It is over for our industry". What happened? The Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement and then NAFTA came into force, and our wine industry was forced to adapt and get better and invest in itself.

Today, our wine industry is a world leader. How do I know that? This past weekend I was in the Okanagan Valley doing wine tasting, visiting different wineries.

An hon. member: It was research.

Hon. Ed Fast: Researching, yes, Mr. Speaker, that is what I was doing. It was great research to do. The quality of our Canadian wines is the best in the world. That is what we Canadians do when we can compete fairly.

Mr. John Oliver (Oakville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Scarborough—Rouge Park.

I am proud to speak today to budget 2017, the next step in our government's ambitious plan to create jobs, grow our economy, and provide more opportunities for Canadians. I would like to highlight a few aspects of the budget that I know are important to people in my riding of Oakville. Budget 2017 puts Canada's skilled, talented, and creative people at the heart of a more innovative economy, one that would create middle-class jobs today and tomorrow for all Canadians.

Of particular importance to me, as chair of the Liberal auto caucus and MP for the riding that is home to Ford Canada and the Oakville assembly plant, are investments in the automotive industry to help manufacturers such as Ford Canada commit to long-term growth and development. The automotive sector is a key enabler for good-quality, well-paying middle-class jobs.

Government Orders

I would like to particularly point out that budget 2017 would create a \$1.26 billion, five-year strategic innovation fund to consolidate and simplify the strategic aerospace and defence initiative, the technology demonstration program, the automotive innovation fund, and the automotive supplier innovation program. The strategic innovation fund would attract and support new high-quality business investments and would continue to help aerospace and automotive firms while also expanding its support to other dynamic and emerging sectors such as clean technology and agrifood. For example, with the support from AIF of \$102 million, the connectivity and innovation centres created across Ontario by Ford Canada, including in my riding of Oakville, would both create 800 jobs and ensure that Canadians are part of creating the connected and energy-efficient vehicles of the future.

I know from round table discussions that the Oakville business community will be pleased to see the budget would establish a venture capital catalyst of up to \$400 million over three years to increase late-stage venture capital available to Canadian entrepreneurs.

In addition to helping bridge the gap between innovation and manufacturing, budget 2017 proposes to launch a new procurement program. A portion of funding from federal departments and agencies would be allocated to help Canadian innovators find the first customers to test and validate their technologies.

As I hear from people at their doors in Oakville, the demand for home care services in Canada continues to grow. Approximately 15% of hospital beds are occupied by people who could receive their care at home or in community-based settings. Meanwhile, many families caring for loved ones at home are struggling with the stresses and pressures that come from not having enough home support. In both cases, these people and these families need more help. Budget 2017 proposes to invest \$6 billion over 10 years to provide Canadians with improved access to home, community, and palliative care services as well as more support for informal caregivers. This means that more people would get the care they need in their homes and that more families would be getting increased support.

For those who receive care at home, an increased burden is put on family members. Balancing work and family caregiving responsibilities can be a real challenge. Things can be especially difficult when a family member is suffering from a serious illness. To give eligible caregivers a well-deserved break, budget 2017 proposes to create a new employment insurance caregiving benefit, which would give eligible caregivers up to 15 weeks of EI benefits while they are temporarily away from work to support or care for a critically ill or injured family member. Budget 2017 recognizes that people make enormous sacrifices to care for loved ones and would help ease that burden by giving people time to be caregivers.

An overwhelming number of Canadian families are affected by mental illness at some point in their lives. In any given year, one in five people in Canada experience a mental health problem or illness. While great strides have been made to improve our understanding of mental illness and its impact on people's lives, wait times to see a mental health specialist in certain regions of our country can range up to 18 months. In Oakville, I have heard from residents about the challenges of accessing mental health services in our community.

Our government recognizes that this is not good enough, and that is why the budget proposes to invest \$5 billion over 10 years to support mental health services. It would also help approximately half a million young Canadians who are currently unable to receive even the most basic mental health care. Clinical evidence has shown that it is absolutely essential for those struggling with mental illness to have access to timely and appropriate mental health services. Improved access to mental health supports would result in improved health outcomes and shorter wait times for hundreds of thousands of Canadians.

● (1205)

Canada's opioid crisis has led to devastating consequences for individuals, families, and communities. The effect of this crisis is being felt in my riding of Oakville. I have met with a number of local health groups, including the Halton Equitable Drug Strategy and ADAPT, a treatment program, about their role in supporting harm-reduction initiatives to save lives. I have heard about the challenges some residents are facing as they try to access the treatment and support they need.

The budget supports the Canadian drug and substances strategy with a total of \$100 million over five years for Health Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada, and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. I want the residents of my riding of Oakville and all Canadians to be protected from the opioid crisis and illicit fentanyl distribution. This plan would provide invaluable resources for treatment, prevention, and enforcement measures.

Oakville is a commuter town, and I know just how important it is for residents to have reliable and safe public transit. After a long day spent working hard, we should expect clean, efficient public transit to get us home on time. To support the next phase of public transit projects, our government is investing \$20.1 billion to support urban public transit networks and service extensions. This investment would make it possible for Canadian communities like Oakville to build new urban transit networks and service extensions that will transform the way we live, move, and work. It would mean new transit lines, more buses, more reliable services, and fewer cars on the road. To get it right, the government is working closely with provinces and municipalities as reflected in the most recent funding of nearly \$5 million for the Oakville transit, thanks to the public transit infrastructure fund.

Government Orders

A clean environment and a strong economy are connected. Canadians know this, and our government agrees. Budget 2017 lays out our government's plan to invest \$21.9 billion over 11 years to support green infrastructure. This investment prioritizes projects that reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, help deliver clean air and safe water systems, and promote renewable sources of power.

Oakville clean tech companies have already received over \$7 million from our government, underlying the potential for innovation we have in my community and across Canada. Through these investments, Canada has positioned itself as a global leader in clean growth, illustrating to the world that a clean environment and a strong economy can go hand in hand.

Canada's vast expanses of protected natural areas, our magnificent natural scenery, and our wealth of wildlife are a point of pride for all Canadians. The residents of Oakville enjoy their close connection to nature. The natural and cultural heritage we enjoy as Canadians enriches our communities and creates jobs by spurring economic growth through tourism. There is perhaps no better example of Canada's natural beauty than our national parks. Recognized around the world and loved by those who visit and work in them, our 47 national parks and four national marine conservation areas are a source of real pride for Canadians. Our national parks are part of our Canadian identity. They allow more Canadians to learn about the environment and connect directly with nature.

To ensure we are able to enjoy our national parks for years to come, budget 2017 provides up to \$364 million to the Parks Canada Agency to protect and preserve our national parks. To make it more affordable for more Canadian families to visit and appreciate the outdoors in Canada's 150th year, admission to all national parks, national marine conservation areas, and national historic sites will be free for all of 2017. I am looking forward to using my pass to visit some of these parks with my family.

With a strong focus on innovation, skills, partnerships, and health, budget 2017 takes the next steps in securing a more prosperous future for all Canadians.

Our government's plan is focused on ensuring immediate help to those who need it most and providing everyone with a real and fair chance of success.

Budget 2017 has some great news for Canadians and some great news for the people of my riding of Oakville. I will be supporting it.

• (1210)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the words in this budget are going in the right direction. Goodness knows, after nine years of Harper budgets where the words “climate change” could not be found in a budget, it is encouraging to hear about climate change.

There is something that I find concerning. When we look at the dollars for mental health, for child care, for homelessness, and for infrastructure, it is true that none of the funds will be spent before the 2019 election. In the budget \$20 billion is pledged for public transit but a bit less than \$1 billion of that would be spent before the 2019 election. That is the case with respect to all of the categories I have just mentioned. Large amounts are promised but spending is postponed.

I would ask the hon. member for Oakville if he could explain. I find it counter to the job we do as parliamentarians, where we are responsible for the public purse. We should be able to look at the annual budget and know what money is going to be spent this year, not review something that would not really happen until after the next election.

Mr. John Oliver: Mr. Speaker, it is a balancing act. Just as we believe one can improve the economy while at the same time protecting the environment, it is a balancing act governments have to work through.

I believe that the right investments are being made. People in communities and at the provincial level will see where funds are being targeted. The investments we need to create jobs to give Canadians confidence in the economy and to get growth happening again in Canada would happen through the budget. We are going to see tremendous growth coming to Canada, thanks to the work of budget 2017.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the most egregious parts of this omnibus bill, and it is an omnibus bill, is the changes to the parliamentary budget officer. We heard clearly from the PBO yesterday that he is not happy, and his office is not happy, with the changes that would be put upon them. They feel it would limit their freedom. It would limit their independence in reporting on the government's spending. That is not something Canadians support. Canadians would like to see transparency.

Let us be honest. The PBO often reports on the government in a way that perhaps is not positive for the government, so I can understand why the Liberals are attempting to silence the PBO and have the PBO actually answer to you, Mr. Speaker, as opposed to putting forward his own agenda on what the office would like to study.

Could the member explain to me how Bill C-44 would make the work of the parliamentary budget officer more transparent if the PBO would be required to submit to the will of the Speaker of the House of Commons and the Senate?

Mr. John Oliver: Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to open and transparent policy and budget-setting. We are absolutely supporting the parliamentary budget officer and the work being done. Having the Speaker, who represents all of us in Parliament, have a say and involvement with the budget officer is a good direction for us.

Our government is committed to open and transparent policy, and I am glad and proud to be representing that here in Parliament.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's speech. He has done a fantastic job of explaining how the budget would have a very positive, profound impact on Canadians.

I wonder if he could share some of his thoughts on how important building Canada's infrastructure is for our country.

Government Orders

•(1215)

Mr. John Oliver: Mr. Speaker, infrastructure is a very important investment for Canadians. Whether it is in transit or green tech, it is a critical part of how we are going to be moving forward. Infrastructure creates jobs while we are making the investments, and it builds for the future so that future generations benefit from the infrastructure investments we make today.

There is an incredible, almost record-breaking investment in infrastructure through this budget and through the commitments in budget 2016. I believe that every Canadian will see the benefit of those investments as they go forward. Whether it is transit, sewage and water systems, or better protection during the storms we are starting to experience, it is a very solid direction for Canadians.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by congratulating our Minister of Finance for delivering on our promises to help the middle class and those trying to join it.

Our first budget appears to have had the desired effect. The new Canada child benefit has helped hundreds of thousands of families improve their standard of living. I recently had coffee with someone who works in poverty reduction in the city of Toronto. She confirmed to me how the CCB has affected so many of the people she serves.

I do not have to go far to find families and children helped by the CCB. I routinely run into people who say that it has changed their way of life. Our office has assisted constituents who needed to file their income tax to qualify for the CCB. They have told us the impact it will have on their lives. The CCB is really a game changer.

I want to share some of the statistics from my riding of Scarborough—Rouge Park. In October 2016, the Canada child benefit helped 17,250 children, in 9,930 families, with an average benefit of \$670, totalling close to \$6.7 million. Let me remind my colleagues that this is approximately \$670 per month tax free. These payments were not made to millionaires but to those who need it, based on their income.

This is the type of program that will help grow our middle class. It will allow young people to engage in things like soccer, hockey, gym, and music. It will provide better housing. It will provide better Internet access. It can help families in any way they need to improve their standard of life.

Building on this and other initiatives from the 2016 budget, our Minister of Finance and his team have crafted a budget for 2017 to support Canadians. I am therefore very proud to speak in support of this budget.

I will focus on three aspects of the budget: first, support for caregivers; second, innovation; and third, support for housing.

Last month, at the Malvern Family Resource Centre, our Prime Minister, along with the Minister of Health and my friend, the member for Scarborough Centre, met with many of my constituents who are the primary caregivers for their loved ones. The Malvern Family Resource Centre is a state-of-the-art facility that supports people of all generations with early years programs through to seniors programs. It has incredible leadership, with Girmalla

Persaud, its executive director, at the helm. In 2016 it had 559 volunteers, who worked just under 20,000 hours to help this community.

At this gathering, the Prime Minister was able to speak to caregivers about how the proposed changes would improve, expand, and simplify the current caregiver tax credit system by replacing the existing credit programs with the new Canada caregiver credit. Budget 2017 would replace the current caregiver credit, the infirm dependent credit, and the family caregiver tax credit with one single new credit.

The new Canada caregiver credit would provide support for those who need it the most and would help more families who give care to their loved ones. The new credit would provide \$6,883 for the care of dependent relatives with disabilities and \$2,150 for the care of a spouse, common-law partner, or minor child. It would provide an additional \$310 million in tax relief for Canadians over the next five years. It would be indexed to inflation, and it would be subject to no reduction until the dependent family member was making more than \$16,163.

•(1220)

[*Translation*]

In addition to the Canada caregiver credit in budget 2017, our government announced that we will extend EI benefits for people caring for family members and parents caring for a critically ill child.

[*English*]

Budget 2017 would provide an additional \$691.3 million, for five years, to create a new EI caregiver benefit of up to 15 weeks. Parents of critically ill children would continue to be able to access up to 35 weeks of coverage, with more flexibility to share the benefit among multiple family members.

[*Translation*]

These changes will help thousands of families across the country to support one another, and will simplify the everyday lives of many people in my riding.

I want to take a moment to thank all the caregivers in my community, and those around the country, who look after their loved ones. As we know, governments cannot take care of people as well as those close to them. However, governments can and must support those caregivers. This budget is a great start.

Innovation is very important to our government. We have many innovators. In my riding of Scarborough—Rouge Park, we have great examples of businesses that focus on innovation. At the University of Toronto Scarborough campus, we have a program called the hub, which acts as an incubator of new ideas and businesses. When I met with a Parks Canada official last week, she confirmed that the hub is working toward developing an app to navigate the Rouge National Urban Park, which is also in my riding.

Government Orders

We have many more innovators who continue to build an innovation-based economy. For example, last year's Google Demo Day's award winner, Knowledgehook, is from Scarborough—Rouge Park. This company of the future, started by Travis Ratnam and his team, continues to grow and will contribute to the economy of the future.

It is in this context that I am very excited that budget 2017 would serve as a foundation for our future growth. It focuses on one thing, and that is to help people succeed. This budget is a visionary step toward building the economy of the future.

Here are some elements. It proposes to invest an additional \$1.8 billion over six years in labour market development agreements with the provinces. For the average Canadian, this would mean more opportunities to upgrade their skills, receive career counselling, start their own business, and gain experience. However, our commitment would go well beyond by expanding eligibility for Canada student grants and loans each year to an additional 10,000 part-time students, and it would expand eligibility even more to students who support their families.

We would launch a pilot project to test new approaches for adult learners who return to school, at a cost of \$287.2 million over the next three years.

We would make changes to EI to help those going back to school, investing in skills development, creating more jobs for youth, and increasing the availability of co-op placements for students.

In this budget we propose a new strategic innovation fund to make high-quality investments in businesses that will bring jobs to Canada.

We would create a new \$400-million venture capital fund, through the Business Development Bank of Canada, to help Canadian businesses get a leg up and add value to our economy. We would invest in the next generation of entrepreneurs by partnering with great organizations, like Futurpreneur Canada.

Let me turn to social housing. Good housing is a fundamental need for the development of an individual. It is the centre of one's life. The member for Scarborough—Agincourt and I met with the CEO of Toronto Community Housing on March 28. We went on a tour of six Toronto Community Housing complexes in Scarborough. We were able to see first-hand the need to invest in housing. These complexes, located in my riding and in Scarborough—Agincourt, help thousands of families make ends meet. They provide affordable living and support those who are most vulnerable in our society.

Budget 2017 would make a historic investment of \$11.2 billion over 11 years to build, renew, and repair Canada's affordable housing and to ensure that all Canadians have their housing needs met. This would include \$5 billion dollars that would go toward our new national housing fund to address housing issues in our cities, including for co-op housing. As members know, there are 12 co-op housing complexes in my riding.

An additional \$2.1 billion dollars over the next 11 years would go toward a homelessness prevention strategy, working with communities across the country to combat homelessness and to provide support to mitigate underlying issues that lead to homelessness.

I am very proud of this budget. Budget 2017 provides answers to many of the difficult questions facing our society today. It would invest to support Canadians in adapting to a modern economy. It would look forward by investing in education, training, and businesses. It would support caregivers. This is a forward-looking budget that I think we can all get behind, and I am proud to support it.

● (1225)

[English]

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my hon. colleague about tax loopholes. The Liberals are putting the private interests of the wealthy few in our country ahead of ordinary Canadians who are working hard every day to make ends meet. In the last 16 months, the government has not managed to eliminate the tax loopholes that mainly benefit the wealthy in our country, the CEOs. They have subscribed to these huge tax breaks that were offered to businesses by the Harper government.

In the last two election campaigns, in 2011 and 2015, the Liberals clearly promised to “set a cap on how much can be claimed through the stock option deduction.” However, they backtracked on this promise once they were in power. Why did the government decide to renege on its promise to eliminate the tax loophole associated with stock options for CEOs in budget 2017?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that my friend may not have read the previous budget, budget 2016.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: You closed it.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: What is important to recognize is that—

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: Did I miss it?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: If I could speak, Mr. Speaker, I could answer that question.

What is important is that in our previous budget, the first budget, we increased taxes on the top income earners. We took away the Canada child benefit from millionaires. Billionaire families are not receiving a cheque every month from this government. We do not believe that those with means should be getting additional money from the government. That is the type of tax fairness our government has implemented. Looking forward, we will continue to do that. I am very proud we are on that track.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I want to remind hon. members that this is an interactive process, but not at the same time. There is a certain procedure that goes on.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Edmonton West.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will give my hon. colleague across the way plenty of time to answer this and will not interrupt him.

Government Orders

When are you going to balance the budget?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I am sure the member did not mean me, the Speaker.

The hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge Park.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, our country has had a social deficit for the past 10 years. We failed to invest in critical parts of our economy. We failed to invest in critical infrastructure. If we look at our historic investment in transit, housing, green energy, and green infrastructure, we are on the right track to building an economy that will lead to a balanced budget. I am very proud we are on this track.

We cannot balance the budget on the backs of the poor. That has been done over the years. It is important to recognize, going forward, that we need to invest in things like housing, our children, and the economy so we will have a long-term sustainable economy.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was somewhat surprised by the question from the New Democratic Party. When the NDP had the opportunity to vote in favour of putting a special tax on 1% of Canada's wealthiest, it voted against it. If we listened to the question our colleague across the way asked, one would have thought she would have voted in favour of that special tax.

Does my colleague find it somewhat ironic, like I do, that the NDP would vote against a tax on Canada's wealthiest 1%?

• (1230)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with my friend. It is important to recognize that our party has found that balance. We are ensuring that millionaires do not get the Canada child benefit to raise their children. We have equalized it toward people who need it based on an income test. We are investing in very important infrastructure that will help families, communities, and cities, and that is the longer-term vision. We can balance the budget, but not on the backs of those who do not have housing, are the poorest of the poor, and do not have money to put food on the table.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, budget 2017 can be called a lot of things, including visionless and empty. It is a budget of broken promises.

During the last election, the Prime Minister promised that in 2017 the budget the deficit would be no more than then \$10 billion. It turns out that his \$10 billion deficit is actually a \$30 billion deficit, three times larger than what he promised.

The Prime Minister promised that the budget would be balanced in 2019. It turns out that in 2019, instead of delivering a balanced budget, the Liberals are on track to deliver a deficit of \$23.4 billion. It gets worse. According to the Department of Finance, based on the current Liberal plan, the budget not only will not be balanced in 2019, it will not be balanced in 2029, or 2039 or 2049, not until 2055. That means someone who is born this year or was born last year will be nearly 40 years old before the Liberals get around to balancing the budget.

The Prime Minister promised to invest in infrastructure for things like roads and bridges. He has not. The Prime Minister promised to not increase taxes for middle-class Canadians. Again, it is a promise

broken. Budget 2017 increases taxes on hard-working middle-class Canadians by nickel and diming middle-class Canadians; nickel and diming middle-class Canadians by eliminating the public transit tax credit; nickel and diming middle-class Canadians by increasing the price of beer and wine; nickel and diming middle-class Canadians by taxing ride-sharing services, like Uber. Whatever it is, the Liberals are nickel and diming middle-class Canadians. Not only is this budget a broken promises budget, but it is also a budget that nickel and dimes middle-class Canadians.

Before I go on, Mr. Speaker, I am splitting my time with the hon. member for Brantford—Brant. I know my colleague will give a very eloquent speech about why this budget is a bad deal for Canadians.

What is the government's plan when it comes to jobs and growth? It seems like the government's plan is to increase taxes on job creators, on small business owners. Small businesses account for 90% of the companies in Canada. Seventy per cent of the private sector is employed in small businesses. The government is punishing small businesses.

Last year the government punished small businesses by cancelling a small business tax cut. It further punished small businesses when it eliminated a hiring tax credit that would allow small businesses to hire new employees and create jobs. This year the government is punishing small businesses by increasing CPP and EI premiums.

It could not come at a worse time. Right now the U.S. administration is cutting taxes and rolling back red tape. The United States is not only Canada's biggest trading partner, it is also our largest competitor. Increasing taxes on job creators undermines Canada's competitiveness, which in turn undermines Canada's long-term jobs growth and prosperity.

• (1235)

The Liberals just cannot help themselves because they are wedded to a tax-and-spend agenda.

In the last year and a half that the Liberals have been in office, we have seen discretionary spending increased by 12%. That is unheard of. That is unprecedented for non-recessionary times. One might say the Liberals are spending like drunken sailors. However, as President Reagan would say, that would be unfair to drunken sailors.

In my home province of Alberta, while 100,000 Albertans are out of work, the government has virtually turned its back on us. It has turned its back on Alberta by killing pipelines and by attacking the energy sector. The latest attack on Alberta came in budget 2017 when the government eliminated a tax credit for the exploration of new wells. Talk about kicking Albertans when we are down.

Government Orders

For all the spending, for all the deficits, for all the debt, what do the Liberals have to show for it? What they have to show for it is fewer jobs created than projected, less economic growth than projected. The government talks a good game about infrastructure, but what have we seen in infrastructure in terms of new infrastructure funding for things like roads, bridges, airports, ports and railways? How much new funding was provided for in budget 2016? A big fat zero, only to be repeated by a big fat zero for new infrastructure investment in budget 2017.

The government talks about investing in affordable housing, investing \$11 billion over 11 years. That number is significant, because the vast majority of the money does not start flowing until 2022, five years from now, and three years after the next federal election. Talk about an empty promise.

With respect to the defence budget, during the last election, the Liberals talked so much about ensuring that the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces would have the tools and equipment they needed to keep Canadians safe. When it comes to delivering for the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces, the Liberals have come out short. In fact, while they are spending more, taxing more, blowing the budget and spending like drunken sailors, they have managed to cut \$12 billion out of the defence budget.

It seems like the return of the decade of darkness is upon us, except the good news is that the Liberals will not have a decade to shortchange our Canadian Armed Forces, because we will be back in 2019.

Broken promises, wasteful spending, higher taxes, massive deficits, massive debt and a failure to fund priority areas, that pretty much sums up budget 2017. It is a failed budget and it deserves to be defeated out of hand.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a number of Conservatives have tried to rewrite the history book, and at times they need a reality check.

It is important to recognize that when Stephen Harper assumed office, he inherited a multi-billion dollar surplus. Before the recession actually got under way, he turned that multi-billion dollar surplus into a multi-billion dollar deficit. Through his years, he accumulated a total debt well in excess of \$150 billion.

Given that Conservative member after member will try to give this government advice on deficits, why would the Liberal government seek any advice from a party that did so poorly with respect to deficits? Why would we want advice from the Conservative? They were unable to achieve a balanced budget. Stephen Harper in fact added in excess of \$150 billion to Canada's debt.

• (1240)

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I will tell members what Stephen Harper did before the recession of 2008 and 2009: he paid down \$38 billion in debt, which constituted one of the largest debt repayments in Canadian history. Then, during the 2008-2009 recession, which I would remind the hon. member was the worst recession since the Great Depression, our Conservative government made short-term stimulus investments to turn around the Canadian economy, and guess what: Canada's economy recovered better than

any economy in the industrialized world. We moved forward with the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio, the lowest unemployment rate, the fastest job creation rate, and a balanced budget.

It gets better, because it was not just a balanced budget. It was a \$2 billion surplus. Guess what the current Liberal government managed to do with Prime Minister Harper's \$2 billion surplus. It managed to turn it into a \$25 billion deficit. Imagine that.

I will say for the member that I will take Stephen Harper's record any day over the record of the current government.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak to the member about something that came forward in this budget that was unexpected by the wineries in our country. This is a \$9-billion industry in our country.

We import 67% of our wine already, and these imports will increase under CETA. Since 1980, the excise tax has increased 125%, from 28¢ to 63¢ per bottle. This excise tax rate is higher than in any other top wine-producing country. France is at 7¢, the U.S. is at 38¢, and Germany's is at zero. This increase of 2% in the budget is tied to our consumer price index and would rise indefinitely every single year, which would hurt our wineries and would do nothing to improve the economic standing of wineries tourism and everything that spreads out from the agricultural footprint of these important Canadian companies and small businesses. This excise tax will hurt that sector, and, shockingly, the Liberals had no consultation with the wineries in our country before raising it.

What are the member's thoughts on the negative impact to our Canadian wineries, and does he believe, as I do, that this measure should not be included in budget 2017?

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with the member for Essex. This is another example of the Liberals' hurting a whole host of sectors in the Canadian economy.

The member mentioned the wine sector. I would also mention the fishing sector and the agricultural sector, where the government cancelled a tax credit on insurance for farming and for agriculture. The government talks a lot about innovation, but again it only identified, arbitrarily, six sectors of the Canadian economy, excluding agriculture, excluding the fishing industry, excluding the energy sector. It really is a failed plan from a failed government.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the member for St. Albert—Edmonton, for his impromptu speech, which really hit the nub of the issue, the fact that this is a tax-and-spend budget and has nothing to do with innovation. Those are the themes I am going to carry on with.

Like all members, I have had the opportunity to speak with many of my constituents and I must say that the government side will not be happy with what my constituents had to say.

Government Orders

The Liberals are fond of calling this the innovation budget. There is really nothing innovative about this budget. It is just good old-fashioned Liberal tax-and-spend. There continues to be no plan for job creation and there continues to be no plan to balance the budget. In fact, the innovation budget, just as my colleague said and as I will underscore, nickels-and-dimes Canadians by recklessly spending billions that the government does not have and saddles future generations, my grandchildren, with that debt.

This budget hikes taxes on the working poor using public transit. It hikes taxes young entrepreneurs when they want to use ride sharing. It hikes taxes on hard-working construction workers simply because they want to enjoy a cold beer at the end of the day. It hikes taxes on struggling parents using child care. It hikes taxes on small business owners, such as farmers, real estate agents, and hair-dressers, and the list goes on.

Perhaps we should have seen this coming. After all, the Prime Minister's first budget took the exact same approach. First he blew up his election promise to run only a modest deficit, a small deficit, and to balance the budget by 2019. Those were election promises. Next he hiked taxes on gasoline and home heating fuel, on savings accounts, on paycheques. He even hiked taxes on kids' soccer and piano lessons.

It is another year, another Liberal tax hike, and another lost opportunity to deliver for Canadian families.

This budget fails to be innovative and it fails to deliver for families. Families need a job plan. Instead they got higher taxes and more debt, which, as I said, will have to be paid off by future generations.

The Liberals are not growing the middle class; they are growing government, and Canadian families are going to foot this bill.

By his own admission, the Prime Minister tells us that \$195 million of the funding for child care will actually go toward hiring bureaucrats in Ottawa. What the Prime Minister cannot tell us is how many child care spaces the Liberals are actually going to create. They hope it is 40,000, but they do not have an actual plan. They hope to balance the budget, but they do not have an actual plan. The pattern has developed and continues to develop.

I can tell members that our previous Conservative government took a much different approach. We focused on supporting families, and we had a plan. That is why we implemented initiatives such as the universal child care benefit, the children's fitness tax credit, the children's art tax credit, tax credits for post-secondary education and textbooks, and income splitting for families.

Unfortunately, since taking office, the Liberals have eliminated these initiatives one by one, with the public transit tax credit being the latest to get the axe.

When in government, the Conservative Party understood that in order to keep up in this global economy and create jobs, we needed to push a real innovation agenda. That is why we created a more efficient and effective national digital research infrastructure system by investing in CANARIE, Canada's world-class, high-speed research and education network. We extended Canada's participation in the international space station mission to 2024 to build on

Canada's strong legacy of supporting space exploration. We developed the next generation of innovation leaders by supporting graduate-level research and development internships through Mitacs. We made a landmark investment in post-secondary education by creating the Canada first research excellence fund, with \$1.5 billion over the next decade. This investment helped to secure Canada's international leadership in science and innovation.

● (1245)

We provided \$49 million to the Canadian Youth Business Foundation to help young entrepreneurs grow their firms. We fostered world-leading research by investing \$220 million in the TRIUMF physics laboratory to support leading research and launch cutting-edge spinoff companies. We provided \$1.5 billion to support the private sector in research and development to strengthen the competitiveness of Canada's aerospace sector through the strategic aerospace and defence initiative. We launched the venture capital action plan to increase private sector investments in early-stage risk capital and to support the creation of large-scale venture capital funds. We supported technology innovation by investing \$15 million in support of the Institute for Quantum Computing for research and commercialization of quantum technologies, and \$3 million to support the creation of the Open Data Institute.

We stood up for the automotive industry by investing \$500 million in the automotive innovation fund to support significant new projects in Canada. We also provided over \$800 million to support cutting-edge post-secondary research infrastructure through the Canada Foundation for Innovation. These are real, tangible supports for ideas and for entrepreneurs that make innovation happen, as well as real, tangible supports for Canadian families.

That is what is missing from this budget. There are no plans. There are platitudes. There are promises after promises that continue to get broken from the previous budget through this budget. There is nothing innovative about it. It is just good old-fashioned Liberal tax-and-spend.

It reminds me of the area of the country I come from, which is Ontario. I have watched the deterioration of my province, sadly, to the status of a have-not province through years of Liberal budget mismanagement. In the last budget, the current Kathleen Wynne government presented to our province more of the same: tax, spend money they do not have, and take us further into debt. We are already the deepest in debt of any sub-sovereign government across North America.

Government Orders

Here we go again, with the federal Liberals taking a page from the Kathleen Wynne playbook, with the individuals who were the architects now being the architects of what happens in the Prime Minister's Office in terms of budget and policy creation. It is absolutely disastrous, and will be disastrous, if we do not have a plan to balance our budget, because as Canadians know, we cannot continue to spend money we do not have and continue to pile on the debt for future generations to have to deal with.

The government should know that well. Previous Liberal governments had to deal with it in the 1990s. They had to cut health care by some 30% in trying to get us back to a reasonable fiscal balance in the country. That is exactly where the Liberals are taking us again. It has been done before. It has been experimented with before.

We are watching the results in Ontario. We are watching company after company in my constituency considering the question of moving to a lesser-priced jurisdiction. I can think of two specific meetings I have had with companies that employ well over 400 people that are actually, right now, entertaining the idea of moving to somewhere in the upper U.S. They are considering the New York, Michigan, or Ohio areas to relocate their businesses. It is because the taxes and the ongoing expenses of operating their businesses are making them uncompetitive. These are international companies in the sense that they have international customers. They must compete on a global basis, and they are having a hard time now finding the resources within their operations to cut their costs to be competitive.

• (1250)

In fact, their costs are skyrocketing as a result of mismanagement and policy at the provincial level. That is what we are seeing here. We are seeing more of the same, tax and spend. Canadians know that all too well.

There is no plan for job creation, no plan for balancing the budget for Canadians, no hope that we will see a light at the end of the tunnel, fiscally, in this country. My constituents and many other Canadians have been underwhelmed and uninspired by this budget. That is why I will be voting against it.

• (1255)

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, something I am very concerned about in this budget, and I am certain that the member has heard it from his constituents, is the lack of transparency from the government.

When we talk about the changes to the PBO that would happen under this omnibus budget bill, they are quite concerning. These changes are not only to how things would be brought to the House—they would now have to go through the Speaker, and the work plan would have to be approved—but they also impact the way we receive information from the PBO. The government would now have one day to look at this before it is released to the public. Again, it would have one day to spin this in any way before the public sees it. Another thing is that parliamentarians would not be able to request the PBO conduct a study anymore. It would have to go through a committee.

These types of changes do not reflect transparency, freedom, and the ability of the PBO to basically look at what the government is

doing and provide Canadians with a snapshot of whether that spending is justified or not, and to have that true independent accounting.

Is the member as concerned as I am about our lack of ability as parliamentarians to bring things to the PBO, and the lack of transparency that Canadians would receive?

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, let us make no mistake about the way the Liberals govern. This is something that Canadians have recognized over and over again. The Liberals say one thing and do another.

It reminds me of operators in my world of small business who present a smoke-and-mirror image. They present an image of “this is what we profess to be” and then they turn out to be something absolutely different.

When it comes to transparency, putting the brakes on, putting in more barriers, and in fact muzzling the PBO and other objective observers of the process by bringing in legislation, the Liberals have accused other governments of doing this. The tone of this started with the government House leader bringing in Motion No. 6 and taking away the rights of the opposition to open things up for discussion. We cannot do that anymore. It is being limited.

The Liberals are doing it now with the Standing Orders. This is all a smoke-and-mirrors game to put more control in the PMO, more control for the government to have the rules that facilitate it. The Liberals do not care about this particular sacred spot we are standing in, the Parliament of Canada, which should be open and transparent in all things.

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to draw to the member's attention the comments of his own chamber of commerce, which said that the skills innovation investment in this budget was very welcome, and that the Liberals are doing great things to get adults back to school, and investing in education and retraining. It is important to invest in retraining and training, as I am sure members will agree. Indeed, this is an innovation budget.

The member for Brantford—Brant mentioned that he is concerned his grandchildren will have to pay for these investments. In fact, his grandchildren will see the benefit of these investments when there are jobs. There is a study that shows that 65% of children who are born this year will work in jobs that do not even exist today. Those are the investments we are making.

After the member for Brantford—Brant and I are long gone from this planet, our children and grandchildren will thrive because of these investments. They will have jobs that will support the future and will keep Canada and Canadians strong forever. It is because of these investments today that his grandchildren and my children and grandchildren will flourish.

Could the member comment on that?

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, the member is going to enjoy my comment on this one. They will also have a debt so large that health care will have to be cut again by 30%, as the Liberals did in the 1990s. That is what happens when we get too far in debt: people cannot carry mortgages that they cannot pay for.

Government Orders

The reality is that there is nothing innovative about supporting people with retraining, education, and all of the things I mentioned. Governments have been doing that for decades. You are just carrying on the same work as previous governments, so do not talk to me about your bringing forth innovative ideas. These ideas have been around forever. Conservatives funded them and previous governments funded them.

Again, do not try the smoke and mirrors thing here. It just does not work.

• (1300)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I can assure the member for Brantford—Brant that I will not be trying anything on him.

The hon. member for Surrey Centre.

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Scarborough North.

I am pleased to rise today in support of budget 2017, entitled “Building a Strong Middle Class”. Today, I will be highlighting new budget measures that are important to Canadians, British Columbians, and those who make their homes in Surrey Centre. These past few weeks have been busy ones, and I have had the opportunity to speak with many residents of Surrey Centre. We were able to talk about the real impact budget 2017 would have on their lives, positioning them and their families to succeed not only in tomorrow's economy but in today's.

Our government's commitment to innovation, infrastructure, housing, and protecting our oceans and waterways is what makes this budget and this government's agenda so transformational. It is with great pride that I can say that the decisions the government is taking, along with the policies we are putting forward, are having a positive impact on the lives of Canadians. This past weekend alone at an event in Surrey, I was speaking with Ted Singh, a constituent in Surrey Centre, who I had the good fortune of meeting for the very first time, a constituent whose two children will see first hand the investment in post-secondary education in Surrey.

Late last year, the Prime Minister was in Surrey Centre to personally share the good news of a \$45 million investment in Simon Fraser University's Surrey campus, an investment that will have an impact not only today but tomorrow and for future generations of people who call Surrey home. This investment will provide supports, resources, and the means for world-class institutions such as Simon Fraser University for the people of Surrey who have aspirations for contributing to making our community and this country a better place.

My constituents are concerned about the ailing infrastructure that surrounds the city, such as the Pattullo Bridge. I am therefore pleased to see the formation of the infrastructure bank, which will help cities and provinces fund great projects and help the constituents of Surrey Centre get to and from work faster, spend more time with their families, and have more money to do the things they enjoy.

I am pleased that the Canada child benefit is continued in this budget, as more than 22,000 children in my riding are benefiting from the support. They are getting over \$700 per month per child, on

average, tax free. This is real support for middle class families that live and work in Surrey.

It is with great pride and honour that I can stand here today behind the Prime Minister, who leads a government that invests in institutions like Simon Fraser University and Kwantlen Polytechnic University that provide opportunities for young Canadians, young British Columbians, and people around the world who aspire to higher education.

Education and post-secondary institutions are not the only places in which this government is committed to investing. Infrastructure is another important area, and under the leadership of the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, I am proud to say that through budget 2017, the planning of Surrey light rail transit will continue. These investments in infrastructure were characterized as a “game-changer” by the metro Vancouver mayors. Approximately \$2.2 billion will go toward building rapid transit projects in metro Vancouver. The chair of the metro Vancouver mayors' council said, about budget 2017, “Today's historic federal investment in transit and transportation is a game-changer for our region and the largest in Metro Vancouver in 20 years”.

We are working with our municipal and provincial partners to deliver the projects they are asking for, because our government understands that municipalities should decide on the best projects for where they are, and only through collaboration and respect will we have success. We can see the product of collaboration and investment right in Surrey. Recently, I had the opportunity to announce a \$25-million project that will expand the capacity of the Surrey Central Station to make it and the SkyTrain more accessible for residents and people who use the station to commute on a daily basis.

I would be remiss if I did not highlight the important investments in innovation that budget 2017 lays out. Something that I was really proud of was that in the days following the release of budget 2017, the Minister of Finance visited Surrey Centre, specifically Innovation Boulevard. A partnership between the City of Surrey and Simon Fraser University, the boulevard is a one-square-mile centre of health care technology and excellence that is anchored by Surrey Memorial Hospital and SFU Surrey, with the goal of helping to accelerate real-world patient solutions. Surrey's Innovation Boulevard is a product of one of Canada's greatest strengths, our skilled, hard-working, creative, and diverse workforce, and under budget 2017 we would see initiatives like this grow and prosper.

• (1305)

Our investments in innovation include the launch of an ambitious initiative that would see up to 10,000 young Canadians have opportunities in work-integrated learning and co-op placements. This would go a long way in places like Surrey and across the Lower Mainland of British Columbia.

Government Orders

This government is putting forward a plan that is based on fairness. It provides Canadians with an optimistic view of the future. We are working to ensure that Canada continues to move forward and lead the international community, particularly with our implementation of our bold economic policies that put a focus on growing the middle class to ensure the prosperity of our country.

Whether it is education, infrastructure, or innovation, this government has an ambitious plan to better the middle class and, with that, the entire country. I for one am so proud to rise today and support it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague across the way on his speech. I get that he is pleased with his government's choices, but I have a simple question for him.

I am aware of the public transit situation in his riding and I would like to know how the people of Surrey, British Columbia reacted when they found out that the tax credit for public transit and bus passes was going to be cut.

Many people in my riding are complaining about this because it takes \$255 away from them every year.

[*English*]

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, constituents in my riding are happy that we are creating better transit and more transit and getting them to and from work faster. That is the goal that saves them hours a day and dozens of hours a week. That is a bigger monetary benefit to them than the discontinuance of the tax credit. What they want is faster transit, more efficient transit, and more environmentally friendly transit. With that, by all the conversations I have had with my constituents, I can proudly say that they are very pleased with the budget.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker what does the member for Surrey Centre think of the changes that this bill would bring to the powers of the parliamentary budget officer, something that has no place in a budget implementation bill? I get the impression that because the Liberals saw the word “budget” in there, they thought they could slip it in, but the only reason to put in something like this which would decrease the independence of the parliamentary budget officer would be to make it easier for them to slip all sorts of other things into the budget in spending that we as individual MPs could not query.

I would ask the member how these changes would make the parliamentary budget officer more independent, or even as independent as he was, when that is what that office demands.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary budget officer is an important and integral part of our democratic process, and anything to strengthen his or her role is beneficial. It is very appropriate to have it in the budget, as the parliamentary budget officer's duties are to review the budget and make sure the budget fits in with the fiscal strength of our treasury and ensure that our forecasts and our expenses are done accordingly. Therefore, it is very fitting for it to be in the budget and is an appropriate source for modifying and modernizing the parliamentary budget officer's duties.

● (1310)

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up on the question about the PBO. It says that PBOs are to be independent and non-partisan and to provide support to Parliament, and yet the PBO himself stated with respect to the changes, “Maintaining the Speakers’ control over the PBO using the exact terms by which the Speakers direct and control the Library seems entirely inconsistent with the clause’s stated intention.”

The member said he supports what the budget does to the PBO because it would give the PBO more control, but the PBO himself said the opposite. I wonder if the member can comment on the consistency of his answer and his comments.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, the PBO has the right to give his opinion on whether he thinks it will help him or not. In the scope of what I have seen of having it under the Speaker it is well-suited and it will strengthen. He has the right to his own opinion and I will leave it at that.

Mr. Shaun Chen (Scarborough North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to speak to the 2017 budget.

I want to first extend my best wishes to all those celebrating Asian Heritage Month. Every year the month of May is a special time to acknowledge the long and rich history of Canadians of Asian descent and their contributions to our great country. It is also a time to celebrate the beauty and wisdom of various Asian cultures. This month I encourage everyone to visit the Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto located in my riding of Scarborough North to explore its distinguished art collections and exhibits.

When our government was elected in 2015, we promised Canadians real change to turn our economy around and to get it growing again, recognizing that a strong economy is built on a strong middle class.

Canada's unemployment rate is now dropping because of thousands of new jobs created since our government took office. We are delivering on our promise to Canadians. This year's budget continues to do just that. Through investments that strengthen the middle class, we would grow our economy over the long term and build on real change we have seen over the past year and a half.

I am honoured and humbled to represent the people of the multicultural riding of Scarborough North. During the last election, I too promised real change to my constituents to provide them with hope and opportunities for a better future. I am proud to say that this budget continues to deliver on that promise.

Government Orders

When I speak to residents about the issues that affect them the most, public transit is an issue that almost always comes up. Public transit is the lifeblood of a thriving city. Whether it is commuting back home to Scarborough North after a long day of work in downtown Toronto, or getting to class on time at the University of Toronto's Scarborough campus, fast, efficient, and reliable public transit is essential. That is why this budget is so important, because it would provide an investment of \$20.1 billion for public transit projects over the next 11 years. This is real change that would make a difference in the lives of people in Scarborough North and across our country.

I now turn to another issue that is near and dear to our hearts and that is affordable housing. Last August, I had the honour to participate in Habitat for Humanity's ribbon-cutting ceremony for its historic home build at 140 Pinery Trail. This initiative will construct a record-breaking 50 townhouse units in my riding of Scarborough North. Upon completion, 50 families currently living in unsafe, unhealthy, and overcrowded housing will each have a new and affordable home. This project speaks to the importance of our government's commitment to invest \$11.2 billion over the next 11 years to support affordable housing, including the construction of new units. This budget does the right thing by ensuring that Canadians have access to safe, adequate, and affordable places to live.

Scarborough North is home to a number of housing co-operatives. Following the release of this budget, I spoke to a number of representatives of these co-ops. I was pleased to share that this budget would invest \$5 billion in a national housing fund, one that would support lending for the construction of new rental units as well as give much needed funds and operational support to social housing providers. This budget would improve the lives of low-income and vulnerable members of our community who rely on social housing for a roof over their heads.

Not only that, this budget would also help improve the lives of new Canadians. Coming to a new country to start a new life is never easy. As a child of immigrant parents, I witnessed first-hand not only the difficulties that new immigrants face, but also just how much the government can do to help new immigrants feel they belong in Canada.

Many of our new immigrants are highly skilled and highly educated. They want to put their talents to use and to contribute to building our great country. Many times, however, highly skilled and educated immigrants face barriers that limit their employment opportunities once they arrive in Canada. Our government recognizes these barriers as a problem and with this budget we are doing something about it.

This budget proposes to allocate \$27.5 million over five years starting this year and \$5.5 million per year thereafter to support our targeted employment strategy for newcomers. This ambitious program would break down the barriers that bright new immigrants face in fully contributing to our economy. Our plan would improve pre-arrival supports for newcomers so that the process to recognize their foreign credentials can begin before they arrive in Canada.

●(1315)

We would also put in place targeted measures to test innovative approaches to help skilled newcomers gain Canadian work experience in their profession. One of the main reasons people choose to come to Canada is to seek new opportunities, both for themselves and for future generations. That is why this strategy would do the right thing by helping new Canadians and their families find appropriate work.

When Canadians secure meaningful employment, it grows our economy, which is why this budget is also focused on supporting innovation. I am proud that my riding of Scarborough North is home to many thriving businesses, including Canada Goose, which celebrated a strong IPO last March.

While industries like textiles and manufacturing will continue to play an important role, the global economy is changing. To address the changing nature of our global economic realities and to ensure it continues to thrive for our children and grandchildren, this budget introduces an ambitious innovation and skills plan. This plan includes \$2.7 billion over six years for unemployed and under-employed Canadians to receive training and employment supports, an investment that positions Canada as a leader in the changing global economy.

That is not all. This budget would do even more to help our seniors and give them the respect they deserve. I know how important this is for my riding of Scarborough North, which is home to many seniors homes, such as the Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care, a provider of exceptional care to many seniors in the greater Toronto area. In addition to recognizing the invaluable services that facilities such as Yee Hong provide, our government is recognizing that there are many Canadians who prefer to receive care in a home setting.

Our government is committed to giving patients the care they need in the setting that they choose. This budget would invest \$6 billion over the next decade for home care, money that would be used to improve access to home, community, and palliative care services. It would also provide more support to informal caregivers, such as family members working hard to balance full-time careers with caregiving for their loved ones.

Finally, this budget rightfully supports our veterans and their families. Scarborough North is home to many veterans, as well as Royal Canadian Legion Branch 614, which recently celebrated its 50th anniversary. Our veterans have dedicated their lives to defend our country, and they deserve our unwavering support and gratitude.

Last year's budget invested \$5.6 billion over six years to give more money to veterans with injuries or illnesses resulting from their military service. Continuing to recognize the sacrifices our veterans have made, this budget focuses on supporting the well-being of our veterans and their families. Our government proposes to help our veterans receive the skills, training, and education they need, as well as the mental health supports they may require.

Government Orders

In conclusion, this budget is one that all Canadians can be proud of. It would create the conditions for a strong and innovative economy that would provide more opportunities, more than ever before, for the middle class and those working hard to join it. Through smart investments and a profound commitment to fairness, our government is proposing a budget that ensures our best days are on the road ahead.

• (1320)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the member's contributions to this place. He is a very positive person, something we need to see more of in Canadian politics. It is an exciting thing.

On a slightly different subject, the Minister of Finance has advocated publicly that any new taxation on proposed marijuana sales should be kept low in order to keep out organized crime. I have spoken to doctors in my riding, and they have told me that there is very little difference, as far as the health of the lungs is concerned, between smoking marijuana versus regular cigarettes. They are equally bad. However, the government has added an excise tax of 2% this year, plus an ongoing escalator every year, which is only going to raise the price of cigarettes, and ultimately undermine the regular market. As we know, here in Ontario and all the way through to British Columbia now, there is a growing problem with contraband tobacco.

Does the member support that escalator despite it showing that there will be as much damage from people smoking marijuana as there is from smoking cigarettes? At the same time, it will only encourage more black market sales, by putting on that escalator.

Mr. Shaun Chen: Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear. Our government's plan is to strictly regulate and ensure that marijuana is kept out of the hands of children. We plan to do that by having a market that is open. As the member opposite said, this is about keeping the money out of the hands of criminals. Criminals are currently growing marijuana illegally, then selling it to our kids, and roaming near our schools. This is not good. It is not good for Canadians. It is not good for children.

That is why our government is taking our heads out of the sand. We are going to strictly regulate, legalize, and restrict access to marijuana in a responsible way. We look forward to having that conversation on the legislation that is forthcoming.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure of representing 10 legions and also a base. The amount of veterans in my riding is numerous. It is a great honour to speak with them and hear their stories.

One of the things I hear from veterans across my riding is their deep disappointment because they have waited long enough. They want to see lifelong pensions for injured veterans established again. That was a campaign promise of the Liberal Party. It is really unfortunate that here we are, again. I appreciate that some of the services have been made more available, and that is wonderful, but the real point is that veterans have waited long enough. They were betrayed by the last government and they want to see this established.

How long will it take for this to be done?

Mr. Shaun Chen: Mr. Speaker, the member is correct. Veterans were betrayed by the previous government. However, they will not be betrayed by this government. We plan to ensure that our veterans receive the support and the resources they need and deserve. This budget takes further action than what we previously committed to ensure veterans receive the skills training and education they need to succeed. We will better support the families of veterans who have been injured during their military service. Also, we will invest in mental health because so many of our veterans are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. We want to ensure we tackle those mental health issues and provide the best care for our veterans and their families.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member talks about a lot of things he thinks are great in the budget. However, he has neglected to mention that the infrastructure component in the budget will not be invested in until years 2023, 2025. I would like to hear his thoughts as to why that component was even put in the budget at this point in time.

Mr. Shaun Chen: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, we are making significant investments in infrastructure, into areas like public transit and affordable housing. Not only that, we are putting money into the pockets of Canadians right now through our Canada child benefit, which is lifting hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty. We have also increased taxes on the wealthiest 1% so we can cut taxes for the middle class.

These investments are putting money into pockets of Canadians today, while we continue to develop an infrastructure plan that will make a meaningful difference to grow our economy and provide a better future for Canadians today and for future generations.

• (1325)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay. I look forward to his impressive speech.

Today I rise to speak to Bill C-44, the budget implementation act. The bill is deeply flawed in my opinion. By the end of my speech, it will be very clear why I will not be supporting the bill. In its 290 pages, it amends over 30 separate acts. Despite all of this, it does very little for the middle and working class.

Once again the Liberals have put the interests of their friends ahead of those of the vast majority of Canadians. On the one hand, they are eliminating the public transit tax credit and on the other, they are facilitating the purchase of public infrastructure by private investors.

Last week I had the honour of having a conversation at a small business in my riding called Townsite Brewing. It is a great microbrewery in Powell River. Its innovation, dedication to the community, and obviously the great beer it makes have been a real builder in their local economy. Sadly, the 2017 budget is not working for it. It has asked me to raise this important issue, and I hope the minister will hear its calls. The federal budget would raise the excise tax for beer, wine, and liquor by 2%. Then it would tie it to the consumer price index. This means that the price will rise for the consumer every year after that. That is simply not good for business.

Government Orders

There are a number of really good reasons for the government to stop this.

There are hundreds of small brewing companies in communities across Canada, employing people, using local ingredients, innovating with new styles of beer, and investing in their business to sell great beer and participate in a very competitive market. This is truly amazing when we look at the history of beer monopolies of the past. Consumers now have more choice. This industry creates great local jobs. For Townsite Brewing, it creates 16 meaningful positions in the community.

Across Canada, small communities have worked very hard to diversify their economies, and this hits these communities particularly hard. Brewing is one of the few remaining industries that is domestic. Eighty-five per cent of the beer sold in Canada is made right in Canada. Not too many food industries can make this claim like the beer industry can. Should the government not support the growth of this share to 90% or 100%, rather than discouraging growth by imposing higher and higher taxes on these products? The entire brewing community and its customers are united in wanting to see the government make the decision to repeal this tax before it becomes law by the end of June.

In my riding of North Island—Powell River, this tax would also impact the wine and liquor industries the riding has.

As I mentioned earlier, the bill would amend more than 30 pieces of legislation. I found it very interesting when a member across the ways said “I don't support omnibus bills” while supporting this omnibus bill. Almost one-third of the changes are nowhere to be found in the budget.

During the last election campaign the Liberals promised to abolish the use of omnibus bills because the practice was undemocratic. The omnibus bill should have been split to allow Parliament to conduct in-depth reviews of the changes affecting the parliamentary budget officer and the creation of the Canadian infrastructure bank. The bill clearly shows that the Liberals put the interests of their friends ahead of those of the vast majority of Canadians. They are totally forgetting that people across the country desperately need infrastructure in their communities. Therefore, by creating the infrastructure bank, the government is giving a green light for privatization of our public infrastructure.

As Mark Hancock, the national president of CUPE said, “If you're an infrastructure bankroller or a billionaire tax dodger, today is a good day. For working Canadians, not so much”.

Bill C-44 is mute with regard to the number of details that would have to be clarified in future legislation. Some provisions suggest that the infrastructure bank will be entitled to use the Access to Information Act to withhold important information from the Attorney General of Canada and the parliamentary budget officer under the guise of sensitive commercial information. Canadians expect accountability. It should therefore be established by the means of a true bill and an exhaustive review by Parliament, not through an omnibus bill.

When it comes to accountability, Canadians can count on the parliamentary budget officer, as he plays a fundamental role in

Canadian democracy and his work depends on his neutrality and independence.

• (1330)

However, it appears that the Liberals want to make his job much more difficult. The parliamentary budget officer would be required to produce an annual work plan, which would be approved by the Speakers of the House of Commons and the Senate, as well as the government member who chairs the finance committee. This is the only officer of Parliament who would be required to seek approval for his work plan.

The PBO analyzed the legislative framework applicable to the parliamentary budget officers in 17 other countries, notably Australia, Great Britain, Austria, Belgium, and so on. According to his research, it is most unusual to require political approval for a work plan. Such a procedure would only benefit the government because the PBO could not undertake a study on his own unless it had been included in his annual work plan.

In addition to submitting an annual work plan, the PBO would have to provide his research results to the Speakers of the Senate and the House one business day before it would be made public. How is that accountability?

Furthermore, from now on, only committees and not individual MPs and senators, as is currently the case, would be able to request the PBO to estimate the financial cost of any proposal that related to a matter of which Parliament had jurisdiction. Any request for research from individual MPs or senators would have to relate to a proposal, bill, motion, or amendment they have made. It is this type of individual request that led the PBO to research the cost of the F-35s and the Liberal tax cuts that only benefited the wealthiest. Adopting these changes will reduce my ability to hold the government to account. It will lessen transparency to Canadians.

This budget fundamentally betrays the commitment to creating a more accountable and transparent government.

This bill also has a huge impact on veterans. I am happy to see there is an investment for additional support for veterans' social reintegration and transitioning. I am pleased to see the creation of an education and training benefit, for example. However, I am deeply disappointed there is no mention of re-establishing lifelong pensions for injured veterans, yet another broken promise by the Liberals.

Overall there is little movement and most promises for veterans have had to wait for the next year's budget. Veterans have waited long enough. David Flannigan, Dominion president of the Royal Canadian Legion, agrees. He said, “Bottom line, this budget doesn't do enough for our Veterans and their families...How long do Veterans have to wait?”

Government Orders

This budget did very little for the military as well. Our military has become extremely good at finding efficiency in everything it has done over the last decade. There comes a point when we simply have to feed the people who need it. It is time to invest in our women and men in uniform. The New Democrats believe our troops should have the support, training, and equipment they need to do the difficult and dangerous work they are asked to do every day. Only with a well-trained and well-equipped military can Canada continue to play an independent role in the world in promoting peace and security. This budget did not provide the resources for the military to do this. I know we are all waiting for the national defence review to see if more is coming. Most important, the military is waiting.

Seniors issues are not a central part of the budget. Yesterday's CBC headline was "We're so far behind: Canada unprepared for housing needs of rising senior population". This was in reference to the census figures. Canadians need a long-term plan, something in which the government does not seem to want to invest.

There has been an investment of some money for drug costs, but it is still not providing seniors with the real help they need. They are making decisions between eating, buying their medication, or paying their housing costs. That is shameful in a country like this. A national seniors strategy is needed now.

Bill C-44 makes our government less accountable and sells public infrastructure that Canadian taxpayers have built to Liberal insiders. When a housing crisis is happening in the country, when our seniors, veterans, and military need help, I can confidently say that the budget bill offers Canadians a series of misguided priorities.

•(1335)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member made reference to long-term planning, and I think that we have seen that the government has taken a very proactive approach to long-term planning. We see it in multi-year budgeting. We see it in working with the provinces on the CPP and with the price on pollution. These are all things that go years ahead.

She made reference to our military. As a former member of the regular force, I am so appreciative of what the current Minister of National Defence has done to ensure that we have longevity and that the needs of our forces will be met by having this review over the last number of months. Because of this Minister of National Defence, we are finally putting into place a long-term plan.

However, in terms of the budget specifically, the member said colleagues of her own had been somewhat critical of the idea of long-term planning because whether it is housing or infrastructure investments by the government, it means long-term planning and multi-year budgets.

Does the member across the way believe that multi-year budgets are a good thing?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I look forward to actually seeing a long-term strategy that will meet the needs of people across this country.

The reality is that we have a seniors crisis right now. We have seen the poverty rate for seniors grow dramatically in the last several

years. There is not enough housing for them. Home care is still something they are struggling to see happen.

A long-term plan is also about having a strategy that people understand. Where is the government's national seniors strategy? We are all awaiting it.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when I was last in Halifax, I spoke to a microbrewer who had started in the early eighties, I believe. He said that back in the eighties, there were probably about 60 microbreweries right across Canada. Today there are well over 600. That was such a rapid increase in microbreweries that I asked him why. He said that the Harper priority budget of 2007, which started providing excise relief for microbreweries, caused the whole game to change for microbreweries in Canada.

The current government is actually adding more excise tax, and not just that. The microbreweries do not mind paying their fair share, but now the government has added an escalator whereby, year after year, regardless of where inflation is, the tax will just lockstep up—and again, there is also the GST on top of that—which makes their product more expensive. Let us not forget that provincially there is excise tax as well.

Would this member agree that these kinds of increases, particularly the fact that there is an escalator, are not only less democratic and transparent, but will actually hamper that industry, both wine and beer, and I am sure spirits as well, although I have not heard from them?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that there are over 650 microbreweries across Canada. It is a growing and prosperous industry. I think it is really important. The reality of very many rural ridings like mine in North Island—Powell River, where we had a very strong industry, usually in logging, mining, and forestry, is that whenever those boom-and-bust cycles happened, they had a huge impact.

Now we see these wonderful industries coming in, and they are building the economy. They have good-paying jobs. They just want to keep succeeding. As I said, in the community of Powell River that I serve, these industries provide 60 meaningful jobs. That may not seem like a lot to the Liberal government, but to the small communities of Canada, those are meaningful jobs that mean that people get to live and prosper in those communities.

I think it is shameful that there was absolutely no discussion, no moving forward, and this comes from a government that also backed away from its promise to have less federal tax on small businesses. Where is that 2% cut?

Small businesses are doing their best in our communities. It would be nice to have a government that actually consulted with them. I hope the Liberals change their minds. It is just the right thing to do.

Government Orders

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise to debate Bill C-44, the budget 2017 implementation bill.

Back in the days when I taught zoology at UBC and comparative anatomy labs at Memorial University, we talked a lot about form and function. Today I would like to begin by talking about the form of this bill and move on to its function, its contents, and what that means in regard to government priorities.

As others have commented, the most obvious thing about this bill is its sheer size. It is almost 300 pages long. It amends more than 30 separate acts and even incorporates Bill C-43 within it, which was already on the Order Paper. Many of these components have nothing to do with the implementation of the budget. For instance, the bill includes major changes to the powers of the parliamentary budget officer, which I will talk more about later.

This bill is the very definition of an omnibus bill. Many Canadians will remember quite clearly what the Liberals said about omnibus bills in the previous Parliament. They and the New Democrats pointed out that omnibus bills were clearly designed to pass disparate pieces of legislation without providing opportunity for proper debate or committee study. The Liberals loudly complained that one of the Conservative budget bills was 175 pages long. That was a micro-bill compared to this one.

The Liberals were so outraged by the omnibus bills of the Conservative government that they put clear promises in their 2015 election platform, saying, “We will not resort to legislative tricks to avoid scrutiny” and “We will change the House of Commons Standing Orders to bring an end to this undemocratic practice”, yet they could not resist doing the same thing with budget 2017, and in a very egregious way. The Liberals have broken a growing number of election promises, but this broken promise, one that puts them in the same camp as the Conservatives when it comes to eroding Canadian democracy, must be one of their most disappointing acts for many of their supporters.

Now I would like to move from form to function and some of the consequences of Bill C-44.

One of the main themes of the last federal election was the struggle to reduce income inequality in Canada, an inequality that has been steadily increasing for the past 20 years or more. The NDP has led this battle for years, and in the last election the Liberals agreed with us in principle and said they would, as we have heard so often since, support the middle class and those trying to join it. In the last budget, the Liberals disappointed most Canadians in the middle class by doing absolutely nothing for those making less than \$45,000 a year, instead bringing in income tax changes that gave tax relief primarily to those making \$150,000 to \$200,000 a year.

The Liberals promised that they would plug the loopholes that allowed CEOs to pay taxes at half the rate of middle-class Canadians, but did nothing in last year's budget and, I am sorry to say, did nothing in this budget as well. Bill C-44 has no provisions to close this loophole, which costs the government almost \$800 million each year and leaves that money in the pockets of the wealthy Canadians who least need it.

Who do the Liberals choose to squeeze money out of instead? It is transit riders, the middle class and those seeking to join the middle class who take buses and trains to work every day. Under Bill C-44, they would lose their public transit tax credit so that the government could pocket \$225 million in savings. Wealthy CEOs get to keep \$800 million, while bus riders have to cough up \$225 million. Budgets are about choices, and this is the unfortunate choice the Liberals have made.

On top of that, we in the NDP were hoping that the Liberal government would take concrete steps to shut down offshore tax havens, where the wealthiest of Canadians and corporations that have pocketed billions of dollars in tax cuts move their profits to avoid paying their fair share of taxes. However, neither Bill C-44 nor any other legislation before us addresses this critical step in reducing income inequality in Canada.

As I mentioned at the start, one of the features of Bill C-44 is a section that would change the role and powers of the parliamentary budget officer. This has no place in a budget implementation bill. Maybe the Liberals thought they could slip it in because of the word “budget” in the title of this important office. The parliamentary budget officer must be independent and neutral, but Bill C-44 would degrade that independence in several ways.

• (1340)

First, it requires the parliamentary budget office to submit an annual work plan to both the Speaker of the House and the Speaker of the Senate. This requirement could only benefit the government, as the PBO would not be able to undertake any study unless it had been approved in the annual work plan.

Second, only committees—committees dominated by government MPs—would be allowed to request that the PBO estimate the cost of any proposal that relates to a matter over which Parliament has jurisdiction. At present, individual MPs can request the PBO to undertake these analyses, but if Bill C-44 becomes law, they could only request cost analyses on proposals that relate to a bill, a motion, or an amendment that they themselves had made.

Again, this bill would greatly restrict the independence of the PBO and restrict the abilities of individual MPs to study the costs of government proposals. It was this type of independent initiative that exposed the true costs of the F-35 fighter jets to Canadians, and it was this independent action that showed that the so-called middle-class tax cuts of this Liberal government only benefited the wealthy in our country.

Government Orders

Another point of disappointment in the budget is the change that would index the excise duty on wine to the consumer price index beginning in 2018. My riding, I must admit, produces the best wine in Canada, and the wine industry plays a large role in the economy there and in other wine regions of the country.

Canadian wine producers are very concerned that this duty will now rise automatically every year, despite already being almost twice as large as the duties levied by other countries. For instance, the duty is 63¢ per litre in Canada versus 38¢ in the United States, while Germany has no excise tax on wine at all.

This automatic increase will exacerbate those differences and undermine the growth of the wine industry in Canada, impacting the entire economic value chain from farm gate to retail.

I would like to end on a positive note by mentioning a few measures that I am happy to see in the budget.

One is the promise to spend about \$40 million to support projects and activities that increase the use of wood as a greener substitute material in infrastructure projects. Using wood as a primary material in large buildings is a technology for which Canada is already a world leader. One of the leading companies in Canada in the construction of these buildings is Structurlam in my home town of Penticton. Structurlam sources a lot of wood for its glulam beams and cross-laminated timber panels from the Kalesnikoff mill near Castlegar on the other side of my riding.

Expanding this part of the forest industry in Canada would give it a much-needed boost in these troubled times as mills across this country face trade sanctions through the softwood lumber dispute. We have heard a lot recently about efforts to diversify our foreign markets, but here is an opportunity to build the domestic market as well, and to build it quickly. Unfortunately, this spending is not scheduled to start until next year, when it might come too late.

Another way that the government could move forward on this file is by adopting my private member's bill, Bill C-354, which directs the government to consider the use wood in building projects. Government procurement is a powerful force that would immediately boost the forest industry across this country.

I am pleased that the Liberal government is keeping at least one of its election promises, albeit a year late, which is to phase out subsidies for the fossil fuel industry. In 2014, the Pembina Institute estimated that more than \$1 billion in fossil fuel subsidies still exist in our tax framework, so I am happy to see that budget 2017 will exclude producing wells from the Canada exploration expenses tax deduction.

In conclusion, I will simply say that budget 2017 represents yet another lost opportunity for the Liberal government to turn the corner on rising inequality in Canada.

• (1345)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a number of New Democrat members have challenged this piece of legislation, the budget itself, and how they are connected.

I want to assure the member that all the budgetary legislation is in fact related to the budget. When the New Democrats introduced their amendment, they tried to say that the infrastructure bank, for example, should be a separate piece of legislation, when in fact the infrastructure bank is an important aspect of the budget.

We know there seems to be a disagreement by the NDP within the House of Commons as a political entity. New Democrats outside the House of Commons do support an infrastructure bank—at least, I have found that to be the case.

I am wondering why the New Democrat members continue to push something that really does not have a strong case. The member talked about the parliamentary budget officer. There is a direct link to the budget and some of the things that are actually happening. Can the member list specifically what in the budget implementation bill is not budget related? Could we have the specifics, please?

• (1350)

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, first I will say that it is not just the NDP that is concerned about the infrastructure bank. This morning I heard one of my Conservative colleagues say that it scared the heck out of him. I would just like to point that out.

Getting back to the parliamentary budget officer, I am mystified as to how this is directly related, or even indirectly related, to the implementation of a budget, unless it is to make it easier for the government to spend money without the oversight of members of the opposition, individual MPs, who will look at that spending and want to go to the PBO and say, “Can you do a cost estimate of this?” This change would stop our ability to do that.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his well-thought-out speech. He had me going right up until the attack on the energy industry, but apart from that, it was great.

The published mandate of the PBO states that it is to provide independent and objective analysis to Parliament. The parliamentary budget officer has stated, regarding the Liberals' proposed amendments:

The proposed amendments impose significant restrictions on the way the PBO can set its work plan and access information. Those restrictions will undermine the PBO's functional independence and its effectiveness in supporting parliamentarians to scrutinize government spending....

We queried one of the Liberal members earlier. His comment was merely, “Hey, that is the PBO's opinion,” and he brushed it off.

I wonder if the member would let us know if he agrees that these significant concerns, these attacks on the PBO, are merely the PBO's opinion.

Government Orders

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, first I would like to say that a PBO's opinion is what we hire them for. Their function is to give us an intelligent and informed opinion on cost estimates and other things relating to the budget. I would certainly listen to the PBO before I would listen to the government on matters such as that.

The Liberal government, and I think every party here, has always said that the PBO has to remain independent. If we change anything in that office, we should increase that independence and neutrality.

These changes would decrease that independence. Any time individual MPs wanted to query a cost estimate that was not directly related to their private member's bills, they would have to go to a committee and get that committee to agree to put that to the PBO. The committees are controlled by government members. It is obvious that the independence of the PBO would be decreased if this passed. Certainly that is something I would love to see taken out of this bill.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for the Bay of Quinte. It will probably be sometime after 3 o'clock today before he gets his chance.

I have been looking forward to the opportunity to speak to budget 2017, because it marks a remarkable new step forward in a lot of communities across Canada, including mine in Fleetwood—Port Kells, my city of Surrey, and Metro Vancouver.

Given our region's role as Canada's western gateway for billions of dollars in trade every year, the investments our government is making at home for me are going to have positive ripple effects at home for every member of the House.

The highlights for our home ridings in budget 2017 are considerable. Our \$20.1 billion commitment over 11 years to improve public transit across Canada would deliver a 40% share of the cost of three key rapid transit lines in Metro Vancouver. One is the SkyTrain extension along Vancouver's Broadway corridor that would serve what is now North America's busiest bus route. The other two rapid transit lines budget 2017 would support are in Surrey.

Our regional growth management plan says that we will be home to a good percentage of the 1.2 million new residents expected to arrive in Metro Vancouver by 2041, so better mobility is going to be really important. Plans are for our Fleetwood neighbourhood to have three stations along the Fraser Highway: one at 152nd, one at 160th, and one at 166th; and perhaps even two more, one at 148th and the other at 156th. Revitalization will take place along the new line.

We have seen this sort of thing happen in the Cambie Corridor, along the Millennium Line, etc. We expect this revitalization to truly reshape Fleetwood and bring to reality the hard work of many visionaries over the years, including, and especially, our friend the late Rick Hart.

Budget 2017 would also make a huge difference in the lives of many Surrey families, particularly those people who have come to Canada with the professional skills we urgently need but who face barriers because their credentials are not recognized here. Every day a doctor, a nurse, a teacher, or an engineer is underemployed, these people lose, their families lose, and we lose. Budget 217 would

invest \$27.5 million over five years, starting this year, to remove those barriers. We would start the process even before the professionals arrived. Once they were here, we would support their efforts to get Canadian accreditation with a loans program to help cover the costs. Finally, a targeted deployment strategy would help them get essential Canadian work experience so they could relaunch their careers.

There are three more highlights from budget 2017 that I would like to mention. I think I can get them in quickly. Each would make a difference in communities across Canada, including mine.

As we all know, housing prices in Metro Vancouver, Toronto, and other cities have pushed home ownership out of reach for far too many families. Our decision to get the federal government back into a national housing strategy responds to the calls for help from the provinces, municipalities, and neighbourhoods. In Surrey, the Guildford neighbourhood, which I share with my colleague the hon. member for Surrey Centre, is where our city's main stock of affordable housing can be found. Budget 2017 would provide \$11.2 billion over 11 years across Canada to design, build, renew, and repair homes for millions of Canadians working hard to join the middle class.

Another \$5-billion national housing fund would better support vulnerable Canadians: the elderly, the disabled, and women seeking refuge from abuse.

Housing costs are a major source of worry and insecurity in many cities across Canada. Our government listened, we heard, and we have made affordable housing a priority.

Another acutely urgent issue in Metro Vancouver is the opioid crisis. No community or neighbourhood is immune from the tragedy of overdose deaths or the gang-related violence that accompanies the drug trade.

In February, our government provided \$10 million in emergency support to help British Columbia respond to the crisis. Illicit drugs took 914 lives last year alone, and more than 320 in just the first three months of this year. This funding builds on the \$65 million over five years we also announced in February for a strategy for an opioid action plan. Budget 2017 would enhance that with a further \$22.7 billion over five years.

● (1355)

This budget would build on scores of other initiatives that matter a great deal in Fleetwood—Port Kells and in every community across the country, important measures like the new Canada caregiver credit that would help those needing care and the families providing that care.

Statements by Members

Improvements to our family reunification program are helping families reunite more quickly, something that matters a lot in many homes in Fleetwood—Port Kells. We also cannot underestimate the impact of the first full year of the Canada child benefit, over \$22 billion in tax-free support for families that need it the most. It is putting food on kitchen tables in Fleetwood—Port Kells and across Canada, lifting more than 300,000 children out of poverty, and depending on the multiplier one uses, sparking over \$200 billion in economic activity.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member will have four minutes and 30 seconds remaining when we return to this topic.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

BASKETBALL

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is a new team in town. The Kitchener-Waterloo Titans basketball club is the newest member of the National Basketball League of Canada, Canada's only professional men's basketball league.

On December 26, the KW Titans tipped off their first 40-game season against the Orangeville A's. The season has flown by. Playoffs start tomorrow against the Windsor Express, with two games away and then two at home in the Kitchener Memorial Auditorium.

Congratulations to Ball Construction, Leon Martin, and InnoSoft Canada for their entrepreneurship in bringing the franchise to Waterloo region, and to the league for providing aspiring basketball players in Canada and the United States with the opportunity to continue their playing career in a professional setting.

Let the playoffs begin. Let's go, KW Titans.

* * *

NIAGARA REGION

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, spring is upon us, which signals the start of the tourist season in my riding of Niagara Falls, which includes the towns of Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie. This season will be especially busy, and local businesses are looking forward as Niagara gears up to celebrate Canada's 150th birthday.

Whether it is touring Niagara's many fine wineries, shopping at various outlet centres, taking in shows at the Shaw festival, golfing on the many scenic golf courses, enjoying time with the family on Clifton Hill, bicycling, or visiting the national historic sites across the riding, there is plenty for everyone to see and do.

We are fortunate and blessed to be Canadians. We owe so much thanks and appreciation to Sir John A. Macdonald and our Fathers of Confederation for laying out the foundation that has built the Canada that we know and love today.

To help everyone celebrate Canada's 150th birthday, I want everyone to know they are invited to Niagara. I know they will love it.

* * *

ATLANTIC AGRICULTURAL HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Eddy Dykerman, recently inducted into the Atlantic Agricultural Hall of Fame.

Eddy, along with his father Bert and brother Gerald, originally established Brookfield Gardens, a mixed vegetable farm selling to local, Canadian, and overseas markets. In 2008, with his son Matthew, they added Red Soil Organics, producing organic produce for similar markets.

Eddy is a leader in environmentally sustainable farming and on-farm food safety. He implemented integrated pest management and nutrient management programs, constructed berms and grassed waterways, and built collection and irrigation ponds to control water runoff. In 2012, the farm received the Gilbert R. Clements Award for Excellence in Environmental Farm Planning.

Eddy serves on numerous organizations, including the Federation of Agriculture, the PEI Horticultural Association, and has supported Farmers Helping Farmers in Kenya. He was instrumental in developing the Canada gap program and led the school healthy snacks initiative.

My congratulations to Eddy for a job well done.

* * *

[Translation]

LONGUEUIL

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on April 27 I had the privilege of witnessing firsthand the leadership of Pôle de l'économie sociale de l'agglomération de Longueuil, which is an umbrella organization that assists with the development of the social economy or, to quote Jean-Martin Aussant, "collective entrepreneurship".

I was especially proud of Rendez-vous de l'économie sociale, which was held in Longueuil, because it gave me a chance to see yet again how enthusiastic our community is about collective entrepreneurship. Look at our local media including the *Point Sud* newspaper or the radio station FM 103.3, or our employment reintegration services organizations such as the Batifolerie or Certex shops. Let us not forget our cultural community such as the Théâtre de la Ville, the Longueuil symphony orchestra, and our young performers at Théâtre du 450. What can I say about our early childhood centres, which have been the pride of Quebecers and the people of greater Longueuil for 20 years.

Quebec is a world leader in the social economy because of the contribution of people like the citizens of Longueuil.

I thank everyone who works in the social economy because every one of their actions help not only the economy of Longueuil and Saint-Hubert to be healthier, but also our community to be more dynamic.

*Statements by Members***OTTAWA-VANIER**

Mrs. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank my distinguished colleagues from all parties for their welcome. I am honoured to be the first woman to be elected in the riding of Ottawa—Vanier.

[*English*]

I look forward to honouring and building on the legacy of our dear friend and colleague, Mr. Bélanger.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank those who have volunteered their time on not only my campaign, but all campaigns during the recent by-election. Their work has helped strengthen our democracy.

[*Translation*]

I very much look forward to working on behalf of my constituents, and I invite them to share their ideas with me in order to strengthen our diverse and dynamic community.

• (1405)

[*English*]

I thank the constituents of Ottawa—Vanier for putting their trust in me.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PEOPLE WITH REDUCED MOBILITY

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to an exceptional woman who is here with us today. Johanne Landry is courageous and tenacious in her work as an advocate for people with reduced mobility.

Ms. Landry has had multiple sclerosis for more than 20 years, was confined to a wheelchair for 17, and was no longer expecting much from life. However, things changed for her as a result of her son's invention. She was given a new lease on life with the Keeogo exoskeleton and its benefits.

Today, with the help of Keeogo, Ms. Landry is here. She can walk, is happy, gives hope to others, enjoys life, and spends her time with her family and grandchildren.

She is asking the government to make the exoskeleton available as a rehabilitation device to help others like her and to ensure that they have the same tax credits as people in wheelchairs—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Saint-Laurent.

* * *

SAINT-LAURENT

Ms. Emmanuela Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am deeply honoured and so very proud to rise in the House today to represent the people of Saint-Laurent, on whose behalf I would like to sincerely thank Mr. Dion, who represented us so well for 21 years.

[*English*]

It is an honour to have won the Saint-Laurent nomination on International Women's Day, the day when 338 young women sat in this very House inspiring myself and young women across Canada.

[*Translation*]

I am especially grateful to my constituents for having faith in me. I will honour that faith by working very hard on their behalf. No matter where I am on Parliament Hill, the people of Saint-Laurent will always be in my thoughts and in my heart.

[*English*]

I believe that Canada is the best country in the world, and I am very proud to stand here alongside my colleagues to represent Saint-Laurent residents and all of Canada.

* * *

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker,

[*Member spoke in Cree and provided the following translation:*]

Recently in the Prairies two high profile violent events occurred where young indigenous women were killed and severely hurt. These events occurred while people stood by and recorded these incidents. The freedom of the violence calls into question our own humanity.

I am a supporter of the Moose Hide Campaign and it is time that we raise indigenous women above our current beliefs.

My aunts, cousins, daughter, and friends are beautiful. They are courageous, humble, intelligent, loving, respectful, honest, hard-working. They deserve additional protection of our laws so people think twice before they destroy lives.

* * *

ELLIE VOORTMAN

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hometown of Ancaster, the greater city of Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, and, indeed, the world lost an incredible force for good a couple of weeks ago with the passing of Ellie Voortman. Ellie had many accolades and community recognitions to her credit and her reach was far beyond our community.

The John & Ellie Voortman Charitable Foundation supported numerous projects and humanitarian causes from the inner city of Hamilton to the far corners of the globe. John and Ellie were successful in business and in life. She was John's strength and love. Together they founded Oakrun Farm Bakery and raised a beautiful, loving family, championship dogs, and lived every day to make the world around them a better place.

It would take hours to describe the many causes they supported and honours bestowed, but the recognition did not matter to Ellie. She generally eschewed the limelight. With humility, poise, and grace, she lived the words of her favourite quote from Theodore Roosevelt, "Do what you can, with what you've got, where you are." All I can say is this is an understatement in describing the extraordinary impact of Ellie Voortman. She will be sorely missed by all.

* * *

• (1410)

MARKHAM—THORNHILL

Ms. Mary Ng (Markham—Thornhill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I rise before this House as the newest member of Parliament for the dynamic and diverse riding of Markham—Thornhill. I wish to thank John McCallum for his great service over many years to that community.

For 30 days in March, I met with thousands of families who shared their ambitions and their goals with me. We spoke about finding good, well-paying jobs, saving for our children's education, saving for our retirement, and ensuring we have the resources to care for our aging family members. I am committed to fiercely serving the residents of Markham—Thornhill and delivering on my promise to bring their ambitions and ideas to Ottawa.

I thank those who have put their trust in me to represent them, and the members of this House who have so warmly welcomed me.

* * *

VIJAY BHATIA

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with an extremely heavy heart that I rise and pay tribute to the life of Mr. Vijay Bhatia, a taxi driver who was tragically murdered on the weekend in London, Ontario. Mr. Bhatia was the victim of a horrendous and senseless crime when he was pulled from his cab and beaten to death by one of his customers.

Vijay was described as a calm and generous individual, someone who embodied integrity and lived his life with dignity until the very end. He always made time for his wife Neelam, his four children Atul, Arun, Nikki, and Keshave, as well as his three grandchildren. Today, Vijay will be laid to rest, and this evening hundreds of members of the London taxi community and the general public will be coming together for a candlelight vigil and to pay tribute to Vijay's life and the incredible person he was.

My thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends during this incredibly difficult time. I know the same sentiment is true for my fellow Londoners, for this House, and, indeed, for all Canadians.

* * *

ROBERT DYNEROWICZ

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week, Canada mourns the loss of a generous, selfless soldier who died in a training accident at Canadian Forces Base Wainwright, Sergeant Robert Dyerowicz of Kitchener.

On Monday, I was privileged to attend the funeral service of Sergeant Dyerowicz, who served two tours in Afghanistan. The

Statements by Members

tributes given by his colleagues and family are a testament to Robert's dedication and commitment to Canada and to all Canadians. As we travelled from the funeral to the interment at Williamsburg Cemetery, children, parents, teachers, and workers lined the streets waving Canadian flags. As we stood in the pouring rain at the interment ceremony, I was reminded again of the sacrifices of our women and men in uniform as they serve in very dangerous and difficult settings. Then the Canadian flag which draped the coffin was carefully removed and folded by Canadian Forces personnel, each of them paying their respects to their fallen brother.

As the ceremony concluded, I had the honour of speaking with Robert's widow, his parents, and his sister. I was able to thank them on behalf of all Canadians for the service which Robert had given, and to assure them of our ongoing prayers. Lest we forget.

* * *

SAMUEL SHARPE SCULPTURE

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Saturday, I attended the Uxbridge Rotary Club's Canada 150 event, where \$10,000 was raised to support an important community project. This project is to create a sculpture of Lieutenant-Colonel Sam Sharpe by local artist Wynn Walters.

During World War I, Sharpe led the 116th Battalion into several battles, including Vimy Ridge. Elected to represent Uxbridge in 1908, he became the only MP to be re-elected while serving on the battlefield. After he returned, Sharpe suffered from shell shock, now known as PTSD. Faced with having to return home to the families of those who had died by his side, he tragically took his own life.

I want to thank the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Minister of Veterans Affairs for supporting this project and securing \$70,000 in funding to honour this Canadian hero in his hometown. It is time we recognized Lieutenant-Colonel Sharpe's bravery and service here in this place, as a symbol for those who have suffered from PTSD while in the line of duty.

* * *

HOUSING

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the right to housing is a fundamental one. Everyone deserves to have a roof over his or her head and the security of knowing where he or she will sleep at night. Across Canada, one of the richest countries in the world, many people do not have a home.

Oral Questions

I have heard stories of seniors couch-surfing; couples who are both gainfully employed but cannot find a home to rent or buy that they can afford; parents placing their children in care because they cannot find a home; and business owners struggling because they cannot hire people because there is nowhere for them to live. There are many other stories that should make us all sleepless. There is no question that Canada has a housing crisis in rural, urban, and indigenous communities.

The government's recent budget has housing funding that would mostly be spent after the next federal election. When will Canada recognize that housing is a right?

I encourage all members of this House to support my private member's bill, Bill C-325, on the right to housing. Let us make it happen.

* * *

• (1415)

CONSTITUENTS' CONCERNS IN CALGARY MIDNAPORE

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I rise in this House as the new member for Calgary Midnapore. I would like to thank the constituents, my campaign team, and our volunteers for putting their trust in me and for their overwhelming support.

I appreciate my family for standing with me every step of the way. Without their love and support, I would not be here.

Young families in Calgary Midnapore, who are struggling to find work, express concern not only for their circumstances but also for their parents' as they age. We have a considerable number of seniors in our riding. We must continue to think of our seniors and how we can provide the best care.

In this recent by-election, my constituents expressed how they feel about the policies of the current Liberal government. They sent a message to the Prime Minister about the harmful carbon tax policy:

[Translation]

They do not want a carbon tax.

[English]

They sent a clear message to the Prime Minister about the jobs and investments fleeing our city and province:

[Translation]

He must work with the Conservatives and help people get back to work.

[English]

I will continue to do in this House what my constituents have elected me to do. I will continue to let the Prime Minister know how they feel—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River.

* * *

ONTARIO FIRST NATIONS

Mr. Don Rusnak (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to rise today in this House and welcome

first nation leadership from across Ontario to Parliament Hill. Chiefs and their delegates are here in Ottawa for their special chiefs assembly and will be spending the day meeting with members of Parliament and cabinet.

I would like to thank all who have gathered here today in the effort to build a new relationship, a positive relationship, a relationship future generations of Canadians can be proud of.

As a first nation member of Parliament, I find it a pleasure to see this level of meaningful engagement toward reconciliation and making Canada a better place for us all.

I would ask all members to join me in wishing these leaders a successful day and a warm welcome.

Meegwetch, merci, thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the Minister of National Defence did was not a mistake, and he cannot solve the problem by trying to avoid the storm. On at least two occasions, he embellished his record and took credit for the work of others. He did so to look good as a Liberal politician. This is inexcusable, particularly for a member of the armed forces. He simply cannot keep his portfolio after what he did.

Why are the minister and the Prime Minister having such a hard time understanding this?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since becoming Minister of National Defence, we took an extensive defence policy into making sure that we looked after our Canadian Armed Forces. That is exactly what we have done. We spoke to Canadians all across this country who had MP consultations to make sure that we have a thorough analysis, to make sure that we have a model that is going to look after our Canadian Armed Forces. I look forward to presenting our new defence policy that is going to look after our troops long into the future.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence may have apologized for embellishing his service record, but it is not enough. His claim of being the architect of operation Medusa, a claim that he made at least twice, when it was not true, was intended for one thing: to make him look good as a Liberal politician. This is a violation of the honour expected of men and women in uniform. He has now lost their trust and their respect. As a result, he simply cannot continue in the job that he has.

After what he has done, does he really think staying on is the best situation for the troops?

Oral Questions

• (1420)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my responsibility and our government's responsibility is to make sure that we look after our troops, to make sure they have all the appropriate tools and equipment. That is exactly what our defence policy is doing. It is making sure that we have a fully funded and rigorously costed policy that is going to look out into the next 20 years, a policy that is going to make sure they have all the right tools, a policy that is going to make sure that, when we send them out on missions, they have everything they need.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is a saying that a soldier has the right to complain, but the Prime Minister and the defence minister are actively denying that right to our soldiers who were deployed in the fight against ISIS. The defence minister made a promise to give back the benefits he took away from those troops. Now he has broken that promise and he is clamping down on those who dare speak out.

Here we have yet another example of the defence minister breaking his word to our military. Can he not see why he has lost their confidence?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will make sure that our troops have all the necessary benefits to carry out their duties. It is our government that dealt with the immediate inequity for the soldiers who lost their tax-free status in operation Impact. It is our government that is working hard to review the compensation rules and find a long-term solution needed to fix the mess we inherited, to ensure a fair and equitable process for all.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is unbelievable. He is actually misleading Canadians again and misleading this House again about this particular issue around compensation for the troops who are fighting the fight against ISIS. Right here, I have a document—I looked at it before question period—signed by the minister himself that clearly states the exact opposite of what he just said.

When is the minister going to stop misleading Canadians and misleading the House and, frankly, step aside?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I stated, we are going to make sure that all our troops have all the right benefits. There is a difference between a tax-free allowance and the hardship allowance benefits.

We have fixed the immediate problem. We are conducting a much more thorough review to look at the wider compensation package, to make sure we have a fair and equitable solution for all those who serve.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to defence issues, the Liberals cannot be trusted. After he cut \$12 billion from Canada's defence budget, the finance minister said that our military was appropriately provisioned. Now the defence minister, after he was caught misleading Canadians about his military service record, is promising to restore the funding that his government cut in the first place. The problem is that, now, no one believes what these guys say. The only way for the government to begin to regain the confidence of our troops is for the minister to step aside. When will he?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since we formed government, we have maintained the spending levels and planned increases while conducting the defence policy review, and we are developing a new policy for Canada, a rigorously costed plan that will put the Canadian Armed Forces on a sustainable footing.

The Conservative rhetoric simply does not match up with the facts. After years of cuts and underspending, we are now in a troubling position where even the status quo of spending on defence will not maintain the status quo of capability. Our new defence policy is going to fix that.

The Speaker: Order. It is the right and the duty of the official opposition to ask tough questions, but I hear from many Canadians who are unhappy with the behaviour in this House, particularly heckling. I do not think the constituents of members, like those of the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands, whom I have heard heckle 12 times already today, would really approve of that kind of behaviour. Maybe he will hear from them.

I ask members to consider that, the views of Canadians on this, and restrain themselves, and stick to tough questions.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about that record. In our last year in office, the defence spending was nearly twice what the Liberals spent in any given year. We came in and we bought our men and women proper uniforms for Afghanistan, after the Liberals sent them into a desert with green camouflage. We bought them new planes so they did not have to hitch rides from the Americans. We bought them helicopters, tanks, and new LAVs so they could protect themselves from IEDs.

The Liberals sent them to Afghanistan with none of that support, and the minister knows that very well. We are happy to compare our record to the Liberal decade of darkness.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1425)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I gave a speech on the announcement of the defence policy review, where we are actually giving a non-partisan analysis, making sure that we have the current state of affairs. We talked about the cuts.

I thought the Leader of the Opposition would be happy to understand that we have a certain state of affairs, so we can actually now create a plan to move forward. That is what the defence policy is actually going to do.

We are going to make sure our men and women have all the right tools. They need sustainable and predictable funding, and that is exactly what we are going to do.

*Oral Questions***ETHICS**

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the cash for access scandal, the Liberals have somehow conveniently managed to miss the entire point. They keep polishing that turd, but it is still a turd somehow.

The same special access to the Prime Minister and his cabinet—

The Speaker: Order. I encourage members to be cautious and appropriate in the language they use in this House. I know the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley would agree.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I call them like I see them.

Special access to the—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a shame that we sometimes cannot hear everything a member has to say.

Last fall, after being caught red-handed, the Liberals decided to press pause on their cash for access fundraisers, but as we might have guessed, they decided to press play again. This evening, the Prime Minister will be in Montreal rubbing shoulders with some of the Liberal Party's generous donors. The Liberals seem to think that no one will notice, however. It is though they are trying to play a Jedi mind trick on us by waving their hand and saying, "This is not a cash for access fundraiser".

Honestly, do the Liberals not realize that Canadians can see right through them?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is taking real action to be more open and transparent with Canadians. That is why my new mandate involves introducing a bill to make political fundraising more open and transparent. If that bill passes, it will apply to events attended by the Prime Minister, ministers, party leaders, and party leadership candidates. It is always possible to raise the bar, and we will continue to take action to make the government more transparent.

* * *

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a few years ago, an opposition member asked the parliamentary budget officer to have a look at the true cost of the F-35s, and did we ever learn a lot. Who was it who had asked? It was the current Minister of Fisheries.

Unfortunately, under the changes his government wants to make, the PBO would no longer be able to study such things. The minister wants to prevent us from having the same opportunities that he himself had. He also wants to prevent the parliamentary budget officer from undertaking any studies that were not already planned at the beginning of the year.

Why do the Liberals want to put the government spending watchdog in a straitjacket?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to giving more independence to the parliamentary budget officer, and that is the primary objective of the bill recently introduced in the House of Commons.

Our government welcomes suggestions on ways to improve the bill, and we are open to amendments to ensure we accomplish the objective of an effective and independent parliamentary budget officer. We appreciate the work he does.

[*English*]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Let us try this again. A rose by any other name, Mr. Speaker. The answer we just heard is total nonsense. The PBO itself is saying that Liberals are restricting its ability to do its job.

The Liberal omnibus bill will allow the government to shut down any PBO work that is not to the government's liking. It will give the Senate veto over the parliamentary budget officer's work and stop Canadians from getting the answers they so rightly deserve.

These changes are clearly not designed to help accountability. They are designed to help the Liberal Party in governing. Why do the Liberals keep pursuing these unaccountable changes? When will they finally turn a corner and do what they promised to do for Canadians?

● (1430)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to providing greater independence to the parliamentary budget officer, and this is the overriding intent of the legislation recently introduced in the House of Commons.

Our government welcomes suggestions on how to improve the bill and we are open to amendments to ensure we accomplish the objective of an effective and independent parliamentary budget office.

We appreciate the work he does, and I look forward to working with the member opposite.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, soldiers deployed in the fight against ISIS are saying that they feel despair after the minister betrayed them by not fully restoring their danger pay. This is in addition to the Minister of National Defence's already established casual relationship with the truth that is demoralizing our troops.

A 27-year veteran stated, "The Defence Minister cannot continue to lead the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces, having lost the respect and trust in this way."

Will the minister listen to the voices of those who have served, do the honourable thing and resign?

Oral Questions

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the service of every Canadian Armed Forces member and also every veteran, our government is focused on making sure our troops have all the necessary benefits to look after their families in making sure we have all the right capabilities.

Last year we conducted a thorough defence policy review that had a very good analysis and gave us a good area for us to work on by making sure we have a fully costed, fully funded defence policy that will look after the Canadian Armed Forces for the next 20 years.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister's misleading comments about his service record are a direct hit on our men and women in uniform.

Yesterday, a parent of a Canadian Armed Forces member wrote me saying that the minister's stolen valour "has directly affected the morale and confidence of Canada's front line infantry soldiers". The feelings of our troops and veterans have gone from disappointment and outrage to distrust and dismay.

Will the minister do the honourable thing and resign?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will always honour the service of our men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces, the ones I have not met and the ones with whom I have even served.

As the Minister of National Defence, it is my responsibility and our government's responsibility to make sure our Canadian Armed Forces have all the right and necessary equipment, and have the right benefits.

We conducted an extremely thorough defence policy review in which all members of Parliament had an opportunity to take part. This is exactly what this defence policy will do: set the Canadian Armed Forces on the right funded track for the next 20 years.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the four fundamental values of the Canadian Armed Forces are duty, integrity, loyalty, and courage. Distorting reality is not on the list.

With all his mistruths, the minister has lost all credibility. Spokesperson Charles McCabe of the Armed Forces Pensioners'/Annuitants' Association of Canada said, "It is disgusting. Everyone is disgusted. He has lost the confidence of everyone who wears or has worn the uniform".

When will he step down?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I stated, I honour the service of all Canadian Armed Forces members who are currently serving and have served before.

As the Minister of National Defence and as part of this government, my job is to ensure we look after the Canadian Armed Forces as we send them on training missions or any operations abroad. That is what our new defence policy for Canada will do. It is a fully funded and fully costed defence policy that will provide predictable funding for our men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces to be able to plan and carry out their missions.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the first things we are taught in the army is to lead by example.

Ever since the Minister of National Defence joined the Liberal ranks, that lesson has been lost on him. He misled Canadians on withdrawing CF-18s from Iraq, on the capabilities of our Royal Canadian Air Force, on the danger pay for our troops fighting ISIS, and on his involvement in Operation Medusa. The minister is a complete joke. No one believes him any more.

When will he step down?

● (1435)

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his service.

When I visited Kuwait for the first time, I was able to learn about the tax-free exemption and to learn directly about this issue, which we were able to immediately fix. Unfortunately, much more work needs to be done, and that is what our government is doing right now. We are reviewing all compensation. We are also making sure we can actually have a long-term solution to this problem.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is becoming increasingly clear that the Minister of National Defence cannot escape this quagmire of his own making. He has lost the confidence of the Canadian people, of our allies, and, most important, our men and women in uniform. There are 12 members of the Liberal caucus who have served in the Canadian Forces and only one of them has been accused of stealing valour.

When will the Prime Minister fire the Minister of National Defence and replace him with someone worthy of the respect of our men and women in uniform?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Minister of National Defence, I will always ensure we have all the necessary tools.

We have conducted an extremely thorough defence policy review. We have been making sure that we look at all the analysis to ensure where all the gaps are within our funding system, where all the cuts were made, so we can have a sustainable, predictable funding model for our Canadian Armed Forces so they can plan. We are making sure all the right benefits are there, the right equipment is there and all the tools necessary for all their training and operational missions.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the minister does not have the honour to resign, he should be fired.

Instead of choosing to keep the disgraced minister in place, the Prime Minister could choose the member for Orléans, a former army commander. He could choose the MP for Kanata—Carleton, a former navigator and former squadron commander. He could choose the MP for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, a former air force captain. He could choose any one of these Liberals who has not been accused of stealing valour.

Oral Questions

Why will the Prime Minister not fire the minister and replace him with someone worthy of the trust of our men and women in uniform?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured and privileged to serve with so many members of our caucus who have had military service. I also consider them mentors as well.

As Minister of National Defence, it is a privilege to be able to serve in this role. I will work extremely hard, as our government does, to ensure our troops have all the necessary tools. I will come for advice for all the folks who have served in the military and as members of Parliament. I have opened up to all for service of any other party—

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when he was in opposition, the member who is now the Minister of Public Safety accused the Conservative government of wanting to hide the truth when it refused to open an inquiry on Afghan detainees. Now, the Liberal government is the one that is refusing to launch a public inquiry.

What has changed? Why have the Liberals once again changed their tune?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, throughout our military operations in Afghanistan, Canada has committed to ensuring the individuals detained by the Canadian Armed Forces were handled and transferred and released in accordance with our obligations under international law.

Canada's policies and procedures regarding detainees have already been subject to significant scrutiny, including an external review by the Federal Court, MPCC, and an internal review through multiple administrative investigations.

I will be happy to make myself available to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner should she choose to revisit the issue.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the flawed study of the Afghan detainees scandal was cut short by the Conservatives after only reviewing an initial set of documents. Stéphane Dion at that point said, “[w]hen you read these documents, you will have questions to ask to your Prime Minister”. He also said that the Conservatives were blocking an inquiry because of being “afraid of having to answer to Canadians”.

Therefore, will the Minister of National Defence appear before the defence committee to answer questions about this scandal, yes or no?

• (1440)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I stated, Canada's policies and procedures regarding detainees have already been subjected to scrutiny, including an external review by the federal court, MPCC, and an internal review through multiple administrative investigations.

I would be happy to make myself available to the Commissioner of Conflict of Interest and Ethics if she chooses to revisit this issue.

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[Translation]

FINANCE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary budget officer is concerned, and rightfully so. The government is using Bill C-44 to try to take away his power. As the parliamentary budget officer himself said, this will undermine his independence and political impartiality. Why? Because, from now on, the parliamentary budget officer will have to report to the Speaker of the House, and he will have to submit his game plan for the year. I really like you, Mr. Speaker, but you should have nothing to do with the work of the parliamentary budget officer.

Why is the Liberal government stooping so low?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I already answered that question. Our plan is to strengthen the position of the parliamentary budget officer so that he can properly serve Parliament. He will have a meaningful mandate and be called upon to consider the economic and financial impacts of the issues submitted to him.

As I also said, our government welcomes suggestions on ways to improve the bill. We are open to amendments to ensure we accomplish the objective of an effective and independent parliamentary budget officer. We appreciate all of the work that he does.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the 308-page omnibus bill bears the signature of the Minister of Finance. My question is for him.

How is it that this man, a dignified, honourable man who has always been steadfast, is now doing the Liberal government's dirty work?

[English]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the parliamentary budget officer, this government believes—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I can hear the question. I need to hear the answer. I need to know if the minister says something unparliamentary, after all, or inappropriate or the other side.

Let us hear the hon. leader of the government in the House.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, as I was just trying to say, we believe that when it comes to the important work the parliamentary budget officer does, the office should have its independence. It should have more effectiveness and more independence, and that is why we have introduced legislation to make this happen. We are open to amendments and we welcome them.

Oral Questions

When it comes to the member's referral to omnibus legislation, what we are proposing is to ensure there is not an abuse of omnibus legislation, like was the case under the Stephen Harper Conservative government.

We are saying we can improve the way this place works. Let us have that conversation.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in order to achieve this greater independence from the parliamentary budget officer, the Liberals have given the Speaker of the Senate veto power over his work plan. Who appoints the Speaker of the Senate? According to section 34 of the Constitution, it is the Prime Minister. Therefore, by independence, the Prime Minister means that the parliamentary budget officer will have to get prior approval to do his work from someone who is hand-picked by the Prime Minister. Is that the member's definition of independence?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is clear is that the member understands the intent of this government in that we believe the parliamentary budget officer should have independence so he can serve Parliament in the best way possible. We believe we can improve the way and the resources to that office. As I have also said, we are open to amendments. We welcome constructive feedback. It is a very different approach than the previous government, obviously.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the approach of the previous Conservative government was to set up the parliamentary budget officer in a fashion that was independent, one of the reasons of which was to allow him or her to examine political party platforms before elections were called to determine if they were in fact costed properly.

We know there has been a very severe problem with the Liberal costing in its last platform. In fact, it is about a \$25 billion problem. Could it be that the Liberals are trying to shut down the independence of the parliamentary budget officer before their next political platform can be costed?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we thank the parliamentary budget officer for his analysis of the provisions of Bill C-44. We look forward to working with him and others to improve the bill to ensure we accomplish the objective of having an effective and independent parliamentary budget officer.

Our government is committed to providing greater independence to the parliamentary budget officer, and this is the overriding intent of the legislation recently introduced in the House of Commons. We believe that it should be an officer who reports to Parliament, unlike the previous government, which felt that he should report to the Library of Parliament.

* * *

• (1445)

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been almost two weeks since the U.S. decided to apply duties of up to 24% on Canadian softwood lumber. It has been six months since

President Trump's election and 18 months since the Liberals came to office, and the Liberals failed to see this coming. They failed to come up with a concrete plan to deal with this emerging crisis and to help the hundreds of thousands of families impacted.

Can the minister confirm that she walked away from negotiations with Obama, thinking she could get a better deal with Trump?

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the previous Conservative government allowed the agreement to expire and did nothing to initiate negotiations.

We are now facing the fifth softwood lumber dispute, and our workers and producers have never been found in the wrong. We disagree strongly with the U.S. Department of Commerce's decision to impose an unfair and punitive duty. The American accusations are baseless and unfounded. We continue to raise this important issue with the U.S., as the Prime Minister did with the President just last week.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we know that communities in Quebec and Ontario have been dealing with flooding over the past few days. Some people have had to leave their homes and they know that they are going to have to deal with the damage when they return. There is a direct link between the flooding and climate change, and we know that these events will occur more often over the next few years.

Can the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness tell us how he will work with the provinces to help these people?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the current situation has been monitored from the very beginning by the Government Operations Centre. We have indicated to all the provincial governments that we are on standby, ready to assist as required, and if a provincial government should make a request for assistance from the Government of Canada, we will respond very, very quickly.

In terms of the future in dealing with climate change, I advise the hon. member to examine very carefully the budget, because it includes \$2.6 billion for this very purpose.

* * *

[Translation]

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, northern Ontario is a vast region with communities of all sizes scattered throughout the area. Promoting economic development is a challenge in this region. However, northern Ontario has many advantages and considerable potential.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

There is a large potential to be unlocked in the region with the many emerging innovative ideas and companies from the region. Can the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development let us know what steps he has taken to promote local regional economic development in northern Ontario?

[Translation]

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Sudbury for his question.

He and his colleagues from the region are staunch supporters of northern Ontario.

[English]

I was excited to be in northern Ontario to announce an increase of \$25 million for FedNor. Along with the launch of this, we also put forward the prosperity and growth strategy for northern Ontario. This will help the community; this will help indigenous communities; this will help diversify the economy; and, in particular, this will help small businesses grow and scale up, which will create good-quality jobs in northern Ontario.

* * *

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been 11 days since the crippling tariffs have been levied on our small and medium producers. On this side of the House, we are hearing from concerned producers, manufacturers, and fearful forestry workers. The minister says we should expect job losses. This is unacceptable, and Canadians deserve better.

What is the minister doing to reassure the over one million Canadians who depend on the forestry industry for their livelihoods, and what is the plan for our communities that depend on forestry?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has been working for many months across many departments in the Government of Canada and, just as importantly, with all of the ministers from the provinces. We know that it is our first responsibility to help the workers who might be displaced, the producers whose companies are at risk, and the communities that will be affected. Not only is it important to look at the short term, but also the long term, and we are also very active on that front, by an expansion of export markets and diversification. We are very focused on this issue.

• (1450)

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the U.S. Department of Commerce levelled a direct attack on our forestry producers last month with new tariffs on softwood lumber. According to Michael Froman, the former U.S. trade representative, the Liberal government had an opportunity to sign an agreement last year with an offer from the Obama administration, but it chose to wait, thinking it would get a better deal with the Trump government.

[English]

What is up now?

[Translation]

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's forestry industry supports hundreds of thousands of good, middle-class jobs. We strongly oppose the U.S. Department of Commerce's decision to impose an unfair, punitive tax. Their accusations are unfounded. We will continue to bring the matter up with the United States, just as the Prime Minister did with the U.S. President.

The coalition never offered conditions that Canada could accept. We want a good agreement, not just any agreement.

* * *

*[English]***TAXATION**

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian manufacturers can compete with anyone in the world provided they have a level playing field, yet these same manufacturers are at a tipping point as their energy costs and taxes skyrocket while under President Trump their American competitors will pay lower taxes and electricity costs.

Instead of helping businesses, the Liberals are increasing taxes on them and strangling them with red tape. Why is the Prime Minister chasing Canada's manufacturing jobs out of Canada with a massive carbon tax?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand that we need to take action to tackle climate change and we need to create good jobs. That is exactly what we are doing. We are making polluters pay and at the same time attracting investment in our innovative industries.

I was just in California, and I was very pleased to meet with venture capitalists, private equity firms, investors, and innovators who are looking at Canada as a great place to invest. The party opposite may not care about creating jobs, but that is exactly what we are focused on.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, why is the minister in California when she should be in Calgary?

The Prime Minister should be listening to Jocelyn Bamford of the Coalition of Concerned Manufacturers, who said that we are standing on a beach with a tidal wave called cap-and-trade barreling down upon us, and our government still doesn't realize that this tsunami will destroy manufacturing in Ontario. She said that businesses are terrified of what the federal government is doing and that "government is supposed to help us, but its policies are causing us to consider moving our growth to other jurisdictions."

What is up—

Oral Questions

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was actually very pleased to be in Calgary just a month ago talking to the Calgary Chamber of Commerce. There were 300 people there to listen to how we are planning to create jobs, grow our economy, and innovate.

I was in California because I am as much a minister of economy as I am a minister of environment. I am attracting investment so that we can create good jobs for companies like CarbonCure Technologies Inc. from Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, which has new processes that will take the carbon dioxide that we do not want, inject it into cement—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît.

* * *

[Translation]

YOUTH

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today the Prime Minister met with his youth council, a body made up of 26 young people from interesting backgrounds, to discuss a very sensitive topic, namely reconciliation with indigenous peoples.

Will the Prime Minister share the council's thoughts with us? No, because he refuses to talk to the media. Will the young people be able to publish their work at the end of the consultations? No, because they do not have permission from the Privy Council to do so. Can they talk about this on Facebook Live? Yes, but only in the presence of a chaperone.

Talk about transparency and confidence in young people!

Can the government tell me if any of the Prime Minister's other councils have so many constraints?

•(1455)

[English]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are proud to be a government that is actually engaging the next generation. To hear from youth, to have them at the table to hear their constructive feedback, and to ensure that they are supportive of the ideas for change for the way this country works is very important. That is why the government took the initiative of having a youth council. Not only does the Prime Minister have a youth council, he encourages every member in this place to also have a youth council to get ideas from their local constituencies to ensure that we are serving in the best interests of all Canadians, Canadians of today and Canadians of tomorrow.

* * *

SENIORS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Statistics Canada reports that now Canada's seniors outnumber its children for the first time in history. The accelerated pace of aging in the population carries profound implications. We need to prepare for proper housing and home care and have a long-term plan.

Given that we have known about this trend for years, it is surprising to see how little is in this year's Liberal budget for our seniors. Will the government react to this news and finally implement a national seniors strategy?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful to our colleague for this opportunity to express how proud we are of our record of helping seniors.

Last year we put into place a measure which is taking 13,000 seniors out of poverty, 90% of whom are women, through an increase in the guaranteed income supplement of up to \$1,000 per year. We are also investing significantly in housing, health care, and support in communities to help our seniors live in a dignified and secure environment.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a Canadian citizen, Sun Qian, has been imprisoned in Beijing for her belief in truth, compassion, and tolerance.

Canada's new ambassador to China refused to publicly protest this latest case of Chinese extrajudicial detention, but by muting content on the plight of dual citizens unjustly held in China, Iran, Turkey, or any other undemocratic country, Canada is treating these citizens as second-class citizens.

Why are the Liberals prioritizing trade and muting Canada's principled voice on the rule of law?

Mr. Omar Alghabra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a very important matter for us.

However, I want to remind the hon. member of our Prime Minister's repeated confirmation that a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian. Unlike the previous government, we have never shied away from defending our Canadian citizens abroad.

Consular services are being provided to all citizens who are in need. We are seized by this particular matter that the hon. member has raised. We are providing assistance to the family and we will continue to advocate for our citizens abroad.

* * *

MINISTERIAL EXPENDITURES

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, documents reveal that the Minister of Status of Women spent more money renovating her offices than on supporting shelters for abused women.

While the minister was spending over \$1 million on her luxury accommodations, she spent less than \$700,000 on emergency housing for battered women.

How can the minister justify this blatant misuse taxpayer funds while every night women in need are being turned away from emergency shelters across Canada because of the lack of funding?

Oral Questions

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege to rise on this traditional territory and to acknowledge that the work of this feminist government is making a real impact in the lives of women and girls across the country, with \$100 million invested in a gender-based violence strategy, \$11 billion invested in housing, a poverty reduction strategy, investments in supporting women entrepreneurs, investments in women in STEM, \$90 million in a network of shelters across the country, \$7 billion in child care, flexibility and more choice in EI and caregiving benefits, I could go on.

I hope the member opposite asks me again.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this self-proclaimed feminist Prime Minister sure talks a good talk, but has failed to do anything meaningful for women in need, like zip pay equity.

The Liberals have no issue padding the pockets of their Liberal friends and wasting taxpayer dollars on their lavish accommodations and vacations, but when it comes to funding shelters for women in need, the Liberals have not made it a priority.

Will the minister finally stop wasting taxpayer money and start investing seriously in projects that protect vulnerable women?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will take the opportunity to remind all colleagues that we invested close to \$90 million in shelters, and \$1 million additionally went to collecting data from across the country to ensure that our investments and our efforts are based on an evidence-based approach.

I am sure the hon. member agrees that restoring the right to advocacy to women's organizations across the country is essential to a healthy and vibrant women's movement too, and that is exactly what we have done.

* * *

• (1500)

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Colin Fraser (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last month I had the honour of travelling to France for the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. It was an immense privilege to stand where, 100 years ago, four Canadian divisions came together to claim their place in the history books. I was humbled to speak to the family members of soldiers who came home from that battle that changed men. While they may not have had the words at the time, mental health injuries and PTSD were a reality then, and they are, unfortunately, the reality for many of our men and women in uniform today. What is the Minister of Veterans Affairs doing to address the mental health needs of veterans and their families?

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at Vimy Ridge, I thought of the brave Canadians who fought to defend our freedom; those soldiers had partners, parents, and siblings. It is true that when members serve, their entire family serves along with them. The families are the strength behind the uniform. In budget 2017, we

announced a centre of excellence on mental health and PTSD, to advance research, education, and outreach services. This would lead to better mental health outcomes for our veterans and their families.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no members of the Canadian Forces should be at a disadvantage because of their service to Canada. The Prime Minister stood with his hand over his heart and he promised, “no veteran” should have to take “their own government” to court. The Liberals have not fulfilled their campaign promise to return to lifelong pensions, forcing Equitas veterans to continue to fight in court. So long as the minister continues to delay introducing promised lifelong pensions, our new veterans will remain at a disadvantage. When will the Liberals stop the necessity for the court action and bring back lifelong pensions for veterans, as they promised?

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member is well aware, we are committed to a pension-for-life option for our veterans. We made that announcement this year, and those details will be forthcoming. Further to that point, we have augmented and strengthened financial security for our veterans. In budget 2016, we raised the ELB to 90% of a soldier's pre-release salary and we raised the disability award. The veterans' ombudsman and many veterans were highly supportive of these changes. It meant more money in veterans' pockets, for them and their families.

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[Translation]

SHIPPING

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, residents of Yamachiche want clear answers to explain why two-metre waves damaged their homes. Damage could run into the thousands of dollars and someone has to be held responsible.

The Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard says that an investigation is under way. However, the Minister of Transport will not confirm that.

Can someone tell us in no uncertain terms whether an investigation has been launched? If so, what is the timeline and when will the results be made public?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for the question.

Our government recognizes the importance of safe and environmentally sound navigation. We are aware of the situation in Yamachiche and can confirm that we have received complaints about this incident. We are currently assessing the factors that may have contributed to this incident.

* * *

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, rail transportation is crucial to our economy, and provides us with an efficient system of moving people and goods through this great and vast country of ours.

Nothing is more important than rail safety, which is paramount to users, to railway workers, and most of all, to all the communities across Canada that have rail lines passing through them.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport tell us what our government is doing to ensure that Canada has the strictest rail safety standards?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Laurentides—Labelle for his question.

Rail safety remains the minister's top priority. That is why we regularly review the Railway Safety Act to ensure that it reflects what the industry needs and what the population needs. We are very pleased to be able to begin this review one year earlier than planned, and we look forward to receiving the committee's recommendations.

* * *

• (1505)

[English]

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, UN Watch is now reporting, "...UNRWA hires and employs racist staff, and places the education of impressionable Palestinian youth in their hands. Canada would never tolerate the employment of racist teachers in its own schools." Why are the Liberals funding this UN organization when there is clear evidence that it employs racist anti-Semites and terrorist sympathizers?

[Translation]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure my colleague that, ever since Canada restored funding to this UN agency for Palestinian refugees, we have been following it very closely, and Canada's presence at the table is making a difference. We are ensuring that background checks are done on all financial services employees. We have helped train 3,000 employees so far, including executives and teachers, on the importance of web independence, and we are reviewing the educational materials. I would rather see those children in that UN school than on the street.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Quebec says that it needs 14 judges to be appointed in order to avoid lengthy proceedings that result in the release of the accused

pursuant to the Jordan ruling. I did say 14. What did the Minister of Justice do? She appointed four judges. Does the minister realize that she may be enabling the release of dangerous criminals, putting Quebecers at risk, and helping to discredit our justice system?

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has taken significant steps to ensure that the appointment process for judges is transparent and responsible and fosters more diversity, among other things. To date, the Minister of Justice has appointed 55 judges and 22 deputy judges across the country, including four new appointments in Quebec.

Our government is very proud of the fact that 60% of the judges appointed are women. That is up 35% compared to the previous government's record. We are committed to continuing to strengthen our judicial system. That is very good news for all members of the House.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Quebec justice minister had only one short comment about the appointment of four judges: we are short 10.

In response to the crisis precipitated by the Jordan decision, Quebec appointed 18 new judges and hired about a hundred legal professionals. We do not want any more criminals to go free because their cases have been thrown out. Quebec took action and appointed 18 judges. Ottawa appointed four. That is ridiculous. What is the minister waiting for? When will she appoint judges to fill the 10 vacancies?

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, our government has taken significant steps to make the judicial appointments process transparent and accountable and to ensure that there is more diversity on the bench. That includes appointing four new judges in Quebec. Our government is very proud that 60% of the appointments are women. We are committed to continuing to strengthen our justice system, and that is good news for all members of the House.

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[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I recognize, as we all do, that we are here to represent Canadians, and I say as a new member how impressed I am with how hard working each and every MP in this room is. I appreciate the dedication and commitment. However, over the last couple of days, I want to address the level of heckling and unparliamentary conduct that is taking place in the House. It is unfortunate, because we have welcomed five new members into the House.

Business of the House

I thank you for your intervention today, Mr. Speaker, but I want to call on all my colleagues in the House, all of us, from both sides of the House, to start conducting ourselves in ways that we can be proud of, because we are representing Canadians, and we want to stand proud of the way we conduct ourselves.

● (1510)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas for her comments addressing this issue.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, one might think that the hon. member for Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas and I had a simultaneous sense of a point of order. I ask for your indulgence for just a moment.

It has been six years since those of us elected on May 2, 2011, have served. I recall distinctly the opening of the 41st Parliament, in which most parties in this place took a pledge never to heckle. The initiative was led by the late Jack Layton on behalf of the New Democrats. Stephen Harper endorsed it, and for comic relief, my entire caucus pledged never to heckle. Since that time, the disappointed group in this corner, led by interim leader Bob Rae, said that they were not so sure, that they might need to heckle.

At this point I need to turn for reference to a quote from the great A.A. Milne in the poem of good bears and bad bears: “And then quite suddenly (just like Us) One got Better and the other got Wuss”.

The NDP members, over the last few weeks, have hardly been heckling at all. The Liberals have hardly heckled at all. However, it seems the Conservatives feel there is a void and they must fill it with more noise than I have ever heard in this place. I urge them, as individuals and collectively, to please honour Standing Order 16 and 18 and find a way to tone down the violence—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. These are points of order and they address matters addressed in the Standing Orders.

I see the member for Calgary Nose Hill rising. Is it on the same point of order?

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Yes, Mr. Speaker. On this point of order, my colleague opposite has actually not cited a specific Standing Order, so I would beg that it is not a point of order. However, since the matter of heckling has become relevant, I would ask—

The Speaker: I fear that the hon. member is challenging the Chair. I am sure she would not want to challenge the Chair. I will let her continue her statement.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, I point to your direction in these matters. You do have the ability to, as you have on many occasions, censure different members or remind them of their behaviour. However, it is incumbent upon all of us to manage our own behaviour here. That includes members of the government giving answers, which frankly, many Canadians find repulsive. I think that by all of us raising the point in debate, that includes the government actually being accountable to members of the opposition by providing real, relevant answers, which many of these ministers do not.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier today, during the members' statements, we heard a beautifully orated speech in a language that 98% of us were unable to comprehend. I wonder if, as a matter of courtesy, if members choose to do that, they could provide prior translation to our interpreters so that we would be able to enjoy the content of their statement and also provide the appropriate support and response.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for his comments. That has been the practice. I encourage members, if they are going to speak in a different language from the two official languages, to provide copies of the translation of those statements to the interpreters so that we can all be aware of what they are saying.

* * *

● (1515)

[Translation]

ROYAL ASSENT

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Mr. Speaker:

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bills listed in the schedule to this letter on the 4th day of May, 2017, at 11:30 a.m.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Wallace

The schedule indicates that the bills assented to were Bill S-201, an act to prohibit and prevent genetic discrimination, and Bill C-224, an act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (assistance — drug overdose).

[English]

Now I believe the hon. opposition House leader has the usual Thursday question.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do have the usual Thursday question. As you well know, I get up every Thursday, and I ask the government House leader what the government agenda is for the rest of the week and the week following. The government House leader tells us what the agenda is, and then we go and prepare. The only thing we have to go on is what the government House leader tells us. We are always responding to what the government is doing and to its agenda, but we get one day a week when we have an opposition day. Well, it amounts to about one day a week.

The last time I asked the government House leader this question, she told me and this House what the schedule would be. It included an opposition day, which was supposed to happen today.

There are extremely timely issues that are going on right now in the House of Commons. There is a huge degree of frustration here on this side of the House, but even more so, there is a lot going on in the Canadian military, and they are feeling a sense of betrayal and frustration.

When our opposition day is taken away, when it is changed around, when games are played with our opposition day so that we cannot address these very serious concerns, I think that contributes to the level of frustration on this side of the House.

I am going to ask the government House leader if she would tell us what the business of the House is for this week and for next week, and if we could please stick to that plan, it would be very much appreciated.

[Translation]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-44, Budget Implementation Act, 2017, No. 1, is currently before the House.

Tomorrow morning, we will consider the Senate amendments to Bill C-4 on unions, and then move on to Bill C-44 after question period.

Next week, we have the pleasure of having two allotted days, one on Monday and one on Thursday.

[English]

Ideally, I would like to finish debate on the budget legislation next Tuesday in order to send the bill to committee for in-depth study. Bill C-4 will be considered on Wednesday, with the hope of sending it back to the Senate that day.

I do my best to provide a calendar that is as accurate as possible so that all members can prepare. From time to time, things need to change. As members know, we have had some important conversations in this place. We will always ensure that members have the ability to have those important conversations. That is why I would ask that we all continue working better together.

[Translation]

The Speaker: I have notice of a question of privilege.

The hon. member for Montcalm.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

RIGHTS OF NON-RECOGNIZED PARTIES

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon, I am addressing you in your capacity as the custodian of our rights and privileges. For weeks, the government has been claiming that all members will be able to fully participate in the parliamentary reform. It said so as recently as yesterday. However, nothing could be further from the truth.

The government's proposed parliamentary reform and the approach it is taking to this issue violate the rights and privileges of members who do not belong to recognized parties. Hundreds of thousands of voters are being muzzled.

I checked, and I can tell the House that the letter from the Leader of the Government on the changes to electoral reform was sent only to her counterparts in the recognized parties. Not only were we not informed by letter like the other parliamentarians, but we had to learn about the leader's intentions in the newspapers.

Privilege

We did not get the leader's letter until yesterday afternoon. What is worse, she indicated in that letter that the government will now have to use time allocation motions more often. That means we will have even less speaking time. The government's decision will limit our freedom of speech and have a direct impact on our work, the work that hundreds of thousands of Quebeckers elected us to do.

How can the government possibly amend the Standing Orders of the House without including every single elected member of the House, with no exceptions?

The government is accountable not just to recognized parties in the House, but also to all those elected by Canadians. This is set out very clearly in the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, on page 61: "The privileges of the Commons are designed to safeguard the rights of each and every elector."

Members of non-recognized parties are 34th in the order of speaking, and the leader has announced that the number of closure motions will increase. This means that we will never get a turn to speak. This will permanently silence small minority political parties, as well as voters. It is an unacceptable attack on the freedom of speech of the members of the Bloc Québécois and the Green Party.

Mr. Speaker, in the next few weeks, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs will debate the the reform of Parliament, its procedures, and its Standing Orders. It will establish the new parliamentary rules that you will have to enforce. I would like to bring to your attention that as a result of the defeat of our motion of April 5, these changes will be discussed and amended without our being able to fully participate in the discussions. It was the government that defeated our motion.

We are barred from all committees. This practice is discriminatory and unfair for non-recognized parties. These rules and procedures discriminate against non-recognized parties and run counter to the principle that the privileges protect the rights of every voter.

Mr. Speaker, we are asking you to defend minority elected officials so that the majority does not crush them. I will repeat the quote: "The privileges of the Commons are designed to safeguard the rights of each and every elector."

In your speech of December 3, 2015, you clearly stated that you wanted to reform parliamentary procedure. You said: "I believe the Speaker should lead discussions about how to reform our procedures to achieve these things and to have measures that ensure that members are better able to focus on their work and carry out their duties".

On page 89 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, we read: "By far, the most important right accorded to members of the House is the exercise of freedom of speech in parliamentary proceedings." A little further on, it is described as "a fundamental right without which they would be hampered in the performance of their duties."

The Speaker's role in protecting this privilege in particular is set out on page 308. "The duty of the Speaker is to ensure that the right of members to free speech is protected...."

Government Orders

•(1520)

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, as the custodian of our privileges, it is your duty to intervene to ensure that the elected members of non-recognized parliamentary groups are not deprived of their most fundamental right, the right to speak, and the right to vote in committee and in the House on behalf of their constituents.

I am asking you today to guide us as to how to reform our procedures so that you can protect the rights and privileges of parliamentarians belonging to non-recognized parties. In fact, we hold that there are four breaches of our parliamentary privileges.

First, the procedure put forward by the government to reform House procedures and practices without the participation of all parliamentary groups, who are excluded from the committee on parliamentary reform, is not in keeping with the principle of fairness that must guide the Speaker's rulings and infringes on our freedom of speech.

Second, the government's expressed intent to use its parliamentary majority rather than seeking a consensus among elected officials to make changes to the Standing Orders and procedures is not in keeping with the practices and customs in that regard.

Third, the government's expressed intent to use time allocation more frequently inordinately violates the freedom of speech of non-recognized parties, especially since it has announced that it will use its parliamentary majority to push through its reforms.

Fourth, the fact that elected members of non-recognized parties were not informed of the government's intentions regarding the procedural amendments at the same time as the recognized parties is a clear indication that parliamentarians from non-recognized parties are not being treated equitably.

We are counting on you, Mr. Speaker, and we await your wise judgment.

•(1525)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Montcalm for his speech.

The member for Saanich—Gulf Islands on the same question of privilege.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Montcalm. He stated his position, and I completely agree with him.

As members, we are all equals here in this place. Our constituents, the people who live in our ridings, are equals, and it is only fair that we all have the same rights and freedoms here in the House. We are treated differently only because of a law that was passed in 1963. I think that was the year that Parliament passed the law that granted money to parties with more than 12 members.

[English]

In 1963, it was about giving parties with more than 12 members some money. Over time it has morphed, without any specific law ever passing, to say that members of legitimate elected parties, in my case a party that runs nationally, and in the case of the Bloc a party that runs very strongly in one province, should have, and would have in other parliaments within the commonwealth system, the same

rights. For the matter, independents should have the same rights, as their voters have the same rights.

In this case, we do not have those rights, because as we know, over the years we have adopted traditions in which parties with more than 12 members have more rights. It has not been reassessed since 1963. In the early 1990s, a former member of Parliament for Winnipeg—Transcona at the time, the hon. Bill Blaikie, made a brilliant argument as to why the NDP, with nine seats, should have the right to sit on committees. At the time, with all due respect to my colleague from the Bloc, that was objected to by the Bloc, because it had more than 12 members, and they were mad, because when they had fewer than 12, the NDP had not supported them.

It would be wonderful to review what has happened by accretion, without any actual decision ever rendered in this place, and go back to the question of why members of Parliament who happen to be in parties with fewer than 12 members should have fewer rights. I set aside the issue of money. Why should we have fewer rights than any other MP?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, given what has been said, we would like to review *Hansard* and we will get back to you in a relatively short time span.

[Translation]

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Montcalm, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, and the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons. I will await the government's comments. Then, the Chair will take it all under advisement and get back to the House with a ruling in a timely manner.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2017, NO. 1

The House resumed consideration of the motion that C-44, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2017 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Fleetwood—Port Kells has four and a half minutes left in his speech.

The hon. member for Fleetwood—Port Kells.

Government Orders

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for those who may remember, we were talking about the budget and some significant investments that the federal government had been making to move a number of very important things forward. It all contributes to economic activity, but it is important to realize that what the government has been doing so far, budget 2016 and budget 2017, is more than a stimulus program. The investments we are making in infrastructure, jobs training, innovation, and early learning and child care are about building a solid foundation for a prosperous economy, one that offers a fair share and a fair shake to all Canadians willing to step forward to invest some hope and hard work for a real change in their lives.

Listening to Canadians and evidence-based decision-making are blazing a new path for the country in a fairly uncertain world right now. This recognizes that while the previous government's ideology may have been well-intentioned, it simply did not deliver the results the majority of Canadians wanted.

Speaking of results, I want to save some time to talk about the issue of deficits, because they keep coming up.

The previous government sought to balance its last budget at all costs, this, after racking up over \$150 billion in accumulated deficits over 10 years. What a cost it was. If it did indeed balance the budget, it was thanks in part to service cuts and lapsed funding that fluffed up the bottom line as ministries and programs did not actually spend the money the Conservatives committed.

A balanced budget at all costs, but who paid? Our veterans certainly did when front-line staff was cut back and service offices were closed. So did unemployed young people and our disabled Canadians when tens of millions of dollars in promised funding went unspent. So did Albertans, when Mr. Harper's government had no response for them in 2014 and 2015 as falling oil prices foretold tough times ahead. All Canadian taxpayers certainly did when over 60 of the Canada Revenue Agency's most senior auditors were let go to cut costs. They are the ones who could have tracked down many millions of dollars in taxes avoided by wealthy families, which may now be helping even more wealthy families avoid paying their fair share of taxes.

The Conservatives believed so much in the virtue of a balanced budget, at all cost, that they tried to close the gap for 2015-16 with the fire sale disposal of the General Motors shares they purchased during the economic collapse of 2007-08.

The Globe and Mail reported that this badly timed sale, done to balance the budget, resulted in as much as a \$3.5 billion loss off the original purchase price. All Canadians took it in the neck for that one.

As I mentioned, lapsed funding, the underspending of government budget commitments, also padded the Tories' bottom line.

Of course, every government, every year, sees lapsed funding, but as *The Canadian Press* reported in December 2014, the Conservatives gamed the system deliberately, with rewards for managers who underspent their budgets.

The balanced budget bragging rights the previous government pursued, at all cost, was the old bait and switch, a carnival side show or a shell game.

To be sure, as we look at budget 2017 and the critically important work it does to build on budget 2016, there are financial deficits. However, Canadians understood during the last election campaign that those deficits were an investment, that deficits would lead to something our country sorely needed. They can see today that there are dividends of many kinds being delivered.

I think it occurs to people, when we think about it, that there is more than one kind of deficit. There were times in the decade prior to budget 2016 that Canada experienced many deficits, deficits in dollars, to be sure, but also deficits of compassion, imagination, vision, and optimism.

Budget 2017 is delivering a surplus on all those accounts. The kind of Canada we are supporting will have the equity, the economy, and the future that will ultimately deliver the kind of genuinely balanced budget we have not seen since the days of Chrétien and Martin.

I was a teenager when Canada celebrated its Centennial. I remember, with great fondness, the incredible energy, enthusiasm, and pride that swept from coast to coast to coast. We owe it to today's teenagers, to everybody, in fact, to recreate that experience. What a better time than now, our 150th birthday, and what a better way than with the direction and future laid out for our country in the federal budget before us today.

• (1530)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of many aspects of the budget. In two budgets now, the government has dealt with Canada's middle class.

One of the things we do not hear too much about in this budget is the importance of venture capital. By enabling venture capital opportunities, we will be helping small businesses.

Could my colleague share his thoughts on the importance of what I would argue is the backbone to Canada's economy and how we can support our middle class by getting behind our small businesses?

• (1535)

Mr. Ken Hardie: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question. It brings to mind the fact that this government has been criticized somewhat for not decreasing the tax rate on small business. However, we hit the nail on the head in that our small business does not need a tax cut. There is nothing to be saved if we do not make money. What our small businesses needed was more customers.

The impact of the Canada child benefit on the tax reduction for middle class has actually rippled through the economy and is helping to build stronger businesses at the community level, which is where we need them.

Government Orders

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the comments of my hon. colleague concerning the cuts to program delivery, which we saw over the years of the previous government, and how many communities suffered, including my own, which lost counter service and delivery of government programs, and the Canada Revenue Agency. We lost a counter service and service to our community in Immigration.

I have many questions for my hon. colleague, but I will ask him this. Why is there nothing in the budget to increase that program delivery, to put resources back into the service delivery of the government? He talked before about the government that cut them.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that they cannot all be restored at once. We are restoring some very important things like services to veterans and the opening of the Veterans Affairs office. We are investing more into the Canada Revenue Agency to see if we can improve the revenue intake of the government from people who should be paying a fair share of taxes.

Like the hon. member, things are missing off the list in this budget that I would like to have seen. This is one budget. There are more to come. As we collaborate together in the House and we raise the issues that are important to Canadians and we hear what is important to Canadians, those surely will be the priorities in future budgets, just as they have been in this one.

Ms. Sheri Benson: Mr. Speaker, I will continue my questions, since I have been given another opportunity.

I would categorize this implementation bill as an omnibus bill. It is full of things that are not necessarily budget related, including changes to the Investment Act and changes around parental leave.

There is not much in this implementation of budgets. A lot of other things have been crammed together.

However, my comment on one of the insertions in this omnibus bill is around the changes the Employment Insurance Act. Here is an example where the government really could help families, particularly in my riding. Instead of increasing the benefits, instead of making it easier for people to access the employment insurance program and making it better, which I need to remind people is funded by employers and employees, not the government, the government has just extended what I would say is not a very high level of benefits over a longer period of time.

In my riding, many people will be unable to access this extended parental leave because they just cannot afford to live on that amount of money.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member may remember that we did in fact help to boost the unemployment benefits, particularly for the people who were very hard hit in Alberta. We are looking at a situation right now with the prospect of people right across the country being very hard hit as a result of the new sanctions, the new tariffs being brought on our softwood lumber. I believe, and it has been commented on by a number of observers, that the government has had to keep its powder dry in some respects. We do not know the level of service or the level of support that will be required to help Canadians who will find themselves potentially in very difficult situations simply because of what has been going on with our largest trading partner.

It would be good if we could do it all, but we are doing the most important things first.

● (1540)

Mr. Neil Ellis (Bay of Quinte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill C-44, the budget implementation act.

I would first like to thank the hon. member for Fleetwood—Port Kells for sharing his time with me. He was a teenager when Canada celebrated its 100th birthday and I was a day away from my fifth birthday, so I can learn from the member and all that he has done for his great riding.

Bill C-44, the budget implementation act, and its unprecedented investments in infrastructure represent more than \$180 billion over 12 years. Infrastructure, quite simply, is the providence of the most basic and necessary foundations of all our lives. There is a direct correlation between the condition of our travel and trade corridors, our roads, trade corridors, energy transmission, utility or public transit services, and our ability to thrive, excel, and innovate.

Budget 2016 sets the focus for the first phase of our government's plan to recapitalize and modernize our existing infrastructure assets. By keeping our foundational systems in the best possible repair, we are making it easier for Canadians to navigate their larger life ambitions, whether that is to protect and study our country's diverse environments, to develop our key resources, to build, manage, or expand on existing services, or to connect with friends and family in this immense and beautiful country we live in.

That is why I am so proud that budget 2017 ensures that our infrastructure, as a national foundation for the diverse and vibrant lives that Canadians lead, is strong. Budget 2016 initiated upgrades to long-neglected critical infrastructure. It also enabled us to sign bilateral agreements with all provinces and territories, as well as partner with indigenous and municipal stakeholders to plan and deliver infrastructure projects. Phase one of Canada's new infrastructure plan included \$11.9 billion over five years that started in 2016.

Since November 2015, we have approved over 2,000 projects for a combined investment of over \$21 billion. As part of the fall economic update, we are investing \$81 billion over the next 11 years, starting in 2017-18. We have also proposed the creation of the Canada infrastructure bank, an arm's-length crown corporation, which would allow us to attract and mobilize private capital funding from world-leading institutional investors.

Government Orders

Funds held by the bank would be released to our provincial, territorial, and municipal partners after successful and innovative financial negotiations in order to supplement our wider public investment toward infrastructure projects. In doing so, our government is encouraging an innovative process of delivering key investments for our most vital sectors, including \$3.4 billion for public transit, \$5 billion for investments in water, waste-water, and green infrastructure that supports a clean growth economy, and \$3.4 billion for social infrastructure that promotes affordable housing

As for public transit, we all know that when it is easier to reach our destinations, it increases our productivity in our workplaces and also the enjoyment of our leisure time. This is why budget 2017 has enabled us to approve 744 public transit projects for federal funding.

I am thrilled that my local riding, the Bay of Quinte, has received over \$1.4 million for transit in the city of Belleville, \$169,000 for Quinte West, and \$22,000 for Prince Edward County, respectively. I was proud to read in today's paper that transit in the city of Belleville is up about 10% this year already. It proves that these investments build our economy and create better lives for the people who live there.

This federal funding will enable upgrades and expansion of existing transit services across the Bay of Quinte region. These investments will generate feasibility studies on existing transit usage, modernization of vehicle storage facilities, creation of additional bus shelters, and expansion of coverage as well as the transit services offered. Across Canada, 132 transit systems will receive similar funding to help build and connect public transit across our communities. By offering more reliable, accessible, and connected public transit options, we are allowing our communities to lessen their ecological footprint, but simultaneously take larger steps toward improving the ways we live, move, and work.

● (1545)

I will now turn to the clean water and waste-water fund. We all know that when we can trust our sources of water or the practices associated with processing all the residential, commercial, and industrial forms of waste that we make, we are able to rest easier knowing that our health and safety are not in question. This is why budget 2017 has set aside funding to expand 219 waste-water systems and to rehabilitate another 328. Few of us like to think of what exactly is hidden, treated, and recycled through these systems, but none of us can ignore the importance of these crucial arteries of infrastructure. Without proper sewer, air venting, and water intake mechanisms in place, we are unable to deal practically or safely with the most basic aspects of human life.

Notable projects include the Bragg Creek flood mitigation in Alberta, and the sanitary servicing to reduce phosphorus to Lake Simcoe-Royal Oak, Bay, Cottage in Barrie, Ontario. This reminds us all that our rural, remote, and urban communities need clean water for their residents, for their agriculture, commercial, and industrial processes, and especially for emergency services like firefighting. These projects and others can encourage efficient water use and assist the key gatekeepers of our rivers, streams, and watersheds and waterways to provide safe water intake and treatment for all Canadians.

Regarding green technologies, all across Canada other projects that generate the use or development of clean and sustainable products or services have also received funding as part of our wider initiative to build safe, inclusive, and sustainable communities. With the support of a low-carbon green economy, projects like upgrades to the Red Rock waste system treatment plant in Red Rock, Ontario, illustrate the success of budget 2017 in supporting the acceleration and adaptability of our communities, whether urban, rural, or remote.

These projects are just a few of the strong examples of our plan to encourage intergovernmental stewardship of existing resources or energies and use of emerging technologies, and draw from multifaceted expertise of Canadians going forward. We know that in order to generate and share the very best practices, ideas, and innovations in products, culture, or agricultural fare and connect with our fellow Canadians, whether locally or over long distances, we must ensure that our infrastructure is greener, accessible, and technologically equipped to offer the highest levels of service to our citizens, residents, and visitors. We owe this as much to ourselves as we do to our future generations. The stronger our infrastructure is, the stronger our own capacity to shape our future becomes.

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

Mr. Speaker, the budget is a very important document for any government. It establishes the priorities, and I believe that the first priority for this government has been Canada's middle class, ultimately believing that if we have a healthier middle class, we will have a healthier economy. We have seen strong governance in the many different departments that have had such a positive impact in many different ways. For me personally, one of the most significant things we saw in the past number of months was the agreement in the health care accord, where virtually all provinces, except my own Province of Manitoba, unfortunately, have health care agreements in place. That is something that is important for me.

When my colleague reflects on the number of things that have taken place over the last while, what would he say is one of the more important issues, outside of the budget and the details of the budget, but just something in principle?

Mr. Neil Ellis: Mr. Speaker, as some of us here are aware, being a former mayor of a small municipality, I would say it is important for us to have suitable funding and programming so that our mayors can plan forward. When we made the transit announcement in the city of Belleville, the mayor was so happy because this allowed him to update the transit system, not only in technology but in bus shelters and technology in hand-held devices so we can tell when the transit is more efficient. This is going to increase ridership in my community.

Government Orders

It is also important for my college. My riding is the home of Loyalist College. We are all well aware of students and their transportation needs. It is important to run an efficient transit system to our college. It is also important for our industrial park. We all know that many industries in our industrial park need seven-day transit services, and this enables the mayors to plan forward.

The mayors in my constituency are excited about infrastructure money that they can depend on, money that has been coming, money that is making projects in their communities to determine growth.

• (1550)

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague and a lot of government members wax on about all the money in the budget for social housing. I notice in the budget there is more money for charging stations for millionaires and their Teslas over the next four years than there is for support for northern housing and support for indigenous people not living on reserves or federal lands being made available for social housing.

How can the member say that the needs of millionaire Tesla owners are much more important than these respective needs?

Mr. Neil Ellis: Mr. Speaker, lots of money is going to those areas through budgets. There is always more money that could go to other things.

Highway 401 goes through my riding. The member talked about electrically powered cars. I feel that as the community goes and how things are, we as leaders should look at alternative technologies. The member referred to millionaires driving electrically powered cars. Some of my family members drive electrically powered cars but they are not Teslas.

In general, the member's question is valid, but having said that, we have to look at the big picture.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, many members in this place are shocked to see in this budget implementation bill what the Liberals are proposing for the parliamentary budget officer. When his colleagues participated with me on OGGO, the government operations committee, on reforming the scrutiny of estimates and supply, they made a dissenting report and in that report they requested that the government, the Conservative government at the time, take immediate action to make the parliamentary budget officer an officer of Parliament. What happened to the Liberal Party and its belief in the independence of the PBO?

Mr. Neil Ellis: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately I do not sit on the committee the member referred to. I feel that the answer was given today by the hon. government House leader. In the sense of the member's question, she answered that suggestions are coming forward and we offer her suggestions on how we can make our policies and legislation better.

It is about how the House reacts. I have listened to everybody being so negative on the budget, and I know that is the role of the opposition, but I like to look at positive things. Together, as leaders and as members of both parties, we could co-operate more and make better public policy.

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity today to give some of my thoughts on this budget.

I really believe this budget is a lot of baffleleg and bluster. I believe it is short on substance and that it saddles future generations of Canadians with massive debt. One of the biggest challenges is that we will be putting the burden on our young people, on our kids and our kids' kids, to pay off the massive debt that we will incur over the next few years.

The Prime Minister campaigned on the promise to run a modest \$10-billion deficit, but it was not long after the election that he broke his promise. He pledged to return to a balanced budget, and that pledge has been completely abandoned. To top things off, our national debt is spiralling out of control.

Before I continue, I want to mention that I will be sharing my time with the member for Lethbridge, if I may.

This budget is simply nickel-and-diming the middle class. It is making the cost of living more expensive for middle-class Canadian families. It is becoming obvious to us in this place and to Canadians across the country that the Liberal economic plan is not working. Budget 2016 failed to create jobs and failed to grow our economy; budget 2017 is just more of the same.

The *Financial Post* reports that in 2016, the economy had one of its most difficult years, with a growth of merely 1.3%. It goes on to say that it does not get much better looking forward and that the federal government's own Department of Finance predicts economic growth will average just 1.6% out to 2030. Further, the report notes that growth expectations from private sector economists have consistently declined since the Liberal government came into power. Even more troubling is that the Liberal economic update forecasts have consistently decreased, and have now been downgraded to 1.6% in budget 2017.

Our party leader correctly noted that the government's own numbers show that the economy is growing no faster than before its spending binge began. She also correctly noted that Canadians are working fewer hours and that their wages are not keeping up with the cost of living.

The Prime Minister should not be surprised by all of this. He cannot expect different results by using the same old Liberal tax-and-spend methods.

As was the case with the 2016 budget, this year the Liberals have once again abandoned small businesses. Small businesses are the largest employers of Canadians across the country. Almost every business needs a tax break, but when it comes to spirits, wine, and beer, the Liberals have decided to increase taxes by 2%. This tax hike will have a very negative impact on wineries, craft breweries, and small distilleries in the riding of Niagara West, and consumers will once again have to pay more at the cash register because of more new Liberal taxes.

Government Orders

I have received numerous letters from stakeholders in the wine industry who are pleading with the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance to reconsider this ill-conceived tax hike. Wine is among the highest value-added agricultural products in Ontario, and many of our grape growers may face economic hardship in the face of this tax increase. Wine, as one of Ontario's signature industries, should be supported and promoted by our federal government, not selectively targeted.

The long-term impacts on wineries across Canada will be immense, as will they be on others in the value chain, including restaurant workers, bartenders, delivery truck drivers, and others. For the sake of the long-term survival of the Canadian wine industry, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance should pay attention and consider reversing this tax hike immediately.

The wine industry is not the only victim of Liberal overtaxing. Others will feel the Liberal pinch as well. With respect to public transit users, for example, roughly 1.8 million Canadians will see higher taxes and higher prices for bus passes because the Liberals have decided to get rid of the public transit tax credit. A Toronto Transit Commission analysis showed that the elimination of this credit will mean 2.5 million fewer people will ride the TTC in 2017. Uber and ride-sharing services will become more expensive because the Liberals have decided to slap a tax on them.

Others include donated medicines; child care; small business owners, including farmers, fishers, doctors, lawyers, and accountants; oil and gas companies; and the tourism industry.

These are all in addition to the Liberal tax hikes last year on gas and home heating and Canadians' savings accounts, the implementation of more payroll taxes for businesses, and the ending of tax breaks for children's soccer and piano lessons. It seems that no matter what the Liberals do, they always somehow end up raising taxes on average Canadians and plunging our country into more debt and deficit.

• (1555)

It also seems strange that the Liberals are calling budget 2017 their innovation budget. There is really nothing new or innovative in this budget. Many of the programs are recycled and repackaged. What is becoming clearer is that they have no plan, no commitment, and no ideas on how to create jobs and grow our economy.

However, here is the kicker. They are spending billions on buzzwords and catchphrases. Mr. Speaker, unless you are a venture capital catalyst or a supercluster, this budget is simply not for you.

Innovation thrives when businesses and entrepreneurs are free from excessive taxes, regulation, and interference, but this budget takes the opposite approach. It picks the winners and just does not really care about anyone else.

Here is what really worries me. The Prime Minister promised to run modest deficits for a couple of years. What this has turned into is borrowing \$143 billion over six years. If that is a modest deficit, then I do not want to see or hear what he considers a large one.

What Canadians must keep in mind is that the national credit card that the Prime Minister keeps swiping works in a very similar way to their own credit cards—namely, the money needs to be paid back,

and paid back with interest. Incredible amounts of money have already been borrowed. What this means is that not only this generation but generations to come will need to pay the principal and interest on the debt being racked up now. Canadians turning 18 years old today will not see a balanced budget until they are in their fifties. Essentially, our children and even our grandchildren will be on the hook for paying off debt that the Prime Minister is needlessly racking up now.

This is in addition to making all Canadians pay more taxes for virtually everything, and it explains only half the vicious cycle the Prime Minister has been inflicting upon us. What happens when the debt cannot be paid back? Will he raise taxes even more? Round and round we will go again.

With all this spending of billions of dollars on our national credit card, the Prime Minister could not seem to find a sufficient amount of money for our men and women in uniform. For the second year in a row, the budget contains very little for them. Budget 2017 makes major cuts to defence, despite demands from the U.S. that NATO members commit to spend at least 2% of their GDP.

The government is deferring \$8.5 billion in equipment purchases, having already deferred \$3.7 billion in the past budget. The Department of National Defence now faces a \$12-billion shortfall. It certainly does not look like national defence is a priority for this Liberal government. In an era of so much Liberal spending, it is of great concern that the largest cuts are consistently at the expense of the Canadian Armed Forces, raising the question of whether the Liberals believe that Canada needs the ability to defend itself and our allies from clear threats such as Russia, North Korea, Iran, and ISIS.

Recent examples, including the Liberals' decision to pull our CF-18s out of the fight against ISIS, their preference for fourth-generation fighter jets, their lack of increased support for our Ukrainian allies, and their failure to advance important procurement projects, all suggest that the Prime Minister is of the view that other countries should be relied upon to do the heavy lifting.

With growing United States pressure for increased budgets, Canada's allies have committed to modernizing their military capabilities and spending 2% of their GDP on defence. Our Prime Minister has not followed suit, putting us in a very precarious position. Considering the clear global threats to our security, we need the appropriate investments in Canada's national defence and we need them now. The finance minister does not seem to agree, stating that the government believes the military is appropriately provisioned.

Government Orders

We are living in dangerous times, when our security as a nation should be regarded as a matter of the utmost importance. By not allocating the necessary funds to our armed forces, we are playing a dangerous game and putting our country at constant risk. It is simple: the Liberals are asking Canada's military to do more with less. This cannot stand. On this side of the aisle, we will continue to fight for the resources that our Canadian Armed Forces deserve.

If the Liberals will not listen to us here in this place, then I hope they will listen to the hard-working Canadians that this budget will directly affect. According to a Nanos poll reported by *The Globe and Mail*, most Canadians are giving the Liberal government's second budget a thumbs down. What this poll found is that Canadians are expressing a strong desire for the Liberals to lay out a plan for eliminating the deficit after the budget, there is no mention of when the federal books will be balanced. It is no surprise that only 5% of Canadians had a positive view of the budget.

Nik Nanos himself said:

I think the fact that only one out of every 20 Canadians had an outright positive view of the federal budget should give the Liberals pause because it suggests that the budget, at least for a number of Canadians, was a disappointment.

When Canadians were asked if it is important to them that the federal government have a plan in place to eliminate the deficit, four in five Canadians agreed that a plan should be in place. The reality is that the Liberals have no plan.

• (1600)

We, as the official opposition and as Conservatives, are the voice of the taxpayers and will hold the Liberals to account. We will not and cannot stay silent while the Prime Minister nickel-and-dimes Canadians with no plan whatsoever to create jobs and grow our economy. Too much is at stake, and we hope he listens and understands that so far his ideas are not working.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the opposition often raises the issue of small businesses. I would like to share with the member a very important industry in Canada, focusing on Winnipeg, and that is the taxi industry.

The taxi industry provides hundreds of jobs to wonderful, hard-working people in Winnipeg, and there is a sense of unfairness as to why the taxi industry has to pay GST, for example. One of the initiatives in this budget was to recognize that Uber has a responsibility to pay GST. For whatever reasons, the Conservatives have come out against that particular tax, yet small businesses in many different regions of Canada, especially where there is a healthy taxi industry, are very supportive of that particular initiative because at least it makes the playing field a little more level.

Does the member not believe that where one can, one should promote that level playing field, and that if one pays the tax, the other should also pay the tax?

• (1605)

Mr. Dean Allison: Mr. Speaker, in terms of trying to tax everyone more, I suggest we should try to tax small businesses less.

Small businesses have to deal with a number of things. In my speech, I talked about regulations being one of those things, but if

we start looking at things like a carbon tax or CPP, we see that there are a number of different taxes that by themselves will not necessarily hurt businesses, but an accumulation of multiple taxes and regulations makes it very difficult for businesses to survive and thrive when times are tough.

I would encourage the government, as it continues to spend money on innovation, to realize that taxation is also a part of that. Instead of trying to make everybody pay more taxes, I would encourage it to find ways to lower taxes for all businesses to make it easier for them to survive.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to come back to the matter of taxes. As members know, people in the spirits and microdistillery industry have been calling for lower excise duties on 100% Canadian products for years, but the government has refused. Not only has the government refused, but it also told them today that there would be an immediate increase in excise duties. In fact, excise duties will continue to increase indefinitely based on the consumer price index.

Could my colleague talk about this Liberal proposal, which, instead of helping our microdistilleries that produce fine Canadian products, will impose more taxes on them, with no end in sight to the increase in excise duties?

[*English*]

Mr. Dean Allison: Mr. Speaker, I had a private member's bill on the excise tax in 2005. When Conservatives became government in 2006, we eliminated the excise tax on 100% VQA products. We also did that for microbreweries as well. As a result of what happened, there was unprecedented growth in the wine and microbrewery industry over the last 10 years.

I do not believe that was only because of reducing the excise tax, as there were a number of other factors involved, but what I hear from the microbreweries, micro-distilleries, and the wineries is that we should start looking at ways to reinvest. The distilleries were concerned that they did not get a break. They have been looking for a break, because they use Canadian products. Why they are looking for the break is not so they can stuff their pockets with more money but so they can reinvest in their businesses. That is one of the challenges we have to address.

I appreciate the money that is available for innovation funds, but not every business is going to have access to those funds. We are talking about the digital industry and a number of other industries that I think are important, but the challenge is that the normal, boring businesses, the businesses that are maybe not that sexy, also need access to capital. What happened with the wine and microbrewing industries is that the money was reinvested in those industries so they could actually have growth of capacity.

There are other issues facing those particular industries, the cross-border tax being one of those things, but, as I said, it is important that they have the money to spend and reinvest in their businesses so they can grow their businesses.

Government Orders

•(1610)

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill C-44, the budget implementation bill.

When the federal government releases its annual budget, it is far more than simply numbers on a page. It is actually a declaration of intent, a vision statement of sorts; and so it is important for us to take time to learn about what exactly the government plans to do on behalf of Canadians, or perhaps it is in hindrance of Canadians.

On March 22, the Liberal government put forward budget 2017. In this 278 page document, the Liberals outlined their plan to spend the money of taxpayers.

We all know that I am a Conservative member of Parliament in this place. I believe governments should be as small as possible. I believe business owners should be provided with freedom to innovate and create jobs, and I believe in freedom of choice and the fact that it should be protected. Naturally, I look at the budget through a different lens than my counterparts do. As the member of Parliament for Lethbridge and as a Conservative, I was thoroughly disappointed by the budget.

The bottom line is this. The Liberals are hiking taxes, stalling on infrastructure spending, and doing little to help seniors, and they have zero plans in place for helping the rising generation. I have not even mentioned the fact that the Liberals are incurring a deficit load of \$28.9 billion in this budget, which is a far cry from the \$10 billion that they promised during the election. This would leave future generations with the task of paying for their reckless spending.

To be fair, there are a few measures in the budget that I would like to draw upon, and of course, many of them have to do with former Conservative initiatives that are now being expanded. One would be the caregiver tax credit that rolls three different Conservative tax credits into one. The Liberals continued also with the Conservatives' trend of providing greater access and flexibility to student loans to ensure adult learners have the resources they need to access training to improve their work prospects.

The budget would also provide new flexibility to mothers on maternity leave, and different flexibility for people on employment insurance to return to school. I do believe these are excellent or noteworthy changes. Unfortunately, however, these positives were overshadowed by an entire host of negatives.

With increased taxes on public transit, Uber, beer, wine, tobacco, home heating, and gasoline, life gets a lot more expensive for Canadians with budget 2017. These new taxes would make life less affordable and disproportionately affect those with low or fixed incomes.

Let us take a closer look. Budget 2017 would eliminate the public transit tax credit, which many of my constituents have told me would have a negative impact on them. Getting rid of this tax credit disproportionately affects those with disabilities and those on a fixed income, particularly seniors.

Furthermore, the Liberals decided to increase taxes on those who offer insurance to farmers and fishing properties, thus driving up the

cost of insurance for those who are farming families in my community.

Budget 2017 would also increase taxes on tourists who visit Canada on a tour package, thereby driving up the cost of visiting our great country. It is a mystery to me why we would want to do that. This would result in job losses in the tourism sector, especially in regions such as Yukon and the Maritimes, who can afford it the least.

As already mentioned, courtesy of the Liberal government, every Canadian who enjoys a glass of wine, a bottle of beer, a cigarette, or taking Uber would now pay even more.

The Liberals have justified an astronomically high deficit by saying that much of the money will go toward infrastructure projects, which are meant to boost the economy, they would argue. However, since the Liberal government took office, 94% of approved projects have not yet broken ground. This is a huge problem. This means jobs are not being created, and it means that the economy is not being stimulated in the way the Liberals promised.

Budget 2017 contains no new infrastructure spending beyond what was announced in the 2016 fall economic update. As for Lethbridge, as the member of Parliament, I was really hoping to see greater funds become available for infrastructure projects within a medium-sized centre such as ours. However, that was not the case. Instead, we were left out in the cold. Why might that be? It is because the Liberals made all the money available to Liberal-friendly big cities like Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. There is zero new funding for small and medium cities like ours.

•(1615)

When it comes to helping seniors, budget 2017 is far more harmful than it is helpful. The Liberals scrapped the public transit credit, eliminated the family caregiver tax credit, and increased the cost of living by putting in place a carbon tax. To top it all off, the Prime Minister continues to refuse to put a minister for seniors in place. Right now in Canada, one in six people are seniors. They deserve more.

However, they are not the only ones. Canada's youth are put in a significant place of disadvantage with the budget. Instead of raising taxes, the Prime Minister really should have focused on job creation and policies that would lead to that. In the last year, Canadians aged 15 to 24 lost 42,000 full-time jobs. To make matters worse, the best solution the finance minister has to offer the younger generation is that they simply need to get used to what he calls "job chum". This is absolutely unacceptable. We need to take this generation much more seriously.

Government Orders

Since being elected in 2015, I have had a chance to travel from coast to coast across the country, and I have talked to young people in each province as I have gone along. The biggest concern I hear over and over again is that they want to find meaningful employment after they graduate from university or college. Many youth have called upon the federal government to provide a tax incentive to employers who hire young people. Such an approach would allow the free market to reward job creation and, unlike government job programs, would result in long-term, well-paying jobs for these young people. I believe that budget 2017 was a missed opportunity to advocate for the rising generation.

Sadly, with this budget the Liberals are mortgaging the future of our great country, and it is our children who will ultimately have to foot the bill. It is extremely concerning to me that budget 2017 puts Liberals on track to spend \$100 billion more than they will collect through tax revenue in the life of this government. This is like taking a \$100 billion mortgage out, which our children and our grandchildren would be responsible for paying back. This is hard to justify, when our children and our grandchildren would see little to no benefit for this money.

In short, I will be voting against Bill C-44, the budget implementation bill. I cannot in good faith look my constituents in the eye and tell them that this budget is in fact in their best interest. Neither can the party opposite. The truth is that the Liberals have a spending problem. When it comes to spending my constituents' money, they cannot help themselves. They find that fun, and I am not okay with that. I am not okay with their raising taxes so they can pay their corporate cronies who come begging for government bailouts. The Liberals call it advancing innovation, but we know it is actually corporate welfare. The Liberals are taking from the poor and giving it to the rich. I believe that is absolutely, fundamentally wrong.

It is no surprise that the Prime Minister and his cabinet ministers keep getting caught holding swanky cash for access fundraisers with the business elite of Canada, or that the rich Bay Street business types and the Liberal-friendly think tanks are the ones that are benefiting from the Liberal government's policies.

Canada's economic future is looking a little uncertain. There are factors beyond our control, such as the unpredictable American government, that further advanced this uncertainty. This is why it is even more important than ever that we get our own house, our own country, in order first and foremost.

The budget points Canada into very dangerous economic waters. My job as a member of Parliament in this place is to defend the taxpayers, and this budget fails to respect their investment in this great country, the country we call Canada. Therefore, I will be voting against Bill C-44, the budget implementation bill.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as an example, when we have a bridge that requires annual maintenance and we do not do maintenance for a year, the bridge will be fine. If we do not do it for two years, it will not be doing so well. We will start to see the cracks. After a few years though, we have to rebuild the bridge. If we want to have proper infrastructure in the country, it takes that annual investment, that constant improvement in infrastructure, that constant investment.

The deficit we have in the country exists all across the country, in our physical and social infrastructure. It is everywhere. If the member does not want to have any kind of investment, that is fine. She can get up and say that. However, I believe if we want to improve our country, improve our investments in infrastructure, and prepare for the future, we have to invest. The best way to do that right now is through the deficit spending that we are doing.

I wonder if the member would like to assert her lack of desire to invest in our infrastructure.

• (1620)

Ms. Rachael Harder: Mr. Speaker, with respect to infrastructure, I would agree with the member. I do think it is very important that we invest in our infrastructure and that we maintain our infrastructure. In fact, that is why I believe we should start getting some shovels in the ground. Six per cent just is not cutting it. There is another 94% of projects that have been approved that have not even started. Canadians do deserve better. They do deserve their roads, their bridges, etc., to be maintained. Unfortunately, the present Liberal government seems to be incapable of getting the job done.

That said, when it comes to infrastructure spending, I think we should note that it is actually the Liberal governments of the past that have severely cut back. If we are noticing a lack, if we are noticing cracks in roads or bridges that are not holding up, I think we actually need to look opposite.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her very clear and coherent speech, although we do not exactly share her political point of view. That is normal, however, and we respect that.

I wonder if she could talk a little more about the infrastructure bank that is being created. The Liberals said during the election campaign, and are still repeating today, that interest rates are low, so it is a good time to borrow to invest, and that we need new infrastructure.

Now we are suddenly learning that about 90% of the money for the infrastructure bank will come from the private sector, which will expect to make money and see a return on investment. This means more tolls and user fees. Once again, it will be Canadian taxpayers, people in my riding and in the member's riding, who will have to pay for it.

What does the member think of the Liberals' plan regarding the infrastructure bank?

[*English*]

Ms. Rachael Harder: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the infrastructure bank, we are looking at billions of dollars, without a concrete plan attached to those dollars. When I read through the Liberals' plan, so to speak, the waters are actually quite muddied for me. I am not exactly sure what the plan entails, in terms of rolling that money out and actually getting projects done.

In terms of public-private partnerships and engaging the private sector, I think the private sector gets the job done, and it always does it at an expense that is far less to the taxpayer than if it were publicly funded and operated.

Government Orders

That said, I think I am waiting on the Liberals, in terms of their actually rolling this out and getting some money into the hands of developers and making sure that these infrastructure projects actually take place, and the Liberals have not shown themselves to actually have a plan to get that job done.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague, the member for Lethbridge, for her great presentation on the reality of the current Liberal budget.

I have two adult children and six grandchildren. My daughter and daughter-in-law currently stay at home and care for my grandchildren. I am curious to know how this 2017 Liberal budget is going to impact my family, given what we have heard and read in the budget.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague has two adult children, one of them is a stay-at-home mom. The former Conservative government brought in something called income splitting, which would actually benefit her a lot because it would mean that—ultimately, at the end of the day, without going into it, it would save them a lot of money. That measure was actually reversed by the Liberal government that is now in place. That is really unfortunate and, of course, that is detrimental to my hon. colleague's daughter.

In addition, when we are talking about almost \$30 billion worth of borrowed spending just in this year alone, at the end of the day, that is getting passed on to my colleague's daughter and to her children, again, for things that they actually may not see the full benefit of. At the end of the day, it is their taxes that are going to go up and it is their health care that is going to get pulled back, and other services they depend on, because the government is going to eventually have to pay this money back.

• (1625)

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to resuming debate, I would like to inform hon. members that we have surpassed the five-hour time after the first round of speeches on this particular motion that is before the House and so, thereafter, all speeches, interventions, on this motion will be limited to 10 minutes for a member's remarks and five minutes for questions and comments.

Resuming debate, the hon. Minister of Status of Women.

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Status of Women, Lib.): I would like to emphasize the number five, as you just have, Mr. Speaker, later on in my presentation, but there is one thing I must say before I do.

[*Translation*]

It is a great privilege for me to be here, on traditional Algonquin territory.

[*English*]

What a great privilege it is for me to be on this traditional and territorial ground of the Algonquin peoples, to be the member of Parliament for the incredible riding of Peterborough—Kawartha, and to have the opportunity to serve the people of Canada as their Minister of Status of Women Canada.

I am speaking today to budget 2017, which is a budget of opportunity, and not just for the people of my riding, where we have

a college and a university, where we have one of the highest percentages of seniors, who have chosen to spend their golden years in my riding, and where we have high rates of poverty and a lack of access to affordable housing.

Budget 2017 is a budget of opportunity for women and girls in Canada.

I am speaking in support of the budget, of course, and I am thankful to the Prime Minister and our Minister of Finance for introducing such a feminist budget.

In coming up with my remarks today, I thought about what numbers I ought to talk about. Do I talk about the \$7 billion we would invest in budget 2017 for a national early learning and child care framework? Should I emphasize the \$11 billion we would be setting aside for the first ever national housing strategy? Do I focus on the \$100.9 million we would be putting forward to help implement this federal government's very first gender-based violence strategy? Do I talk about the 300,000 Canadian children who are being lifted out of poverty thanks to the Canada child benefit plan, which we introduced when we first assumed office? I thought about elaborating on all these numbers, but perhaps if there is one number I could leave members with today, it would be the number five.

The number five is an important number for several reasons. The United Nations sustainable development goal number five focuses on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. It is a goal that several nations have signed onto, as has Canada, and it seeks to change the course of the 21st century by addressing key challenges, such as poverty, inequality, and gender-based violence. We know that empowering women is a precondition for reaching this goal.

This goal is an important one, because there is worldwide recognition that when we have improved outcomes for women and girls, we have improved societies, we have improved countries, and we have enhanced stability and prosperity for people around the world. This is the evidence-based context in which our government's feminist approach to governance can be understood.

This brings me to chapter 5 in budget 2017. In chapter 5, what we see is a first for the Government of Canada, a gender statement. This is the first time there has been an acknowledgement in a federal budget that the decisions we make, how we tax, how we spend, and how we focus our efforts in terms of programs, services, policies, and legislation affects people of different genders and different backgrounds differently. This gender statement allows for a meaningful and transparent discussion on gender and intersecting identities, which will help us better understand the challenges faced by different communities across this great nation and make more informed decisions to advance fairness, gender equality, and prosperity for all.

I am going to talk about three women who highlight the importance of having a gender lens.

Government Orders

Let me tell the House about a young immigrant woman from my riding who attended Trent University. Her name is Andressa Lacerda, and she is the executive vice-president of NobleGen Inc., one of those clean tech companies that our environment minister is so proud of that are solving real challenges globally through investments in evidence, science, and clean technology.

Andressa's company, NobleGen, received a repayable loan of \$600,000 through FedDev Ontario to help the company expand its marketing activities and sell its advanced bio-products on a global scale. It is expected that this \$600,000 investment is to help leverage other funds and to create 22 decent jobs in my riding of Peterborough—Kawartha.

• (1630)

This is in line with budget 2017's innovation and skills plan to make Canada a world-leading centre for innovation, creating good, well-paying jobs and strengthening and growing the middle class. It is why we would be funding Futurepreneur Canada with \$14 million over the next two years to continue its important work of inspiring the next generation of entrepreneurs so that more of them can achieve the kind of success Andressa has.

I am going to talk about Sophia Fairweather, who I met at the UN Global Compact Network forum in Toronto this past April. Start Up By Sophia is an Edmonton-based organization that creates innovative startup products in STEM to help educate, inspire, and provide leadership to other children in STEM. That is why, in budget 2017, we have put aside \$11 million to offer young people, particularly girls, the opportunity to participate in activities that build engagement in STEM fields.

Malala Yousafzai, one of the newest Canadians I know, spoke in this House not so long ago. When I think of her, I think of courage, determination, her passion, and her dedication to human rights and women's rights. Her way of elevating the voices of girls across the world is a lesson and a model for us all. Like her, our government will not be silent about violence against women and girls. That is why, in budget 2017, \$100.9 million would be invested in implementing the first-ever gender-based violence strategy that would focus on prevention, support for survivors and their families, and a more responsive judicial system.

Chapter 5 in the budget is an important number, because it begins the important work we need to do to ensure that all of our decisions moving forward are considered through this gender lens so that Canada can lead the world and work with other OECD countries to continue to improve outcomes for people of all genders.

Last, I would like to speak about the Famous Five. Their statue is one of the most meaningful I have come across in the precinct, for a number of reasons. As we get ready for October, when we celebrate the Persons Case, we recognize the work of these five courageous women and their allies, who fought for personhood and for recognition that women and girls in Canada have just as much to contribute as their counterparts do. They fought for personhood, and they won, but they were also fighting for equal opportunity for all, because when Canadian women are elevated, empowered, and included, Canada as a whole prospers.

Budget 2017 reflects the highest level of political commitment to advancing socio-economic outcomes for women and girls and people of different genders in this country. Therefore, with the humility that our work is far from over, we will work together as a federal government, working with our provincial and territorial counterparts, to continue the good work of those great five women. I urge all my colleagues to review chapter 5 in great detail and to support budget 2017.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member across from me talked about violence committed against women and the fact that the government was committed to seeing that reduced. She said we want “to continue to improve outcomes” in developing nations. I find this curious, because the government just supported Saudi Arabia being on the women's commission within the UN. We know that Saudi Arabia does not exactly stand for women's rights. In fact, it does not stand for human rights in general, but it is particularly violent against women.

I am wondering how the hon. member across from me can defend the government's position with respect to supporting Saudi Arabia in this effort to portray violence against women.

• (1635)

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Mr. Speaker, I would correct the member. Canada did not support this particular piece. In fact, Canada does not have a seat at that table.

That said, my hon. colleague brings up the Commission on the Status of Women. In 2013, I had the great privilege of meeting the opposition leader, who at the time was the minister of status of women, at the Commission on the Status of Women in New York City. It was the 57th gathering of this particular group of advocates, from all over the world, who were united by one common cause: ending violence against women and girls.

I received a grant through my connection with the local YWCA in my riding and attended as a young woman. I was inspired by all the ways Canada, the country of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, was leading the world.

However, I left there disheartened. I would say that it was a key moment for me in terms of entering politics. It was there that the NGOs and the labour groups in the audience would interrupt the sessions Canada was hosting with outrage and dismay, asking why launching an inquiry to find out what had happened to indigenous women and girls was not a priority for the government.

Government Orders

I returned this year to lead the Canadian delegation as the Minister of Status of Women. I was so proud that not only did we take action and the inquiry is on its way but that we have a feminist Prime Minister and a government with a feminist agenda. We know that the work is not done. There is much work to do, and we are committed to that work.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for mentioning the group in Edmonton. There is lots of great work going on in my fair city.

The member spoke about Malala. Of course, all of us here admire the work of Malala. However, I have to say that there was one thing on the day of making Malala a citizen of Canada that did not happen that disappointed me.

The children of Canada mounted a huge campaign called Shannen's Dream on behalf of Shannen Koostachin, who wanted to have a school in her community. Chelsea-Jane Edwards has continued that campaign. I tweeted her that day saying that I wished she could be here.

I am deeply disappointed, first of all, that the budget and the bill do not mention the need to finally deliver the dollars the Human Rights Commission said the government needs to provide equal access to services for aboriginal children. The government speaks of equality for women and speaks of caring for children, but when the rubber hits the road, they forget about those out there in the community who are actually doing the hard work to make sure that their communities have those equal opportunities.

I wonder if the member could speak to what happened to the additional measures to make sure that indigenous children are getting equal access to comparable services and education.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for her hard work and her advocacy on behalf of various groups across Canada. It is work I am committed to as well.

I began my presentation, with what I would call a clumsy French translation, acknowledging that we are on traditional territory, because like our Prime Minister, I believe that there is no relationship more important to us as a country than the relationship with the indigenous peoples of this land.

As an immigrant to this land, I recognize that I have been afforded opportunities that have brought me to this place but that there are many indigenous peoples who do not benefit yet from those same opportunities. We need to change that.

In budget 2016, we invested over \$8 billion to begin the hard work of reconciliation through investments in infrastructure, education, and cultural renewal. Budget 2017 would build on that. There is an additional investment of \$3.4 billion over the next five years to improve outcomes for the first peoples of this land. This, I believe, is one of the most important priorities every single member of this House has. It is a sacred obligation that I know we will all work hard to address.

•(1640)

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to resuming debate, 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 Elgin—Middlesex—London, Taxation; and the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, Indigenous Affairs.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to join the debate. I want to offer a much more light-hearted critique following the heavy substance we had, provided by the many members of the Conservative caucus especially.

I always start with a Yiddish proverb. I have one of course. The heaviest thing in the world is an empty pocket, and it very much applies to this budget. It will empty the pockets of most Canadians. The nickel and diming in the budget, whether it is higher taxes on Uber and ride-sharing services like Lyft, or higher taxes on cigarettes, alcohol, and transit passes, Canadians will see their pockets far emptier than they have ever been before and their families will feel it far heavier than they ever have.

There has been a lot of criticism in the media. Journalists, columnists, and stakeholder groups have, in a sustained way, criticized the budget for its lack of vision and ideas. There is actually a lack of new ideas. There is nothing new in the budget from the fall economic statement. We simply have a return to more 1970s public budgeting methods, which is extremely high deficits, structural deficits, a lot of new debt, and a lot of program spending with very questionable results on the back end. In fact, in the budget the term “innovation” appears 212 times, “small business” appears six times. The one thing missed in the budget is that the government could have spent money on the purchase of a new thesaurus.

[*Translation*]

In French, that would be a “Larousse” and a “Bescherelle”.

[*English*]

The 2016 census was released on Tuesday by Statistics Canada. On the population and demographics numbers, it states that we have more seniors than children in Canada now. It says that the working age population, 15 to 64, has declined to 66.5%; over 65 is now 16.9% of the population; and under the age 15 is 16.6%. We have more seniors today than we have ever had before and now it is inverted. We are now a country of grandparents, not children. That was a favourite saying of former premier of Alberta, Ed Stelmach. He used to say that we were quickly coming to the point where we would have more grandparents than young children, and that is a fundamental change to the country and to the way the government should be delivering on programs.

All we see in the budget is simply runaway spending. Some spending is going to seniors, but there is no attempt even to try to constrain some of the spending, redirect it, and make it easier for seniors to access those services. I have a lot of seniors in my riding who are having a very difficult time accessing GIS, OAS, and Service Canada. It is not that they are not eligible for it, but it is the service delivery component that they find very difficult to access. Not all of them are up on the latest app. Not all of them are using the latest Apple device. They are simply having difficulty accessing basic services.

Government Orders

On program spending, by 2021 and 2022, seniors' benefits will account for \$63.7 billion. That is much more than double what we will be spending on children's benefit programs by then. This trend will continue, and this budget has too few superclusters of ideas to address the problem of the aging demographics.

The nickel and diming budget, as I like to call it in my riding, includes, as I said, hikes on alcohol, cigarettes, public transit passes, ride-hailing services, and a lot more. It keeps going, especially on businesses. A lot of promises were made by the Liberals during the election, but they have not kept them, like the reduction to the small business tax, which has a material impact on how people plan their business. An analysis done by the CBC found this budget contained only \$1.3 billion of any new spending. In a \$300 billion operation, which is the Government of Canada, why do we need this budget when it is just a rehash of the fall economic statement? It is generally a rehash with a lot more buzzwords being used, trying to promote the government in a vain attempt to find those extra votes.

In Calgary, the Minister of Finance delivered a speech after the budget. I talked to the media afterward. It was a stock speech. It could have been delivered in any city, in any county, anywhere in Canada. It would have been exactly the same, and it fell flat with the Calgary business community. There was very little interest. It was a quiet crowd and the people had very little to say afterward. I asked the minister the very simple question then about when the budget would balance itself. Obviously, I did not get an answer, because there is no answer. There is no answer in the budget either. The only answer we find is in Department of Finance documents that were put out, which state that we will have to wait until after 2050 to ever see a balanced budget again. The return to a balanced budget is fictional.

• (1645)

When I commented on budget 2016 last year, I thought the government should perhaps put that budget up for the Scotiabank Giller Prize as a work of fiction. Budget 2017 is a redux, a rehash, a lot more fiction, but there is a lot more science fiction in this one than there ever was before.

The Liberals are budgeting from the heart out, as a previous member said. It is vanilla flavoured, as *Macleans* has called it.

Particularly worrying for me are changes to the tax laws that govern the exploration of new wells. Companies will see their tax deductions reduced between 2019 and 2022. In Calgary, Edmonton, and regions in Alberta, this is going to extract \$145 million out of companies when they are hurting the most right now and trying to keep employees on the payroll. The Liberals are giving Alberta \$30 million of its own tax money to basically go toward orphan well cleanup and taking away \$145 million that would have gone toward the exploration of new wells.

The government's logic is that it will spend \$30 million to clean up orphan wells and then discourage the exploration of new wells by taking \$145 million from businesses. That is the logic at a time when Alberta is really hurting? It is no wonder the members for Calgary Heritage and Calgary Midnapore were elected with over 75% support in their ridings. With that type of logic, of course we will see those types of numbers. There are 82,000 inactive oil and gas wells, a lot of which could be reclaimed, but not for \$30 million. It is no

surprise this budget has fallen flat with Canadians, not just pundits, columnists, or politicians.

In a poll referenced by *The Globe and Mail* by Bill Curry, with the headline "'Canadians were not impressed' by federal budget: survey", only 5% of Canadians said they had a positive view of this budget. That is interesting. As I mentioned before, the earliest we will see a balanced budget will probably be in 2055 or 2056. These are Department of Finance numbers, not my numbers in any way. This is why there is so little confidence in the government and so little support for this budget. It is a rehash. It is fiction. I do not believe a lot of this money will ever get spent. The Liberals make announcements over years that far exceed the mandate of the government, expecting people to be wowed by numbers in the billions. There is a lot of money in the budget supposedly for science. This year it is science fiction, like I said.

I want to mention the Nebula Award. It is May 4, so "May the 4th be with you". I want to mention two science fiction prizes and I want to compare the budget to them. I really think the government has a chance. There are two government documents that could be submitted for a prize. They are the budget speech and the budget itself. The Nebula Award is for a short story of less than 7,500 words. That is the budget speech. There is the option of a novelette, a novella, or a novel. The government could submit chapter five that the minister just mentioned for a novella.

The eligibility requirements, though, might prove difficult. However, perhaps it could negotiate with President Trump and have it included in NAFTA so Canadians could also apply for the Nebula Award. It says, "All works first published in English, in the United States, during the calendar year", which is looking pretty good right now, "in the genres of science fiction, fantasy, or a related fiction genre are eligible for the Nebula Awards in their respective categories." There is good news. If it is published online, like this document is, it is eligible as well.

I will also mention the 2017 Hugo Awards that will be presented at Worldcon 75 in Helsinki, Finland, on August 11. There is still time to apply for the best novel, best novella, best novelette. One of the works that is up for the award would be competitive. It is called *Ninefox Gambit* by Yoon Ha Lee. The best novella is *The Dream-Quest*. This entire budget is a dream quest for a balanced budget to help the middle class perhaps or to take more kids out of poverty, none of which will be achieved.

Government Orders

This is 1970s public budgeting. It failed then and it will fail today. It will fail in 10 years and it will fail the next generation. The next generation will be kids like my kids, who are looking at more debt, programs that do not work, and an entire government that is stuck in the 1960s and 1970s.

• (1650)

Without taking too much time, I will mention one more work because it applies to what the minister was talking about, the best related work, *The Geek Feminist Revolution*, written by Kameron Hurley and published by Tor Books, a far better read than chapter 5.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if we are going to talk fiction, the absurdity of the speech would really do Douglas Adams proud.

The real fiction is that that Conservatives are good fiscal managers. If we want to look for a time that Conservatives brought us from a deficit to a surplus, we would have to go back to the late 19th century. In the early 20th century, they managed to balance a budget. It was inherited from a Liberal government, and it was in full deficit by 1913, ahead of the First World War. Stephen Harper managed to balance a budget inherited from good Liberal fiscal management. There is one budget they claim to have balanced, and it is a spurious argument, and they ended up selling a whole lot of house to pay off the mortgage.

On what basis do the Conservatives believe they have any capacity in fiscal management?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, obviously, the member has a love for Yiddish proverbs like I do, which is amazing. We spent some time in the House procedures committee and he had to survive eight hours straight of my speech on a lot of various subjects that were pertinent to the discussion then.

However, to answer his question, it is quite simple. The Department of Finance disagrees with him. The parliamentary budget officer disagrees with him. Canadians disagree with him. It is all right there in the numbers. The Conservatives are good stewards. Typically, we are elected. When things are going really badly, we clean up the books, we lower taxes, we fix government programs, and sometimes we are defeated. Then the Liberals get back in, raise spending, raise the deficits, ramp up the debt and, typically, Canadians then go back to the Conservatives to fix it again.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately for my colleague, people have more than two options at the polls. The fact is that they added \$150 billion to the national debt during their time in power, and it was not the end of the world.

Anyway, my question is about the government's choices. By passing an NDP motion, the Liberals agreed to put limits on stock options for CEOs, but that is nowhere in the budget. It could have kept that promise in Bill C-44, the budget implementation bill. It could have followed through on the commitment it made when it passed our motion on March 8. Unfortunately, there was no mention of it in the budget tabled on March 22. Now Bill C-44 makes no mention of that commitment either.

What the Liberals did do was get rid of the public transit tax credit. People in our ridings use that tax credit. People come to see

me, and they tell me that they use it. Sometimes it is the only tax credit they can use because they are not in a position to make charitable or political donations. They do not have access to other tax credits; this is one of the few they can use. Now the government is taking their tax credit away. It just so happens to be leaving generous tax credits for CEOs in place.

What does the member think of the Liberal government's policy choices?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Sherbrooke for his question.

Like me, he is angry that the government listens to neither New Democrats nor Conservatives when we have ideas that can help people in our ridings and people who really need help. I agree with him. We should not be helping big corporations and CEOs; we should be helping small businesses. During the election campaign, the government promised to cut small business taxes. We know that 98% of them create wealth and create most of our jobs. The Liberals have done nothing.

The government is looking at this as if it were another budget. It could have done the job properly. It could have kept its promises and made that part of the government's agenda. That is not what it did, but should we really be surprised? It does not seem to bother them. The Liberals are not here for Canadians. They are here to make sure they will stay in power for decades if possible. They take these programs, like the infrastructure program, and they do nothing with them.

In my riding, Calgary Shepard, there is a rail project that I would like to see built, but it requires federal money. We have not seen any yet. A lot of people in my riding are interested in this project, but they will never get to see this train run unless the government finally decides to convince the province to get the project started.

• (1655)

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House to speak to budget 2017, and how it will help our families, our infrastructure, our children, and our seniors.

I am optimistic about the budget. It is a good budget, but there is an aspect of this year's budget that is both unique and historic. Our government has been called Canada's first feminist government, and we are very proud of that distinction. More important, we are determined to live up to it, so that those words become the real and tangible efforts that help all women succeed.

Government Orders

The budget 2017 gender statement represents the government's first comprehensive effort at reporting on gender-based analyses of budgetary measures. Gender-based analysis identifies the ways in which public policies affect women and men differently. Budget 2017 identified more than 60 measures as having differential gender impacts, but we can do more.

We have a real opportunity to show how we considered and prioritized outcomes for women. In this bill, Canadians will find the kinds of things they should expect in a federal budget implementation act: a focus on skills and innovation, infrastructure, and tax fairness, to name a few, examples of things that will help middle-class Canadians succeed. These measures were developed with gender equality in mind. Empowering women to become economic drivers equal to that of men can have a real and positive effect for our economy.

Recent history has shown that as women have become more educated and more established in the workforce, Canada's economy and the incomes of both men and women have grown. Canadian women are among the most educated in the world, something we should be so proud of, and make up 47% of the labour force, yet women are still paid less than men in exactly the same positions. In this area, Canada lags behind similar countries.

Barriers are particularly evident among younger women with at least one child. They are still far more likely than men to sacrifice careers to perform unpaid work at home. As policy-makers, it is our obligation to consider and to take action to address the inherent bias that persists in these areas, not simply because it makes economic sense, but because it is the right thing to do.

Well before budget 2017, our government started taking action on gender-based challenges. We rolled out the Canada child benefit to better support families and lift hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty. We increased the guaranteed income supplement top-up benefit to boost support for the most vulnerable single seniors who are disproportionately women. I would now like to discuss a few measures in the bill.

Through this bill, our government is taking steps to help improve the current caregiver credit system that applies to Canadians who are caring for their loved ones. Budget 2017 simplifies the existing system by replacing the caregiver credit, the infirm dependant credit, and the family caregiver tax credit with a single new credit, the Canada caregiver credit. This new non-refundable credit will provide better support to those who need it most. It will apply to caregivers, whether or not they live with their family member, and it will help families with caregiving responsibilities.

Budget 2017 assessed proposed tax measures, including the Canada caregiver credit, to determine their gendered impacts. By applying a gendered lens, budget 2017 will promote the fair and consistent treatment of women and men under the tax system. Statistics Canada estimates that more women than men are caregivers. However, we also know that a slightly higher proportion of men claim the caregiver tax credits.

Our government is also committed to meeting Canadians' demand for health care services. With the passage of the bill, the government will provide funding to provinces and territories for home care and

mental health services in 2017-18 as an immediate down payment to provinces and territories that have accepted the federal offer of \$11 billion over 10 years.

Clearly, the demand for home care services is growing with an aging population. Today, approximately 15% of hospital beds are still occupied by patients who could and would prefer to receive their care at home, or who would be better off in a community-based setting.

What is more, a majority of those Canadians who have taken on the responsibility to care for their loved ones are still in the workforce. They are sandwiched. They are men and women who are likely to spend a significant amount of time in caregiving activities. The time to support them is now.

• (1700)

Women also account for nearly two-thirds of all home care clients. Paid care is mostly provided by female health care providers. The targeted health care investments in this bill would be used to train additional front-line home care workers, and increase employment opportunities for women.

When it comes to mental health, scientific research has made great strides to improve our understanding of it and its prevalence. Unfortunately, we know that an overwhelming number of Canadians will be affected directly or indirectly by mental illness at some point in their lives.

Furthermore, family violence is a key factor for poor mental health, suicide, and substance abuse. Many organizations have noted that victims of family violence are predominantly women.

By providing the stable, predictable, and long-term funding needed to shorten those wait times for mental health services, outcomes for many groups, including women at risk, can be improved.

There are other examples of measures from this budget that stand to benefit women. This bill would allow parents to choose to receive employment insurance parental benefits over an extended period of up to 18 months at a lower benefit rate of 33% of average weekly earnings. The existing benefit rate that we have now of 55% over a period of 12 months would continue to be available. This measure recognizes that every Canadian family is different, with different needs when it comes to how a family manages work and family responsibilities. Working parents need more flexibility to navigate the challenges that come with a growing family.

Government Orders

In conclusion, we know this is just a start and that making progress on these issues will demand both continued effort and a clear sense of what we need to accomplish. We must change the way that we create policies to level the playing field so that everyone has a real chance to succeed.

The bill is the first that seeks to implement budget measures that were developed under a lens of gender-based analysis. More work is still to come. I encourage my fellow members to support this bill and the progress that it represents. We need all Canadians to be at their best. We cannot allow anybody to fall behind. We are in a very competitive global world. We need everybody doing their best, and being provided with the opportunities to succeed.

By building that ladder, by providing those rungs so that our women and men can succeed in the workforce, in their families, in the community, that will build a better Canada for all of us.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his presentation.

However, I am always surprised at how he presents things. I get the impression that he is wearing rose coloured glasses when he brags about being part of a feminist government.

The government is saying pretty much the same thing about indigenous issues. It says it made a record investment, but that investment will likely not be made until sometime after 2020, even though the needs of indigenous peoples are urgent and pressing right now. They were urgent and pressing yesterday.

The hon. member says that this budget leaves no one behind. I would like him to address the fact that in every speech today, not one person has talked about indigenous issues or the investments in indigenous issues, which are quite paltry in my opinion.

Why talk about what is going to happen in 2020 or 2021 when the indigenous communities have pressing needs today?

• (1705)

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Mr. Speaker, the member is quite right regarding how pressing these issues are, such as being able to provide safe water on reserve. For many years we heard about many water advisories. Those have come down quite a bit. That has been through significant investments in infrastructure, investments in education, \$8 billion of investment. Reconciliation is at the forefront of this government's agenda.

There is much more work to do, but we are diligently working at this. We are working with the entire House. I believe we are all in this together. We are all on the same page. Indigenous people are our fastest growing population. When I say that we need everybody at their best, I do mean everybody needs to be at their best. That is why those investments with indigenous people are so vital and so important.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in honour of my colleague, the member for Calgary Shepard, I want to say a Yiddish proverb, that words should be weighted and not counted. I thought of that when I listened to the member's speech.

I asked a question previously about the government committing \$120 million for charging stations for Teslas and then overlooking many other needed items. The member went on and on about it being a feminist budget. I noticed that a new national strategy to address gender-based violence is getting 20% less money from the government than it is providing for Tesla charging stations. How does the member reconcile that?

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Mr. Speaker, the member should look back a number of years to when there was an egregious amount of spending on advertising by the former government. There was a carpet bombing of ads during the NHL playoffs and during the Super Bowl. They were sandwiched with political ads. There was \$750 million spent on partisan advertising on television. What I heard from my constituents was why the former government was wasting so much money on that advertising. The member should go back and look at what the Conservative government did when it was in power and that egregious spending.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what a privilege it is to stand in this place representing the residents of Winnipeg North.

I thought I would do something a bit different and give a bit of an overview.

Over the last 18 months since we have had a new Prime Minister and a new government, a great deal has been accomplished. I am often asked in my community what some of the real, tangible things are that the government has done that have made a difference, and how I could best explain them. A number of things come to mind, things that have really had a profound positive impact on the constituents I represent and ultimately on all Canadians from coast to coast.

I think of things such as the Canada child benefit program, a program that was greatly enhanced by this government. We ultimately saw tens of thousands of children lifted out of poverty, many of whom called Winnipeg North their home.

I think in terms of the increase to the guaranteed income supplement. Some of the very poorest seniors in Canada were given significant increases in the guaranteed income supplement, which lifted thousands of seniors out of poverty, many of whom are residents of Winnipeg North.

I think of the CPP agreement. Our national government worked with the provinces and territories and came up with an agreement with respect to the CPP. It is not just about today; it is also about tomorrow. Parties of all stripes came to an agreement. We saw an increase for retirement into the future, something the previous government could not accomplish, something I am proud of, because this will help my constituents, who will have that much more money when it comes time for them to retire.

When I talk about retirement, I have to make mention of the reversal of the Harper decision. Members may recall that former prime minister Stephen Harper increased the age for individuals to qualify for OAS from 65 years to 67. Our government reduced the age back down to 65. This particular policy decision enabled hundreds of my constituents and thousands of Canadians across Canada to benefit.

Government Orders

There are many things, direct and indirect, that I could talk about.

I could talk about students. Our government almost doubled the student summer employment program. Hundreds of youth are given the opportunity to get work experience during their summer break, and many of those jobs are in my riding of Winnipeg North. There are so many things that this government has been very successful in doing at the local level.

Then I could talk about the bigger picture. The budget implementation bill that we are debating today is a continuation of what this government started when it first took office. The Prime Minister made it very clear: Canada's middle class and those who aspire to be a part of it are the government's first priority, and the initiatives that have been taken by our government support that primary objective. For example, we saw a special tax increase on Canada's 1% wealthiest. We saw a decrease in tax for Canada's middle class, and millions of Canadian families in every region of our country benefited. There is so much more in terms of just addressing the middle-class issue.

This budget is also about investing in infrastructure. Record high amounts of money are being invested in Canada's infrastructure. Every region of our country will benefit, including the residents of Winnipeg North, where these dollars will ultimately help to improve their quality of life. I am speaking of infrastructure such as streets, capital infrastructure, facilities dealing with public transit, green projects, because we believe we need to invest in Canada. Infrastructure is absolutely critical in terms of our further development as a country.

• (1710)

We have also seen the government take a very proactive approach on issues that we know are very important and top of mind to constituents. One of those is the price on carbon pollution. We hear a lot of criticism from the Conservative Party on that, but when we talk to young people in no matter what region in the country, we find that the Prime Minister has it right. In fact it is beyond young people, but I am always encouraged by how young people get engaged on this particular issue.

When we went to Paris, we made some commitments. Governments around the world made commitments. Our Prime Minister and our Minister of Environment took those commitments and turned them into something tangible and real. This is an issue on which working with the provinces has really made a difference.

It seems the only party in Canada that is opposed to this measure, with the exception of Brad Wall, is the local Conservative Party here in the House. That demonstrates just how out of touch the Conservative Party is with Canadians. One would have thought they would have learned something from the past election. They need to start listening to what people have to say.

The Prime Minister often talks about how important it is that as members of Parliament we represent the interests of our constituents here in Ottawa, as opposed to what it used to be, when MPs would often be representing Ottawa in their constituencies. It is absolutely essential that we take talk with our constituents, get the understanding of our communities, and bring that to Ottawa to help formulate policies that would really make a difference.

And it is starting to pay off. We have some very encouraging trends that give us reason to be optimistic. We will continue to move forward because of the many initiatives our government has brought in and put in place in a relatively short time span.

I heard some members across the way say they were concerned about tourism, that tourism numbers are down. It is not true. In fact, we have record numbers of tourists coming to our country. I believe it was in excess of 30 million last year, which was a substantial increase. It is almost a double-digit increase, a 9% to 10% increase, from the previous year. When those sorts of things happen, it means there are going to be more jobs in the hospitality industry.

Jobs are important. We recognize that as a government. That is why in the budget we spend a lot of time talking about not only protecting the jobs of today but looking at ways we can ensure that there will be jobs for tomorrow.

We have a government that is very progressive in its thinking and is proactive in dealing with trade agreements. We were able to get CETA across the goal line. We talked about the trade agreement with Ukraine and the negotiations that have benefited our canola farmers in the Prairies. There are ample examples of our government's approach having a significant positive impact on our economy.

I bring it back to what we have talked about a great deal for the last two years and more, even before we were in government. The Prime Minister and our government are focused on Canada's middle class and those who are aspiring to be a part of it. We are working hard every day to ensure that the policies that continue to evolve from the many different ministries do what they can to reinforce the importance of working hard, providing hope, and ultimately believing that if we have a healthier middle class, we will have a healthier economy. I understand the benefits of the economy and I believe that in time, Canadians will continue to support the types of government initiatives that we have witnessed over the last 18 months.

• (1715)

I would encourage all members of this House to get behind this legislation. It is a budget implementation bill. It is a good budget. It is a continuation from the first budget we introduced, and Canadians will benefit. If in fact opposition members listen to what Canadians have to say, I suspect they will be inclined to vote for this budget.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on child poverty rates, the member mentioned at the beginning of his statement that in 1994, under a previous Liberal government, 15.5% of persons under 18 were low income. By the time that previous government left office, it was 15.7%, so the previous Liberal government did not really do anything, it failed.

In 2006, when a Conservative government took over, the child poverty rate was 16.3%. By the time the Conservatives left office, it was 14.7%. Actually, the rate was down even in absolute numbers. I have the sheet going back to 1994, two government cycles, and for the first time the number was lower than one million Canadians under the poverty line. Is the member convinced that his government is on the right track? The previous Liberal government failed miserably at this. It was the right policies of the previous Harper Conservative government that actually got it done. Why are the Liberals introducing more policies that will fail again?

Government Orders

● (1720)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would challenge the member across the way to think about what I actually said. We had a substantial increase in the Canada child benefit program that lifted tens of thousands of children out of poverty. The member across the way, with his Conservative colleagues, voted against that.

He might want to talk about the past; I am talking about what, in the last two years, this government has been able to accomplish. What we know for a fact is that there are fewer children in poverty today because of this government and the policies that we have brought in, policies that the member across the way and the Conservative Party specifically voted against. The Conservatives need to rethink whether they want to fight poverty, because if they want to fight poverty, the best thing they can do is vote for this budget.

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Winnipeg North tried to give us a laundry list of what the government has accomplished over the past year and a half. In that vein, how many bills has his government presented to this House, and how does that number compare to the average that new governments would have presented to Parliament in their first year and a half after being elected?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I think the member is being a little mischievous with that particular question. I would let the member across the way know that there are many ways in which a government can deliver on the promises that it makes to Canadians during the election.

I think Canadians want to see, first and foremost, issues within the budget that are actually going to deliver and are going to make a difference. I would suggest that within these last two budgets, we had the most progressive government in providing good, sound policies that are taking people out of poverty, that have clearly demonstrated the ability to generate jobs for Canadians, and that are giving more hope. We have seen tourism numbers going up. We have seen job numbers trending up. Once again there is opportunity for Canada to continue to grow and prosper into the future.

I believe that if we were to canvass Canadians, we would hear that the most important issue for them is to have some faith that they have a government that is listening to what Canadians are saying. For the first time we have a Prime Minister who is truly listening, accountable, transparent, and making a difference in the everyday lives of all Canadians.

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad there was mention of tourism, because we heard some statements from across the way saying that measures we have taken would negatively impact on tourism. I would argue that this may be the greatest year in the history of Canada for tourism in view of not only the tax measures we have taken but also of the image that Canada has created for itself through our Prime Minister and through other things. With the American dollar exchange rate and *Come From Away* with seven Tony Awards nominations, I think people are going to be wanting to come to Canada. Would my friend comment on the positive effects that tourism would see thanks to our measures?

● (1725)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is so correct. More than 30 million people have come to Canada. That kind of number is unprecedented. Even Stephen Harper could never achieve that. We have done that within two years. I think the opportunity to continue to see some positive trends is there. It is very real. Much of the information that we hear from across the way is not necessarily full and complete.

I can assure members that we are on the right track. That is one of the reasons why I would challenge them to actually recognize it and vote with the government for a budget that is going to make a difference here in Canada.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to resuming debate, I will let the hon. member for Edmonton West know that there is somewhat less than five minutes remaining in the time for government orders this afternoon. I will have to interrupt him partway through his usual 10 minutes of remarks, but he will have the remaining time when the House next gets back to business on the question.

The hon. member for Edmonton West.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know my time will be short, so maybe I will make up for it by yelling like our friend across the way, the member for Winnipeg North.

I would like to rise to speak to Bill C-44, budget 2017, otherwise known as the line of credit bill. Before I get to my reactions to the bill, I want to share with the House someone else's reaction to the bill.

After the budget came out, I was at home, on a Saturday, because I am here on a Friday, and I was grouching about this huge deficit and debt that the government is adding for future Canadians to pay. I was grouching to my wife about the extra \$100 billion. My oldest son—who is in Grade 12, a strong libertarian, a strong Conservative, who is entering the real world next year—was in the room, playing on his computer. Normally, we could set a bomb off and it would not distract him from his video game, but he heard “\$100 billion”, looked over at me, and yelled, “Dad, what the heck?”—actually, it was not “heck”; it was a different word, but members get the idea. He said, “Thanks for sticking us with the bill.”

That is what we are doing here. We are sticking future generations with the bill for the present government's inability to act responsibly today. There is a disconnect between the government's perception of its budget and reality. From its spin, we would never realize what a train wreck its financial plan is. The government is raising taxes, taking away family tax credits, shamelessly adding a tax on a tax by adding GST to the tune of about \$200 million to the carbon tax in Alberta and British Columbia, and even with all these added taxes, it is still saddling us with over \$100 billion in debt over the next four years.

What do we get for selling out our children and our grandchildren? We get 1.7% projected growth. There is no need to check *Hansard* or the translation. Members heard me correctly. I said 1.7% growth.

Private Members' Business

I am disappointed in the unsustainably high deficits, the tax increases, the continuous movement of the financial goal posts just to cynically meet the Liberals' needs on a given day and the stunning lack of new ideas from the government.

The government has not even been around for two years. This is only its second budget, and we are already hearing about how lacklustre it is and how disappointing it is that the government is unable to offer anything new. Do not take my word for it. Here are some quotes from our friends in the media.

Stephen Gordon, in the *National Post*, wrote, "With this federal budget, the Liberals have let the middle class down, again".

If Mr. Gordon is watching on CPAC, I will tell him that he forgot to mention that they are also letting down those working to join the middle class.

Andrew Coyne said, "No money, no ideas, but a wealth of bafflegab and buzzwords from the Liberals".

Paul Wells, of the *Toronto Star*, says, "It's a mystery how the Liberals are encouraging innovation and helping the middle class.... It would be nice if [the] budget offered real gains because so far the [Prime Minister's] government's handling of both issues is pretty much a mess."

To put this into perspective, there are more recorded examples of *Pravda* criticizing the Soviet government than there are of the *Toronto Star* criticizing the Liberals.

The media are correct. The budget does not offer anything new or meaningful to help Canadians get a job, save for the future, or grow the economy. Instead, the budget spends more, borrows more, delivers on very little, and provides no hope for those in the middle class and those working to join it.

The government likes to brag about how often it consults Canadians. I would love to meet those who rely on the public transit tax credit in order to afford the bus passes, who actually told the finance minister to go ahead and end this tax credit. I would love to meet the young Canadians who use Uber because it is an affordable alternative to a car, who told the finance minister to go ahead and tax this service. I would love to meet the small business owners who enthusiastically support the government's broken promise to lower the small business tax. I would absolutely love to meet the people who said yes to higher oil and gas exploration taxes.

● (1730)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member will have six minutes when debate continues on this matter.

It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

HOLIDAYS ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-311, An Act to amend the Holidays Act (Remembrance Day), as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed without debate to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

[English]

Mr. Colin Fraser (West Nova, Lib.) moved that Bill C-311, An Act to amend the Holidays Act (Remembrance Day), as amended, be concurred in at report stage.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): When shall the bill be read the third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Colin Fraser moved that Bill C-311, An Act to amend the Holidays Act (Remembrance Day), be read the third time and passed.

He said: Madam Speaker, it is certainly a pleasure to rise in the House this evening to speak to my private member's bill, Bill C-311, an act to amend the Holidays Act with respect to Remembrance Day.

I want to sincerely thank the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage for examining my bill, listening to witnesses, and making changes to the bill that I completely agree with. In fact, at second reading, I had mentioned that I would be suggesting those changes to the committee, and those changes were recommended by the committee.

My bill changes the wording and status of Remembrance Day in the Holidays Act by making it a legal holiday, like Canada Day and Victoria Day. It is intended that this amendment will correct the Holidays Act that currently has different language regarding Remembrance Day than the language used for Canada Day and Victoria Day.

I believe it is important to fix this inconsistency and properly recognize Remembrance Day in our federal legislation as a federal legal holiday. More than simply correcting this inconsistency, however, I believe it is important that we continually examine how we are remembering the sacrifice of our fallen heroes and honouring the service of past and present Canadian Forces members.

Private Members' Business

I hope my bill will also have the added ability of affirming Parliament's commitment to this important solemn day of remembrance right across Canada. It is important to ensure that we shine a bright light on Remembrance Day and remembrance-type services at any opportunity we get.

Last month, I had the honour to attend the Vimy 100 commemoration in France as part of the Canadian delegation. It was an amazing experience to share with veterans and youth, as well as other fellow parliamentarians who were with the delegation.

We toured battlefield sites and cemeteries to remember our fallen. The interaction between the youth and the veterans was an amazing thing. There were two youth from each province and territory in Canada. It was wonderful to experience how they worked together to honour the sacrifice of our brave soldiers who fell in duty in World War I at Vimy, but also how they were able to share stories and engage in conversation with veterans who were on the trip and also, in many cases, family members of those who had fought at Vimy Ridge. I think it is important to celebrate at every opportunity, to make sure that our history is remembered for generations to come.

One of the interesting veterans on the trip was Ed Peck. I had an opportunity to speak to Ed on a couple of occasions during the trip. He is from British Columbia. He is a veteran of the Second World War, and participated in the liberation of Holland. He told me about his father, whose name was Cy Peck, who was actually a sitting member of Parliament during World War I and fought at the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

This amazing connection between generations and between people who serve in this place, as Mr. Peck did, is an incredible testimony to the dedication in service to our country. Mr. Cy Peck was the only sitting member of Parliament to ever win the Victoria Cross at the Battle of Amiens, I believe, in 1918. It is an amazing story which, upon reflection, ties very well into what my bill is attempting to do in elevating the status of remembrance in our country, and ensuring that our history is remembered for generations.

The ceremony on April 9 at Vimy was also an incredible opportunity as a collective experience for young people and veterans alike to share with all Canadians. There were more than 25,000 Canadians, many of them youth, from across our country who were able to attend that ceremony. Many of them had fundraised on their own in order to participate. This is a wonderful symbol for many years to come, a remembrance of sacrifice by our veterans, that will be in good hands.

Whenever we as Canadians have an opportunity to raise the profile of Remembrance Day and shine a light on its significance for our country, I believe it is worthwhile.

• (1735)

The bill was sent to the Canadian heritage committee, which oversees the Holidays Act. There were a number of proponents who spoke in favour of the bill. Some of them had the opportunity to explain why they thought it was important to insert the word "legal" into the context of the Holidays Act.

Mr. Dave Geddes, upon being asked what he thought adding the term "legal" to the term "holiday" would mean, said:

First, I think it would show our veterans that the government really does care. I understand that you people do, but to do this on our 150th birthday, for the veterans.... I think you would get 100% support from them.

Mr. John FitzGerald from Newfoundland and Labrador said:

I agree. Yes, I think changing would help. It gives it prominence. It gives it an importance and a weight—or I can use the word "gravitas"—that it deserves, and that our history and our duty to remember and honour our veterans and those who put themselves in harm's way even today in our Canadian Forces deserve.

That's my short answer.

Also appearing was Wilma McNeill, who has been a champion of modifying or making language consistent in the Holidays Act for many years. She is a strong supporter in favour of the bill. She said:

Yes, I agree that putting it up in the status with Canada Day and Victoria Day will help. Maybe it will wake up some of the provinces and they'll come on board. I think it's very important that we have it, and then it will be there forever. It won't be taken away.

This is the time to do it, as everybody is making celebrations for the 150th anniversary of the birth of Canada. Wouldn't this be a great way to honour our veterans once and for all for the sacrifice? When we think of what they did for us.... We live in a democracy, free, and we can do whatever we want, and it's because of the veterans.

Those were some of the testimonies given at committee in support of the bill.

Comments were made by a representative of the Royal Canadian Legion Dominion Command as well. We talked about this at second reading, the fact that it had not supported the idea behind making it a statutory holiday in all jurisdictions. It was certainly saying that to the committee. However, the main point it raised was twofold. First, schoolchildren should be in school on November 11 to ensure they were learning about Remembrance Day. Second, if it were made a day off for everyone, people would treat November 11 as just another day off.

I have the utmost respect for the Royal Canadian Legion, and I have canvassed this issue with many Legion members at the Legions in my riding and across Canada. Many of them, and all of them in my riding in particular, support the bill.

The Royal Canadian Legion Dominion Command put forward those two reasons for not supporting my bill. I believe it is in error. The bill has nothing to do with giving people the day off work or school. It cannot do that. It is not within the purview of Parliament to pronounce or legislate on such things. That is up to the provinces. The bill does not and cannot encroach on the jurisdiction of the provinces. Therefore, it is a moot point.

However, if we take the arguments themselves on their merits in any event, in jurisdictions where it is a day off for schoolchildren, it works very well. In Nova Scotia, in Veterans Week and leading up to November 11, many veterans are able to come into the schools to participate with schoolchildren and explain to them why remembrance is so important. The children then have the opportunity on November 11 to attend a cenotaph with family and with veterans and share in that collective experience, as I mentioned before when I saw the students and veterans participate in at Vimy on April 9.

Private Members' Business

Becoming just another day off is another argument used for people getting the time off work. Again, this has no ability to do that and it has nothing to do with it. That is completely up to the provinces. This is simply modifying language in the federal act to make it consistent with other days.

We see increasing numbers at Remembrance Days services across Canada, most particularly in Nova Scotia. Because of the Remembrance Day act in that province, they have the ability to attend those services.

• (1740)

Therefore, I would respond that the possibility people would take it for granted and just treat it as another day off is incorrect. I believe that year after year people are showing more reverence, and more importance and emphasis is being placed on Remembrance Day. The more we can use education and ensure that children are being taught why Remembrance Day is so important, the better off our country will be. This is a valued and important day of reflection for many Canadians. I think that because of increasing attendance, especially in jurisdictions where people do have the day off work, that is not a proper argument for not supporting this bill, especially since it does not do what is claimed it would do, which is to give people the day off in any event.

The other aspect of this bill that I would like to highlight is that at committee I was asked by some members who did not support the bill at committee stage why this was not simply brought as a motion rather than a bill if all it is to do is elevate the status and shine a light on it. The reason is quite simple. In addition to shining a light on this important day, and ensuring that Canadians know that Parliament is affirming its commitment to honouring and commemorating this important day of November 11, it actually does something tangible. It fixes an inconsistency which may well have been a drafting error made many years ago in the Holidays Act by leaving out the word "legal". The word "legal" holiday is there for Canada Day and Victoria Day. I would submit that it should be there for Remembrance Day as well.

In conclusion, I believe this bill is well reasoned and is a modest bill in what it actually does. It adds consistency of language in the Holidays Act. It elevates Remembrance Day to the same status as Canada Day and Victoria Day in federal statute, and it does affirm Parliament's commitment to ensuring that this very important day of reflection and gratitude to our fallen and all of those who serve is given its due respect. Therefore, I would ask all of my hon. colleagues to support my bill, Bill C-311, and ensure its passage.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. friend for bringing this bill forward as a private member's bill. I do not dispute for a second the intent of my hon. colleague in what he is trying to do as far as elevating the status of Remembrance Day is concerned. Like a good lawyer, he countered most of the arguments I was going to make with respect to the potential of a question. However, we did hear from the Canadian Legion, which represents 275,000 members, that on the 15 or 16 occasions that it has dealt with this issue as a resolution at its national congress, every time it has been defeated. Therefore, the Legion spoke not in favour of this legislation.

My hon. colleague mentioned why it was not brought as a motion. I spoke with him about this. Nobody in this place would think any less of Remembrance Day and its status, and so this piece of legislation is a nice thing. However, in his comments he said that he submits that it should have been put in as a legal holiday, and I want to ask him why this holiday in particular over and above the other two—

• (1745)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We are out of time for questions and comments. We have to allow for others to ask questions.

The hon. member for West Nova.

Mr. Colin Fraser: Madam Speaker, my hon. friend and I serve on the veterans affairs committee together, so I know the importance of this for both of us.

With respect to it being a legal holiday, and I believe the question was asked at committee, I think if we have a plain language reading of the bill right now, most Canadians would say that Remembrance Day is being treated differently from the other two days. The effect given by adding the word "legal" will elevate it and ensure that it has the same consistent language, and is treated at the same level as other important days, such as Canada Day. It adds that consistency to the language, on a plain language reading of it. I believe we should correct that error, and we can do that, while at the same time shining a light on this important day, and affirming Parliament's commitment to honouring the sacrifice and service of our brave veterans.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from West Nova, who is a colleague in Nova Scotia and a friend, for bringing this private member's bill forward. To me, it is a no-brainer that we would want to treat Remembrance Day with every bit of respect, both in our communities and in our laws, just as we treat Victoria Day, as an example.

In the member's comments, he mentioned the number of young people he saw when he went to Vimy Ridge for the 100th anniversary. This year is Canada's 150th anniversary as a nation.

One of my favourite things about attending Remembrance Day ceremonies in my community is the intergenerational nature of those in attendance: veterans who fought bravely for our country two generations ago and cadets who stand on guard at the cenotaph, or with the Canadian flag today. It was amazing to see the cadet corps in my riding, which won the top army cadet corps in Nova Scotia, travel to Vimy this year.

Could the member elaborate on the importance of the intergenerational nature of the Remembrance Day ceremonies to which his bill is going to draw attention?

Mr. Colin Fraser: Madam Speaker, it is very important to ensure that intergenerational knowledge is there to commemorate these important days of remembrance and sacrifice so these stories can be shared and that young people not only participate in these acts of remembrance, but understand what it means to serve their country and to have sacrificed for their fellow citizens. It is very important we ensure that young people are involved in these types of wonderful ceremonies.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to stand in the House today to speak to Bill C-311 regarding potential changes to Remembrance Day in terms of being a legal holiday.

I have nothing but the utmost respect for the member for West Nova, and I reinforce the comments that have been made by the member for Barrie—Innisfil in that respect.

This private member's legislation comes from the right place, from a good place. We all want to see participation in the recognition of our veterans' service grow. We want to see more people at parades on Remembrance Day or on any other days of the year when we recognize the contributions made in the many wars Canada has had to participate in, where our troops have fought so valiantly.

Most members of the Conservative caucus, if not all, voted for this legislation. We wanted to see it go to committee. The reason we wanted to see it go to committee was very simple. We wanted the committee to analyze it, bring in witnesses, and understand the potential ramifications and concerns that would be brought forward by different veterans groups and organizations. Certainly there were those who supported it. I do not want to say it was on one side.

The Royal Canadian Legion Dominion Command has been very clear over the years that it does not support a change in this respect. We have to listen to those stakeholders. We need to ensure that we listen to them in this process. After all, it provides a community for those who have served. We need to ensure that its voice is heard on a national and even a provincial level. This specific private member's bill has both a provincial and a federal piece to it.

An organization that represents over 275,000 members has said that it believes that the best way to grow participation on Remembrance Day is to ensure that young people are in the classroom to ensure that they are learning about the day on that specific day. That is a very strong argument that has been brought forward and is one that I have personally heard in my riding, where I have two Legions. It is one that I know has been communicated to most members of the House.

I like to draw on my experiences as a young person, and specifically as a young person in politics. Had it not been for my school having Remembrance Day services, there probably would have been many children in my school and in my area who would not have had the ability to participate in a Remembrance Day ceremony. Where I grew up, to be blunt, it was a very poor area. There was government housing. The reality is that there was no opportunity sometimes to get to Remembrance Day services, because people did not have the means.

It is ultra important that young people are able to see and be a part of these services that take place each and every year that recognize the incredible contributions of our veterans. Those who are with us still can show up at schools and share their experiences and their values and why it was so important to fight for their country, or in many cases, even to fight for people in other countries. This is so necessary for our young people. We need to make sure that this is preserved going forward.

I recognize that it is a bit different, depending on where we go and what province we are in. I can speak to the experiences I have had in Ontario.

● (1750)

As we look forward, I know the Legion Dominion Command will continue to be involved in this process. Its members are doing an incredible amount of work to ensure that Remembrance Day grows and has more participation. With the amount of work I know they do in our community in setting up our Remembrance Day ceremony and working with local media to ensure people are able to come out and participate, I feel they are the experts on this subject. Any time we have an opportunity to listen to the experts on a subject, we should do so. They have a lot to contribute and certainly they know this file better than almost any of us in the House could, save and except those who have served in our armed forces.

I know a lot of work has been put into this bill to date. The member for Barrie—Innisfil, the member for Souris—Moose Mountain, and the member for Yorkton—Melville have all put a ton of time in, along with members from the other parties, to ensure all sides and all stakeholders have been listened to and consulted on the subject.

However, as we come here, debate and are readying for a final vote on this in the House, it is a time when I specifically need to say that I will not be supporting the bill. It has been well debated, well-thought-out, and well positioned. It comes from a great place with respect to what the member is trying to achieve. However, at the end of the day, I believe we should be doing everything we can to ensure that the ceremonies that happen in schools with young people continue and that we do not do anything to inhibit that or to create this as a holiday instead of a day of remembrance. To me, it is not a holiday. It is a day that we should all take very seriously, to understand the sacrifices that have been made so we can stand in the House freely, without any concern for our well-being, and say everything we believe as politicians.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this subject and I look forward to the upcoming vote.

● (1755)

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am proud to rise in favour of this bill. It is worth noting at the outset that Remembrance Day is already a statutory holiday in federal jurisdiction and in six provinces, including my province of Saskatchewan. This bill would amend the Holidays Act to define Remembrance Day as a legal holiday, which I hope would prompt the remaining provinces to consider designating it as a statutory holiday.

There have been a number of previous attempts to make this change. In the last Parliament, the former New Democratic MP for Scarborough Southwest presented a nearly identical bill that made it to third reading before dying on the Order Paper. It had support from all parties. Liberal MPs tried to make this change in 1991 and 1994; Conservative MPs tried in 2004 and 2006; and NDP MPs tried in 2006, 2009, and 2014. Hopefully the eighth time is the charm, and we will finally achieve this worthwhile change and correction to our legislation.

Private Members' Business

The first point I would make in favour of this bill is that we should welcome more statutory holidays. As our economy grows, those benefits should be shared with working people in the form of both higher wages and more time off. We hear a lot of rhetoric from the government about helping the middle class and those working hard to join it. One of the tangible ways that the government can help improve the lives of working people is to increase the number of statutory holidays.

The reason to make Remembrance Day one of those statutory holidays is to allow people to attend commemorative ceremonies at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month. In Saskatchewan, where Remembrance Day is already a statutory holiday, the result has been that thousands of people attend the indoor ceremony at the Brandt Centre in Regina. Hundreds more in Regina attend the outdoor ceremony at the Cenotaph in Victoria Park. Having Remembrance Day as a statutory holiday clearly works in terms of improving attendance at these ceremonies.

The argument that we just heard from my colleague from Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte against making it a statutory holiday is that it is better to have students in school observing Remembrance Day there. What I would point out is that schools can and should teach about Remembrance Day on other days, but on the date itself, I believe it is far more meaningful for children to go to the ceremonies with their families than to do it as part of some sort of mandatory school activity.

I would also point out that every year, unfortunately, there are fewer and fewer veterans from the world wars with us. If those veterans are sent into schools on November 11, then they are not available to attend the public Remembrance Day services, whereas if veterans share their wisdom and experience in schools on other dates close to November 11, then they are available to attend the public ceremonies on that date. It clearly makes sense for schools to have activities on days other than November 11.

The purpose of these ceremonies is, of course, to honour the service of veterans to our country. Since Confederation, more than 100,000 Canadian soldiers have been killed in wars. I would like to pay special tribute to the Regina Rifle Regiment. It was one of the regiments that landed on the beaches of Normandy on D-Day and was the first Canadian regiment to secure a beachhead.

● (1800)

I would also like to say a few words about the role of the South Saskatchewan Regiment in the Second World War. It was thrust into the ill-fated raid on Dieppe. It also served with distinction in the more successful campaigns in northwestern Europe after the Normandy landings, and as part of that, it liberated the Westerbork concentration camp.

I think in addition to honouring service, a big part of Remembrance Day is remembering the horrors of war so that we do not repeat them. For me, a very important part of November 11 is remembering for peace. I would like to say a few words about current events. We have the war in Syria. We have both North Korea and the United States testing long-range missiles. We have sabre-rattling about Russia, including, unfortunately, on the floor of this House oftentimes. Therefore, I feel that this is an important time for

Canada to send a message of remembrance for peace by designating Remembrance Day as a legal holiday in our country.

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to address Bill C-311. This bill seeks to make changes to the Holidays Act as it pertains to Remembrance Day.

I am pleased to advise the House that we will be supporting the bill with the amendments that were made at committee. I would also like to take this occasion to congratulate and thank the member for West Nova, who has shepherded the bill through committee in a very deliberate and thoughtful way. The passion that he feels for this subject has been very evident in the manner in which he has approached his work throughout in connection with this piece of legislation.

First allow me to explain the origins of the Holidays Act. It is a consolidation of three previous statutes: the Dominion Day Act, the Remembrance Day Act, and the Victoria Day Act. The main purpose of the Holidays Act is to establish the date of these holidays. Although other legislation, such as the Canada Labour Code, refers to Remembrance Day, the Holidays Act is the only place where the date is defined as November 11. When the Holidays Act was put in place, it incorporated the existing wording of all three of the previous statutes, which explains why Canada Day and Victoria Day are referred to as legal holidays and Remembrance Day is referred to simply as a holiday.

The bill before us today proposes to change the Holidays Act to add the word “legal” before “holiday” as it pertains to Remembrance Day. Changing the reference to Remembrance Day to be the same as the term used for Canada Day and Victoria Day will provide consistency in the Holidays Act.

It is important to note, however, that adding the word “legal” before “holiday” in the Holidays Act will not make Remembrance Day a paid non-working holiday for all Canadians across Canada. At the federal level, the Canada Labour Code determines paid non-working holidays for employees under federal jurisdiction. Employees who do not work under federal jurisdiction are subject to provincial and territorial legislation. This change would be a symbolic reflection of the continued commitment of our government to honour veterans and remember their sacrifices.

It is fitting that these discussions about Bill C-311 are occurring in the year when we are commemorating significant anniversaries, including the 100th anniversary of the battles of Vimy Ridge and Passchendaele and the 75th anniversary of the Dieppe raid. Through major events here in Canada's capital at the National War Memorial and overseas at the Canadian National Vimy Memorial in France, we are turning Canadians' attention once again to these pivotal moments and the sacrifices that were made for our freedom.

Remembrance Day is more than just a date on the calendar. Observed on November 11, the anniversary of the armistice that formally ended hostilities at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month in 1918, Remembrance Day is a national annual commemoration that keeps alive, in our collective memory, the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who served. They served in the air, they served on land, and they served at sea, and millions more contributed on the home front.

Private Members' Business

●(1805)

[Translation]

Canada pays tribute to our heroes. Canada's national flag, a paramount symbol of our nation, is flown at half-mast on Remembrance Day. The act of half-masting is a dramatic visual statement that speaks to the sense of shared loss. The flag on the Peace Tower is lowered at 11 a.m. on Remembrance Day, in synchronization with the flag at the National War Memorial.

Flags at other locations across the country are also flown at half-mast on Remembrance Day. Each year, on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, Canadians across the country gather at the National War Memorial, in memorial parks, community halls, workplaces, schools, and homes to observe a moment of silence, collectively stand in honour of all who have fallen in the service of their country, and acknowledge those presently serving.

[English]

There is a profound value in pausing to remember and in setting aside time to participate in remembrance activities. It is easy sometimes to take for granted the many freedoms we enjoy in Canada: the freedom of thought, of religion, of expression, and the right to equality, liberty, and security. These freedoms are enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights, and the charter forms part of our Constitution.

On April 17, 2017, we marked the 35th anniversary of the charter. The Prime Minister reminded all Canadians:

The Charter protects the rights and freedoms that are essential to our identity as Canadians. It allows us to express ourselves as individuals and to celebrate our differences, while bringing us closer as a country.

In 2017, as we celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation, the 100th anniversary of the First World War, and the 35th anniversary of the Canadian Charter of Rights, let us address the long-standing inconsistency in the Holidays Act and use the same language for Remembrance Day that is used for Victoria Day and Canada Day.

On Victoria Day we honour our sovereign, Her Majesty The Queen; on Canada Day we show our pride in being Canadian; on Remembrance Day we pause to remember, to reflect on the value of our freedom, and to honour our brave Canadian men and women in uniform who have served and continue to serve our country.

Though changing the Holidays Act to identify Remembrance Day as a legal holiday would be symbolic, it is an important recognition of the significance of that date. Symbols are powerful, as they have an impact on identity. As Canadians, we hold our veterans and our serving members in high esteem, and we set aside time on Remembrance Day to show our respect and gratitude.

This change to the Holidays Act would reflect the continued commitment of the Government of Canada to honour our Canadian values of freedom and equality and would serve as a reminder that Remembrance Day is a time to appreciate our hard-earned freedom. The men and women who fought and continue to fight deserve our respect and admiration. We need to keep their stories alive and pass them on to the next generation.

●(1810)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, today I rise in this House to speak on the subject of Bill C-311, an act to amend the Holidays Act for Remembrance Day, presented by the member for West Nova. This bill seeks to modify the Holidays Act to make Remembrance Day a legal holiday, which would impact federally regulated employees but would not force the provinces to adopt it as a paid statutory holiday. For many, the main goal of this bill would be to make Remembrance Day a legal holiday as well as to encourage Canadian provinces and territories to revisit the possibility of making November 11 a statutory holiday. On a federal level, it is Parliament that decides holidays and their designations, but provinces and territories decide which days become non-working holidays in their respective jurisdictions.

First and foremost, we need to ensure that, for generations to come, the bravery and sacrifice of those who fought are celebrated, and that the horrific nature of war is remembered, and that these things are passed to our children and to theirs. Personally, I have been passionate about Remembrance Day for a long time. I have the utmost respect for serving Canadians, past, present, and future. Honouring our veterans was so important to me as a child that I wrote numerous poems on the subject and received several awards from the Royal Canadian Legion in St. Catharines for my poems from 1972 to 1974.

Each year, I participate in nearly a dozen events that mark Remembrance Week in my riding of Sarnia—Lambton. I have received countless emails and letters from constituents in my riding, outlining why they are in favour of this bill and why they would like to see me vote in favour of this legislation.

Many provinces and territories already have legislation in place that recognizes Remembrance Day as a legal holiday. Making Remembrance Day a legal holiday would simply elevate its federal status to that of Canada Day and Victoria Day. Currently, three territories and six provinces have made Remembrance Day a paid public holiday, including Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, P.E.I., Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia. Nova Scotia and Manitoba have specific legislation surrounding what can and cannot be open on November 11. Only Ontario and Quebec do not consider Remembrance Day to be a paid holiday and so have no legislation regarding November 11.

One of the many concerns raised regarding this bill touched on the educational component of Remembrance Day in schools and the fear that ongoing education on this subject could be lost. I certainly believe that children in Canada should learn about our military history, sacrifice, honour, and the important military role Canada has played since its creation. Battles such as Ypres, Vimy Ridge, and Passchendaele, the Battle of the Atlantic, the Dieppe raid, D-Day, the Korean War, and the missions in Afghanistan define Canada as we know it and are recognized internationally as acts of bravery, courage, and partnership.

Private Members' Business

Creating a sense of respect for our veterans in children from an early age will help to instil a sense of pride in young Canadians, and that impact is not easily erased. The earlier our youth learn what actions and decisions shaped our country, the more equipped they are to really appreciate and participate in Canadian society. They need to learn these things in school, but they also need to experience the act of remembrance at a cenotaph. These services have moved me to tears many times, and are a most effective reminder of those who sacrificed themselves in defence of our country. In the provinces and territories where legislation regarding Remembrance Day is already in place, most schools dedicate specific time to Remembrance Day education and ceremonies. This, along with its being a paid statutory holiday in some provinces and territories, allows Canadians to congregate at cenotaphs across the country on November 11. The act of seeing a formal Remembrance Day ceremony at a cenotaph or war memorial can have a significant impact on children and youth in our communities and can instil a sense of pride and honour that only ceremonies as powerful as those mentioned can bring. I believe it is important for all Canadians to have the opportunity to attend Remembrance Day ceremonies, should they so choose.

In my riding of Sarnia—Lambton, we have a special constituent who has been advocating for the designation of Remembrance Day as a legal holiday for over a quarter of a century. Wilma McNeill of Sarnia has been actively working toward legislation such as this at both the provincial and federal level for over 27 years. With her two sons and her late husband having served in the military, Wilma has dedicated herself to seeing legislation such as this put into place.

• (1815)

Wilma's journey first started with a bill proposed by MP Ken James in the early 1990s. Soon after, she strongly supported Ontario MPP Dave Boushy, whose bill reached second reading. When Wilma speaks on the subject, she recalls how excited and encouraged she was when MP Ronald MacDonald presented two bills on the subject under the Chrétien government.

Wilma has fought tirelessly to reinstate Remembrance Day as a statutory holiday in Ontario and has worked with Sarnia—Lambton's previous MP, Pat Davidson, along with myself, to ensure everything is being done to encourage this bill.

Wilma has written to countless prime ministers, premiers, MPs, and MPPs on the subject and has told me that she will continue to do so until changes are made.

Wilma spoke in favour of this bill only weeks ago at committee, and has spoken in favour of a similar bill at committee in the past.

Wilma is determined to have legislation such as this passed in her lifetime. I would like to both thank and commend Wilma for her years of dedication, her constant smile, and her countless pink outfits that bring joy and encouragement everywhere she brings her message.

Not every person in my riding is in favour of this legislation. I have also heard from constituents who stand against this bill and would like to see it voted down. One of the primary concerns I heard centres around how a proposed day off, which is still up to the discretion of the provinces for the majority of Canadians, could be

seen as a vacation and not a day of remembrance. Many constituents are concerned that Remembrance Day could turn into another long weekend or a day to sleep in and relax.

However, I would like to think that those of us who are committed to remembering our fallen heroes would encourage others to take the time and make the effort to pay our respects on November 11 and join our communities at the local cenotaphs.

Another concern raised was how Remembrance Day becoming a holiday could affect our children and our youth in schools. Concerns were raised as to whether this legislation would alter, reduce, or eliminate any form of education or ceremonies on the subject of Remembrance Day. The provinces where legislation already exists proves this is not the case and the education and ceremony segments are simply scheduled earlier or later in the week, permitting students to attend community ceremonies with their families, if they desire.

Personally, in my role as MP, I can truthfully say that I attend at least 11 Remembrance Day ceremonies in the week leading up to November 11. Remembrance Day is not necessarily a one-day event and can often stretch over an extended period of time. I do not believe that making November 11 a legal holiday will have a lasting impact on Canadian students as alternatives already exist and have already been successfully implemented in numerous provinces and territories.

Another concern raised was that of the position of many Legions across the country, as well as the position of Dominion Command. Not all the Legions across the country are on the same page when it comes to this subject and their opinions vary.

In addition, the Canadian military, the Merchant Navy, the Air Force Association of Canada, and the 1st Hussars all support having this day as a legal holiday.

Dominion Command, on the other hand, has clearly stated that it is not in favour of Bill C-311. Dominion Command has been dealing with these concerns for decades and its role is indisputable. It is familiar with the issue. I fully respect its stance and all the work it does for the forces and for our veterans. Having dealt with this issue 15 times in 45 years, Dominion Command has seen a growth in Remembrance Day activities and in participation. It highlighted concerns about the subject of education in schools and concerns that Remembrance Day might become another holiday that would lose meaning, and if it were to become a legal holiday, would it be treated as another time to remember and honour our fallen or just another long weekend.

Seeing as the majority of Canada already has legislation in place regarding the status of Remembrance Day, and seeing those provinces and territories are capable of providing complete in-school education and ceremonies during the week that leads up to November 11, I believe students are still receiving excellent education and interaction on this subject in school.

Allowing Canadians the opportunity to attend Remembrance Day ceremonies in their communities, or in larger city centres, would encourage Canadians to participate, which I believe is a good thing.

Private Members' Business

I recognize that not all Canadians would take advantage of the opportunity, but the question remains, should Canadians have that choice?

As such, I will be standing in favour of the bill when it comes for a vote. I will do so both in support of Wilma McNeill, as well as in honour of the countless Canadians who deserve to be remembered forever.

• (1820)

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart (Fundy Royal, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to rise today and speak to Bill C-311, an act to amend the Holidays Act for Remembrance Day.

I want to praise my colleague, the hon. member for West Nova, for bringing forward the bill, but also for his tireless efforts on behalf of the women and men in the Canadian Armed Forces, and our veterans. We are both members of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, and his passion for the commemoration of sacrifices made by our veterans is clear.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak today, because I believe one of the most poignant things we can do as proud Canadians is to join together as a nation and as individuals to recognize and pay tribute to those brave Canadian soldiers, sailors, and aviators who have made the ultimate sacrifice, in wartime and in peace, at home and abroad, to safeguard our values and our way of life.

Well before the people of Fundy Royal placed their trust in me to represent them in Ottawa, I would attend the Sussex Remembrance Day ceremonies every year with my family. One of my earliest memories I have is attending the local ceremonies in my hometown of Sussex, New Brunswick, where veterans and citizens alike paid their respects to those who came before and served our nation with dignity and with their lives.

I remember how we stood by the cenotaph alongside the Sussex train station, a place where many of the 300,000 personnel trained at Camp Sussex passed before, during, and after the World War I. It was also at this train station where many, but not all, returned home. I remember being a proud seven-year-old in my neatly pressed Brownie uniform standing beside my hero, my veteran, my grandfather. He made my Remembrance Day real. Together we waited for the clock to strike 11:11, and then walked up to the cenotaph to pin our poppies on white crosses.

The act of remembrance remains the most important ceremony for me each year. Since those days, I have had the opportunity to meet many heroes in many communities throughout Fundy Royal and New Brunswick because of the dedication of many organizations, including Royal Canadian Legion branches, cadet units, municipalities, and the 8th Canadian Hussars association.

I have witnessed each community's immense pride in their local heroes and contributions to the efforts of the Canadian Armed Forces.

I am sure every member of the House can relay his or her own story of the unique way his or her communities take pause for the act of remembrance. They do this at cenotaphs and memorials, community halls, auditoriums, hockey rinks, and public squares.

As we celebrate Canada's 150th anniversary, we are looking to the future and thinking more than ever what the Canada of tomorrow will look like and the values we hold dear, a year where we confirm that we are proud of this amazing land, its kind and welcoming people, and the example we have set for the world. I would agree with my honourable colleague from West Nova that as proud as we are of Canada, we are just as proud of the women and men who have served our country with distinction, and with their lives.

Bill C-311 will be another chapter in the progression of our efforts as Canadians to remember. What began as a response to the incredible losses of the First World War, where we lost almost one in 10 of the nearly 620,000 men and women of the armed forces, has evolved into a national tribute to all those who made the ultimate sacrifice and a consistent show of support for our Canadian Forces.

In 1919, as a response to calls for a commemoration to mourn these deaths and pay tribute to those who were returning from the Great War, King George V urged people across the Commonwealth to observe two minutes of silence at 11 a.m. local time. This was to be known as Armistice Day. From 1921 to 1930, Canada observed Armistice Day on the Monday of the week in which November 11 fell.

It was the Canadian Legion that began lobbying Parliament to enshrine in law, November 11 as Armistice Day. In fact, it was one of the original resolutions it had at its founding convention. In 1931, the hon. member for Comox—Alberni, introduced a bill to observe the date as November 11. Passed by the House of Commons, the bill also changed the name to Remembrance Day, and it was first observed in 1931.

The member for West Nova has given us a timely and special opportunity to mark Canada's 150th anniversary by introducing Bill C-311 to change the definition of Remembrance Day in the Holidays Act, from a holiday to a legal holiday. Not only will Bill C-311 elevate the status of Remembrance Day to the same level as Canada Day and Victoria Day, it will reconfirm the commitment of the House to veterans and their families, and those who are serving today, and will show our unwavering gratitude for their sacrifice and service.

Those who serve in uniform do it with bravery, honour, and dignity, protecting the values we cherish most, and doing so with their lives. Let each day we enjoy our freedom be a day we honour them in remembrance.

• (1825)

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am a member of the heritage committee, and I have attended the meetings discussing Bill C-311. It has become abundantly clear to me that this measure aims to go in the back door to achieve a desired outcome at the front door. I am opposed to the legislation and to the method by which it has been proposed.

Adjournment Proceedings

First, let us get some history. We have heard a lot of history in the last 50 minutes or so. The bill is described as a modest measure to add consistency to the language in the federal Holidays Act by adding the word "legal" and ensuring that the same language that is used for Canada Day and Victoria Day is used for Remembrance Day. The bill has been introduced and reintroduced nine times since 2004. Seven of the nine introductions never made it past first reading. Does this not raise the question, then, of whether it is worth spending more time debating a measure to add consistency to the Holidays Act?

This inconsistency has been around since 1931—that is, 86 years—without any ramifications. As I said earlier, the desired outcome is a national statutory holiday coming out the front door; this is just gaining entry through the back door.

Remembrance Day is the day dedicated to remembering those who have served and sacrificed. We have an opportunity to thank those who have served in our world wars. However, do we need a holiday to do this?

Last year, as is my habit, and for the past number of years in my city, I attended the ceremonies at the Sasktel Centre with over 9,000 other Saskatonians. The Sasktel Centre event is considered Canada's largest indoor Remembrance Day ceremony, and it has been for the last two and a half decades.

Let me quote a statement made at the committee by Mr. Brad White, who is the dominion secretary of the Legion. He said:

This procedure for enacting change in the Legion starts at the branch level, where any member can propose a change in policy or administrative procedure that could affect the entire organization. Following a review and discussion by all members within the branch, the resolution passes to the provincial command level. At the provincial command level and at their convention the delegates from within that jurisdiction further consider and discuss the proposed resolution.

What I saw in the testimony at the heritage committee was no documentation at all. All we heard from the guests was talk about the RCAF Association and the navy, although during cross-examination it was not so much about the navy. The testimony that we heard had very little to do with the national association but with all the local bodies. This is why we see the bill come back to the House of Commons time and time again.

I notice the time. I will not support this bill today.

• (1830)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member will have six and a half minutes the next time this issue is before the House.

The time provided for the consideration of private members' business is now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

TAXATION

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, today I stand to reiterate a specific question I had asked the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, and I hope the parliamentary secretary will be able to assist me with this.

I asked this question:

Mr. Speaker, this Prime Minister has dictated that the provinces must collect his carbon tax. In true Liberal fashion, Premier Wynne has secretly planned to apply HST to their new cap-and-trade plan and will hide the cap-and-trade tax in the delivery charge. Ontarians are [now]...paying more for heat and hydro [and also]...tax on tax.

When will the Prime Minister stand up for...Ontarians and tell his Ontario Liberal friends to start helping the middle class instead of taxing them to death?

For anyone watching, unfortunately the response I received that day was:

Mr. Speaker, 80% of Canadians live in a jurisdiction where there is already a price on pollution.

The good news is that provinces stepped up when the previous government did not. We know that putting a price on what we do not want, pollution, will foster what we do want, which is good jobs...

However, if we look at the question versus the answer I received from the minister, it does not even touch on the true issue.

In Ontario, the carbon tax was put forward effective January 1. Ontario is calling it "cap and trade". This came forward because Jeff Yurek, who is a member of the provincial Parliament and also represents Elgin—Middlesex—London, brought to the attention of the Ontario government the fact that the HST was being applied to this tax. Therefore, we already know the carbon tax is going to affect everyday Canadians by increasing their food, transportation, and anything else they will be impacted by.

In the province of Ontario, when we look at our hydro bill, the carbon tax is not noted. By calling Hydro One, we found out it was put under the delivery charge, and that is where we can find the HST. When looking at this, we are talking about a tax on tax. This is a huge concern for us because if people are already having difficulties paying for their food and hydro for their homes, we are now not only applying a 3% to 4% carbon tax, we are also applying a 13% tax on that. Therefore, we had to bring this forward.

The Prime Minister and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change said that there would be no impact, and that it would be revenue neutral. However, the Library of Parliament has come forth and has indicated that this is absolutely not the case.

We are not going to talk about the carbon tax; we are going to talk about the tax on the tax. That is the question I have for the government and the parliamentary secretary today. They have an opportunity to do what is right. If we truly are trying to do something for climate change, we should not be picking our winners and losers. Nor should we be nickel-and-diming Canadians.

Adjournment Proceedings

According to the Library of Parliament and the information received, in Alberta and B.C. alone, \$280 million will be collected. Therefore, we know this is not revenue neutral. If all provinces do the same, is the government willing to reconsider not only the carbon tax, the cap and trade, but also the fact that an additional 13% has now been applied to it?

Canadians cannot afford this plan. What are you going to do about the tax on tax?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind the member to address the question to the Chair and not to the individual member.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources.

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, after 10 years of Conservative inaction on climate change, it is time to put a price on what we do not want: pollution. This really does make sense. Polluting should not be free, and polluters should not get a free ride. When we put a price on pollution, we can invest the money in things we do want: more jobs, better transportation, healthier communities, and cleaner energy.

The evidence clearly shows that pricing carbon pollution is the most effective way to reduce emissions and grow the economy. It will also stimulate innovation, increase energy efficiency, and promote investment in clean technology.

Already 97% of Canadians live in a province that either has a price on pollution or has committed to doing so. Under our approach, we have given provinces and territories the flexibility to design their own policies to meet the federal benchmark, including their own policies to price carbon pollution. The revenues from these policies will remain in the province or territory where they originate, as we have always said.

Provinces that price pollution are already using the revenue to put money back in the pockets of people who need it the most by giving the money back to families through rebates, by cutting personal income tax and small business taxes, and by investing to support entrepreneurs and clean technologies that create good-paying, middle-class jobs all around the country.

This is already happening. While some provinces put money right back in the pockets of Canadians in the form of a deep tax cut, others will invest in new clean businesses. Companies like New Flyer, Landmark Homes, and SkyPower Global are building innovative technologies like electric buses, energy-efficient homes, and solar panels while creating good-paying, middle-class jobs.

In my riding, there is the Alderville First Nation, which has one of the largest solar farms in an indigenous community. It now has a revenue stream and has created jobs and clean energy for communities. Also in my riding is a company called Tri-County Plastics, in Brighton. It has created a large shredder that is now able to recycle things that could never be recycled before and has created up to 20 new jobs in a town of about 3,000 people.

This is why many leading Conservatives in Canada, including Preston Manning and Ontario Conservative leader Patrick Brown, all support carbon pricing.

Pricing carbon pollution is only one part of the climate plan, which includes accelerating the phase-out of coal, developing a clean fuel standard, and taking action on short-lived climate pollutants. Canada's climate plan is one that economists, business leaders, and Canadians across the country have been calling for. It will allow us to meet our international obligations under the Paris agreement on climate change and will lay the foundation for the transition to a clean-growth economy. It will also give us a competitive advantage in a market that Mark Carney, governor of the Bank of England, says is worth trillions of dollars.

In 2015, over \$300 billion was invested globally in renewable power. That is almost double the amount invested in fossil fuels. Unlike the party opposite, we recognize that in the modern age, economic development and environmental sustainability must go hand in hand, and unlike the party opposite, we know that strong environmental policies, including a price on carbon pollution, are crucial for generating the type of support that is required for major projects, and ultimately, for Canada as a whole—

• (1835)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Speaker, I appreciate all the words the member said. I am not questioning the carbon tax. I am questioning the tax on tax. I ask that we all put our speeches down and get down to the real business.

The government has come out with a plan to seek carbon pricing. Regardless of what we call it, I want to go to step two. Not only will the provinces have a carbon tax but the federal government will receive GST in the federal coffers from Canadians who are already being nickel-and-dimed to death. This is not about solar panels. This is not about windmills. This is about the fact that a revenue-neutral program the Liberals have put forward is not revenue neutral.

I would ask the member on the other side to put down her papers and tell me the answer to my question.

Ms. Kim Rudd: Madam Speaker, I will say again that, unlike the Conservatives, we are focused on supporting middle-class Canadians and their families at every stage—

• (1840)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Okay, thank you, no need.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind the member that she had the opportunity to ask the question. She should take the opportunity to listen to the answer.

Adjournment Proceedings

Ms. Kim Rudd: Madam Speaker, not only did the Conservatives vote against the Paris agreement, but when it comes to middle-class Canadians they opposed our government reducing taxes for nine million Canadians; a Canada child benefit that helps nine out of 10 Canadian families and will help raise 300,000 children out of poverty; and enhancements to student loans, which will help 250,000 Canadians.

Our government is focused on both protecting our environment and growing our economy while helping the middle class and those working hard to join it.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, it has now been 17 months since the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs gutted the First Nations Financial Transparency Act; 17 months, and no action has been taken by the government, nor has the minister provided any details on what she plans to do.

I hear from band members every week who are fighting to see the books in their own communities so they can see how federal funds are spent. They hear of plans for breakfast programs, improved water systems, and new homes, but somehow the money is not getting through.

I want to point out that the vast majority of bands do comply with the transparency act, even after the minister removed the valuable compliance measures. Going from 95% down to 85%, to 84%, and continuing to decrease just means that hundreds of thousands of band members are now increasingly left without the valuable information. I do want to acknowledge that this is a small problem, but it is a growing problem and it is an important problem, because we do hear stories. Unfortunately, as in governments, as in private business, sometimes things are not done the way they should be done.

I am rising tonight to follow up on a question I asked the minister in question period on December 14, a long time ago, and I had hoped that I would not have to ask this question again. I would have thought something would have been done by now.

I did bring to the House's attention a CBC article by Charmaine Stick of Onion Lake Cree Nation, which was titled "I starved myself for financial transparency...". Charmaine is courageously standing up for financial transparency in her community. She stood before a House of Commons committee on April 6 and sat in the gallery later that day. I would like to take this opportunity to read part of a powerful letter that she wrote to us a few weeks later. She wrote:

I have struggled for years to get answers from our leaders regarding the Onion Lake Cree Nation's finances.

I have read the few documents provided by the band. I have read more detailed documents that have been leaked to me. That reading has raised more questions than answers.

I have contacted officials at Indigenous and Northern Affairs, but they've been unwilling or unable to provide answers.

I have attended band meetings and asked questions of our leaders directly, but they too have failed to provide answers.

I have gone on a 13-day hunger strike to demand transparency.

I am now partnering with the Canadian Taxpayers Federation to launch a court application to compel my chief and council to publicly provide transparency.

I know my experience is different from the stories that you often hear from our leaders. They say they provide documents when requested and answer questions in public meetings. But think about that in the context of the way things work in Ottawa. I watched Question Period in person for the first time after the committee meeting and it was entertaining, but it wouldn't be good if it were the only source of transparency. A few band meetings a year aren't enough for First Nations communities. There needs to be clear requirements for transparency and strong standards for accountability....

Grassroots people in First Nations communities must have the basic tools of transparency. The federal government must provide those tools through The First Nations Financial Transparency Act. Give the grassroots the tools of transparency and we will strengthen accountability from within First Nations communities. The government is making it a priority to strengthen the nation-to-nation relationship between the Crown and First Nations and it's important to remember [that the first] nations are made up of people and...derive their power from the people.

• (1845)

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to the important question that has been raised by the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

Of course, I would like to acknowledge first that we are gathered on Algonquin traditional territory.

My hon. colleague has raised a question this evening that is really directed to one particular case, and it is a matter of public record right now in the country that the case she is raising with regard to Onion Lake Cree Nation is currently before the courts. We understand the frustration that the member may be experiencing as a result, but while this case is before the court, there are certain jurisdictions in which we will be limited.

However, I want to make a statement that I really believe speaks to where we are trying to get to with transparency and accountability.

First of all, we want to have a process that will include first nations and make them a part of the solution in designing what this transparency and accountability looks like.

As a government, this is a priority for us. It is a priority for first nations, a priority for their members. We understand that it will take us a little time to get there, but first nations have been very clear with us that they do not want a top-down approach, a made-in-Ottawa solution, because it does not work.

We saw the former government, of which the member was a part, try that and attempt that top-down approach, imposing upon first nations what it felt as a government would be the solution. That is not the practice that we have signed on to. We have signed on to a process of reconciliation and working in collaboration with indigenous governments across Canada. That means we do not impose upon them what we feel is right; we negotiate with them. We come to a consensus on the proper accountability and transparency measures that need to be implemented, those that will work.

Since last summer, the minister and the department have been working with indigenous organizations, including the AFN and the Aboriginal Financial Officers Association on ways to enhance mutual accountability.

The government has also reached out to community members and leadership through a comprehensive online engagement process, and now it is ready to embark upon in-person sessions across the country over the next few months. I encourage first nations members to visit the departmental website to learn more about how this process works. As well, the government is also continuing to work in full partnership with them to improve mutual accountability and transparency.

We remain committed to the process. We remain committed to establishing a new fiscal relationship with first nations, and in the meantime we are continuing to invest historic amounts of investment in the billions of dollars in first nations education, health care, housing, and community development in all areas of the country in all indigenous governments.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Madam Speaker, it has been 17 months. I am very concerned and suspicious that the 2019 election will roll around and this issue will still not be solved.

We are not talking about complicated issues. We are talking about what every Canadian enjoys from their federal government, their provincial government, their municipal government, and should enjoy from their first nations government. This is about first nations community members. This is not about something difficult. It is about basic rules of transparency.

Instead the government is forcing community members to take their bands to court. I heard today there are other band members who

Adjournment Proceedings

are so desperate they will go to the Human Rights Tribunal, so it is absolutely inexcusable for the Liberals to say that it is important to them when they can spend the next four years, eight years, 10 years before they provide basic transparency to community members.

• (1850)

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Madam Speaker, I would like to assure the House and the member opposite that we are working very hard to get transparency and accountability measures in place. We are working hard to do it in partnership with first nations, and it is already common practice for all first nations to report back, both to their members and to Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada with their financial and program performances.

The member speaks of us as though there is no accountability measure in place at this time, and in fact there is. All first nations governments in the country are still required to report their audited, consolidated financial statements to the department and to their membership, and of course we will continue to do more to increase that transparency and accountability.

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

(The House adjourned at 6:51 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Thursday, May 4, 2017

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Government Response to Petitions

Mr. Lamoureux 10741

Committees of the House

Procedure and House Affairs

Mr. Bagnell 10741

Petitions

Home Children

Mr. Cannings 10741

HIV/AIDS

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) 10741

Genetically Modified Foods

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) 10741

Questions on the Order Paper

Mr. Lamoureux 10741

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Budget Implementation Act, 2017, No. 1

Bill C-44. Second reading 10742

Ms. Bergen 10742

Mr. Virani 10742

Ms. Ramsey 10742

Mr. Duguid 10742

Ms. Ramsey 10743

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) 10744

Mr. Albas 10744

Mr. MacKinnon 10747

Ms. Quach 10747

Mr. Nantel 10748

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) 10748

Ms. Dzerowicz 10749

Ms. Ramsey 10750

Mr. Jeneroux 10751

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) 10751

Mr. Iacono 10751

Ms. Trudel 10752

Ms. Quach 10753

Mr. Warawa 10753

Mr. Lamoureux 10754

Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River) 10755

Mr. Fast 10755

Mr. Lamoureux 10757

Ms. Quach 10757

Mr. Oliver 10757

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) 10759

Ms. Ramsey 10759

Mr. Lamoureux 10759

Mr. Anandasangaree 10760

Ms. Ramsey 10761

Mr. McCauley 10761

Mr. Lamoureux 10762

Mr. Cooper 10762

Mr. Lamoureux 10763

Ms. Ramsey 10763

Mr. McColeman 10763

Ms. Ramsey 10765

Mr. Peterson 10765

Mr. Sarai 10766

Mr. Nantel 10767

Mr. Cannings 10767

Mr. McCauley 10767

Mr. Chen 10767

Mr. Albas 10769

Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River) 10769

Mr. Jeneroux 10769

Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River) 10769

Mr. Lamoureux 10771

Mr. Albas 10771

Mr. Cannings 10772

Mr. Lamoureux 10773

Mr. McCauley 10773

Mr. Hardie 10774

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Basketball

Mr. Tabbara 10775

Niagara Region

Mr. Nicholson 10775

Atlantic Agricultural Hall of Fame Inductee

Mr. Easter 10775

Longueuil

Mr. Nantel 10775

Ottawa-Vanier

Mrs. Fortier 10776

People with Reduced Mobility

Mrs. Boucher 10776

Saint-Laurent

Ms. Lambropoulos 10776

Violence against Women

Mr. Ouellette 10776

Ellie Voortman

Mr. Sweet 10776

Markham—Thornhill

Ms. Ng 10777

Vijay Bhatia

Mr. Fragiskatos 10777

Robert Dyerowicz

Mr. Albrecht 10777

Samuel Sharpe Sculpture	
Ms. O'Connell	10777
Housing	
Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	10777
Constituents' Concerns in Calgary Midnapore	
Mrs. Kusie	10778
Ontario First Nations	
Mr. Rusnak	10778

ORAL QUESTIONS

National Defence	
Ms. Ambrose	10778
Mr. Sajjan	10778
Ms. Ambrose	10778
Mr. Sajjan	10779
Ms. Ambrose	10779
Mr. Sajjan	10779
Ms. Ambrose	10779
Mr. Sajjan	10779
Ms. Ambrose	10779
Mr. Sajjan	10779
Ethics	
Mr. Cullen	10780
Mr. Boulerville	10780
Ms. Gould	10780
Government Spending	
Mr. Boulerville	10780
Ms. Chagger	10780
Mr. Cullen	10780
Ms. Chagger	10780
National Defence	
Mr. Bezan	10780
Mr. Sajjan	10781
Mr. Bezan	10781
Mr. Sajjan	10781
Mr. Paul-Hus	10781
Mr. Sajjan	10781
Mr. Paul-Hus	10781
Mr. Sajjan	10781
Mr. Strahl	10781
Mr. Sajjan	10781
Mr. Strahl	10781
Mr. Sajjan	10782
Public Safety	
Ms. Laverdière	10782
Mr. Sajjan	10782
Mr. Rankin	10782
Mr. Sajjan	10782
Finance	
Mr. Deltell	10782
Ms. Chagger	10782
Mr. Deltell	10782

Ms. Chagger	10782
Mr. Poilievre	10783
Ms. Chagger	10783
Mr. Poilievre	10783
Ms. Chagger	10783
Softwood Lumber	
Ms. Ramsey	10783
Mr. Leslie	10783
Public Safety	
Ms. Trudel	10783
Mr. Goodale	10783
Regional Economic Development	
Mr. Lefebvre	10783
Mr. Bains	10784
Softwood Lumber	
Mr. Doherty	10784
Mr. Carr	10784
Mr. Gagnéux	10784
Mr. Leslie	10784
Taxation	
Mr. Fast	10784
Ms. McKenna	10784
Mr. Fast	10784
Ms. McKenna	10785
Youth	
Ms. Quach	10785
Ms. Chagger	10785
Seniors	
Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	10785
Mr. Duclos	10785
Foreign Affairs	
Mr. Kent	10785
Mr. Alghabra	10785
Ministerial Expenditures	
Ms. Gladu	10785
Ms. Monsef	10786
Status of Women	
Ms. Gladu	10786
Ms. Monsef	10786
Veterans Affairs	
Mr. Fraser (West Nova)	10786
Mr. Hehr	10786
Mr. Brassard	10786
Mr. Hehr	10786
Shipping	
Mr. Aubin	10786
Mrs. McCrimmon	10786
Rail Transportation	
Mr. Graham	10787
Mrs. McCrimmon	10787
International Development	
Mr. Allison	10787

Ms. Bibeau	10787
Justice	
Mr. Thériault	10787
Mr. Mendicino	10787
Ms. Pauzé	10787
Mr. Mendicino	10787
Points of Order	
Oral Questions	
Ms. Tassi	10787
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	10788
Ms. Rempel	10788
Statements by Members	
Mr. Falk	10788
Royal Assent	
The Speaker	10788
Business of the House	
Ms. Bergen	10788
Ms. Chagger	10789
Privilege	
Rights of Non-Recognized Parties	
Mr. Thériault	10789
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	10790
Mr. Lamoureux	10790

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Budget Implementation Act, 2017, No. 1

Bill C-44. Second reading	10790
Mr. Hardie	10791
Mr. Lamoureux	10791
Ms. Benson	10792
Mr. Ellis	10792
Mr. Lamoureux	10793
Mr. McCauley	10794
Ms. Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	10794
Mr. Allison	10794
Mr. Lamoureux	10796
Mr. Dusseault	10796
Ms. Harder	10797
Mr. Graham	10798
Mr. Boulerice	10798

Mr. Motz	10799
Ms. Monsef	10799
Ms. Harder	10800
Ms. Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	10801
Mr. Kmiec	10801
Mr. Graham	10803
Mr. Dusseault	10803
Mr. Fonseca	10803
Mr. Saganash	10805
Mr. McCauley	10805
Mr. Lamoureux	10805
Mr. Kmiec	10806
Mr. Weir	10807
Mr. Bratina	10807
Mr. McCauley	10807

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Holidays Act

Bill C-311. Report stage	10808
Mr. Fraser (West Nova)	10808
Bill C-311. Motion for concurrence	10808
(Motion agreed to)	10808
Mr. Fraser (West Nova)	10808
Bill C-311. Third reading	10808
Mr. Brassard	10810
Mr. Fraser (Central Nova)	10810
Mr. Nuttall	10811
Mr. Weir	10811
Mr. Casey (Charlottetown)	10812
Ms. Gladu	10813
Mrs. Lockhart	10815
Mr. Waugh	10815

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Taxation

Mrs. Vecchio	10816
Ms. Rudd	10817

Indigenous Affairs

Mrs. McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	10818
Ms. Jones	10818

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