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Monday, November 6, 2017

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, November 6, 2017

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

•(1100)

[*English*]

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES ACT

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.) moved that Bill S-236, An Act to recognize Charlottetown as the birthplace of Confederation, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise today to move second reading of Bill S-236, an act to recognize Charlottetown as the birthplace of Confederation.

I begin by thanking my hon. colleague and fellow Islander, Senator Diane Griffin, for sponsoring the bill in the other place and for ably stickhandling it through the Senate legislative process. Of course thanks are also due to the senators who engaged in fulsome and thoughtful debate on Bill S-236 and who brought profile to the story of the founding of our great nation, and improved on the original bill.

Let me turn to the nuts and bolts of Bill S-236. The bill aims to entrench, honour, and affirm Charlottetown's integral role in the history of our country as the place where, in 1864, Sir John A. Macdonald led the Fathers of Confederation in a discussion about the political union that eventually led to Confederation. Reflecting on that foundational time in our history is especially important now as we near the end of the year-long celebration of our nation's 150th anniversary, and look forward to the next 150 years as a progressive, inclusive, and growing country.

Our founding fathers, I believe, with the seed of the idea of nationhood developed in Charlottetown and followed up later at the Quebec Conference, built better than they knew. In addition, I think it is critical to recognize that Bill S-236 will be an important contribution to the story of our nation's history that has been told in part by a number of actions that have preceded it, both in this place and elsewhere.

The bill will complement the September 1996 proclamation by the Right Hon. Jean Chrétien that recognized the role of Charlottetown

as the birthplace of Confederation, and affirmed the city as an integral part of our Canadian heritage.

Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson should also be recognized. In October 1964, he had the official opening of the Confederation Centre of the Arts as Canada's national memorial to the Fathers of Confederation.

It also complements two measures that were passed in the P.E.I. Legislative Assembly: the Birthplace of Confederation Act; and a unanimous motion passed in December 2016, supporting the declaration of Charlottetown as the birthplace of Confederation and urging all of us as parliamentarians to support that legislation.

The story of Confederation is a story of building relationships. It is what we do within Canada and around the world. It is what we have always done.

On September 1, 1864, leaders of the governments and legislatures of Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and the Province of Canada met in Charlottetown, P.E.I. for what came to be known as the Charlottetown Conference. There, they created a shared vision of a union of the British North American colonies, and the creation of a new country. They did so through peaceful and constructive conversation, which is something that cannot be said of all nations.

This point was vividly made by the University of Prince Edward Islands's Dr. Ed MacDonald when he appeared before the Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs during its examination of the bill in June. He said:

Other nations were born at the tip of a sword. We were born at the point of a pen by discussion and negotiation.

From this perspective, while the story of Confederation may be less dramatic than that of some other nations, I think that it reflects what is probably not a uniquely Canadian approach, but is perhaps quintessentially Canadian to the extent that we can work together collegially and try to find mutually beneficial solutions.

Certainly this Canadian approach is particularly relevant now, as we continue to take our place on the world stage and navigate international negotiations.

•(1105)

In both situations, we as Canadians look beyond our borders and within to re-examine long-standing relationships; reflect on our economic, social, and cultural values as Canadians; and show leadership to the world.

Private Members' Business

The parliamentary and public debate about the bill and about the story of Confederation that has occurred as we celebrate 150 years as a country has raised some issues that must be recognized. One is what many see as the lack of inclusive discussions at the Charlottetown Conference in 1864. No indigenous peoples were involved and no women participated.

I invite everyone though to cast their minds back to that year and to reflect on how common that situation probably was. "All men" was probably the rule rather than the exception to the rule. During the other place's consideration of Bill S-236, Senator Griffin read a statement from the Mi'kmaq Confederacy that reflects the importance of indigenous people to P.E.I.'s heritage as it does to the heritage of all regions of Canada.

The statement noted that Prince Edward Island has been the home of the Mi'kmaq people for more than 12,000 years, yet they were not invited to participate in the Charlottetown Conference. It also emphasized the continued importance of the inclusion of Canada's indigenous peoples on a nation-to-nation basis on all matters.

Over time, we have learned to be a more inclusive society, one that respects diversity in all its forms and values that brings. I am confident that the parties who would be involved in these types of discussions today would be more representative of our peoples and our regions than was the case 150 years ago. We cannot rewrite history. We can only move forward with the lessons that we learn from history.

I also want to recognize that while the Charlottetown Conference may be viewed as the watershed moment in the story of Confederation, the importance of the Quebec Conference in 1864 and the London Conference two years later cannot be understated. During consideration in the other place, the preamble of Bill S-236 was amended in order to acknowledge those important conferences. Yes, the bill would allow us to celebrate a particular city, but it would also allow us to honour and to affirm our built heritage.

A great many nations do so. As a member of the Canada-U.S. Interparliamentary Group, I had the privilege of visiting Independence Hall in Philadelphia, which is a landmark that is revered throughout the United States and recognized around the globe. This physical place, built heritage, gives Americans and international visitors a sense of history, a sense of place, a sense of how the United States came into being.

Some 20 years ago, I had the occasion to take my American counterparts onto the floor of Province House in order to hold our final Canada-U.S. IPG session. As we walked on the worn steps we explained to them that Province House is the location of the province's legislature and very importantly is the national treasure where the founding discussions about our country occurred. It may be just my imagination, and most people around this place know I do not have a big imagination, but I want to think that I saw awe in the eyes of my American colleagues that mirrors that which I saw when visiting Independence Hall. Although as is often the case with the Americans, they thought the place was a little smaller.

Province House is a national treasure where the Charlottetown Conference took place. It is one of the world's oldest still functioning parliamentary buildings and the only remaining building of the

Confederation conferences. Built of Nova Scotia sandstone, we islanders are privileged that this building still stands strong in Charlottetown and remains the centre of political life.

The United States has Philadelphia's Independence Hall and no doubt other countries around the world have buildings they associate with their founding fathers. Such buildings provide citizens and visitors with a physical place to connect with history and gain a sense of how a nation came to be.

• (1110)

It is my hope that Charlottetown's Province House can be such a place, where visitors can stand as they admire the Confederation chamber's high-vaulted ceilings, upper balcony, cornice mouldings, and worn steps and reflect that they are in the same location where Canada's Fathers of Confederation met more than 150 years ago to discuss the future of our nation. Among others, Parks Canada is to be commended for the work that it continues to do to preserve and protect Province House in order to "give our past a future".

Let me reiterate the bill's fundamental objectives: to affirm Charlottetown as the birthplace of Confederation; to complement provincial efforts; and to build on the designation of Charlottetown as the birthplace of our country in order to honour, celebrate, share, and educate. In reiterating that the story of Confederation is one of relationship building, let me say that I look forward to respectful and non-partisan debate in this place, and I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

To conclude, in addition to those I mentioned at the beginning of my remarks, let me thank a number of others who contributed in important ways to where we find ourselves today with this bill. Philip Brown must be commended for his passion and persistence, along with Sharon Larter and Leonard Cusack for their efforts; island MLA Jordan Brown; former MP and colleague George Proud, who introduced a similar bill many years ago; and the people from New Brunswick who helped bring national attention to our efforts through a friendly and spirited dialogue, exactly the sort that we would expect of Atlantic Canadians, about the story of Confederation. Last but certainly not least, let me thank my island colleague, the hon. member for Charlottetown, who is the House of Commons representative of the place that Province House calls home and will in due course be sharing his unique perspective on Bill S-236.

• (1115)

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating my colleague from Malpeque for shepherding this initiative from the other place through this place.

In particular, I was drawn to the member's reference to Confederation being a story of building relationships, so I congratulate the member for also including in those relationships that of the indigenous members in Canada.

Private Members' Business

I have two questions for the hon. gentleman. First, would he support as part of this initiative including the Mi'kmaq population in and around Charlottetown in developing heritage and tourism materials to talk about their participation in this relationship of which the member speaks? Second, would he support the call to action number 45 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that asks for, "Reconci[ling] Aboriginal and Crown constitutional and legal orders to ensure that Aboriginal peoples are full partners in Confederation"?"

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has made it very clear that we support the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The ministers have been involved very extensively in trying to work with the indigenous community to recognize those wrongs of the past and build for the future.

With regard to heritage sites around the city and on Prince Edward Island, that is happening in many cases. There is always much more to do but clearly, as I said in my remarks, the Mi'kmaq people have been residents, if I could call it that, of Prince Edward Island for some 12,000 years. They are a part of this. We are in different times today and their participation has to be recognized as well.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the hon. member's remarks, he gave us a feel for why recognizing the birthplace of Canada and Confederation is so important. Why would we recognize it now? What is it about this point in history that we should leverage the lessons from 150 years ago and that birthplace and take it into the future? What has endured and what has changed, and why is now the right time to be recognizing this?

Hon. Wayne Easter: Clearly the timing could not be more appropriate, Mr. Speaker. This is our 150th anniversary. It is a time of celebration. At this time, we are building on the experiences of our past. A lot of effort has gone into this over the last number of years, and everything has come together in this, our 150th year. This is the time to pass in legislation that Charlottetown is indeed the birthplace of Confederation.

However, as I mentioned in my remarks, there were other important events. Yes, Charlottetown was the birthplace of Confederation, but I could also go into what a number of people from Upper and Lower Canada said at the conference, how they talked about building a union. That was then built on in the Quebec and London conferences. Charlottetown is the birthplace, but to get there, there were other conferences that happened as well.

Hon. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 150th anniversary of our country's Confederation. However, while it may seem strange to us now, the establishment of the Dominion of Canada in 1867 was by no means a foregone conclusion. In the pre-Confederation period, the colonies in British North America were seized with political deadlock and economic instability. They faced numerous challenges posed by geographic distance, barriers in language and communication, and distinct regional identities and interests.

Due to these significant obstacles, the prospect of any sort of union between the colonies seemed hopelessly impractical and unachievable. However, there were some great men, determined men, who were undeterred by the challenges they faced. They were motivated by the grander vision they shared for the disparate British

North American colonies. These visionaries, the men we refer to as the Fathers of Confederation, set out to join the colonies and forge the future of a nation.

With this goal in mind, on the evening of Monday, August 29, these men—John A. Macdonald, George Brown, Thomas D'Arcy McGee, Alexander Galt, William McDougall, George-Étienne Cartier, Alexander Campbell, and Hector Langevin—boarded the *SS Queen Victoria* to sail down the St. Lawrence to Charlottetown, P.E.I.

At the same time, delegates from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island were about to hold a conference in Charlottetown to discuss a maritime union among the three provinces. However, the Canadian delegation believed that these discussions could result in something even more significant, so they resolved to join the Maritimers and make the case, not for a regional union but for a larger confederation.

The Charlottetown Conference began on Thursday, September 1, 1864, and lasted until Wednesday, September 7. There were 23 delegates in all, eight from the Canadas, as Ontario and Quebec were then known, and five from each of the maritime colonies. They met each day without interruption or adjournment on the second floor of the legislative council chamber in the Colonial Building.

Over the course of the week, John A. Macdonald and the rest of the Canadian contingent presented their arguments in favour of Confederation to the maritime delegates. The new nation would be one established in the spirit of co-operation. Each of the regions would be represented in a central government, which composition would be reflective of the general population. This government would be able to enact laws that would ensure the prosperity and security of the nation as a whole, which would be enhanced beyond what could ever be achieved by each colony on its own. The delegates were taken up with the vision for a new nation communicated by Macdonald and the others, and deliberations began in earnest to establish the terms for Confederation.

The long hours and hard work of the conference were punctuated by grand balls and dinners. On one such occasion, Macdonald and the Canadian delegates invited their counterparts to dine on the *SS Queen Victoria*. They had prepared well, bringing a boatload of champagne with them to Charlottetown for the occasion. Liquor and wine flowed freely, and there were numerous stirring and impromptu speeches.

According to historian P.B. Waite, it was moments like these that were truly "the beginning of Confederation. There were no resolutions and no signatures, only toasts and talk, but perhaps for the first time, some of the twenty-three delegates at Charlottetown began to drink the deeper draught of nationalism."

These events fostered considerable amicability and mutual respect among the delegates, smoothing the path for the hard work of nation building. Despite such different backgrounds, regional interests, and aspirations, each man at the conference was able to work with the others in the interest of achieving something truly remarkable.

Private Members' Business

By the time the conference concluded on September 7, all of the initial discussions and agreements necessary had been made. It had been a success. Of course, not all was settled, and the conversation would need to continue, first at Quebec, where the bulk of the detailed hard negotiation and drafting took place, and finally in London, where the i's were dotted and the t's were crossed and the birthplace of Canada was finalized. The Charlottetown Conference had demonstrated that a union between the colonies was indeed possible.

As one observer noted, "the Charlottetown Conference established Confederation as a political reality. It gave Confederation the initial *élan*, the sense of common destiny, that for a time seemed to sweep all before it." Because of the success of the Charlottetown Conference and the momentum it produced towards achieving Confederation, John A. Macdonald and the other Fathers of Confederation were able to find the consensus necessary to unite Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia as the initial provinces in the Dominion of Canada. It was not long before their vision for a great country would finally stretch from sea to sea, with the other provinces and territories joining in subsequent years.

• (1120)

Were it not for the hard work and efforts of the Fathers of Confederation at that initial conference in Charlottetown, we would not have the strong, proud, and free country of Canada that we know today. There is no question that we would not be standing here in this place today if not for the tenacity and determination of the Fathers of Confederation, who worked so hard on those late summer days in Charlottetown over 150 years ago to secure the vision of a united country we call Canada. That is why, in the days leading up to the Charlottetown Conference, the *Charlottetown Monitor* declared that it would be, "perhaps the most important event-as far at least as the future destinies of these colonies are concerned-that has occurred during the present century." It is for this reason that Charlottetown is now rightfully termed the birthplace of Confederation, which this bill seeks to formalize.

I am especially glad to see a bill such as this come about in this year, the year that we celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation. For the Canada 150 celebrations, the Liberal government determined that the history and the events of Confederation itself were not worthy to be celebrated as part of Canada 150. Despite that fact, everyday Canadians from across the country have taken it upon themselves to celebrate the people, events, and accomplishments of Canada's history themselves. Canadians care about their history and the places that have shaped that history. Prince Edward Island has seen a record increase in tourism this year, as Canadians and other visitors have flocked to the places that are of so much significance to the founding of our country. Therefore, I applaud the hon. member for Malpeque's conscientious objection to the Liberal government's war on history, by recognizing the historic importance of Charlottetown in forming our country through the Charlottetown Conference. I would encourage all members of this House to continue to reflect upon the importance of historic places in our country and to seek out further opportunities to see these places preserved and restored.

It should be said that there is an element of irony in this effort to recognize Charlottetown as the birthplace of Confederation. As all

who were listening carefully to that speech noted, while the conference took place there and those first four colonies took the step, the leap into Confederation, there was one that was conspicuously absent. That was the one that housed that original conference, Prince Edward Island. I have often asked my friends from Prince Edward Island what the reasons were. They have always said to me what I thought was the most succinct response, "Well, you know us islanders, we're a very prudent type. We just wanted to be totally sure that this project was going to work before we got on board." It would only be a few years before that actually took place. Therefore, we are glad not only that P.E.I. overcame those initial fears, but now so enthusiastically wants to embrace its critical role in making that Confederation happen.

Thomas Heath Haviland was one of those Fathers of Confederation. He was born and died in Charlottetown. He knew just how important his beloved city was in the shaping of this country Canada. He declared, "It may yet be said that here in little Prince Edward Island was that union formed which has produced one of the greatest nations on the face of God's Earth." Indeed, this is as true today as it was on the day when he spoke those very words.

• (1125)

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of Bill C-236 but with some significant caveats I would like to propose to members.

While I accept the premise that Charlottetown is the birthplace of Confederation, we in the NDP think it is imperative that Confederation be framed as a process and not as a finite, singular event. The relationship of which the member for Malpeque spoke is among Canadians, among provinces, among territories, and among indigenous communities that make up this amazing country. It is an ongoing process, therefore. We are in this marriage together, and we must continuously work on improving that relationship, which is the foundation of our country.

Yes, the process of Confederation began in Charlottetown, and that is indeed worthy of celebration, yet there were several vital steps that occurred and must therefore be part of this narrative as well. Other steps and other places deserve credit in the creation of our country. Specifically, Quebec and New Brunswick both played important roles in this process, and one would be remiss not to mention that fact. This legislation may give the impression that Confederation was conceptualized and executed all in Charlottetown. That was definitely not the case.

I would also like to spend some of my time speaking about the way indigenous people were so wrongfully ignored during this process. We are all aware of the colonial context in which our country was created a century and a half ago. Just as each of us as individuals is a product of our historical context, so too is Canada. I implore the government to ensure that recognition of Charlottetown does not lead to a sort of celebration of colonialism.

Private Members' Business

Including indigenous people, especially the Mi'kmaq population in and around Charlottetown, in developing heritage and tourism materials for the cradle of confederation is a critical component of this celebration and this understanding. A better understanding of our history is one important step toward reconciliation. The glaring omission in our historical narrative of the essential contribution of indigenous peoples must be redressed. A celebration of the birthplace of Confederation must include them going forward as part of our country's narrative.

We must be careful to acknowledge indigenous peoples' presence in the concerned territory prior to this particular agreement. We must acknowledge that they were not included in the negotiations about their future and the future of the very lands they had occupied from time immemorial.

It is also important to support indigenous people as they represent their own historical narratives. Confederation is not the Canadian story; it is a Canadian story, one of many that represent our collective history. Let us not make the same mistake those who came before us made by ignoring other cultural historical narratives.

With this in mind, let me return to the matter of Charlottetown and how to best define its role in this process. Recognizing Charlottetown as the birthplace of Confederation is, for many Canadians, a foregone conclusion. The province is already promoting itself as the cradle of Confederation, and most of us arrive on the island by means of what is called the Confederation Bridge.

I understand that there has been a little contention, though. A recent 2017 New Brunswick tourism campaign had the slogan "Celebrate where it all began", so I understand the sponsor's tenacity in seeking to get Charlottetown formally recognized. If I am not mistaken, a similar bill was put forward a couple of years ago, and I am also aware of a former Liberal prime minister making a proclamation to express this sentiment.

Let me start by addressing one argument I have heard to discredit Charlottetown's role, which is that Prince Edward Island did not join the union of British North America colonies until 1873. However, the proposed bill recognizes Charlottetown as the birthplace of Confederation, irrespective of P.E.I.'s participation in the union, so I do not consider the province's initial withdrawal from the proposed union as grounds to oppose this legislation in any way.

I alluded to my following point in my short preamble, but I want to reiterate: with respect to this legislation, Confederation should not be considered a static event.

● (1130)

Complicated unions and political manoeuvrings often have many moving parts. The British North America colonies union is certainly no exception. The initial conference was held September 1, 1864, in Charlottetown, and then New Brunswick governor Arthur Hamilton Gordon was instrumental in its organization. The role Governor Gordon played in getting parties to the conference is certainly worthy of recognition in the story of Confederation, because without his insistence on the initial conference, perhaps things would not have come together as they did. However, we must remember that he had proposed the initial conference to achieve a maritime union among P.E.I., New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia. Shortly after the

conference began, Sir John A. Macdonald and Sir George-Étienne Cartier persuaded the delegates from the east to abandon their original proposal and consider a greater British North America colonies union with those who called themselves the Canadians, who hailed from what is now Ontario and Quebec.

Historian Shawn McCarthy, at UNB, has convincingly explained that New Brunswick governor Gordon had hoped to assemble a maritime union and invited P.E.I. and Nova Scotia to discuss the proposal. Since this was not the union that took place, he promptly withdrew from the conference and headed home. Therefore, at the Charlottetown conference, the idea of a maritime union was essentially scrapped, and the union of the British North America colonies was born.

While many items were agreed to in spirit in Charlottetown, such as the idea of creating a federation, with a federal and local or provincial government, the details were confirmed in Quebec City at the famous Quebec City conference, in October 1864. Therefore, Quebec City played no less of an important role. It just does not necessarily have the title of the birthplace of Confederation. There was a subsequent conference in London as well that undoubtedly also played a significant role in finalizing the proposed union.

The BNA Act received royal assent on July 1, 1867. I hope hon. members will see why I have asked that Confederation be considered a process instead of a singular event.

In some ways, the Confederation process is a very Canadian story. It is filled with compromises and the genius and emotional intelligence of key players drawn from various backgrounds from various parts of this land. When one considers these prominent figures and their roles in arranging both the Charlottetown and Quebec conferences, it is easy to see that both New Brunswick and Quebec played a huge role in the ultimate success of the union. It is certainly my contention, however, that Charlottetown was where the union of what we now call Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia was conceived.

Professor MacDonald, from the department of history at the University of P.E.I., states:

...the process began in Charlottetown in 1864. It was at that conference that a congruence of pressures, fear of the Americans, the colonial office wanting us to unite and the needs of Canadians came together in an agreement in principle to a confederation. This was a huge, watershed moment, and I use that term advisedly. All things flowed from that agreement in principle to a confederation

He said that everything flowed from the conference in Charlottetown, so that is absolutely critical.

Private Members' Business

There has not, however, always been a positive role in Confederation in respect of indigenous peoples. That has to be recognized as well as we try now, finally, to build a nation-to-nation relationship. We must ever be mindful of the way the first peoples were treated in our country. That is why, in the preamble of the bill before us, its talks about Charlottetown forming “part of the basis for the nation of Canada”. I strongly agree. The population of indigenous peoples, the Mi’kmaq population in particular, have to be front and centre as we celebrate this initiative.

Therefore, I call on the government to not pay lip service to the calls for action in the truth and reconciliation commission report. In particular, I draw its attention to call to action no. 45, which calls on the government to not only reconcile aboriginal and crown constitutional orders to ensure that aboriginal peoples are full partners in Confederation but also to “adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the framework for reconciliation.”

● (1135)

In conclusion, the NDP supports Charlottetown as the birthplace of Confederation. We acknowledge that the long process began there, but we call on the government to recognize and acknowledge the important role indigenous peoples should have played in the negotiations and to work with them to create a new narrative for Canada going forward.

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I could not be more proud to stand in this chamber today to speak to Bill S-236, an act to recognize Charlottetown as the birthplace of Confederation.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the efforts of a couple of Charlottetown constituents, Sharon Larter and Philip Brown, from Charlottetown, not be confused with Philip Brown from out west. They have been the driving force behind getting this bill into Parliament and pushing it along.

I would also like to acknowledge the efforts of Senator Griffin, in the other place, who picked up the idea from these Charlottetown constituents and shepherded the bill through the Senate; and my colleague, the hon. member for Malpeque, who is seeing the bill through this process. I would also like to acknowledge George Proud, the former member of Parliament from Hillsborough, a friend and mentor, who initially came up with this as a private member's bill more than 20 years ago. This must be a proud day for him.

I would like to thank the members for York—Simcoe and Victoria for their very thoughtful contributions and support of this bill.

A birthplace marks a beginning and the setting into motion of something new. The movement towards Confederation began with the discussions at the 1864 Charlottetown Conference. Held in the legislative council chamber of Province House, in the capital of Prince Edward Island, these discussions sparked a vision of a wider, united nation built on the belief that is still true today, that unity is strength.

Prince Edward Island has embraced its role as the birthplace of Confederation and has made it a significant part of the identity of the province. This identity is showcased through historic re-enactments every summer by the Confederation Players. It is proudly featured in

tourism campaigns and on license plates. It is integrated in the name of the world's longest bridge, across ice-covered water, the Confederation Bridge, and in the name of the Confederation Trail, which extends the full length of Prince Edward Island. I can personally attest to that, having traversed the full length of the trail by bicycle this past summer with 20 friends in our own Canada 150 project. It is also in the name of the Confederation Centre of the Arts, which is a permanent memorial to the Fathers of Confederation and the site of the longest running musical in Canadian history, *Anne of Green Gables*.

The Government of Canada has also recognized Charlottetown as the birthplace of Confederation. In 1996, the role of Charlottetown was recognized through a proclamation signed by former prime minister Jean Chrétien, and it is still proudly displayed on the second floor of City Hall in Charlottetown.

The Government of Canada invested in the year-long celebrations in 2014 of the 150th anniversary of the historic Charlottetown Conference. Currently, the government is investing over \$40 million to restore Province House, the site of the Charlottetown Conference.

● (1140)

[*Translation*]

In recognizing past historic events, we have the opportunity to consider what it was like to live at that time. In 1864, our country was very different. Our government looked different, our economy and transportation were different, and the role of women and indigenous peoples in our society was different. Recognition of a historic moment is not a stamp of approval of the values and ideals of society or its leaders at that time. Recognition is a marker. It is a point of reference for future generations to show that at this time in our history something happened that altered the course. For Canada, Confederation indeed altered the course of our nation.

I recognize that not all of the outcomes of Confederation were good and that for certain groups, like Canada's indigenous peoples, the effects were long-lasting. This is part of the reason why recognition is the correct course of action and why I support Bill S-236. Recognition of Charlottetown as the birthplace has the potential to spark discussions and reflection on what happened, who was involved, and what motivated their behaviour and decisions.

It can also be an occasion to encourage Canadians, and especially our youth, to look at this historic marker in the continuum of our nation and consider the event from multiple perspectives. It could encourage reflection on how far we have come as a nation on issues of importance in society today such as the role of women, and it can serve as a reminder that we still have a way to go on issues like our interactions with indigenous peoples.

Progress is attained by degrees. Even the act of Confederation was not established in a single meeting but took several conferences and several years before it came to fruition. In addition to Charlottetown, there were the Quebec and London conferences, in 1864 and 1867, respectively. Confederation initially brought together four provinces but it took over a century for the other six provinces and three territories to become a part of the Canada we know and love today.

Private Members' Business

• (1145)
[English]

It is well-timed to recognize Charlottetown as the birthplace of Confederation in 2017 to coincide with the 150th anniversary of Confederation. As we celebrate this year-long anniversary, we are setting the tone for the future of Canada. Moving forward with this acknowledges that our past is a part of us. We will better understand the complexity of the issues facing us if we take the time to understand how we got to where we are today.

We can be inspired by those who have paved the way for us, who have led with vision, and who, through hard work, determination, and collaboration, pushed forward on the dream of a nation united. That dream is yet to be attained. There is work ahead of us. For now, we can reaffirm the role of Charlottetown in Confederation by supporting Bill S-236. We can, through this bill, also recognize the role that the Quebec and London conferences played in Confederation.

Our nation was not born out of revolution or war; it was born out of a series of conferences and negotiations that led to our Constitution, our country's founding principles. At the Charlottetown Conference and the following conferences, our predecessors set out to define who we are and what we stand for as a country. This is continually evolving, but it is built on the foundation that we, as Canadians, believe in fundamental freedoms and live in a democratic society. We believe in human rights, equality, and peace. These are our values.

What was accomplished at the conferences that led to Confederation was a coming together of ideas, collective problem-solving, and the birth of the ideal that we are better together as a nation united. Our differences of region, background, education, and goals strengthen us, rather than divide us. This year, as we celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation, we are looking back, but we are also looking forward. Bill S-236 reminds us of a specific moment in our country's evolution, a turning point. We cannot go back; we must keep moving onward, but we should remember that what is happening now could not have happened without what happened then.

This bill has a simple purpose: reaffirming the role of Charlottetown in Confederation. Canada's smallest province played a big role in the creation of our nation. Let us inspire those who come after us to be reminded that, in this vast and diverse nation where we can freely have heated debates on topics we are passionate about, we ultimately are united and that this union began in a room in Charlottetown in 1864.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I begin the debate on an issue that is near and dear to the hearts of many Canadians, and in particular my dear friend and colleague, the hon. member for Malpeque, to officially recognize in law that Charlottetown was indeed the birthplace of Canadian Confederation. Not only is this legislation 150 years too late, but it finally solves the great debate on what place in Canada we should formally recognize as our official birthplace.

Second, this proposed legislation would unofficially give the blessing of the Parliament of Canada to the Province of Prince Edward Island to proclaim on its licence plates that it is in fact the

birthplace of Confederation. I commend the tenacity of Islanders in their struggle to get this endorsed recognition. As the old saying goes, "It's better to ask for forgiveness than permission". I would not be surprised to find this saying inscribed on the family crest of the member for Malpeque.

As only a squabble among Canadian provinces can break out, from what I am led to believe, our New Brunswick brethren decided that their Canada 150 celebration tourism slogan would read that people should visit their province to "Celebrate where it all began". This impasse on which province should officially be designated by law as the birthplace of Confederation led to Bill S-236 being introduced by Senator Griffin from P.E.I., so that our dear friends from the New Brunswick delegation would know that the seed that led to the birth of our great country was planted in September 1864, while on the island of the great red mud.

In preparation for this momentous debate, my office reached out to the Parliamentary library and requested the book *The Road to Confederation*, by Donald Creighton, which some would call the most preeminent tome ever written on the subject. And lo and behold, their copy had walked away. While some would raise suspicions as to whether the Minister of Tourism for New Brunswick had somehow acquired this book to ensure that the waters remained muddy on this age-old question, as if by divine intervention the Parliamentary library found its original 1964 hardback copy at the thirteenth hour and saved the day.

The very concept of a united Canada in 1864 was as far-fetched as the idea that this current Liberal government will inevitably balance its budget. That said, hope springs eternal. Canada was indeed created, and there is a minute chance that the current federal ledgers may one day return to the black.

Today's debate is to prove that Charlottetown should be recognized as the birthplace of Confederation. To do so, I will rely on the evidence of Donald Creighton in his book, who went to great pains to illustrate that were it not for the Charlottetown Conference, we would not have been celebrating our sesquicentennial.

As has been said, the Charlottetown Conference was originally not designed or orchestrated for the sole purpose of unifying the various regions of British North America under one central government. The intent of the meeting was to explore whether Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia should amalgamate as one entity. While it would be an understatement to say there was hesitancy on the part of these three colonies to undergo a maritime union, it was none other than Sir John A., George-Étienne Cartier, George Brown, and Alexander Galt who struck when the iron was hot.

While the Province of Canada and the three maritime colonies may have been neighbours, their direct links and familiarity with each other were nowhere near as strong as they would soon become. While the delegates from the maritime colonies had arrived in preparation for the conference, P.E.I.'s W.H. Pope, the provincial secretary who had been tapped to be the official welcoming party, wondered where the interlopers from the west were.

Private Members' Business

It was not until the next morning, on September 1, that an unknown steamer pulled into view. As noted in the *Road to Confederation*, the Islanders later came to call her the “Confederate Cruiser”. As soon as the ship pulled into the harbour, the news travelled as fast as a Prairie wildfire that “the Canadians had arrived”.

Now, much to the chagrin of Pope, the cruiser did not actually dock in the harbour but had anchored some distance from the wharf. How was he supposed to extend the most personable and warm Islander welcome, as only an Islander can do, without being in the presence of these Canadians? He found himself a rowboat, and according to the New Brunswick assembly journals, he started bravely out with all the dignity he could in a “flat-bottomed boat, with a barrel of flour in the bow, and two jars of molasses in the stern, and with a lusty fisherman as his only companion, to meet the distinguished visitors”.

• (1150)

As the Canadians assembled on shore and met in the legislative council chamber in the Colonial Building, the Prince Edward Island government was taken back by such a large delegation. They had only prepared a table to sit four delegates from the west; however, sitting across from them was a group of eight smiling Canadian ministers, and in tow, the clerk of the Canadian Executive Council and two of Sir John A.’s secretaries.

To highlight the excitement that was in the air, by a stroke of coincidence, the Slaymaker and Nichols’ Olympic Circus were in town. Now, why, one might ask, did I bring this up? I do so because Islanders from across the colony had gathered in Charlottetown to attend the circus, the first in over two decades. There were no rooms available at any of the hotels or lodgings to accommodate all of the Canadian delegation. Because all of the accommodations were accounted, this provided for a far more personal interaction between none other than George Brown and W.H. Pope, as Brown was invited to stay at the affable latter’s house, while the others were put up at Franklin House.

As they began the heavy work of negotiating a single unified country, P.B. Waite wrote in *The Life and Times of Confederation*, the Charlottetown Conference established Confederation as a political reality. It gave Confederation the official *élan*, the sense of common destiny.

It was that morning that the four principles, Macdonald, Cartier, Brown, and Galt, began the process of gently swaying their maritime cohorts. The Canadians, who were once bitter enemies, in particular Macdonald and Brown, had decided to holster their partisan leanings and personal political objectives in order to persuade the others that Confederation was “possible, desirable, even necessary”.

Day three of the conference proceeded in the same orderly fashion, with rhetorical flourishes and convincing arguments by the other Canadian delegates, who were doing an extraordinary job of convincing all those who attended of the great potential of a United Canada.

It was that night that the Canadians invited the maritimers onboard the SS *Queen Victoria*, aka the “Confederate Cruiser”, and swooned them over a decadent meal and a steady flow of Sir John A.’s water.

The ice had been broken, the relationships were now firmly formed, and no longer were they strangers or even acquaintances; they were the architects of Canada.

According to George Brown’s letter to his wife recalling the events of the evening, someone on the vessel had yelled:

If any one can show just cause or impediment why the Colonies should not be united in matrimonial alliance, let him now express it or forever hold his peace.

To the surprise of no one, there was silence, and George Brown said:

...the union was thereupon formally completed and proclaimed!

Confederation was meant to be.

That very word “Confederation”, which only two days before was as foreign to the delegates as the word “excitable” to describe Stephen Harper would be or the word “humility” to describe the current sitting Prime Minister, was now dripping with great excitement from the tongues those who had gathered around the mahogany table the next day at the Colonial Building in Charlottetown.

I think the evidence provided by my colleagues in previous speeches, and some of the colour I was able to provide, has helped convince this House that Bill S-236 should be passed with unanimity and expediency.

While the Charlottetown Conference was just one element that led to the official creation of our dominion in 1867, it was the birthplace that led to the successful Quebec City and London conferences.

As P.B. Waite said:

What is surprising is not how much was concluded at Quebec, but how much had been arranged at Charlottetown.

To Donald Creighton who wrote that people despairingly said that nothing could ever happen in Charlottetown, they have undeniably been proven wrong.

The story of how our nation was created, showing how westerners, maritimers and, yes, even Islanders, could put aside petty differences to focus on what was best for the greater good, is a lesson for all of us assembled here today 150 years later. It could perhaps lead to great compromises among all political parties in 2017, if only the member from Malpeque could row out in his dinghy and show us that true Islander hospitality for which Islanders are known.

• (1155)

There is more that unites Canadians than divides us; that the nation is unified and proud. As we gaze upon what the next 150 years will bring, we pay tribute to those courageous founding fathers for all they did, and we make the solemn pledge to pass down a stronger Canada than the one we inherited.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to thank my colleagues of all parties who spoke and offered their support for Bill S-236, that Charlottetown is the birthplace of Confederation.

Government Orders

When there are debates in this place, we sometimes do not agree and sometimes we do. Even when we agree, we always learn something new. I thank the members for York—Simcoe and Victoria. I learned something new from their remarks. I really liked the approach of the member for Brandon—Souris who appealed to the compromises we could make within our parties. The member and I did not always compromise on the farm movement, but just like the lessons of Confederation, we always learn some lessons as time passes.

It could be summed up best on why this was the birthplace of Confederation. I will read a note, which I believe comes from the archives. It says:

On the first official day of the conference, Macdonald spoke at length about the benefits of a union of all of British North America. The next day, Galt - a businessman, finance minister, and railway promoter - presented a well-researched description of the financial workings of such a union. On the third day, George Brown discussed the legal structure. And on the fourth day, McGee praised the nationalist identity, one that he saw bolstered by a vivid Canadian literature.

On every day of the conference, people spoke about building a greater nation.

I will sum up by saying thanks to all those in the House who offered their support at this stage of the bill today. We ought to recognize our founding fathers who met in Charlottetown and, yes, who went further in other conferences, such as the Quebec Conference and the London Conference. Over the years, we have learned, as the member for Victoria mentioned, about ensuring we are inclusive, about bringing in all peoples of our country and about what we are doing in this day and age. I can truly say, with the meeting and this bill to endorse Charlottetown as the birthplace of Confederation, that the founding fathers built, better than they new, a great nation, Canada, from coast to coast to coast.

• (1200)

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2017, NO. 2

The House resumed from November 2 consideration of the motion that Bill C-63, A second 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.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to stand in the House today, 150 years since the very first sitting on November 6, 1867.

Before I move onto this, it is appropriate that I send our thoughts and prayers to friends, families, colleagues, and first responders who

attended the church shooting in Sutherland Springs, Texas. Our thoughts and prayers are with the friends, the families, and all first responders in that entire community. Just as they are grieving, we are grieving with them.

I thought about what I would say on the fall economic statement. Today, I will talk about our legacy because, at the end of the day, all of us will be remembered for something. In preparing for this speech, I stumbled across a couple of quotes that I thought I would enter into the records. The first is, “No legacy is so rich as honesty.” That was by William Shakespeare. Over the last two year, we have seen the Prime Minister’s actions, his direction and his choice of how he will move forward in his mandate or what he believes is his mandate.

I coached for a long time. I would always tell our kids, when I was coaching hockey, or baseball, or soccer or when I was working with youth groups, that they would go through this life once. At the end of the day, all they would have was their integrity, their legacy. I would ask them what they would like to leave behind, or what would be their brand as they moved through life. When I would worked in schools, I would talked to kids. I would ask them what a brand was. They would say that a brand was the swoosh on a Nike shoe, or it was the great big A&W sign or the bear for A&W. I would tell them that their brand was what people would say about them after they left the room. The kids talked about the the swoosh or all those other items. These are logos and marketing tools, but a brand is really what people say about us.

If we compare governments and prime ministers over the years, Prime Minister Harper took us from back row and second from the left to principled leadership and the front row. That will no doubt elicit jabs from the other side, but I want to offer this. We had a leader who was principled, who put his thoughts always on Canadians, how our policy would impact those who elected us, how we were seen on the world stage with respect to Canada as a collective as one nation, and I have the examples to back it up.

• (1205)

There are those of us who are more concerned about how we are perceived through the lens of others than how our actions are perceived and what our legacy will be. I will use a very recent example.

We have a young Prime Minister who has been in *Vogue*. He has been seen planking, photo bombing through Stanley Park in my beautiful province of British Columbia. He has been seen with his shirt off. Far be it for me to criticize.

Government Orders

We had a leader who was known for his principled leadership. Now there is a leader who is known for fancy socks or for showing up in question period in a Superman Halloween costume underneath his clothes. I was in the House that day. Many on this side were wondering if he had a new haircut. Somebody said that he was trying to be Waldo. I said no. I said that if we had learned anything over the last two years, it was that he believed he was Superman. I said he was trying to Clark Kent. The Prime Minister left part way through question period and returned quickly. Shortly thereafter in social media was the Prime Minister coming down the stairs showing the large Superman logo. He thought that was very novel and that it would be on the front page of newspapers.

At a time when fishers, farmers, and small business people are suffering, the Prime Minister is being investigated by the Ethics Commissioner. The finance minister is embroiled in an investigation, one that I do not know we ever have seen before. He seemingly has profited since being in office. He introduced legislation that would benefit the companies in which he had assets. We now know that there are more hidden businesses, numbered companies, in the Bahamas. The latest leak in the last 24 hours is that there are more questions. Canadians are hearing about questionable actions, which are leading to more questions.

I come back to our legacy. When I ran in the election, I had an opportunity to speak to a few members of Parliament, a few MLAs, and leaders within the community, who I hold in high esteem. They are really my mentors and I respect them. They put our constituents first. I think the world of Mayor Lyn Hall in my riding. During the course of the wildfires, he led his team with actions, not just words. He helped alongside myself and some of the MLAs as our community grew beyond our traditional population base. We welcomed 11,000 evacuees into our community and looked after them. We opened up our hearts and homes and looked after them.

With true leadership, MLA Mike Morris, MLA Shirley Bond, and MLA John Rustad did whatever they could to ensure that those in our communities were cared for. We do that every day, not just when there are emergencies. Why? Because we care more for how those in the community who elected us are doing than getting a picture on the front page of a newspaper, wearing new socks, walking a red carpet, or taking a selfie. We care about those who elect us. We care deeply about our communities. We care deeply about Canadians.

• (1210)

We have a government that campaigned on promises to Canadians, that said they were ready to lead. They said real change will be coming. Have we ever seen real change. The Liberals announced in their fall fiscal update that they have no plan to get back to a balanced budget. They have no plan, because it is not their money. They have no idea.

When I talk about my family finances, I do not refer to them as my fortune. In my riding of Cariboo—Prince George, there are very few people who can stand before a mike or a camera and talk about their family's fortune. They would probably say they are worried about their family's finances or how they are going to make ends meet. They would probably say they are worried about the fact that Canada does not have a softwood lumber agreement in place.

There is a further concern in terms of one of our number one industries within the province of British Columbia. This past weekend, Tolko, one of the largest mills in my riding and located in Williams Lake, had a massive fire. This added further insult to the fact that we lost 53-million cubic metres of fibre in the wildfires this past summer.

The Liberal government has dithered away any opportunity to get a softwood lumber agreement in place, and hundreds of people have been waiting to see their government stand up for them and fight. Now there is further uncertainty in our communities. There is further uncertainty in our communities because of what the government has done. The Liberals like to say that Canadians are far better off, but the reality is that hydro, gasoline, home heating, health and dental benefits, employee discounts, personal savings, life-saving therapies, and local businesses have all been attacked by them, regardless of what they say.

People at home are listening to this debate today. People in the gallery are listening. I can say that everyone gets talking points. Government members get talking points. When we ask the hard questions that Canadians want us to ask, time and time again the Liberals will stand up and give the same repetitive answer, which turns out to be a non-answer. Why is that? It is because they do not believe they have to answer to Canadians.

There is another quote that I want to mention, "All good men and women must take responsibility to create legacies that will take the next generation to a level we could only imagine." What level are we talking about for the next generation? Under the leadership of Prime Minister Trudeau, what is the government going to leave to the next generation? The debt we are incurring today, the money we are talking about today, is not free money. It has to be paid back. Who is going to pay that money back? It will be my kids. It will be their kids. The next generation will have to pay it back. That will be the Liberal legacy.

I have stood in the House a number of times since the summer. I have talked about the wildfires and how our communities managed to rally together.

• (1215)

Speaking about legacies, there is a gentleman back home who is very sick. I believe he knew how sick he was during the summer. Regardless of how sick he was, he continued to fight the fires. He continued to lead teams all on his own. He is a local logging contractor whose name is Lee Todd. He is legendary in the Cariboo. However, he was sick, and I am not quite sure how sick, but he flew his personal helicopter to try to spot where the first fires were. He led other local contractors.

In the Cariboo, we do not take no for an answer and we do whatever we can to get things done. Regardless of whether it is prescribed, we just get it done. We do not ask for permission, many times we beg forgiveness afterward, but we get the job done. Nobody knows what tomorrow is going to bring but, for me, one of Lee's legacies is going to be that regardless of his own health and well-being, he continued to lead and do whatever he could. For example, he opened his shop and fed the firefighters and contractors who wanted to save our community.

Government Orders

I throw that in because, again, when we are talking about legacy and moving forward, we have to be reminded time and again that this House does not belong to us. It does not belong to the government or to those of us on the side. It belongs to Canadians. We were elected to be here and be their voices. We have talked about parliamentary privilege over the last year. That privilege is not so we can get to the front of line, ride in fancy vehicles, or attend fancy events. Parliamentary privilege is there to protect the rights of Canadians. This has been forgotten.

We have a Prime Minister and a House leader who wanted to change the standing rules of the House because they thought it would modernize them. They have invoked closure on debate, time allocation, time and again. I know what is going to come from the other side. They are going to start pointing fingers and saying that when those guys were in power this is what they did. Well, I can only speak about my experience. I am a new member of Parliament, as people know. I am fortunate that the good people of Cariboo—Prince George elected me. I have lived every day of being elected with the mindset of asking what my legacy is, because I may only get the chance to be elected once. We do not know how long this opportunity is going to last. Whatever we do, we should try to impact and change as many lives as we can.

Hopefully, people see that they have a fighter and I am fortunate enough to be elected in the next election. Whether it is my bill, Bill C-211, that calls on the government to develop a national framework with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder; our work in talking about the impacts of impaired driving on families, which loss never heals regardless of time; working with my colleagues on this side of the House to hold the government accountable and fight for Canadians; working with colleagues across the way on team Canada approaches, and going to the U.S. to sit side by side with them and presenting team Canada, not being partisan, but team Canada; or whether it is through parliamentary trips, we always have to be mindful of what our legacy is.

I know my time is very short. I want to leave everyone with this last quote, and I have one question after that. John Diefenbaker said, “Freedom is the right to be wrong, [freedom is] not the right to do wrong.” I think that is so important. I am going to leave my colleagues with this. Before the partisan jabs come out, I want to ask everyone in the House what they want their legacy to be and what they want to be remembered for. Is it standing up for someone who is hiding assets and making it harder for Canadians? Fight, fight for Canadians.

• (1220)

Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by making a comment. It is very easy to make personal attacks. It would be very easy for me to make personal attacks against the previous Prime Minister Stephen Harper. However, I will not do that, because that is not what Canadians want. What I will do is focus on the member's comments about a legacy. One thing that this Prime Minister has proven as part of his legacy is a confidence and a belief in Canadians. That is why this Prime Minister has held unprecedented levels of consultations, which have resulted in some of the measures included in Bill C-63.

Just as an FYI, it is not the Prime Minister who is asking to take selfies, it is Canadians who are asking to take selfies with the Prime

Minister. That is a vote of confidence. That is an indication of a great legacy and a great brand.

I will provide the member with a few facts. There are over 450,000 more new jobs today than there were in 2015. In October alone, there were over 30,000 new jobs created. We have had the lowest unemployment rate since 2008. We have had the fastest growth in the G7. Are these not things that the member would acknowledge are a great legacy and that our Prime Minister and this Liberal team can be very proud of?

• (1225)

Mr. Todd Doherty: There we go, Mr. Speaker, she answered the question. That is exactly what I said the Liberals are worried about, their brand. She said that it was because of their “brand”. Oh my gosh, the arrogance is staggering.

Let me speak first to this “FYI”. It is not about the brand of the Prime Minister, it is about the policy that impacts Canadians. We know that 80% of Canadians pay more tax under the current government than they did with us.

Let me also talk about the consultations of the Liberals. Whether it is with respect to Bill C-63 or Bill C-55, Canadians are saying that the current government is not listening to them. Therefore, in my file on fisheries, oceans, and the Canadian Coast Guard, time and again, Canadians, whether they are our first nations, stakeholders, fishermen, or farmers, those people at the grassroots are telling us that the Liberals are not listening. They are more worried about their brand than they are about Canadians. That is the problem.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased that my colleague from Cariboo—Prince George has highlighted the legacy of failings of the Liberal government. Also, I very much appreciate that he highlighted that this is not about serving Canadians, it is about branding the Prime Minister. In fact, in the question just a second ago from the Liberal member, she commented on what a great legacy taking selfies was to leave behind. Can members imagine that being one's legacy?

I want to ask the member this. The long-lasting legacy of the current Liberal government will be imposing upon the next generation an unbearable debt load because of the Prime Minister's profligacy in spending. I would ask the member to comment on how our children and grandchildren are going to have to pay for our spending today. This is spending that is for our benefit but that future generations will have to pay.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague from Abbotsford. He knows I look up to him, and think the world of him. We are very fortunate to be in the House. We get to learn from and work with great people from all sides. The hon. member for Abbotsford has an incredible legacy that will live well beyond his time in the House.

Government Orders

He talked about the spending of the government. I do not know about you, Mr. Speaker, but I do not go to the casinos. I think we have done fairly well in our lives, but just going to a bank machine is like going to a slot machine. If I get some cash out, it is like I beat the house.

The Prime Minister has never had to worry about balancing a chequebook. He has never had to worry if he is going to have money in his bank account to make ends meet at the end of the day, or how he is going to clothe and feed his family. His government has spent more money on projects that do not benefit Canadians. The Asian investment bank will do nothing to create infrastructure here in Canada. Why is he spending that money? It is because it is helping his friends.

He has no concept that that money has to be paid back. Our kids, like the pages who are sitting with us, when they get out into the real world, do not understand they already have a huge amount of debt they have to pay off because of the government. It is not starting out on the right foot. It is starting out in debt. That is wrong.

● (1230)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring us to the topic of today's debate, which has been completely absent for the last half hour or so. That is Bill C-63, the omnibus budget bill.

This is my first chance to speak to this, so I would like to mention that I read it over the weekend. It is a bill of 275 pages, with 11 different divisions. As much as I am genuinely fond of my friend from Cariboo—Prince George, I was disappointed by his speech, because vacuous rhetoric around the Prime Minister's socks is not as valuable as actually diving in and discussing the bill.

I have read a lot of omnibus budget bills. As for the ones under the previous government, I can genuinely and honestly say that turning page after page of Bill C-38 I moved from anger to grief. I was crying by the time I finished reading it. I am very happy to say that having read Bill C-63, I was nearly very bored. That is a good sign when dealing with a budget bill.

I would like the member to tell me if he likes or does not like the amendments in division 8, part 5, which would allow for flexible work arrangements for employees, or further in that division, the part that would guarantee time off work for families who are victims of family violence.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands is also someone I very much respect in the House, and consider a friend. Usually, she is standing up and saying that was a good speech we did, or we had a good comment.

Our colleague brings up a good point. There are things in the bill that are good, but I would offer this to our hon. colleague across the way. She is a good person. She knows we are here to make sure we are representing and standing up for Canadians at all times.

My 30 minutes was not about the Prime Minister's socks. It was more about how we are more worried about a brand than policy, and how that impacts Canadians. She is a very smart and learned person, far smarter than I am. I apologize, perhaps it was my delivery of my speech, but my message was this. We seem to have gone away from what matters most, and that is Canadians, to what our Prime Minister

is wearing. It is more that than what he is bringing to the table, and what he is doing for Canadians, and how far we have fallen. That was the crux of my speech.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives continue to be out of touch with what Canadians really want to hear. I would suggest to members that, while they focus their criticism and personal attacks, whether it is on the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance, or the government as a whole, we will continue to remain focused on delivering for Canadians.

When the member talks about things such as “legacy”, I would suggest that the member might want to reflect on many of the positive initiatives of this government, whether it is historic agreements on pensions and the environment; a health care accord in regards to the fine work that the former minister of health has done on that; or tax reform or tax breaks. There is a litany of things that this government has done.

I have many individuals who have given me the distinct impression that this government has done more in two years than the former government did in over 10 years. I would ask the member if he would not, at the very least, acknowledge that there have been many different and positive actions that this government has taken.

Mr. Todd Doherty: There we go again, Mr. Speaker, the Liberal arrogance.

The member should come out to the communities. Come out to the small rural ridings where the proposed tax plans are targeting the hard-working creators of our communities, the backbone of our economy, and the backbone of our provincial and regional economies. They are attacking them. Eighty percent of Canadians are far worse off under the current government than they were under our government.

In fact, the Liberals talk about all the money that they are spending to make things better. The parliamentary budget officer has even said that infrastructure grants and contribution promises are falling flat. They are not able to get the money out the door. What do the Liberals do? They point the finger at the communities, say that they are not ready, and say it is not them but somebody else.

I am asking colleagues across the way to stand up for Canadians. How do they want to be remembered? What is their legacy going to be? Will it be socks?

● (1235)

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on Bill C-63. It is an honour to do so.

Small and medium-sized enterprises, or SMEs, are the backbone of the Canadian economy. They employ 10.5 million Canadians and contribute to roughly 40% of the country's gross domestic product. They are indeed engines of job creation.

Government Orders

The government is committed to making sure that businesses have the resources that they need to invest, innovate, grow, and create jobs. The Business Development Bank of Canada, BDC, is helping Canadian entrepreneurs achieve their full potential by facilitating their access to tailored solutions, including financing and consulting at each stage of their development. BDC services support the start-up and growth of small businesses across Canada.

BDC is mandated to support Canadian entrepreneurship, with a particular focus on SMEs. It does so by offering financing and advisory services. BDC financing provides business loans with flexible financing options, such as principle postponements and pre-authorized working capital, which help to protect the company's cash flow.

Before I go any further, I would like to inform this House that I am honoured to be splitting my time with the member for Parkdale—High Park.

Through its investments in a broad range of services, from venture capital to quasi-equity and securitization, BDC supports innovative and high-growth companies as they expand operations and scale up.

BDC's advisory services, which include a broad range of business support and consulting provided through a network of consultants, help businesses scale up, improve productivity, and export. Through its pan-Canadian reach, BDC serves nearly 49,000 clients, active in all industries nationwide, through a network of 118 business centres located across Canada.

To further expand its reach to entrepreneurs, BDC leverages its support to SMEs through more than 290 partnerships, strategic relationships, and memberships. Among other things, these partnerships allow BDC to improve support for underserved entrepreneurs, including young entrepreneurs, women entrepreneurs, indigenous entrepreneurs, businesses in Canada's north, social entrepreneurs, immigrant entrepreneurs, and rural entrepreneurs.

BDC also extends its reach and visibility to SMEs by organizing the annual BDC small business week, which was successfully held across Canada this year during the week of October 16. The BDC small business week celebrates entrepreneurship at local, provincial, and national events. It attracts close to 10,000 entrepreneurs at hundreds of events held across Canada.

As an instrument of public policy, BDC also responds to the direction from the government on areas with the most priority. For example, recognizing the importance of venture capital to Canada's economic prosperity, the Government of Canada introduced the venture capital action plan, VCAP, in 2013 and directed BDC to act as an agent of the government in managing the VCAP.

BDC also participates in the development and deployment of the accelerated growth service, AGS, which delivers coordinated, client-centric federal support, including financing, advisory services, and export and innovation support from participating federal organizations. As part of its role in the AGS, BDC collaborates with other organizations in the federal family to operationalize its concept, and to offer coordinated access to government services and programs.

The proposed changes in Bill C-63 to the Business Development Bank of Canada Act will allow the BDC to deliver on key initiatives

in budget 2017, and thus improve access to capital for innovative SMEs operating in emerging sectors of the Canadian economy.

● (1240)

SMEs will be the Canadian job creators of the future. In particular, BDC will also be making available new financing to clean technology firms, including SMEs, to help them hire new staff, develop innovative products, and support domestic and international sales. Innovation in clean technology will lead to products and services that will have an impact on all sectors of the Canadian economy. Clean tech has the potential to create thousands of well-paying jobs for Canadians.

The legislative change will also allow BDC to administer the venture capital catalyst initiative, VCCI, which will increase the late-stage venture capital available to Canadian entrepreneurs, and help Canadian start-ups grow and succeed. Venture capital is an essential source of financing for innovative, growth-oriented firms, and VCCI will support the continued growth of Canada's innovative companies.

I am very pleased to see that the Government of Canada is making smart and responsible investments that will result in better jobs and opportunities for all Canadians. The amendment to the Business Development Bank of Canada Act will enable the government to make the required investments in BDC to allow it to implement these important initiatives.

As our economy evolves to a more innovative clean tech-oriented economy, it is important that we make investments today that will pay off for the future generations. Equally important, I believe, is Canada's growing trade economy. Canada's ability to export to foreign markets needs to be leveraged. It is the way the economy of the future will grow, and it is the way Canada and Canadians can diversify their customer base in a changing global environment.

My riding of Newmarket—Aurora is home to many SMEs. I have had conversations with a number of them who already access the services of BDC. It is an important tool and lever in the Canadian economy that, in my frank assessment, is underutilized at this point.

Many SMEs are not aware of the services offered by BDC. I believe that changing the Business Development Bank of Canada Act, creating investment, particularly venture capital investment, will be the way for those SMEs to tap into and access federal government support, and also to access venture capital support, both at early age as start-ups and as they mature when they need additional capital to expand their already successful operation.

Government Orders

I hope that all sides of the House will agree that supporting SMEs, supporting innovation, and supporting the creators of jobs today and what will be the creator of jobs in the future is something that we can all get behind. I urge all members to support Bill C-63, particularly those with an affinity and fondness for the proposed changes to the BDC, because these investments will improve the BDC, thereby improving the opportunities for SMEs across Canada.

● (1245)

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite was focused on one bank, but I would like to focus on another that is mentioned in this budget implementation bill.

The Liberals have made a choice to now make an enormous investment in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. This is a government that ran on a platform that it would make substantive investments in infrastructure development here in Canada. Whether it be Collingwood or Wasaga Beach, my home town of Creemore, or otherwise, that infrastructure is desperately needed to make sure that small businesses are successful and, quite frankly, to make sure moms can just get their kids to school.

The fact of the matter is the Liberal government has made a choice. It has chosen to invest close to half a billion dollars in a different place, in China. The last time I checked, China was not a province of Canada nor Canada a province of China.

Why is this investment in infrastructure being made overseas, not here at home where we really need it?

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's affinity for infrastructure investment. I was with her in her riding when we announced infrastructure spending at the hospital at CFB Borden. I was happy to be there with her and share some of the good news with some of her constituents, who I can assure members very much appreciated that investment in infrastructure. As the member mentioned, it is very much needed, not only in her riding but across Canada.

However, our investments in infrastructure and in the infrastructure bank, indeed any investments we make, as any Canadian does, are made with a look to getting a return on that investment. We need to look globally around the world for how we can leverage Canadian expertise and Canadian capital to get the best return on that expertise and capital. That is the benefit of investing globally. This not an either/or proposition. Of course, we will continue to invest in Canada and all the provinces of Canada, but we also need to keep investing globally to be a player in the global infrastructure world and to make sure there is a return on investment for Canadian investors, wherever they choose to invest their capital.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his attention to SMEs.

If the government of the day paid attention, it would see that world investment is shifting toward renewable energy, not fossil fuels. Yet the current government has been chastised by both the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development and the Auditor General for not only refusing to provide the schedule for how it is going to meet its commitment to remove perverse subsidies for the fossil fuel sector, but also for the pathetically tiny shift in fossil fuel write-offs in its budget, which we are debating here today. My understanding is that it simply would move from

100% write-off to a 30% write-off, and that this will continue up to even 2021.

Could the member tell us, given his interest in SMEs, his government's schedule to finally remove the perverse subsidies, which amount to almost \$6 billion a year, and of that amount, how much is reduced in this bill?

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Mr. Speaker, it is always nice to hear from the member for Edmonton Strathcona. We had an opportunity last week to sit together at the special hearing of the international trade committee when the Prime Minister of Ukraine was here. It was nice to see her there. I know that we share either Ukrainian heritage or a large Ukrainian contingent in our constituency.

As a member of Parliament, not necessarily a member of the government, I do not have any inside information on that schedule. However, it is not an either/or proposition. This government supports both the oil and gas sector and clean, green technology. I do not think we should be ashamed of that. I do not think that is something bad. I do not think we need to make enemies of certain sectors in this country as a way of pushing a different agenda. There is room in the Canadian economy and the Canadian landscape for both industries. It behooves our government, and it is actually incumbent on us, to support industries that create jobs for Canadians, and I am proud to be part of a government that chooses to do that. I hope we do it for a very long time.

● (1250)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage (Multiculturalism), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin today by acknowledging that not only are we marking the 150th anniversary of Confederation this year, but on this very day are also celebrating the 150th anniversary of the first meeting of this very Parliament. It is an honour to speak on such an auspicious occasion.

I rise today to speak about the second budget implementation act, Bill C-63. I will address key parts of this implementation act, which I know will have a positive impact on and benefit the residents of my riding of Parkdale—High Park.

Over the last two years, I have heard from my constituents on issues that affect them and their families daily. I have heard their concerns and what they would like to see addressed by the government. I know that the positive measures included in this proposed act will help to resolve my constituents' most pressing concerns.

Government Orders

Canada has the fastest growing economy in the entire G7, and as a government, we are dedicated to reinvesting the benefits of that growth back into Canada to better the lives of my constituents in Parkdale—High Park and, indeed, all Canadians. Our government will lower taxes on small businesses, offer more support to families through the Canada child benefit, enhance the working income tax benefit, and also advance indigenous reconciliation.

There have been 500,000 jobs created since 2015. Over 1.5 million low-income workers will receive support to advance their careers and provide for their families. Canada's unemployment rate has dropped from 7.1% in September 2015, just before the last federal election, down to 6.2% in September of this year. Youth unemployment figures across the country are also at historic lows. Building on this positive growth, our government is enhancing the working income tax benefit by \$500 million, which will benefit 1.4 million Canadians. Additionally, to encourage entrepreneurship and innovation in our communities, we are lowering the small business tax from 11% to 9%.

This is a strong budget that will benefit people from coast to coast, including my fellow residents of Parkdale—High Park. This will be done by ensuring tax fairness, thanks to this new budget implementation act. It will put Canada's most skilled, talented, and innovative individuals at the heart of our future economy, creating more jobs both in the short term and the long term. We will also be implementing an agenda that addresses the changing nature of the economy to ensure that it will work for all Canadians.

This legislation allocates \$400 million for the venture capital catalyst initiative. This will directly benefit start-ups, entrepreneurs, and small businesses in Parkdale—High Park and right around the country. It is the small business owners, like those in the neighbourhoods of my riding, like the Junction, Swansea Village, and Parkdale itself, and Bloor west village that not only stimulate our economy but also support the families living in our very community.

In the last couple of years, it has been a pleasure to engage in conversations time and time again with small business owners in Parkdale—High Park, who make up the fabric of the fantastic neighbourhoods where we live, and shop, and raise our families. I also held a town hall with small business owners at the end of September. I listened carefully to their concerns and relayed those concerns back to cabinet and the minister.

Our government has responded. As a result of this important feedback, we are determined to limit any changes in the tax treatment of passive income to 3% of Canadian businesses who hold more than \$1 million in their corporate accounts. We have also decided not to move forward with measures relating to the conversion of income into capital gains.

I know that many of my constituents work long hours, and sometimes maintain more than one job to advance their careers and to support themselves and their families. Therefore, I will address the working income tax benefit, because this zones in on so many millions around this country, the hard-working Canadians, whether they live alone, with families, or are supporting seniors. In fact, the working income tax benefit is particularly zoned in on those living alone, who are now, according to the most recent census, the most common type of household in the entire country. For those people, it

will alleviate the stress of managing the cost of housing and living expenses throughout a given month. For a single person balancing escalating costs, it will ease the transition back into the workforce. It will also reduce income inequality and help to reduce poverty in this country.

In addition to assisting working Canadians, we are acting on our priority of supporting communities' most vulnerable people: children and families in need of additional resources. We are doing so through this budget implementation act by enhancing the Canada child benefit. Once we heard from families across the country, our government took measures to cut taxes on Canada's middle class, as well as to introduce the Canada child benefit, a much-warranted change that creates tax-free benefits targeted to help those who need it the most.

● (1255)

The new Canada child benefit has already been tremendously successful. In fact, it informs a lot of the economic growth I referenced in the first part of my remarks. As the result of this very program, nine out of 10 families already benefit from the CCB, and 300,000 children have been lifted out of poverty as compared to the year 2014-15. The impact of these measures cannot be underestimated. This impact is being felt by families who contribute to our communities and local economy by investing back into communities with things like piano lessons at High Park Music, swimming lessons at the Parkdale Community Recreation Centre, or simply by purchasing healthier food for one's kids at the various farmers markets in my riding.

As a result of the enhancements to the Canada child benefit, in 2017-18, more than 1.2 million will have benefited in the province of Ontario, my home province, and they will continue to receive additional support. Why? Because our government has made a commitment to further strengthening the Canada child benefit to make sure it keeps pace with the cost of living. Starting next July, two full years ahead of schedule, the tax-free Canada child benefit amounts for families with two children will go up by approximately \$200. It does not stop there. The following year, those families will see about \$500 more.

One of the major concerns I have heard in conversations with many of the parents and families living in my riding of Parkdale—High Park is the cost of raising a family. In order to effectively address this, we are allocating more support for families, through the CCB, to help meet the numerous ongoing costs of raising a family. As the father of two young boys, I understand what it means to raise a family. I have also heard from countless people in my riding about those challenges. We are working in a targeted way to address the needs of those people in my community and in communities around this country who need the help the most.

Government Orders

The stats are quite overwhelming. In my riding alone, 10,290 children benefited from the Canada child benefit in July. The average payment that month was \$510 per family, for a total of \$3.255 million distributed to families in the riding of Parkdale—High Park. In addition to the benefits received by my neighbours through the new and enhanced programs I mentioned, this budget implementation act also includes measures that would entrench and fortify our commitment as a government and nation to reconciliation with indigenous persons.

As Canadians, we must continue to take a critical look at our past as we contemplate the future of our relationship with indigenous persons. It is vital for all of us to establish a spirit of reconciliation so that Canada's next 150 years leave a positive legacy. I am honoured, distinctly in my role as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Heritage, to be working with the Minister of Heritage on advancing our government's efforts to preserve, restore, and revitalize indigenous languages. This goes beyond the celebration of our collective history. It is an opportunity to begin to correct the impact of harmful government policies like the colonial legacy of the residential school system has had on indigenous communities.

Recognizing this, the budget implementation act would invest \$90 million over the next three years to support indigenous languages and culture. That includes \$69 million in new funding to support things like language classes and culture camps, developing learning materials, and recording indigenous languages through the aboriginal languages initiative. Funding would also support the use of technology to preserve oral histories and the creation of other interactive educational materials. These investments would build tangibly on our government's commitment to working with indigenous persons to co-develop, in the spirit of true reconciliation, an indigenous languages legislation that would help to preserve, protect, revitalize, and promote indigenous languages in this country.

We are investing, as a government, based on the positive gains that have come as a result of Canada's fastest economic growth in nearly a decade, by enhancing the measures that support our small businesses, families, and hard-working people, and furthering our commitment to reconciliation. I urge all members of this House to vote in support of this bill to advance these important initiatives.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I too feel very honoured to be standing to speak on the 150th anniversary of the first sitting of this place, and it is important that we are talking about the budget implementation act.

The one thing that is not clear to me as of yet is this Chinese infrastructure bank, where we are spending half a billion dollars. I know the communications adviser for the minister suggested that it is going to create jobs here at home. I am not sure what fantasyland that is from, where spending half a billion dollars in China building infrastructure is going to create jobs here at home for the middle class.

I would appreciate hearing a strong rationale, in terms of why the investment of half a billion dollars of taxpayers' dollars is going to help the middle class here at home and create jobs.

• (1300)

Mr. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, the short answer is that by improving our relationships with foreign nations, including diversi-

fyng our trade and investment portfolios, we are stimulating the economy here at home. Our commitment to infrastructure is unprecedented. Our commitment to infrastructure investments is unprecedented. What we are doing with the Asian infrastructure bank is indifferent in terms of what we are investing here. We are working toward building the economy by promoting infrastructure development. That includes developing greater ties with diverse partners around the planet, including the Asian side of the equation.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have been calling attention, along with colleagues from the other side, to a particular part of the budget implementation act around the unpaid leave for victims of domestic violence. I would like the member to comment on perhaps an unintended consequence of an unpaid leave for domestic violence. Many people will not be able to access an unpaid leave in a situation of domestic violence, because often victims are controlled economically by the abusive partner at home. Therefore, coming home with a paycheque that is less than it was before and then having to explain to an abusive partner why it is not the same amount, I think my colleague would understand how that would be a huge barrier to victims accessing this leave. I wonder if the member would agree that it needs to be a paid leave for this instance.

Mr. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the intervention, because it highlights an extremely important issue. We have heard time and again about the importance of leave in the context of the domestic violence situation and gender violence in this country and around the planet. Our government takes this issue very seriously, in terms of ensuring there is flexibility in terms of arrangements, that people are empowered and not unempowered, and that people do not fear reprisals to accessing leave. It is something that needs to be studied and examined by our government. I would hope that this kind of important intervention gets studied closely at committee when the budget bill is being evaluated.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on one thing that the member mentioned at the beginning, and that was the change in the economy in Canada, in particular being the fastest growing economy in the G7. This speaks directly to the budgets that have been presented by this government and what this government has been doing over the past two years. I wonder if the member would like to elaborate on that point.

Government Orders

Mr. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, in my brief response, I would say that it is demonstrating that the notion of investing in an economy to stimulate it has proven to be a successful formula. That is exactly what the head of the IMF said when she came here, that she hoped the Canadian experiment would go viral around the planet. The fact that we are doubling five of the G7 nations and are 40% larger in terms of economic growth than our American neighbours demonstrates that when we took the courage of conviction and campaigned upon a platform to invest in an economy, we did just that. It can be proven to work, and it can be proven as a winning formula that helps us succeed in terms of building the growth that we all desperately want. That is not a partisan issue. Creating jobs and boosting the Canadian economy is something we all share. How we are going about doing it is something we are responding to in terms of what Canadians told us. We believe strongly in that conviction, and we will continue to do so.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we resume debate, for the benefit of all hon. members, we have passed the five hours of debate on the motion before the House since the first round of speeches on the motion. Accordingly, all of the interventions from this point on will be limited to 10-minute speeches, followed by five minutes of questions and comments.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

• (1305)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that I did not get under the wire for my 20 minutes, but I will try to keep my comments confined to 10.

I am pleased to speak to the budget implementation act, but I would like to create a bit of context before I get into a couple of details contained within it. In the 2015 election campaign, the Liberals made specific promises to Canadians. They promised that they would have tiny deficits of \$10 billion a year and that they would get back to balanced budgets during their time in office. They also indicated that dollars would be spent predominantly on infrastructure in the provinces and territories.

The first thing we have to recognize is that everything they have done since, in terms of the budget and budget implementation acts, has violated their promise to Canadians. The Liberals made a promise about what they were going to do with respect to deficits and how they were going to spend Canadians' money. That was an important promise, and it is shameful that they are breaking that promise.

The Liberals are breaking their promise at a time when it is not necessary. I will acknowledge that had the economy been struggling, they might have had to provide a bit of stimulus. However, they took office with a surplus budget and a growing economy. The Liberals are quite proud to say that the economy is going well, so why do they need to spend all of this extra money? That is an important place to start.

There are three areas that the government directly controls. It controls the creation of an environment that would be positive for jobs, opportunity, and growth. It controls bringing money into its coffers through our tax system, and it obviously controls how to

spend that money. I would suggest that these three functions need to be carefully aligned. In this budget, which deals predominantly with the expenditure side of things, the government is completely out of alignment with the other three features. We need an environment that is going to create success. We need a fair tax system, and we need to have a reasonable spending plan.

I would like to touch briefly on tax generation. Not only do the Liberals want this \$20 billion deficit with no plan for getting back to balanced budgets, but they are desperately looking for ways to get more money. The interesting thing is that they have floated out a whole bunch of ideas, but they have never done anything that would impact the personal wealth of the Prime Minister, the finance minister, or their Liberal friends who are enjoying some tax benefits that most of us do not enjoy.

The small business tax was an idea that was floated out by the Liberals. It would have hurt our small businesses in terms of how they dealt with passive income and how they would grow their companies. However, the Liberals did nothing with respect to tax avoidance schemes that are used by their wealthy friends.

The Liberals floated out the idea of taxing the health benefits of teachers who make \$80,000 a year, yet they are not going to worry about shares that are held in a company like Morneau Shepell and the finance minister's introduction of legislation around pensions.

The Liberals also talked about taxing employee discounts. They realized that the accounting nightmare of charging taxes on the value of a Big Mac would be a little over the top, so they walked away from that idea very quickly.

The Liberals are denying disability tax credits to people who have diabetes. They said they would hire more nurses who would review the paperwork that has already been done by doctors and nurse practitioners. They were considering hiring nurses for the Canada Revenue Agency to review the paperwork, so they could justify their denial of disability tax credits for diabetics.

• (1310)

Free advice for the government would be that it perhaps should be spending those dollars for nurses on more people to look at tax havens and tax-avoidance issues. Very clearly, there is one set of rules for the Prime Minister and his friends and another set of rules for the rest of us.

I will now go to tax expenditures, the other part of the budget. I will start small and work up to some of the larger issues. Money matters. How Liberals spend hard-earned tax dollars really matters. I have some examples of how they are choosing to spend money. If people were to walk a one-kilometre circle in this area, they would see a cup, which apparently cost \$2.5 million. It is some sort of structure sitting on Sparks Street. They have chosen to build a \$5-million hockey rink. If people were to walk a little further, they would know that City Hall has a beautiful skating rink all year round, but Liberals chose to spend \$5 million for a hockey rink that I believe is going to be open for about a month.

Government Orders

Just yesterday, we heard that \$10 million is going to a private business to build a Club Med in Quebec. There are many in my riding who would say that if the government is going to subsidize and support the resort industry, there are many who be very happy to be at the table and receive \$10 million. However, there was a reason, when Conservatives were in government, that we did not do that kind of thing. It was because we did not believe that kind of corporate handout was to the benefit of anyone.

I have to speak about something in this particular bill that I have had no reasonable explanation for. Nothing has been said by the Liberal government that gives me any comfort that this will be money well spent. That, of course, is the half a billion dollars going to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. That is in division 5, part 2. The original explanation from the finance minister's communications person was that this is going to create jobs here at home and will help the middle class. What fantasy world would someone have to live in to believe that giving half a billion dollars to an Asian infrastructure bank that is building bridges and roads in Asia is going to create jobs here at home and help the middle class? I would note that if there were opportunities abroad, Canadians are not precluded from bidding on those jobs anyway. There has been no reasonable explanation for that half a billion dollars. When I was in Yellowknife not so long ago, I saw a huge need for infrastructure there.

This leaves me a couple of minutes to talk about creating an environment for success. The north is a great example. It created a moratorium on oil and gas drilling and decided to turn significant areas into parks. The premier of the Northwest Territories said that southerners want all of the north to be their park. Southerners are taking away their dreams and hopes, and creating a nightmare for them. They are putting a carbon tax on them and they are going to be not only the most impacted by climate change, but the ones most impacted by a carbon tax, with nothing to support the impact that is going to have. They are taking away jobs and opportunities, imposing additional costs, and destroying a community.

In conclusion, I suggest that the budget implementation act is a follow-through on broken promises from an election campaign. It would go after law-abiding small businesses to grab dollars wherever the Liberals can and create an increasingly negative climate for investment. Although there may be a couple of measures that are reasonable and supportable, the BIA 2 would simply continue a very flawed fundamental approach by the government to the finances of our nation.

• (1315)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reality of the situation is that Canada's economy is growing the fastest of the G7 countries. This government has made serious choices investing in people, investing in children, and investing in infrastructure and programs. The result of what this government is doing that we have seen over the last number of years is an improvement. Our economy is stronger than it ever was during the time of the Conservatives.

My question for the member is very simple. Is she as excited as I am that Canada's economy is number one, in terms of growth, in the G7?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, what I talked about was having a government that sets a structure for success. If the Liberals want to suggest that things that happened two years ago were to blame for it, then I think they had better also give us credit for what happened two years ago, because we saw this country through the global recession, we created many free trade agreements, we got rid of red tape, and we moved things forward in a positive way. Certainly, they can thank us for that, as they are enjoying that benefit. However, what I did indicate was that I am really worried that what they are doing and how they are spending money will take us right back to where we started from and put us in a very difficult position.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier when responding to a question, the member mentioned division 2 of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank agreement act that is being created through this BIA. We know from experience that previous governments have refused to join this. There is a Japanese-led Asian Development Bank, Japan being an ally, that we would like to collaborate with. For the half billion dollars that the government is putting into this, we get a 1% share of the votes, which is barely anything. Now we learned that last year, in 2016, this infrastructure bank, led by the Chinese government, is actually financing two pipeline projects, one in Azerbaijan and one in Bangladesh.

I would like to hear the member speak about this cognitive dissonance we see from that side of the House, where the Liberals would actively impede the success of the Canadian energy industry here in Canada, putting a lot of energy families out of work, while supporting the middle class in Asian countries.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, my colleague has just expressed things perfectly with respect to this infrastructure bank and what it is doing. However, for the people who might be listening on this 150th anniversary, this is not about Canada's responsibility with respect to foreign aid, as we all believe we need to step up to the plate when there are tragedies in other countries. This is about Canada investing almost half a billion dollars overseas. Other than making us feel good and making us part of this global community, there has not been one good rationale why the Liberals would not follow the recommendations of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal and provide support for our first nations children, yet they are happy to put half a billion dollars into something that will not benefit Canadians.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I note that the current government is using the same line that was used by the previous government, which is that Canada is leading the growth among the G7 countries. Unfortunately, I have heard some recent economic data that suggests to me that the economy may not be doing as strongly as the government would like to portray. The GDP actually shrunk in August, and we are on track to maybe end the year with a more modest GDP growth of around 2%.

Government Orders

My question has to do with what the member would like to see the current government do in order to create a stronger production base in Canada for value-added production. I know that we rely a lot on our natural resources in this country, but what would she suggest the government do to try to get more value-added production and create those better jobs here in Canada?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, my colleague brought up a very important point. Although we have had some reasonable and strong economic growth, there are number of flags out there that we need to pay attention to. I met with the Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada, and mining exploration in this country is way down. We have a softwood lumber agreement. Not only is value added important, but let us get the softwood lumber agreement fixed. There was an opportunity when the Prime Minister was meeting in the U.S. shortly after his election when he had the willingness to solve this problem. He failed and we need to get that fixed. That will certainly impact British Columbia, and provinces all across Canada.

• (1320)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on the subject of Bill C-63, the budget implementation act, 2017, No. 2, today. Specifically, I am pleased to talk about the government's plan to invest in people and communities to build a stronger, healthier, better Canada.

If we were to ask Canadians, the vast majority of them would say they are very proud of our public health system. The 2017 federal budget recognizes that and includes over \$37 billion in transfers to the provinces and territories under the Canada health transfer.

A prosperous country such as ours also needs a comprehensive strategy on drugs and other substances. When it comes to cannabis control, the current system is obviously not working. It does not do a good enough job of protecting Canadians' health and safety, especially not our youth. It is often easier for our children to acquire cannabis than cigarettes.

As everyone knows, our government plans to legalize and strictly regulate cannabis. This policy is necessary and has two main objectives: on the one hand, to keep marijuana out of the hands of youth, and on the other, to deprive criminals of any profits from illegal cannabis sales.

In advance of the government's plan to legalize cannabis, budget 2017 allocated several million dollars to public education programming and monitoring activities.

Taxation is one of the key factors that will play an important role in ensuring that our objectives are met. As the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance have clearly stated, taxes must be low from the beginning, and the federal, provincial, and territorial governments must continue to work together to guarantee a coordinated approach. Co-operation is critical, and the federal government wants to engage our provincial and territorial partners in order to develop a coordinated approach to cannabis taxation.

This second budget implementation act lays the groundwork for such a partnership. It amends the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act to allow the Minister of Finance, on behalf of the federal government and with the consent of the Governor in

Council, to enter into coordinated tax agreements with the provincial and territorial governments on cannabis taxation.

All governments must endeavour to maintain an effective level of taxation over time, one that helps balance our social and health objectives, the risks associated with the illicit market, as well as our tax priorities. All levels of government will have a significant role to play. It is important to remember that the framework for the production, sale, and distribution of cannabis for non-medical purposes will be based on the sharing of responsibilities. The federal government will be responsible for granting licences for production, cultivation, and manufacture, while the provinces and territories will be responsible for granting distribution and retail licences.

• (1325)

It would also be much better to have a coordinated approach on the taxation side of things. Legalizing cannabis will help the government increase tax revenues, but it is important to keep in mind that that is not the primary objective here. The primary objective of legalizing marijuana is to try to keep marijuana out of the hands of children and keep the profits out of the hands of criminals.

The best way to do that is to have a coordinated approach to taxation across the country. As the Minister of Finance said, we have to get this right and we have to work with the provinces and territories. Budget implementation act, 2017, No. 2 will implement the framework for this coordinated approach when cannabis for non-medical use becomes legal in Canada, the intention being that this occur at the latest in the first half of 2018.

As I said, taxation is one of the key factors that support the objectives of cannabis legalization, but it is not the only one. The government plans to take a number of measures to regulate non-medical cannabis. There will also need to be investment in awareness and education programs to inform Canadians, especially young Canadians, of the risks to both health and safety associated with cannabis use.

Although access to cannabis for non-medical purposes will be restricted and strictly regulated, various federal agencies will also be required to do more. Public awareness campaigns will help inform Canadians about the dangers of driving under the influence of cannabis and other drugs.

Police forces will also need new tools to better detect drug-impaired drivers. Physical inspections at companies that produce cannabis will be necessary. We heard this during the Standing Committee on Finance's cross-Canada pre-budget tour. I am very pleased to see that the fall economic statement tabled last week allocates significant funding to the development of a new framework to regulate and restrict access to cannabis.

Government Orders

As I just mentioned, I was pleased to see that the fall economic statement allocates significant funding to the development of new legal frameworks. Health Canada, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Canada Border Services Agency, and Public Safety Canada will all receive funding to ensure that they have the resources they need to issue licenses, conduct inspections, enforce all the aspects of the cannabis bill, and conduct meaningful public awareness and outreach.

In conclusion, the government's intention is to legalize cannabis for non-medical purposes in Canada. Legalization will keep cannabis out of the hands of youth and keep profits out of the hands of criminals. To support this dual objective, coordination between governments is essential. We are committed to working with the provinces and territories. The budget implementation act, 2017, No. 2 is part of the federal government's ongoing efforts in that regard.

I urge all hon. members to support this important legislation. It will help us give our children and grandchildren a stronger, better, and healthier Canada.

• (1330)

[*English*]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague spent a fair bit of time speaking about the cannabis legislation and the government's attitude and contributions toward this. I want to focus a bit on education.

Up to last week, the government had committed the grand total of \$9 million over five years, dedicated toward the education of our youth in advance of the cannabis legalization, which is to happen in about seven months. We heard at committee that the states of Colorado and Washington spend that amount every year, with a population one-seventh of Canada's, showing and highlighting the absolute lack of investment by the government on education. Embarrassed by that, last week the government announced that it would spend another \$36 million over five years for education, but only when it was exposed in committee that it had failed so miserably in the regard.

My question for the hon. member is about tax policy. The federal government unilaterally announced a certain tax proposal at the last federal-provincial ministers conference and caught a lot of provinces by surprise. I wonder if my hon. colleague could expand on this. Could he tell members of the House what the government's policy will be toward taxation of cannabis? How much will the tax be? How much will it raise? How will it be shared with the provinces?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his question and comments. Before I answer his main question, I want to say that I reject the premises of his question about the government's intentions with respect to implementing cannabis education programs.

Certainly our goal has always been to put a program in place to deter cannabis use through education. As the date approaches and we coordinate our actions with the provinces and territories, Canadians will see more and more proof of the government's plan to launch major awareness campaigns about issues associated with cannabis

use. Those campaigns will target youth in particular as well as the general public.

To get back to my colleague's main question, the reason I gave this speech and the reason these measures are in the 2017 budget implementation act No. 2 is that we want to make sure the provinces, the territories, and the federal government coordinate their actions. This is a long-term undertaking that we will accomplish together.

I would ask my hon. colleague to be a little more patient and give the provinces and territories time to negotiate with the federal government. That is how we will keep taxes as low as possible and eliminate or significantly reduce the sale of cannabis by organized crime.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for decades, separatist MPs in my region worked hard to prove that the federal government could not work. They worked hard to prove that the federal government was not interested in the riding. Those MPs did not actually do anything. All they did was obstruct the role of the federal government.

Since I have been here, we have managed to bring more than \$100 million in extra funding to the riding, mostly through the Canada child benefit, as well as through a number of other programs. Nearly \$30 million has been invested in other programs.

People are starting to see that the federal government has a role to play in the regions in Quebec.

I would like to know whether my colleague from Hull—Aylmer has had a similar experience.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate the question from my hon. colleague from Laurentides—Labelle. I can assure him that I have some good news on this and that the federal government has certainly shown leadership when it comes to investing in Quebec. The Canada child benefit is a major part of this budget. We saw in the economic statement that we are going to invest in this benefit anew.

In my riding, Hull—Aylmer, in my colleague's riding, and in every riding in Canada, this new social initiative has benefited every Canadian, especially those with children and those in need.

This is an important investment. It proves that the federal government can play an important role together with the provinces in eliminating poverty everywhere.

• (1335)

[*English*]

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak before the House regarding "A second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2017 and other measures."

Government Orders

We would not know it from the name, but this is one of the most exciting bills being considered by Parliament this session. With the passing of this bill, my colleagues and I will be doing what we came here to do: serve our communities and our country.

Early this morning, I arrived in Ottawa on an overnight flight, after a weekend back home in my riding of Surrey Centre. My time away from the Hill gave me a chance to meet with constituents in my riding office, at community events, and over coffee. I would like to thank everyone who came out to my recent “Chai with Sarai” event.

As with every weekend, I boarded my return flight, appreciative of Surrey's diverse, hard working and altruistic population. I also left looking forward to Surrey's bright future. Everywhere I looked, I saw new businesses, new developments, and new residents. In fact, Surrey is one of the fastest-growing cities in all of Canada. That makes us one of the fastest-growing cities in the fastest-growing economy in the entire G7. Just last month, we added a whopping 35,300 new full-time jobs and \$9 billion more to the government coffers due to the great economic growth resulting from an agenda of innovation and growth.

It is a good time to be a Canadian. With this budget implementation bill, we can put the benefits of Canada's growth back in the hands of the people who made it happen. We get to put money back in the hands of families.

I have always been proud of our government's Canada child benefit and what it does for Surrey Centre. In fact, the benefit ensures that \$800 million a year tax-free goes to families in my riding. This measure goes a long way toward ensuring Surrey families will not have to make the choice between school supplies or new skates for their children. However, in the words of our Prime Minister, “better is always possible”.

One year ago, when I spoke regarding the implementation of the 2016 budget, I was happy to note that our government would be indexing the Canada child benefit to inflation starting in 2020. This year, I am even happier to note that we will be moving forward on this measure two years ahead of schedule. Thanks to the strengthened Canada child benefit, a single parent of two making \$35,000 a year will receive \$560 of richly deserved non-taxable dollars the next fiscal year.

Our commitment to families goes beyond finance. Bill C-63 would also create greater flexibility in the way employees could take paid and unpaid leave. This would ensure that more workers would see an increase in family time and a healthier work-life balance. In this regard, and in all that we do, our government believes in the importance of leading by example.

This is not the only way we are making it easier to be a worker. Our newly enhanced working income tax benefit will provide \$500 million to low-income workers, starting in 2019. This comes on top of the \$250 million increase that has already come about through pension reform.

Many Canadians work long hours to join the middle class, and it is our duty to send support their way. Currently, the working income tax benefit benefits 1.5 million Canadians, including more than 200,000 in British Columbia. It boosts these numbers and helps more Canadians pay their rent, put food on their tables, and make the

sometimes jarring transition to full-time work after a period of unemployment. It also ensures that those living alone, the new most common type of household according to the 2016 census, do not slip through the cracks. These new measures work together to ensure financial security to Canadians of all backgrounds.

This includes small business owners. We recognize that small business is the expression of middle-class Canadians' passion, hard work, and great ideas. We want to applaud entrepreneurs and employees who make our communities so dynamic. We have lowered the tax rate for small businesses by almost one-fifth, from 11% down to 9%, to ensure small-business owners have the financial environment they need to thrive.

● (1340)

However, one cannot talk about entrepreneurship without discussing innovation. To me, innovation means Surrey companies like Safe Software Incorporated, whose Feature Manipulation Engine software allows companies worldwide to manipulate reams of geographic data as easily as we might watch a Facebook video. It means Surrey companies like Orello Hearing Technologies, whose novel, inexpensive hearing aid is poised to disrupt the industry and dismantle the systemic barriers that face Canadians with hearing disabilities. To me, innovation is the reason I often see people's eyes light up when I mention my province of beautiful British Columbia.

This is why I am glad to see our government enacting the innovation and skills plan included in budget 2017. We have already set aside \$950 million for the creation of technological superclusters. Members are likely familiar with many tech clusters already. Many of them know the reputation of places like Silicon Valley, Tel Aviv, and the Toronto–Waterloo corridor. Clusters bring industry, government, and academia together to foster great ideas and energize economies. B.C.'s own digital technology supercluster is poised to stand out as an example to the world of developing and harnessing virtual and augmented reality in ways that benefit industries from gaming to forestry.

With this budget implementation bill, we would pour an additional \$400 million into our venture capital catalyst initiative and invest \$600 million in green technology firms. As my Vancouver to Ottawa flight consistently reminds me, Surrey is three hours behind Ottawa when it comes to time zones. However, Bill C-63 would ensure that we are years ahead when it comes to innovation.

Government Orders

Surrey is home to almost half a million people. That is half a million residents hoping to see their dreams become reality. They are dreams like those of our entrepreneurs, who aim to disrupt our outdated world views and leave their mark on our society, dreams like those of our newest residents, who want to feel at home and at peace in a city or country that may still seem unfamiliar, and dreams like those we all share: to live in financial security and spend time with those we care about. By continuing to implement the 2017 budget, Bill C-63 would help make these dreams a reality, and I encourage all MPs to vote in favour of it.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the member conveniently left out of his speech was any reference at all to balanced budgets. Members may recall that when the Prime Minister was telling Canadians why he should be the Prime Minister of this country, he made a lot of promises, many of which he has already broken. The big one that matters to future generations is that he promised that within the term of his government, four years, he was going to return to balanced budgets, just the way the previous government always balanced its budgets and left surpluses. In fact, what the member has failed to mention is that there is nothing in this budget that would actually return government to balanced budgets so we will not be leaving future generations with a huge debt load for the spending we do today. How will the member explain to the next generation the fact that his government has broken its promise to return to balanced budgets, and in fact, has no plan to return to balanced budgets?

• (1345)

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, I do not think Canadians want any advice from a past government that ran deficit after consecutive deficit. In fact, the Conservatives left a country that was lacking in infrastructure, that had depleted infrastructure, and that was lacking in social programs, which put us far behind. It is like deferred maintenance on a house. One can only patch a leaky roof so much. The actions this government has taken are to bring this house, this beautiful country of Canada, back into the 21st century, where middle-class Canadians will have a good standard of living, where middle-class Canadians can expect good public transit, and where middle-class Canadians can expect a good education for their children. That is the priority of this government, and that is the priority this country elected us for.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear that my hon. colleague has connected with constituents, as I do at my “coffee with Don” in my riding.

My question on the budget has to do with the critical areas of housing and infrastructure. My hon. colleague and I both come from British Columbia, and he would well know that there is a housing crisis in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia and in other areas of the country. An entire generation of Canadians cannot afford to buy a house, and now, increasingly, cannot even afford to rent a place in the Lower Mainland. It is affecting businesses, slowing our economy, and crushing the dreams of a generation of people who cannot live in the place they grew up in.

I would like my hon. colleague to tell me what in the budget will produce affordable housing for British Columbia. How many units will be produced in the Lower Mainland as a result of this budget?

Second, on the infrastructure the government was elected to produce, can he please tell me what major infrastructure projects the budget will fund in British Columbia?

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, I share a lot of flights with the hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway, and I want to remind him that “Chai with Sarai” sounds a lot better than “Coffee with Don”. However, I welcome his method to connect with his constituents.

Our government has committed over \$11 billion on the national housing front. We have committed to a national housing strategy. This is our government's commitment not to have a patchwork or knee-jerk reaction but to come up with a comprehensive strategy, working with all stakeholders—the provinces, the municipalities, and the charities that run the current programs to take people off the streets and put them in housing—to bring more Canadians into proper homes and help those who are having affordability challenges, specifically in the Lower Mainland. We want those who have been born and raised there to be able to live in their own homes. I am committed to working with the government on that.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned that in his riding of Surrey Centre, there is a population of 500,000, and 35,000 new jobs have been created. It is similar to my region of Kitchener and Waterloo. I want to ask how the investments have helped in his region and how job growth has increased because of those investments.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, the infrastructure announcements have helped in terms of the ability to actually build new housing. In my riding of Surrey Centre, public transit had not been increased in over 20 years. It was 1986 when the last fixed light rail or transit line came in for the Sky Train. No expansion had ever been done. Due to the commitment and the \$50 million given to create the plans for the new LRT line, we have seen more high-rises, more condos, and more apartments being built than ever before. That comes from the commitment investors, developers, and the business community have seen this government making in terms of building infrastructure to provide quick and affordable public transportation.

• (1350)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I should first announce to all members that I will be concentrating my remarks today more on the budget tabled on March 22 of this year than on Bill C-63, which I am sure all members understand is the BIA, or the budget implementation act. That act would, of course, enact certain provisions contained in the budget. Since they both flow together, all my remarks will be primarily concentrating on the budget itself.

Statements by Members

First and foremost, in my opinion, at least, budget 2017 was a terrible budget. In fact, I do not think it would be unfair to say that it was a socialist budget. I use that term, because I am reminded of the famous words of former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher, who once opined that the reason socialism will never work is that eventually socialists “run out of other people's money.” Unfortunately, the Liberal government has not figured that last part out. I believe it thinks money grows on trees, because it is spending it like drunken sailors, thinking there is a never-ending supply of currency. We all know that this is simply not true, but perhaps that is a debate for another day.

What I will attempt to do today is talk about why I believe this socialist budget is so bad. This budget tabled March 22 is basically a combination of two things: it is a budget of broken promises, and it is a budget of higher taxes. I say higher taxes because we know, based on a recent study by the Fraser Institute, that fully 81% of Canadians considered to be in the middle class will now be paying \$840 a year more in taxes than they were before. This comes from a government that is proud to stand in this House day after day to say how it has lowered taxes for the middle class. In fact, it has not. It has done just the opposite.

It is also a budget filled with broken promises. As one of my colleagues quite correctly pointed out just a few moments ago, when the Liberal government was running for election in 2015, it promised to run modest deficits of no more than \$10 billion a year for the first four years, and then by election year, 2019, it would return to balance. Has it done that? Not at all.

In fact, what is truly alarming is the fact that when asked the question, both the Prime Minister and the finance minister said that they did not know when the government would return to a balanced budget. In my opinion, the reason they did not know is that they could not answer the question. They have absolutely no idea how to get back to balance, and if they do, when that would take place.

If the chief executive officer and the chief financial officer of any corporation said to their board of directors that they did not know when they would be perhaps returning to a profitable situation, I would suggest that both those officers would not be long in their jobs. I think that is what is going to happen in this case. The Government of Canada is, in effect, a corporation, a business, albeit a very large business. If the chief executive officer, that being the Prime Minister, and the chief financial officer, that being the finance minister, do not know when they could return to balance, I believe they should be fired, and I think they will be fired come 2019. It is not just the fact that they made promises they cannot keep. The truly alarming situation we have in front of us is that they simply do not know the answer to a very simple question: when will they return to balance? They cannot even give an approximation of when they will return to balance, and that is truly frightening.

• (1355)

Canadians expect more of their government. Canadians expect more of any government. However, for a government to freely admit, and to take some pride in admitting, that it will be running deficits that could go on in perpetuity, and that it does not know how to get back to balance, there is no pride in that, only shame, and the Canadian public is finally starting to figure that out.

I would suggest to my friends opposite, if they truly care about the Canadian taxpayer, as they so often repeat in this place, they would take immediate steps to try to find out how to return to balance. Second, they would implement provisions within their own spending regime to get back to balance. It is not that they have a revenue problem. They have a spending problem.

Some would argue there is an easy way to get back to balance, and that is to raise taxes. Quite frankly, I think my friends opposite are taking that to heart because they seem to be raising taxes on just about everything. That is not the way to run a government.

Conservatives believe in lower taxes and balanced budgets. That is a foreign concept to many on the opposite side of the aisle, I am sure, but it has proven to be effective in years past. Also, if the government truly wants to return to balance, it should start listening to some of its former colleagues. Prime Minister Stephen Harper, for example, returned to balanced budgets after a few years of serious deficits, caused by the worldwide global recession. I suggest to my friends opposite that they take a page out of that playbook and look at what they need to do to return to balance. It would certainly not be by spending, like they are today. It is about fiscal restraint, a foreign concept to many of the members opposite.

If the finance minister wants to prove his competence to the Canadian public, he should start looking in the mirror whenever he delivers an economic forecast and economic update, because we know now, if we did not before, that the finance minister, encouraged by his Prime Minister, is in the middle of a very serious conflict of interest.

I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that every single person in the country, from the time they first achieve cognitive thought, knows the difference between right and wrong, and what the finance minister has done by attempting to hide \$20 million in shares in a numbered company in Alberta is simply wrong. The Prime Minister and the finance minister have a choice to do what is right, and do what is right for all Canadians. I sincerely hope they do. The right course of action would be for the finance minister to step down and the Prime Minister to accept his resignation.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Ms. Monique Pausé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the winds of change really blew through Quebec during yesterday's municipal elections. On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I want to commend each and every candidate, because it takes courage to run for office.

I would also like to congratulate the winners, but I am especially proud of the women who won. The people of Montreal, Saguenay, and Rouyn-Noranda elected a woman mayor for the first time ever.

Statements by Members

Women are increasingly claiming their place not only in Montreal, Saguenay, and Rouyn-Noranda, but also in Brossard, Longueuil, my own region of Repentigny, and all across Quebec. However, those victories must not distract from the fact that there is still much work to be done to encourage more women to get into politics. Yesterday, less than one-third of the candidates were women.

Let us hope that the victories of the new and re-elected women mayors will prove that there is room not only for women, but also for their highest ambitions.

* * *

[English]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Mr. Jati Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the hard work of the Wonder Woman Society based in Mission, British Columbia.

The Wonder Woman Society is a non-profit organization that supports women's education, employment, business, and health in our community and across B.C. The vision for the Wonder Woman Society is to create a network for women to empower and inspire other women to reach their very best emotional, physical, and mental health.

On November 22, the Wonder Woman Society will be hosting its first annual fashion show fundraiser. This event will bring together over 200 women from across the Fraser Valley. I am proud to support both this event and the long-term work of the Wonder Woman Society.

When a woman changes her life, she changes her family, her community, and her world. I applaud the society's work by empowering women to take advantage—

● (1400)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Simcoe—Grey.

* * *

YOUTH

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to recognize the official grand opening of the Collingwood Youth Centre. This month, over 200 local youth and volunteers will gather to celebrate this next chapter in its history.

When the original facility closed in 2016, the Rotary Club of Collingwood South Georgian Bay, under the leadership of Juanita Hodgson, took the leadership role to find a new vision for this centre. In addition, the Rotary Club, Blue Mountain, the Collingwood Business Development Centre, The Environment Network, Elephant Thoughts, and a local builder, Ray Smith, put their heads together and made this happen. Thanks to their hard work, Collingwood youth will now have access to a wide series of programs that will allow them to be successful in the future.

I am so proud of the great work they have done. Congratulations again to every one who has made this happen. It is going to be outstanding for Collingwood Youth.

[Translation]

PAULETTE GAGNON

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my riding of Sudbury is the future home of Place des arts, the largest cultural centre that Canada has seen in the past 25 years.

The very accomplished, clever leader behind this project was a remarkable figure in the cultural community, my friend Paulette Gagnon.

Ms. Gagnon passed away on October 13. Originally from Hearst and a proud Franco-Ontarian, Paulette had a very impressive career. She was the head of the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française and of the Association des théâtres francophones du Canada.

Very few people are as passionate about standing up for the interests of artists and cultural groups as she was. People could not say no to her. She was a formidable leader and an architect of the French Canadian cultural community, which is now better equipped and better structured because of the work she did.

Paulette, I salute you, but most of all I thank you.

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VALÉRIE PLANTE

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to congratulate the new mayor of Montreal, my friend Valérie Plante.

As her son pointed out to her, Valérie's name will go down in history. To quote Valérie herself, “375 years after Jeanne Mance, Montreal finally has its first woman mayor”.

Most importantly, Valérie is a progressive and positive woman with the ability to bring people together. She puts people first and has a vision for the future of Montreal that makes the economy a priority while also focusing on public transit and social and affordable housing. Members know how important those things are to me.

A fresh wind is blowing across Montreal this morning, and I really look forward to working with Valérie.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the new mayor of Mercier-Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, Pierre Lessard-Blais, and everyone on the borough council. They can count on me to bring the priorities of Mercier-Hochelaga-Maisonneuve to Ottawa's attention.

* * *

VETERANS' WEEK

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Veterans' Week is a time to honour Canadian veterans for their courage, their service, and their sacrifice.

This week, communities across Canada will come together to remember the men and women in uniform who answered the call of duty to protect our freedom.

*Statements by Members**[English]*

In my riding, I am honoured to be marching with our service men and women in both the Aurora and Richmond Hill Remembrance Day parades to remember our local veterans.

I am also proud to attend Wellington Public School's Remembrance Day ceremony where students in Ms. Durham's grade 8 class will each be recognizing a local veteran from our community. I am honoured to be chosen as a local veteran by student Natalie Pineda.

I look forward to hearing more about the community.

[Translation]

I urge all Canadians to pause for a moment this Saturday and remember that the peace we enjoy today came at a price.

[English]

Our peace is not without sacrifice. Lest we forget.

* * *

●(1405)

VETERANS WEEK

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on October 27, the Royal Canadian Legion launched their annual poppy campaign to raise funds in support of veterans and their families.

On the same day members of the Port Elgin Legion began preparing Christmas care packages for deployed service members. Last Christmas, Blair and Elizabeth Eby learned that a service woman from Port Elgin and her unit stationed in Iraq were desperate for a piece of home at Christmas time. The town rallied together with well wishes, and donations of art work, Tim Hortons coffee, and popcorn, which were quickly mailed out.

This year, Legion Branch 340 hopes to send Christmas boxes to two units stationed in Iraq and Latvia. This Veterans' Week, let us remember the Canadians who paid the ultimate price for our freedom, and the soldiers around the world who continue to fight for us.

We thank the Port Elgin Legion for all they do to support veterans and active service members.

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VOLUNTEERISM

Mr. Geng Tan (Don Valley North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in tribute to a highly dedicated team of volunteers in my riding.

The Pleasant View Community Recreation Committee has been offering after-school classes to children and adults for over 40 years. It is rare to see such a strong and long-lasting volunteer commitment by the same group of people. Some of them, who first got involved as young mothers, are now grandmothers but are still helping other families' children to enjoy learning opportunities.

The committee is making a significant and sustained contribution to their community. I salute the compassion and social engagement of this committee. It is my hope that their passion and love for community continue to inspire others to get involved.

HEALTH

Mr. Joe Peschisolido (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on October 21, the health minister and I were invited to the Pacific Autism Family Network Hub in Richmond.

Our tour of their facility was both eye-opening and heartwarming.

[Translation]

This centre is a one-stop shop for special programs, support services, and specialized resources for families affected by autism spectrum disorder and related disorders.

[English]

Created through the vision of Sergio and Wendy Cocchia, and many others, the Hub is the first of its kind in North America.

[Translation]

I am grateful to Sergio, Wendy, and everyone at the centre for the warm welcome they gave me and for everything they do for so many families. I wish them every success with their expansion plans, which will allow them to extend their specialized services to more families across British Columbia.

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*[English]***VETERANS AFFAIRS**

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over 93,000 Canadian soldiers took part in the Italian campaign in World War II. Six thousand paid the ultimate price and are buried in military cemeteries throughout Italy, and 19,000 more were wounded. These facts are little known in Canada and Italy.

The spirit, sacrifices, and commitment of these Canadians led to many defining moments of the campaign, and their actions have been described as heroic and pivotal. However, Canada's participation has been mostly misidentified as American or British. Thanks to the work of the Peace Through Valour committee this is changing. The committee unveiled a monument in June 2016 at Nathan Phillips Square in Toronto and is currently working on a book.

On behalf of everyone in this place I want to recognize the Peace Through Valour committee for its work shining a light on Canadian soldiers' efforts in Italy.

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**CHARLESWOOD—ST. JAMES—ASSINIBOIA—
HEADINGLEY**

Mr. Doug Eyolfson (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the important work of Connie Newman and Doug Mackie, two outstanding individuals in my community.

Statements by Members

Connie Newman was bestowed the Manitoba Council on Aging Recognition Award for her tireless work with numerous advocacy groups for seniors. I had the pleasure of working with her personally to address the issues facing seniors in my riding.

Doug Mackie opened the first Men's Sheds in Manitoba, to create a community space where senior men could help each other get through difficult times. Members have credited Doug and Men's Sheds as having given their lives renewed purpose. Doug was selected as one of 150 leading Canadians for mental health, and I look forward to highlighting Doug's great work at our upcoming Spirit of Giving event on November 18.

It is community members like Connie and Doug who define the best of Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley as a welcoming and inclusive place for all, and it is my honour to stand in the House to recognize their achievements.

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GURU NANAK DEV JI

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this weekend we celebrated the birth of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the founder of the Sikh religion. His mission was to create a universal religion of compassion, love, and kindness, and to reinforce that we are all children of the supreme being.

In the late 1400s, when women were severely oppressed, the Guru empowered them and uplifted their status by writing in a Sikh holy scripture that disrespecting women is unacceptable, that within her, man is conceived, from her are born saints and kings.

● (1410)

[Translation]

The three basic principles he taught were to lead an honest life, to help the poor, and to seek God within, by shunning Maya, meaning materialism, and by serving humanity and lifting up others.

[English]

The principles of Guru Nanak Dev Ji led to the daily prayer, "*Nanak naam chardi kalaa, tere bhane sarbat ka bhala*", where every day a Sikh asks the Almighty for the well-being of all humanity in the worldwide community.

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CANADIAN FARMERS

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to travel to beautiful New Brunswick and P.E.I. to talk to our farmers in Atlantic Canada. Their innovation, diversity of product, and entrepreneurial spirit is incredible, but what I heard from these farmers is the frustration with Liberal policies affecting their farms, stifling their small businesses and their communities. After denying it for months, the Liberals had to admit that their changes would indeed impact the future of the family farm. Through all of this, the agriculture minister and Liberal MPs in Atlantic Canada were silent.

There is a great deal of anxiety among Canadian farmers. They do not trust the Liberal government and they have reason to be wary: a punitive carbon tax, critical trade agreements now in jeopardy, and

crippling taxes on family farms show that agriculture is not a priority for the Liberal government.

As shadow minister for agriculture, I will continue to listen to our farmers, stand up for Canadian agriculture, and assure our producers in Atlantic Canada and across the country that the Conservatives will ensure that farmers in Canada have a powerful voice here in Parliament.

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150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST MEETING OF PARLIAMENT

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on a chilly November afternoon, exactly 150 years ago today, on November 6, 1867, Canada's House of Commons met for the very first time. This historic event was a bold and courageous leap of faith toward building the great country that we in this House have the privilege to serve.

[Translation]

My hon. colleagues may be interested to learn that, as is still the tradition today, the first order of business was to elect a new Speaker of the House of Commons. Back in 1867, Canada was changing rapidly. There were just four provinces represented in the first Parliament, but this number would grow to six by the time it dissolved in 1873.

[English]

We stand on the shoulders of successive generations of Canadians and as members of Parliament, we must never ever lose sight of why we are here: to do our best to serve our constituents and build a better Canada for future generations.

* * *

BANKRUPTCY

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, hundreds of people have come to Parliament Hill today to demand changes to Canada's inadequate bankruptcy and insolvency laws. These people have gathered here to reflect the profound support across Canada to make the laws fair for Canadian workers and their families.

The collapse of Sears Canada focused attention on the depth of unfairness in our system as workers are stripped of basic rights, like severance and termination pay, and retirees will see their pensions reduced, but the tragedy of Sears Canada is only the tip of the iceberg. Many of those joining us in Ottawa today know first-hand what happens when workers are put at the bottom of the list. They have lived with and seen these effects: workers losing jobs and benefits and pensioners losing pension and health care benefits.

I salute all those who have come to Parliament Hill today to demand change and the millions of Canadians across the country who support them. Our laws allow for legalized corporate theft, plain and simple, and it has to stop.

* * *

[Translation]

SHOOTINGS IN SUTHERLAND SPRINGS

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise on behalf of the Conservative caucus to acknowledge the terrible act of violence that occurred on Sunday at a church service in Sutherland Springs, Texas.

Regardless of the circumstances, cowardly, murderous acts like these, targeting families and friends, always leave us stunned and deeply saddened.

• (1415)

[English]

These victims were simply gathering with their community to celebrate their faith, a faith that is focused on joyous acceptance of others and love for our fellow human beings. For millions of people around the world, including Canada, and for our friends in the United States, faith is the wellspring for our principles and can be such a force for good.

We pray that in time God will grant the families and friends of yesterday's victims the peace that was so cruelly taken from them by a madman this weekend.

On behalf of the Conservative Party and my caucus, I wish to extend our deepest condolences and sympathy to the victims and their families.

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SHOOTINGS IN SUTHERLAND SPRINGS

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I stand today to share thoughts and heartfelt prayers for our American friends and neighbours in the wake of yesterday's senseless and horrific act of violence in Sutherland Springs. We extend our deepest condolences to the families and friends of those killed, and we wish a speedy recovery to all those harmed.

That this attack occurred in a place of worship, a place of safety and peace, is beyond appalling.

We stand united with our friends and allies in the United States as we have always done, and as we will always do, in their time of mourning.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the 16th Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Honourable Joe Clark; the 17th Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Honourable John Napier Turner; the 18th Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney; the 21st Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Honourable Paul Martin; the 31st Speaker of the House of Commons, the Hon. John William

Oral Questions

Bosley; and the 34th Speaker of the House of Commons, the Hon. Peter Milliken.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

ETHICS

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the paradise papers reveal that the Prime Minister's chief fundraiser, Stephen Bronfman, moved millions of dollars to offshore tax havens through a complex web of entities in the U.S., Israel, and the Cayman Islands. The papers show evidence of bogus records to hide payments, false invoicing, and six-figure gifts to avoid paying tax attributed to Bronfman.

At the height of a softwood lumber dispute, the Prime Minister chose to take Stephen Bronfman to a state dinner at the White House, leaving his Minister of Natural Resources behind. I have a simple question. What business did Bronfman have at the White House?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if you will permit, on behalf of all Canadians, I extend my deepest condolences to the families and friends of those who were killed in Texas, and we hope for a speedy recovery for all of those who were injured yesterday. It is appalling that this act took place in a place of worship, where worshippers should have felt safe. Canada, as a nation, stands in solidarity with the United States during this difficult time.

On the other matter, I can assure the opposition that we are fully committed to fighting tax avoidance and tax evasion, and we will continue to ensure that the CRA pursues all infringers upon that for the many years to come.

• (1420)

[Translation]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister spent part of the summer and the fall treating small business owners like tax cheats. He accused them of using loopholes to save on taxes.

Let us see what he will do now that some of the Liberals' closest advisers were named in the paradise papers and they are the ones who allegedly used loopholes to shelter their fortunes.

How long has the Prime Minister known that Liberal bagman Stephen Bronfman avoids paying all of his taxes in Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are fully committed to combatting tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance. I will let the individuals concerned comment on their own situation, but I will say that the Canada Revenue Agency is reviewing links to Canadian entities and will take every appropriate action with respect to the paradise papers.

Oral Questions

In the last two budgets, we invested a historic amount of money to combat tax avoidance and evasion, and our plan is working. There have been 627 cases transferred to criminal investigations, 268 search warrants, and 78 convictions. We will continue—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first it was the Minister of Finance and now it is Liberal bagman Stephen Bronfman who has been caught red-handed. He apparently hid part of his personal fortune in a tax haven.

Why is the Prime Minister still making honest, middle-class Canadian families pay more while allowing his friends to avoid paying taxes in Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the last two budgets, we invested nearly \$1 billion to identify high-risk taxpayers here and abroad. The Canada Revenue Agency is reviewing links to Canadian entities and will take every appropriate action regarding the paradise papers.

Our investments have already yielded results. We have identified \$25 billion in unreported income. We will continue to work to create a system that is fair for all Canadians.

[*English*]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Stephen Bronfman once said that his goal was to, “raise a lot of money and to help...[him] become the next Prime Minister.”

Bronfman became the Liberal Party's head of revenue, and he hosted cash-for-access events with the Prime Minister. One event was advertised as an opportunity for donors to “form relationships and open dialogues with our government.”

Clearly, Bronfman believed that giving money to the Prime Minister would yield favourable outcomes. When did the Prime Minister learn that Bronfman's interests included protecting favourable offshore tax treatment?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as you well know, we are fully committed to fighting tax evasion and tax avoidance. I will let individuals comment on their own situation. However, with respect to the paradise papers, the CRA is reviewing links to Canadian entities and will take every appropriate action.

In the last two budgets, we invested nearly \$1 billion to identify high-risk taxpayers in Canada and abroad. Our investments have already yielded results. We are on track to recapture \$25 billion from our efforts against tax avoidance and tax evasion. We will continue to work for a system that is fair.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the past two years the current Liberal government has demonized retail workers who enjoy an employee discount. It has demonized hard-working entrepreneurs and business owners, and characterized them as tax cheats. The Prime Minister is even raising taxes on diabetics to pay off his billion dollar deficits. Meanwhile, he is here in the House defending a man who hid his assets from the Ethics Commissioner.

Why is it that under the current government, it is always the middle class and working Canadians who pay a bit more, while

wealthy friends like Stephen Bronfman always end up getting away paying less?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to talk about what we have done over the past two years. We raised taxes on the wealthiest 1% so we could lower them on the middle class. We have delivered a Canada child benefit that gives more money to nine out of 10 Canadian families to help with the high cost of raising kids. We did that by stopping to sending child benefit cheques to millionaire families. On top of that, we are lowering small business taxes to 9%. We have put more money in the pockets of our most vulnerable seniors, almost \$1,000 more, in the guaranteed income supplement. We made it cheaper and more affordable for young people to go to school. That is what we have been doing.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the stats that Prime Minister is quoting actually shows his government is doing a good job going after the small taxpayer, going after ordinary Canadians, but it always lets the big fish go.

We know about Stephen Bronfman through the paradise papers, but let us not forget that the government, through committee, stalled the study on KPMG and the Isle of Man. Let us not forget that the government has done nothing about the Panama papers.

The government has not taken seriously the issue of tax havens and offshore accounts. When will it?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, we have always fought strongly against tax evasion and tax avoidance. Indeed, this is a multi-billion dollar issue. That is why we made a billion dollar investment to tackle it.

We are reviewing leaks to identify any links to Canadian entities and we will take every appropriate action. We use the information received through leaked lists when they arise, but we do not wait on these lists to attack the problem. That is why the CRA has more than 990 audits and more than 42 criminal investigations related to offshore financial structures, under way as of September 30.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government is going after the small taxpayer, but not the big fish. The Prime Minister was elected on the promise to work hard for the middle class and those working hard to join it. The middle class cannot afford accounts on the Cayman Islands, but the Liberals' rich and wealthy friends can.

The Prime Minister said shortly after his election “Tax avoidance, tax evasion is something we take very seriously”, and promised swift action. Canadians are still waiting. What is the Prime Minister waiting for?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are fully committed to fighting tax evasion and tax avoidance. That is why we put close to a billion dollars in the last two budgets to do just that. In investing historic sums to make sure we have the right tools to crack down on tax evaders, we have concrete results delivered. There are 627 cases transferred to criminal investigations, 268 search warrants executed, 78 convictions. We will continue to work hard every day for a tax system that is fair for everyone.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, hiring more inspectors without changing the current treaties with tax havens will not amount to much.

An international consortium of journalists published a list of new names of people who are benefiting from tax havens: the Queen of England, rock stars, Trump's entourage, and, in Canada, the Liberals. What a surprise. Former Liberal prime ministers, former Liberal senators, and Liberal organizers were named.

Are the Liberals doing nothing to combat tax havens in an effort to protect the Liberal family?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know full well that in our first two budgets we invested nearly \$1 billion to combat tax evasion and tax avoidance.

We continue to work every day to ensure that everyone pays their fair share of taxes. The results speak for themselves: 627 cases have been transferred to criminal investigation, and there have been 268 warrants and 78 convictions.

We will continue to work hard every day to create a tax system that is fair for all Canadians.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Cayman Islands is the kind of place where there are more bank accounts than people. Members of the middle class and those working hard to join it do not have bank accounts in the Cayman Islands.

For those who do not know, Stephen Bronfman was once the head of the Prime Minister's leadership campaign and is the chief fundraiser for the Liberal Party of Canada. He also happens to manage a trust in the Cayman Islands.

Have the Liberals failed to crack down on tax havens in order to protect Liberal organizers and friends of the Prime Minister?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, I will let the individuals involved comment on their own situation.

Our government continues to crack down on tax evasion and tax avoidance. We will continue to work for the middle class and those working hard to join it. That is why we lowered taxes for the middle class and raised them for the wealthiest 1%. That is why we created the Canada child benefit, which gives more tax-free money to nine out of 10 families every month. That is why we are in the process of lowering the small business tax rate to 9%. That is what we are doing for the middle class.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, meanwhile, with his tax reform, the Prime Minister spent weeks essentially accusing our farmers, entrepreneurs, and professionals of fraud.

The paradise papers scandal is proof of the Liberals' hypocrisy. The names in there are not those of ordinary people. One is the Liberal Party's chief fundraiser, Stephen Bronfman. Another is former Liberal senator Leo Kolber. Both are very good friends of the Liberal Party.

My question is simple. When did the Prime Minister find out that his organizer had direct connections to tax havens?

• (1430)

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to combatting tax evasion and tax avoidance. In our first two budgets, we took concrete steps. We invested \$1 billion, we have targeted four jurisdictions per year, and we have hired competent staff.

Our plan is working. We have transferred 627 cases to criminal investigation, and there have been 268 search warrants and 78 convictions. The Canada Revenue Agency is scrutinizing links to Canadian entities, and we will take appropriate action.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they could speed things along if the minister asked the Prime Minister for his friends' phone numbers. Members of the Prime Minister's inner circle are using all kinds of schemes to hide millions of dollars in tax havens.

There is no doubt that the Prime Minister and Stephen Bronfman are connected. They have even vacationed together. In 2015, Mr. Bronfman said that he was prepared to do everything he could to help the Prime Minister win.

Why did the Prime Minister let his friend, the Liberal Party's chief fundraiser, avoid paying taxes like all other Canadians are required to do?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I repeat that our government is fully committed to combatting tax evasion.

The opposition members' hypocrisy is astounding. The former minister of national revenue, Mr. Blackburn, clearly stated in an interview that this was not even a priority for the previous Conservative government.

We do not need any lessons from a party that works every day to protect privileges for the wealthy. Canadians expect a fair tax system. That is what we promised, and that is what we will deliver.

[*English*]

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with the Liberals it is always the same, "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours". Stephen Bronfman said to the Prime Minister, "Anything I can do to help, just let me know". The Prime Minister said "a big thanks for your help", nudge nudge, wink wink, and the Liberals' buddies are taken care of once again.

Does the Prime Minister not see why Canadians are so outraged by yet another example of Liberal hypocrisy and conflict of interest?

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is fully committed to combatting tax evasion. We have invested nearly \$1 billion over the past two years, and we can announce that we are very close to recovering \$25 billion.

Our strategies and measures are yielding results. I want to reassure the public that the Canada Revenue Agency is reviewing links to Canadian entities, and we will take appropriate action.

[English]

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when Bronfman said that the goal was to raise a lot of money to help this guy become the next prime minister, he was not doing it as an act of charity. He, as all Liberals do, always wants something in return. He and the Prime Minister are close friends and Bronfman is an integral part of the Prime Minister's inner circle.

If the Prime Minister is truly concerned about the tax avoiders revealed in the paradise papers, will he instruct his party to return all the money raised by Bronfman, yes or no?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is fully committed to fighting tax evasion and tax avoidance, to make sure the tax system is fair and equitable for all Canadians.

I am proud of the leadership role Canada has taken on the international stage. Co-operation between revenue authorities, including the exchange of tax information, is an essential tool for maintaining the integrity of Canada's tax base.

Our efforts have borne fruit, as we are about to recoup \$25 billion.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Stephen Bronfman is the Prime Minister's top moneymen, and was the Liberal Party's "revenue chair". The Prime Minister vacations with him. He even broke protocol to bring him to a state dinner with then President Obama. Now we know that he used a \$60-million tax haven scheme to avoid paying his fair share in Canada.

If the Prime Minister wants to restore any credibility on the issue of tax fairness, will he immediately order the Liberal Party to give back all the money Stephen Bronfman raised for the Liberals?

• (1435)

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is fully committed to fighting tax evasion. The historic \$1-billion investment we made in our last two budgets is yielding concrete, tangible results for Canadians. We are about to recoup \$25 billion.

We investigate four new jurisdictions per year. Our plan is delivering results. We have had 627 cases transferred to criminal investigations, 268 search warrants executed, and 78 convictions. We continue to work for Canadians.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have spent another billion dollars on tax collectors. Who have those tax collectors gone after? Have they gone after Morneau Shepell? Have they gone after the billionaire Bronfman family, or have they instead decided to go after people suffering with diabetes, or after minimum wage-earning waitresses who enjoy a small chicken sandwich at the end of the shift or after small businesses and farmers? When will this high-tax hypocrisy come to an end?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every Canadian has a friend or relative who is affected by mental health problems, and the social and economic costs are extremely high.

We are giving a record number of tax credits to people with disabilities and people with mental health problems. In budget 2017, we invested \$5 billion so we could help 500,000 Canadians under the age of 25, and we will continue to focus on helping those most in need.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government does not understand anything about international tax avoidance because it continues to ignore the fundamental problem of tax havens instead of addressing it.

The minister still believes that the solution to tax havens is to invest in the Canada Revenue Agency. However, the fundamental problem lies in our overly permissive legislation that the Liberal Party's cronies benefit from.

Could the minister get her head out of the sand, especially since she voted for an NDP motion calling for action against tax avoidance and tax havens? Why has the minister still not proposed any measures to put an end to this legal tax scam?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if only my colleague opposite could show as many results as we have with respect to tax avoidance.

Over the past two years, we invested \$1 billion. We are very close to recovering \$25 billion. People are facing charges. We have been meeting with four new jurisdictions every year. Cases are being handed over to criminal investigations.

We are on track to meet Canadians' expectations. It is what we promised in our platform and we are keeping that promise.

[English]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it did not take long for the Liberals to start acting like Liberals, placing wealthy friends ahead of everyday Canadians.

Oral Questions

In March of this year, the Liberals voted in favour of the NDP's motion calling on the government to take action to tackle tax haven, including renegotiating tax treaties that let companies repatriate profits from tax havens to Canada tax free. Here is a spoiler alert; they have not done any of it yet.

Did the Prime Minister refuse to act on tax havens to help his wealthy friends?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our position on the issue was quite clear during the campaign.

We said we would combat tax evasion and tax havens. We have invested \$1 billion over the past two years. We have produced results for Canadians. We are going to recoup close to \$25 billion. We have criminal investigations under way. We are working with tax administrations around the world.

I can say that I am very proud of the international leadership role we have taken.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a major ethics crisis involving the Prime Minister of Canada is tarnishing Canada's international reputation.

We now know that Stephen Bronfman, the Liberal Party's chief fundraiser, had questionable dealings with tax havens. Mr. Bronfman is a close friend of the Prime Minister. They are so close, in fact, that when the Prime Minister visited the White House a year and a half ago, he left his Minister of Natural Resources behind but brought his good friend Bronfman, the Liberal Party's top bagman, to the White House with him.

Can the Prime Minister give us just one good reason why he left his Minister of Natural Resources in Ottawa and brought along his close Liberal friend and fundraiser?

• (1440)

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is firmly committed to combatting tax evasion and tax avoidance. What we want is a fair and equitable tax system for all Canadians. Our actions are producing results. We have invested close to \$1 billion over the past two years, which will enable us to recoup nearly \$25 billion.

I am very proud of the international leadership role we have taken. We are working with our partners around the world. That is what Canadians asked us to do, and that is what we are going to do.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as everyone knows, the Prime Minister is very close to the Bronfman family and to Stephen Bronfman in particular. This reflects poorly on Canada. Here is what the influential newspaper *The Guardian* wrote this morning: "The chief fundraiser and senior adviser to the Canadian Prime Minister...who played a critical role in [his] rise to power...". That is huge. We are not talking about some humble supporter who put out some lawn signs. This is the money man who helped get the Prime Minister where he is today.

Can the Prime Minister give us one good reason why, when he went to Washington, he left the Minister of Natural Resources in Ottawa but took his Liberal buddy—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Minister of National Revenue.

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is fully committed to combatting tax evasion. I do not understand my colleagues across the way. The Conservatives' hypocrisy is stunning. A former Canada Revenue Agency minister, Jean-Pierre Blackburn, even had the nerve to say that tax evasion was not even a priority for the Conservative government.

We made an election promise to crack down on tax evasion, we are taking action, and we will continue to work to ensure that everyone pays their fair share and that we have a tax system that is fair for all Canadians.

[English]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if we want to talk about hypocrisy, let us talk about two sets of tax rules, one for Liberals and one for everyday working-class Canadians.

Bronfman and his associates are reported to have engaged in bogus record-keeping, false invoicing, and six-figure gifts to avoid paying tax. The Prime Minister continues to protect him. The Prime Minister is so close to Bronfman that at the height of a softwood lumber dispute, he took him to the White House instead of the natural resources minister. Canadian taxpayers paid for that trip.

We ask the government again, what business did Bronfman have at the White House?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in our first two budgets, we invested nearly \$1 billion, a historic amount, to combat tax evasion and tax avoidance. Our plan is working. There have been 627 cases transferred to criminal investigation, 268 search warrants and 78 convictions. The Canada Revenue Agency is scrutinizing links to Canadian entities and will take appropriate measures. We continue to work toward a tax system that is fair and equitable for all Canadians.

[English]

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a Liberal is Liberal is a Liberal, and we can always count on them to be entitled to their entitlements, entitled to take private helicopters on private island vacations, entitled to taxpayer-funded nannies, entitled to protecting their vast family fortunes from many unfair tax changes, entitled to setting up offshore tax havens in France, Barbados, or the Cayman Islands. Canadians are entitled to know, why do they always end up footing the bill when these lifestyle of the rich and famous Liberals pay less?

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to combatting tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance. I want to reassure Canadians that, personally, as the minister responsible for the Canada Revenue Agency, I have no one to protect. There are laws that apply and they will apply to everyone so that we have a tax system that is fair and equitable for all Canadians.

* * *

• (1445)

[English]

PENSIONS

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, after consulting with workers across the country, I am tabling a private member's bill to protect the pensions of workers. Currently Canada's bankruptcy laws do not protect workers' pensions and benefits. The Prime Minister knows this, which is why he promised workers in my hometown that he would improve retirement security for Canadians. However, he has so far refused to fix the rules that let companies shortchange workers' pension plans. Workers fulfill their obligations, and companies and the Liberal government must do the same.

Will the Prime Minister keep his promise and work with me to protect our pensioners, yes or no?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government supports secure pensions. More importantly, we understand workers and their families and the dedication and commitment they make to various companies. It is important that we work with them.

With respect to the CCAA process, that process is designed to help companies in financial distress, so that they can restructure their affairs in order to come out of that restructuring process to help, preserve, and create thousands of jobs.

With respect to Sears, the current issue at hand, we are working with Sears Canada employees across the country, and Service Canada, in order to provide assistance and support to the workers and their families.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the murdered and missing indigenous women's inquiry says that its slow progress is due to Liberal interference. In fact, it reports that eight out of 10 challenges are barriers put up by the Liberal government, like strangling bureaucracy and lack of resources. It is clear the Liberals misled families when they promised they were doing everything they could to help this inquiry succeed.

Will the Liberals support the families of missing and murdered indigenous women, and when will they stop blocking the inquiry's work?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the important work of the commission is crucial to getting the answers the families have been waiting decades for, and to ending this ongoing tragedy. We are

absolutely committed to ensuring that the commission has all the support it needs to succeed. We have struck a working group to create and provide effective back-office support to the commission to ensure it is able to do its work effectively. Families must and will get the answers they need.

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THE ECONOMY

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, people in my riding of Kitchener South—Hespeler in the Waterloo region are proud of our government's commitment to grow the economy, create jobs, and strengthen the middle class. They know that the smart investments our government is making will help more Canadians find and keep good, well-paying jobs.

Can the minister update this House on what our government is doing to grow the economy and ensure every Canadian has a fair shot at success?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the investments we are making in child care, skilled trades, training, and infrastructure will put more Canadians on the path to success. Since our government first took office, the Canadian economy has created over half a million jobs. We have seen 11 consecutive months of job growth, the best in a decade. As Bank of Montreal economist Doug Porter noted, September and October marked the highest two-month period of job growth on record. We ran on a plan to make smart investments to grow our economy and strengthen our middle class, and that plan is working.

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TAXATION

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the revenue minister seems to be proud of reaching into the pockets of disabled people and taking away their tax credits and pension plans, while the Prime Minister's chief political fundraiser is sheltering his fortune in an offshore tax haven. Canadians can see the Liberal hypocrisy.

Why will she not protect vulnerable Canadians and make Liberal friends sheltering their fortunes in offshore bank accounts pay the same fair share that they expect of all other taxpayers?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring that all Canadians receive the tax credits they are entitled to. We are moving forward with a national disability act that would remove barriers and improve access for all Canadians living with disabilities.

We have made it easier to access the disability tax credit, we simplified the forms, and in budget 2017, we made it possible for nurses to complete applications on their patients' behalf. We continue to work for the most vulnerable members of our society.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for months, this department has been going after type 1 diabetics, and today this minister has told us how proud she is of her department.

Is she proud of targeting disabled Canadians? Is she proud of targeting low-wage earning retail employees? Is she proud of going after small businesses? When will the Liberal government get its priorities straight, back off from vulnerable Canadians, and go after real tax avoiders, including Liberal insiders?

•(1450)

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is fully committed to ensuring that Canadians receive the tax credits to which they are entitled. I would like my colleagues across the way to know that the legislation has not been amended. It has not been changed. The law is being applied the way it always has.

We will continue to work with our partners. We will continue to meet with them and we will continue to do better with our partners.

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the law may not have changed, but the way it is interpreted has, because the least fortunate are being targeted.

This summer entrepreneurs were the ones being targeted, and now it is people with type 1 diabetes. In fact, 80% of those people will no longer get their tax credit.

Why is the government picking on the most vulnerable in our society? Why is it not looking at what is going on with the Liberals' tax havens?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is fully committed to fighting tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance. In fact, over the past two years, we have invested nearly \$1 billion to combat tax havens. This investment has helped our efforts to recover nearly \$25 billion. Charges have been laid. That is what Canadians asked us to do and we are delivering.

[English]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the last few months, the Liberal government has been squeezing Canadian small businesses for more tax revenue. It has been taking away tax relief from families fighting diabetes, autism, and mental health issues.

However, what is the one group the Liberals have left alone? Their super-rich friends and those working hard to join them. When will the Prime Minister stop targeting hard-working Canadian families and start closing tax and ethics loopholes used by his friends?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the Conservative members opposite that the law regarding disability tax credits has not been amended. On the contrary, in the past two years, benefits paid to persons with disabilities have increased.

Our government works for the middle class and for persons with disabilities. We increased the Canada child benefit to help families.

We lowered the age of retirement, we increased the guaranteed income supplement—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Vancouver East.

* * *

*[English]***PUBLIC SAFETY**

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, children and their families who have been impacted for years by the no-fly list are on Parliament Hill today demanding an end to this human rights violation.

There are children as young as six being denied from boarding flights. Canadians want to see a properly funded redress system in the 2018 federal budget, and they want an end to the hundreds, if not thousands, of false positives that have occurred to date.

When will the government finally heed these calls and end this injustice for families once and for all?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we fully appreciate the frustration of law-abiding travellers who can be stigmatized and delayed as a result of false positives on the no-fly list.

However, to be clear, there are no children on the no-fly list, but there is confusion among similar names. That takes new legislation to fix that problem, new regulations, and a new computer system.

The first of those steps is being taken in Bill C-59. I urge the NDP to vote for it.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-59, as those parents said today at their press conference, does nothing to fix the problem that they face every single time they try to travel. I would ask the minister if he wants to go in front of those families to tell them, "Do not worry, your child is not on the list." These are the false positives that are being lived by thousands of Canadians.

[Translation]

Children, business people, and even veterans are finding travelling difficult. They are being humiliated, profiled, and are living in fear of ending up on the no-fly list.

Again I ask the minister: will she fully fund an actual redress system, yes or no?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the problem is that the no-fly list that was designed 10 years ago contains an inherent design flaw that needs to be fixed. To fix it takes legislation and regulation and a new computer system built from the bottom up.

The first step is to pass Bill C-59 to give us the legal authority to do these things. I urge the NDP to support Bill C-59.

Oral Questions

● (1455)

ETHICS

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister defends tax havens by insisting that they do not actually need to be fixed, that there is no problem. Now, we thought the finance minister was just protecting his own interests within his family company, but it turns out that there is actually a whole crew of Liberals who are colluding together in order to keep these tax loopholes open.

My question is very simple, and that is: When did the Prime Minister become aware that the Liberal Party's head of revenue, Stephen Bronfman, was sheltering money in offshore accounts?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is fully committed to combatting tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance. In the last two budgets, we invested nearly \$1 billion, and our plan is working. There have been 627 cases transferred to criminal investigations, 268 search warrants, and 78 convictions.

The Canada Revenue Agency is reviewing links to Canadian entities and will take appropriate action with respect to the paradise papers. We are working to make the tax system fair for Canadians.

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they say their plan is working, but it is the media that is working. That is how we know about the paradise papers.

The finance minister has defended offshore tax havens in places like Barbados by saying he does not want to throw out the baby with the bathwater. It seems that the babies the minister was referring to are a bunch of the Prime Minister's friends and Liberal Party donors.

When will the Prime Minister quit attacking farmers and small business owners and start investigating Liberal Party donors who are using offshore tax havens?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is fully committed to fighting tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance. I am proud of the leadership role Canada has taken on the international stage. Tax evasion is a global problem that requires collaboration with all of our international partners.

The nearly \$1 billion we have invested is yielding results. We are on track to recoup close to \$25 billion. Criminal charges are being laid, and search warrants are being executed. We made a promise to Canadians, and we are doing what we promised.

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, middle-class Canadians continue to hear the Prime Minister demand tax fairness from them, but when it comes to Liberal Party donors and wealthy insiders, the Prime Minister practises instead tax forgiveness.

When will the Prime Minister end his two-tier taxation policy and start making Liberal insiders and donors pay their fair share of Liberal spending, rather than going after hard-working Canadian small business owners and farmers?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Minister of National Revenue, I can say that there will be no double standard. Everyone must obey the law. That is one of the conditions of a fair tax system. We made a promise during the election campaign, and we have taken concrete steps to fulfill that promise. We have invested nearly \$1 billion, and our investment is bearing fruit. We are going to keep working for Canadians, as they asked us to do.

* * *

[*English*]**IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP**

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the effectiveness and compassion of our immigration system makes Canada an example for the world, but we know that we can always do better, including when it comes to immigration detention. Our government has made great steps on this, which can be seen in the significant drop in the number of people detained under immigration laws in the last two years.

Can the minister please tell us what more the government is doing to ensure that immigration detention, especially for minors, is used as rarely as possible?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working very hard to improve the immigration detention system. I thank the member for Toronto—Danforth for being such a strong advocate.

Today I am announcing a new directive that includes the best interests of the child as a primary factor for the Canada Border Services Agency when making decisions affecting families. The goal is to avoid children in detention as much as humanly possible. We are committed to an immigration system that protects public safety while treating people with fairness, dignity, and compassion.

* * *

● (1500)

ETHICS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, new taxes for Morneau Shepell: zero. New taxes for the finance minister's family company in Barbados: zero. New taxes for the Prime Minister's multi-million dollar family trust fund: zero. New taxes for Stephen Bronfman's Cayman Islands tax shelter: zero. That is life in Liberal tax paradise.

With this hypocrisy now exposed, will the government finally apologize for insulting the integrity of hard-working, tax-paying small business owners across this country?

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is fully committed to fighting tax evasion and tax avoidance, to make sure the tax system is fair and equitable for all Canadians. In the last two budgets, we invested nearly \$1 billion so the Canada Revenue Agency could focus on high-risk taxpayers overseas. Our investment is already bearing fruit, as we have recouped close to \$25 billion in unreported income. The agency is reviewing links to Canadian entities and will take appropriate action with regard to the paradise papers. We will continue to work for a fair tax system for all—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Hochelaga.

* * *

HOUSING

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in her victory speech last night, Montreal's new mayor, Valérie Plante, said she intends to ask the federal government for help increasing the supply of social housing units.

In Montreal, 25,000 families are waiting for social housing. The mayor is adding her voice to that of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' big city mayors' caucus, which recently called on the government to ensure that the national housing strategy includes funding to maintain and expand the social housing stock.

Has the minister heard her call?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Ms. Plante on being elected Montreal's new mayor.

I also want to congratulate and thank all of the other candidates who worked very hard all across Quebec to run in the municipal election. I am personally very much looking forward to meeting Ms. Plante.

In the coming weeks, we will launch Canada's first-ever national housing strategy, which will provide extraordinary opportunities to strengthen the Government of Canada's role in supporting our families in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada.

* * *

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Pierre Breton (Shefford, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in Granby, in my riding of Shefford, we have the largest francophone singing competition in North America. Since 1969, this festival has been an important vehicle for showcasing and promoting Canadian francophone talent around the world. Recently, the Minister of Canadian Heritage made historic announcements for Canadian creators.

Could the minister tell the House what she is doing to support these artists and to showcase their work abroad?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his excellent question and for his work in the cultural sector.

We believe in culture. That is why we invested \$2.2 billion in our cultural sector since forming the government. When it comes to music, we also invested \$4.15 million over two years to ensure that

we can export our musical talent abroad. In addition, we invested \$125 million over five years to relaunch cultural diplomacy and support our cultural exporting strategy.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as an MP, Terence Young introduced Vanessa's Law to honour his daughter, who died after taking a prescription drug. Three years ago today, Vanessa's Law received royal assent, yet under the Liberal government, it sits idle and unenforced.

The Liberals are proposing to undermine the intent of this law even further by making Canadians wait six years for reports of injuries and deaths and by requiring researchers to sign contracts to never reveal crucial data.

Why has the government abandoned Vanessa's Law and the transparency crucial to reducing drug harm and deaths?

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we remain committed to working with our provincial and territorial partners to ensure that all Canadians have access to the prescription drugs they require in an affordable and accessible way.

We will continue to work with all affected Canadians on ensuring that this system is fair for all.

* * *

[Translation]

ETHICS

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it has gotten to the point where every time the issue of tax havens comes up, so does the Liberal Party, and every time we talk about tax havens and the Liberal Party, the Minister of National Revenue sounds like a broken record.

After learning that Jean Chrétien, Paul Martin, and Stephen Bronfman, three prominent Liberals, are hiding millions of dollars down south, we understand why this government refuses to take action against tax havens. It would rather defend the indefensible than clean house. Taxes are for other people to pay, certainly not the Prime Minister's friends.

Will the Canada Revenue Agency do its job and investigate Stephen Bronfman?

● (1505)

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the last campaign, the government was very clear. Cracking down on tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance was part of our platform.

House of Commons

Over the past two years, we have invested nearly \$1 billion, which has allowed us to conduct investigations and to recoup nearly \$25 billion. Charges have been laid. We are working internationally and examining four jurisdictions per year.

That is what Canadians asked us to do and we are getting the job done.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we simply cannot trust the Liberals to do anything but get caught with their hands in the cookie jar.

We wondered why they voted against the Bloc Québécois motion to combat tax havens. We now know it was because that is where they hide their money. The Liberal Party is the tax-evasion party, and yet the Liberals still claim to be standing up for the middle class.

Will this government finally take action and go after people who use tax havens to evade taxes, even if those people include friends, family members, or colleagues?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is fully committed to combatting tax evasion, and we have taken concrete action to do so.

Over the past two years, we have invested nearly \$1 billion, allowing us to recoup \$25 billion. Charges have been laid. We are working at the international level. We are working with our partners. The work is not done. It is ongoing.

I can say that we have always done quite a bit more than the Bloc Québécois.

* * *

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Nunavut, Ind.): [*Member spoke in aboriginal language*]

[English]

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. The government is committed to making real progress on issues most important to indigenous peoples, including education. Targeted investments in first nations education have been made to ensure a brighter future for first nations children.

Nunavut currently has the lowest graduation rate in the country, with only 35% of students graduating. This is 50% lower than the national average. How and when will similar targeted investments be made for Inuit education in Nunavut?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in line with our commitment to work with provinces and territories, we recognize that the issues raised by my colleague are very important. I can assure him that they are at the very heart of our preoccupations. Recently the finance minister met with the organization Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, which represents more than 50,000 Inuit in some communities my colleague has referred to.

Our government transferred \$1.6 billion for 2017-18 to Nunavut. We will continue to work with our partners to make sure we achieve results for all Canadians and to work with the member.

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST MEETING OF PARLIAMENT

The Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Wednesday, October 18, 2017, I will now make a statement commemorating the 150th anniversary of the first meeting of the first Parliament of Canada, after which I invite representatives of all parties in the House to proceed with their own statements.

[Translation]

I invite all members to the Hall of Honour for the unveiling of a decorative window commemorating this event.

[English]

Today we mark an important milestone in Canada's history, the 150th anniversary of the first meeting of the first Parliament. I am honoured that in recognition of this significant chapter in our nation's history, we have in attendance today several of our former prime ministers, speakers, and clerks of the House of Commons.

On November 6, 1867, Canada's members of Parliament came together for the first time to begin shaping their new country, writing the laws that would enable their fellow citizens to govern themselves and strengthen our fledging democracy.

[Translation]

On this day 150 years ago, our predecessors embarked on an ambitious journey that continues to this day, the journey towards a fair, prosperous country for all citizens.

● (1510)

[English]

It is difficult to imagine the enormity of the task before those first parliamentarians gathered in the chamber that used to stand here, facing the monumental challenge of governing a vast and sprawling country still in its infancy. Consider, too, that in those days, Ottawa was not perhaps the most sophisticated location for Canada's capital. A decade before Confederation, the English essayist and political scientist, Goldwin Smith, dismissed Ottawa as "a sub-Arctic lumber-village converted by royal mandate into a political cockpit".

[Translation]

To avoid hurting the feelings of Jim Watson, the mayor of Ottawa, I should add that Ottawa has come a long way since those days. It has even become a leading city, and a lot of work has gone into its development, but there is, of course, always more to be done.

[English]

Any democracy worthy of its name is always a work in progress, and it is our duty as parliamentarians to build on the foundation laid by those first members of Parliament who established the country that it is our privilege to serve.

House of Commons

[Translation]

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Prime Ministers, I rise today to mark a historic anniversary. On this day 150 years ago, Canada's first legislature sat for the very first time. Over the many years and sessions that followed, this House, more than any other institution, wrote Canada's history. Men and women sat in this chamber to debate and pass legislation to build a better, fairer, more equitable country for all.

[English]

Our 14th prime minister, the great Lester B. Pearson, once said, "We who are elected to serve Canada in Parliament owe those who elect us more than the advocacy of non-controversial ideas." He was right.

This House has hosted some of the most important debates and decisions of our time. Within these walls, Canada has been reborn countless times since Confederation, and in our progress we have defined the character of a country. It was here that Agnes Macphail broke barriers as the first female MP. It was here that we introduced universal health care. It was here that we abolished the death penalty. It was here that same-sex couples were extended the right to marry.

[Translation]

It was here that the Official Languages Act was debated and passed. It was also here that we righted some of our most terrible wrongs. We apologized for dark, shameful chapters in our history, especially the horrible way indigenous people were treated in the residential school system and the refusal to take in the innocent people aboard the *Komagata Maru* who were seeking help.

This House has welcomed some extraordinary guests, including Winston Churchill, Nelson Mandela, and Malala Yousafzai. In fact, serving in this chamber is one of the greatest honours to which a person can aspire.

[English]

Day after day, year after year, members sit in this House and do important work on behalf of Canadians, work that impacts families and communities, work that shapes the course of people's daily lives.

Because of the magnitude of what happens and what can happen here, we will not always agree. However, it is the way we disagree that defines us. Let us be women and men of principle and of humility, for we have been bestowed the responsibility to serve and we must do so honourably.

We are lucky to have had strong leaders in this place to remind us of that, folks like Arnold Chan. Let us never lose sight of the fact that we are all here for the same reason, to make our country better, to improve the lives of the people we serve. We may have different ideas on how to get there, but there is always common ground. If we work together, we will find it.

On this historic day, I call upon all of us to continue to work hard and to stay true to ourselves. On that, I am reminded of something that our 15th prime minister once said: "Our hopes are high. Our faith in the people is great. Our courage is strong. And our dreams for this beautiful country will never die."

●(1515)

[Translation]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for 150 years, our Parliament has been a reflection of Canada and Canadians. It is more than a building. It is the embodiment of our national character, its virtues and vices, its strengths and its weaknesses.

[English]

It has been burned to the ground and been built back up stone by stone. It has heard the echoes of gunfire, and felt the blast of a bomb that, thankfully, detonated mere minutes prematurely.

It has rung with cheers of victory at the end of two world wars, and it has stood mute witness to the tears of a nation mourning distinguished former members of this House lying in state, from Sir John A. Macdonald to the hon. Jack Layton.

[Translation]

The legislative measures debated and passed in this chamber help Canada progress and, unfortunately, they also sometimes set us back. Our House has seen legislative measures that support our liberties, and others that limit them.

[English]

This is a physical place, but also an institution, and as an institution made of human beings, the outcomes are not always perfect.

[Translation]

As Canadians, we must not forget our past. We must never be afraid to admit when we have made a mistake and to apologize when necessary.

[English]

That is why Prime Minister Harper came to the House nine years ago and issued a formal apology to former victims of the Indian residential schools on behalf of a country that had failed them. It was appropriate, because so many of the decisions that caused so much grief and suffering had been deliberated and, in some cases, approved right here in this building.

That we who have been trusted with the governance of Canada have sometimes failed should not be surprising. This chamber may be made of wood and stone, but the men and women who give it its life are hewn from the crooked timber of humanity. These chairs have supported patriots and heroes, but also a few rogues, so we cannot claim to have always been perfect, but we know that perfection is not available to us this side of eternity. Yet, somehow, the motley and imperfect assemblages that have gathered here over the last 150 years have achieved something of a miracle.

Together, the members who came before us superintended a Canada that has grown and flourished beyond what anyone in the first Parliament could have dreamed.

House of Commons

It is fashionable today to look down at the past, but that is a luxury we enjoy from heights built by those who preceded us in this chamber. If we look back at our rich history and study the leading figures in its telling and see only the blemishes, then we are missing out on the beautiful story of a country constantly bettering itself, and consistently offering a refuge to so many around the world. It is a story of different parliaments at different times, working through the imperfections of the day. It is a story that on the whole has been a story of hope for so many. It is a story of prosperity, compassion, liberty, and human rights.

To those who deny we have anything to be proud of as a country, I would pose a simple question: "Where else would you have rather lived for the last 150 years?" That is not a rhetorical question. It is a straightforward question for which there is only one honest answer. There is nowhere we would rather have lived, no country we would rather call our home, for no country has acquitted herself better at home and abroad than Canada.

It is indisputable that the world has been better off for the last 150 years because of Canada. Without the sacrifices of our soldiers, sailors, and airmen, more than 100,000 of whom paid the ultimate sacrifice, while many more came home bearing scars, mental and physical, the world would be more dangerous.

[*Translation*]

Without the brilliance of our artists, painters, sculptors, writers, singers, and actors, the world would be losing part of its cultural richness.

Without the work of the men and women who cultivate, farm, and develop our incredible landscape, who fish in our three great oceans that surround us, and who work in the towns, plants, and office towers, the world would be poorer, colder, and darker. If we dwell on past mistakes, we miss out on their remarkable successes. We end up taking for granted their contribution to Canada and Canada's contribution to the rest of the world.

[*English*]

It is time for a little gratitude. Make that a lot of gratitude.

That we have prospered and flourished is no accident. It is a combination of good fortune and good stewardship. We are fortunate to have inherited the most stable and enduring political system in the world. We should be grateful to the members of the House who have nurtured and sustained it for the benefit of Canadians and the inspiration of the world.

For it is to this House that world leaders have come over the last century to express their admiration of Canada as the very exemplar of peace, order, and good government. It was here that Churchill came in Britain's darkest hour, when Hitler's armies were within sight of English shores, to thank Canada for our support and to display his jowl-shaking defiance in the face of Nazi aggression.

Later, we were engaged in a very different kind of war against Soviet imperialism, a battle not just based on geography but on ideology, a battle to defend the economic freedom that had created untold prosperity for so many millions around the world, yet a freedom that was denied to so many. During that battle, two of the great figures of the 20th century, Ronald Reagan and Margaret

Thatcher, each came to this House twice to thank Canada for our friendship and dedication to key principles.

More recently, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko came to Canada while his country was suffering under a new Russian imperialism, to praise "the special partnership between Ukraine and Canada" and to salute Canada as a model for Ukraine and for the world.

It is in our nature as Canadians to be self-deprecating, but sometimes, maybe once every 150 years, it is okay to acknowledge what the rest of the world tells us: we occupy a special place in the fellowship of free nations and our institutions, including this Parliament, are the envy of other nations.

I am not asking members of the House to pat ourselves on the back and congratulate ourselves for assuming this awesome duty. Rather, let us roll up our sleeves and get to work in the House and across Canada to continue the work of those who came before us so that those who come after us, 150 years from now, will consider us worthy of the same gratitude we offer today to our predecessors.

● (1520)

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House today to join my colleagues in marking the 150th anniversary of the first sitting of Parliament. Canadians can be truly proud of having built, shaped, and preserved one of the longest uninterrupted parliaments in the world. Every day we demonstrate to the world how ideas can be debated in a peaceful, civil, and productive manner, with the possible exception of question period.

We show how we can come together to make life better for the people who sent us here to represent them. In a country as geographically, linguistically, and ethnically diverse as ours, this is no small achievement.

[*Translation*]

The NDP can be proud of the major firsts they have contributed to Parliament. Among those, our party was the first to have an openly gay man elected to the House and the first to have a woman lead a federal political party in the House, just to name a few milestones. There is no doubt that we have made a lot of progress since the days when Parliament was made up of only white men. We are pleased to see that the members sitting in the House look a lot more like the people who voted for them than they used to a long time ago.

● (1525)

[*English*]

However, we have to be honest that we are nowhere close to where we need to be. We have yet to achieve even near gender balance in the House. The 2015 election sent a record number of women to this chamber and yet they still only make up a little more than one quarter of the MPs in the House. All parties should use this important anniversary to commit to reaching gender parity in the House as soon as possible.

New Democrats and Canadians across the country also believe our Parliament can be made even better by reflecting Canadians' actual voting preferences.

House of Commons

[Translation]

Let us be honest, the House does not reflect the proportion of support each party received in the last election.

[English]

If we move toward a proportional system of elections, we could not only make room for new voices, but re-inspire Canadians with the knowledge that their votes truly do matter and their Parliament is truly a reflection of their will. Surely there is no better way to mark the 150th anniversary of Parliament than by working to make it more representative. All Canadians will benefit from it.

[Translation]

No celebration of our Parliament would be complete if we did not mention the hard work of the devoted staff and public servants who, by the thousands, over many decades, have kept this institution on a steady course by handling everything that goes on behind the scenes.

[English]

We thank the Clerk, the committee staff, the legislative support staff, our financial officers, our cafeteria workers, the janitorial staff, the security guards, and every other member of the personnel who I will not be able to mention specifically today. This Parliament literally cannot function without them.

Last, on behalf of the New Democratic Party, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all Canadians on the 150th anniversary of their Parliament and recommit to making this place a source of pride for our country, but, more important, a source of the support, solutions, and leadership that will make life better for everyone, from coast to coast.

[Translation]

Thank you and congratulations.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to congratulate those who spoke before me for their heartfelt tribute to the 150 years of the Canadian parliamentary system. I am sure that the Canadian parliamentary system is something very important to them. I am sure that it is very important and that many Canadians are proud of it.

Unfortunately, for many Quebecers, it means something else. Let us face it, the 150th anniversary was not exactly celebrated in Quebec, which is not surprising. Quebec never looked forward to signing the British North America Act. There have not been too many opportunities for Quebec to look forward to anything since the Dominion of Canada was created.

Confederation, for Quebec, means 150 years of being constantly undermined by the decisions taken in the House year after year. It was here that, during the First World War, the federal government temporarily granted itself the right to tax Quebecers' income. The war is over, all the heroes who fought it have been dead for a long time, but we still pay half of our taxes to this government, even though it barely delivers any services. All this to have the power to decide on provincial jurisdictions, when the provinces are the ones that deal with publicly funded services and are accountable to Quebecers. The reality of one hundred years of holding our people

hostage is an anniversary that federalist parties would prefer to ignore.

It was also here in the House that federal politicians voted to prevent Quebec from controlling broadcasting by taking away a portion of our government's jurisdiction over culture, education, and information. The current government's agreement with Netflix is the unfortunate proof that it is bent on meddling incompetently in areas that are supposed to be under Quebec's jurisdiction. Rendering history and reality meaningless, the Canadian Constitution essentially denies the existence of the Quebec nation. Even now, we refuse to sign this pact whose sole intention is to force our distinct society to fall in line every time we try to do things our own way.

This is where the Clarity Act was passed, an authoritarian law that undermines Quebecers' right to the most basic expression of democracy. Today's celebration is about weakening Quebec's position in the Canadian parliamentary system. The day before Confederation, Quebec held half the seats in Parliament. The day after, it held a third of them. Now we have less than a quarter.

When the very first sitting of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada took place on November 6, 1867, the first subject of debate was the appointment of the first Speaker of the House of Commons. The elected representatives had been together for barely 10 minutes when a member from Quebec was forced to complain because John A. MacDonald wanted to appoint a unilingual anglophone Speaker. That member found it unfortunate that, at the inauguration of Confederation, greater respect was not shown. I am sure he would have fallen off his chair had he known that, 150 years later, we would still be having this kind of debate.

• (1530)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is a huge honour for me to rise today as we celebrate the 150th anniversary of this House of Commons.

[English]

I am overwhelmed and grateful for my colleagues that there is an opportunity for the Green Party to mark the 150th sitting of the Parliament of Canada. I want to acknowledge that we are on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin nation. We all are very grateful for the perpetual generosity of indigenous peoples in our country to be willing to consider our meek efforts at reconciliation.

I note that at 150 years old, our democracy here, the first meeting of Parliament on November 6, 1867, was a bit late. One hundred years earlier, the first parliamentary representative democracy in North America met in Nova Scotia. In 2008, Nova Scotians celebrated the 250th.

Imagine that I can stand here today, on our 150th occasion, in the presence in the gallery of four extraordinary Canadians, each of whom I hold in such respect and affection. That the Right Hon. John Turner, the Right Hon. Joe Clark, the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney, and the Right Hon. Paul Martin would be here for this celebration, as well as our former Speakers, John Bosley and Peter Milliken, is an extraordinary moment.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

I want to reiterate how proud I am. I find it incredible that I have the privilege to participate, because it is indeed a privilege, not a right.

[English]

Even as we look back at Halifax and the 250th anniversary, we are all pikers. The longest continuous participatory democracy on the planet is the 800-year-old Iroquois confederacy of the Haudenosaunee. We have learned parliamentary democracy. We have learned that Parliament comes from the word *parler*. We know we are here to speak with each other, work together, respect each other, and to work to earn the respect of our constituents who have sent us here not to blow our own horn, but to carry their cares and concerns to this place.

I could not agree more with our right hon. Prime Minister that one of the greatest parliamentarians I have ever had the privilege to know and work with left us too soon when we lost Arnold Chan. It is his words I think of today, that call in his last speech, the last time he had the physical strength to stand in this place, for us to respect each other.

I also ask us to look around. We are in this room, what a privilege, day in and day out, but how often do we look up, and I am afraid I am going to go in a Friendly Giant direction, look way up? There is a reason that this magnificent chamber dwarfs its occupants. This room is not about us as members of Parliament. This room is about democracy. It is about Canada. We are very tiny in this space because our role is to represent something far bigger than ourselves. We are here for Canada. We are here for a country in which we are blessed to live, know, and love. We are to cherish that democracy. This room dwarfs us for a reason.

• (1535)

[Translation]

Thank you to all of my colleagues and thank you Canada. Congratulations and thank you.

[English]

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Please indulge me for a few seconds. For the historical record, while it was the first meeting of the Parliament of Canada here some 150 years ago, it was not the first meeting that took place in this very chamber some 150 years ago. The very first meeting that took place was the last session of the Parliament of the United Province of Canada, which met here for its last time before Confederation. I would like that to be noted because this building has a very deep history indeed.

The Speaker: While this may not be a point of order, it is a good point of history. I thank the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills for it.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Dan Ruimy (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian section of ParlAmericas respecting its participation at the “2nd Gathering of the Parliamentary Network on Climate Change” held in Panama City, Panama, on August 3 and 4, 2017.

* * *

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food entitled “Non-Tariff Trade Barriers to the Sale of Agricultural Products in Relation to Free Trade Agreements”.

[English]

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

* * *

BANKRUPTCY AND INSOLVENCY ACT

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-384, An Act to amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act (pension plans and group insurance programs).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this time to thank my seconder, my colleague who has done great work and works very hard in this House, and who has also helped me a lot on this bill.

I rise today to introduce a private member's bill titled, an act to amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act. This bill will amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the CCAA so that companies will have to bring any pension plan fund to 100% before paying any other secured creditors. It also makes amendments to require companies to pay any termination or severance pay owing before paying any secured creditors.

Other amendments will prevent a company from stopping the payment of any post-retirement benefits during any proceedings under the BIA or CCAA. These amendments will inject some fairness into a process that often sees the interests of workers, retirees, and their families placed behind all others.

Routine Proceedings

We must fix the imbalances in current legislation and provide Canadian workers, retirees, and their families with the protection they expect and deserve. I am hopeful that all my colleagues in Parliament will put aside their partisan differences and support this bill. Canadian workers, retirees, and their families deserve no less.

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

* * *

• (1540)

PETITIONS

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to introduce today, both of which are issues that are near and dear to my heart.

The first petition recognizes that climate change is drastically affecting the flow rates of the Cowichan River in the Cowichan Valley. It is posing a threat to both fish and fish habitat.

Recognizing that, and recognizing the strong federal role and jurisdiction in that area, the petitioners are calling on the federal government to fund the raising of the Lake Cowichan weir so we may better control the flow rates in that very important river.

ABANDONED VESSELS

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition has to do with constituents who want strong action to clean up abandoned vessels.

I have to recognize my colleague, the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, because the petitioners are calling on the government to support her Bill C-352, and to immediately get the federal government to be a main player to do some much-needed work to clean up our coasts.

We are a coastal nation, and this is needed by many constituents, both in my riding and across this great country.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 1153, 1157, 1159, 1160, 1162, 1171, and 1172.

[Text]

Question No. 1153— **Mr. Kevin Sorenson:**

With regard to the appointment of Rana Sarkar as Consul General in San Francisco: (a) who made the decision to pay Mr. Sarkar at a rate significantly higher than other Consul Generals; (b) was there an open competition for the position; (c) if the answer to (b) is affirmative, what are the details of the competition including (i) where was the competition posted, (ii) number of applicants, (iii) selection criteria; (d) is the government taking any steps to ensure that Mr. Sarkar's salary does not impact salary negotiations between the government and other diplomats; (e) was the government warned that paying an appointee at higher than the normal rate would have an impact on the salary negotiations with other diplomats; and (f) if the answer to (e) is affirmative, what are the details of the warning, including (i) who issued the warning, (ii) date, (iii) recipient, (iv) reason warning did not impact salary decision?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sarkar's compensation

is comparable to that of the San Francisco consul general appointed by the previous government.

With regards to key postings, it is common, both in the public service and the private sector, for compensation to reflect the qualifications and expertise of the appointee. This has been true for many recent appointees, including former cabinet ministers Lawrence Cannon, Michael Wilson, and Loyola Hearn, Gary Doer, Patrick Binns, Alex Himelfarb, David Alward, Vivian Bercovici, Kevin Vickers, Guy Saint-Jacques, Dennis Savoie, I. David Marshall, Paul Maddison, Gordon Campbell, Gérard Latulippe, Jean-Carol Pelletier, and Catherine Doyle.

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Mr. Sarkar brings specialized expertise, including most recently as national director for high-growth markets at globally recognized KPMG. Throughout his career as an adviser and entrepreneur, he built a considerable skill in providing strategy and transaction-focused services to firms, investors and start-ups, enabling cross-border trade, investment, and innovation.

His background will serve Canada's interests in San Francisco and Silicon Valley specifically. He is specifically responsible for working to attract investment and help Canadian business succeed in the fastest-growing industries on the continent, and work to expand our reach across the Pacific Rim while we grow our presence in the world's fastest emerging markets in Asia.

This was one of a number of diplomatic appointments to strengthen our outreach to the United States, highlighting the importance and mutually beneficial partnership of our two countries, which continues to support millions of middle-class jobs on both sides of the border.

Question No. 1157— **Mr. Dean Allison:**

With regard to the government's decision to award certain funding only to areas which are considered "superclusters": (a) which areas applied to be superclusters; (b) which areas were selected by the government to be "superclusters"; (c) how was each area in (b) selected; (d) for each area which applied, but was not selected to be a "supercluster", why was each area not selected, broken down by individual area; (e) what specific guarantees are in place to ensure that areas outside of "superclusters" receive their fair share of funding, broken down by funding program; and (f) for each guarantee referred to in (e), what is the website location where the text is located?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the government's decision to award certain funding only to areas that are considered "superclusters", please see the response from Innovation, Science and Economic Development below.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to part (a), the innovation superclusters initiative received more than 50 applications representing all regions of Canada, including British Columbia, the Prairies, Ontario, Quebec, the Atlantic provinces, and the north. Several of the applications involved interprovincial participation. The applications are from highly innovative industries such as clean technology, advanced manufacturing, digital technology, health/biosciences, clean resources, and agrifood, as well as infrastructure and transportation.

With regard to part (b), the application process for the innovation superclusters initiative is ongoing and a final decision has not been made.

With regard to part (c), the selection of applications involves a two-phase application process. In the first phase, business-led consortia, including companies of all sizes, post-secondary institutions, and other innovation partners, were invited to submit letters of intent to outline their ambitious plans to build world-leading superclusters at scale. The first phase closed on 24/07/2017.

In the second phase, selected applicants will be invited to submit a full application. After the selection process concludes, contribution agreements will be negotiated and results will be announced.

Descriptions of the assessment criteria and process, reflecting key elements contributing to program outcomes, are published in the program guide, which can be found at <https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/093.nsf/eng/00003.html>.

They are used to assess the potential of proposals to generate real economic impact and industrial benefits for Canada, as well as other key elements, such as the importance, relevance, and feasibility of the applicant's proposed plans.

With regard to part (d), the application process is ongoing and a final decision has not been made.

With regard to part (e), the purpose of the innovation superclusters initiative is to accelerate the growth and development of a small number of business-led innovation superclusters in Canada with strong innovation ecosystems that have the potential to be global leaders. The program provides funding to selected applicants with whom a contribution agreement will be signed.

It is expected that the benefits of funded activities will extend beyond the borders of a supercluster, drawing on partners across Canada to achieve a national network effect. Regardless of their location in Canada, organizations outside the supercluster region will be eligible to participate in funded activities.

With regard to part (f), program information can be found on the innovation superclusters initiative website at www.canada.ca/superclusters.

Question No. 1159—Mr. Dean Allison:

With regard to salaries in the Prime Minister's Office, as of September 18, 2017:
(a) how many employees had a salary higher than the salary of a minister (\$255,300);
and (b) how many employees had a salary higher than the salary of the Prime Minister (\$345,400)?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Youth), Lib): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, the Privy Council Office, PCO, is unable to respond

because in processing parliamentary returns, the government applies the principles of the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act, and this information has been withheld on these grounds. PCO is able to confirm that no employees had a salary higher than the salary of the Prime Minister: \$345,400.

Question No. 1160—Mr. Dan Albas:

With regard to meetings or communication between the Prime Minister and the current Premier of British Columbia: (a) what are the details of any meeting or communication where the Trans Mountain Pipeline was discussed, including for each the (i) date, (ii) type of communication (i.e. meeting, phone call, email, etc.), (iii) location, (iv) purpose or summary of communication; (b) what is the official government position with regard to the Trans Mountain Pipeline; and (c) when was the official position communicated to the current Premier of British Columbia?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on July 25, 2017, the Prime Minister, in an introductory meeting with British Columbia Premier John Horgan in Ottawa, briefly discussed the Trans Mountain expansion project. Premier Horgan noted the need to protect British Columbia's interests, and indicated that further discussions with Alberta were planned on the issue.

The Prime Minister announced the Government of Canada's approval of the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain expansion project on November 30, 2016. The Government of Canada requires that Kinder Morgan meet or exceed all of the 157 binding conditions set out by the National Energy Board. The Government of Canada has also established the oceans protection plan to ensure any risk coming from increased vessel traffic in Burrard Inlet is properly mitigated.

There has been no known direct communication of the official position of the Government of Canada to Premier Horgan. The Government of Canada's approval of the project has been noted in the media many times since November 2016.

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 1162— Mrs. Karen Vecchio:**

With regard to the January 1, 2017, policy clarification to the interpretation of eligibility criteria for the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) Involuntary Separation Provision, not including any changes to the Allowance and not including changes made to involuntary separation of couples who are eligible to receive the Allowance: (a) what was the interpretation error that required the change or clarification to interpretation; (b) how was the new interpretation communicated to relevant individuals (i) at Service Canada, (ii) at government departments, broken down by each department within which the new interpretation was circulated, (iii) to seniors who would be affected by the change, (iv) to Senators and Members of Parliament; (c) what are the details of any directives, memorandums, or communiqué circulated to advise the individuals in (b) of the new interpretation, including for each the (i) date, (ii) recipients, (iii) sender, (iv) title, (v) summary of contents, (vi) file number, (vii) text, (viii) website address of text, if applicable; (d) were any responses received to any directives, memorandums, or communiqués referred to in (c) and, if so, what are the details, including for each, the (i) date, (ii) recipients, (iii) sender, (iv) title, (v) summary of contents, (vi) file number, (vii) text; (e) how many groups or stakeholders in total were consulted in order to inform the decision to alter the interpretation of eligibility criteria and to understand the effects it will have on Canadian seniors; (f) what is the complete list of organizations, individuals or stakeholders referenced in (e); (g) how many senior couples currently take advantage of the involuntary separation provision for GIS, broken down by province; (h) how many seniors are currently receiving the involuntary separation provision for GIS based off of the old interpretation of the eligibility criteria, and would have been considered ineligible if their eligibility was under the policy clarification enacted on January 1, 2017, broken down by sex; and (i) considering Canada's aging population, what is the government's plan to help the increasing number of seniors who will face this vulnerable situation?

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, old age security, OAS, benefits are intended to provide partial income security for seniors in recognition of the contributions that they have made to Canadian society and the economy. Low-income pensioners are entitled to additional assistance through the guaranteed income supplement, GIS. The GIS is calculated based on income to ensure that these benefits are provided to seniors most in need.

The GIS is paid at a different rate based on whether seniors are single or part of a couple. This reflects the different economic realities of single seniors and senior couples.

Since 1971, the Old Age Security Act has contained a provision that allows low-income couples in receipt of the GIS and who are forced to live apart for reasons beyond their control to receive their benefits at the higher single rate based on their individual incomes. The intent of this provision was to recognize the increase in cost of living where one member of a couple remained in the matrimonial home while the other was required to go into a chronic care facility, nursing home, or home for the aged. These couples are often described as being "involuntarily separated". In budget 2016, the OAS Act was amended to extend this provision to involuntarily separated couples where one member receives the GIS and the other receives the allowance. These amendments came into force on January 1, 2017.

In January 2017, the department issued an administrative policy direction to front-line Service Canada staff in order to reflect the expanded scope of the provisions for GIS/allowance couples. The department also took the opportunity to clarify the intent of the legislation with respect to eligibility for the involuntary separation provisions.

Specifically, the policy guidance was amended to state that couples must first qualify for the GIS on the basis of their joint income before the involuntary separation provisions could be applied. In order to address any possible situations where individuals had been paid under these provisions while their combined income was above the allowable threshold, a "grandfathering" clause was included to ensure that no current beneficiaries would see a reduction in their benefits.

Shortly thereafter, the department received an enquiry from Mrs. Vecchio's office with respect to this policy direction. Departmental officials met with Mrs. Vecchio on June 21, 2017, in order to hear her concerns in person. At that meeting, she expressed her concerns about couples whose combined income is sufficient to render them ineligible for the GIS, but who may have a large disparity of income between the spouses. She noted in particular that in these situations, if the higher income spouse requires long-term care, the higher costs for that care could result in a significant reduction in the pooled income available to the lower income spouse.

As a result, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development asked his officials to undertake a further analysis on the impact of the January 2017 policy directive. It became apparent that the implementation of this policy guidance was disadvantaging modest income couples. The minister has therefore tasked the department to correct this issue, by assessing the eligibility of couples involuntarily separated based solely on their individual incomes.

The department has already begun identifying senior couples who were affected by the January 2017 policy direction, a process that will be completed by the end of October. Departmental officials will subsequently reassess the benefit entitlement of any couples who were impacted by the January 2017 directive. The number of couples impacted by the directive is expected to be low.

Question No. 1171—Mr. Dave MacKenzie:

With regard to government expenditures on foreign aid since January 1, 2016: what are the details of all expenditures, including for each the (i) recipient, (ii) country, (iii) amount, (iv) date of contribution, (v) purpose of expenditure or project description?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is committed to transparency and open government and as such regularly publishes data on Canada's international assistance projects.

In accordance with the International Aid Transparency Initiative, IATI, the D-Portal contains a wealth of project information including government expenditures on international assistance since January 1, 2016. Details with regard to recipient, country, amount, date of contribution, and purpose of expenditure or project description can be found at: www.d-portal.org/ctrack.html?search&publisher=CA-3&year_min=2016&year=2016&year_max=2019&year=2019#-view=main.

Routine Proceedings

Additionally, Global Affairs Canada maintains the Project Browser, a website that publishes detailed project information and is updated daily. This interactive tool allows the user to search the department's international projects and download information as open data files. The information published also follows the IATI standard and includes details with regard to recipient, country, amount, date of contribution, and purpose of expenditure or project description. It can be found at: <http://w05.international.gc.ca/projectbrowser-banqueprojets/filter-filtre>.

Question No. 1172—**Mr. Luc Berthold:**

With regard to the proposed tax increases on small businesses announced by the Minister of Finance on July 18, 2017: (a) on what date was the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food made aware of the proposed tax hikes; (b) was the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food consulted prior to the announcement; (c) what impact studies have been conducted by the government related to how the tax increases will impact farm families; and (d) what are the details and findings of any such impact studies?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government assesses issues arising under the tax system on an ongoing basis. It relies on a range of approaches and information sources to develop an in-depth understanding of potential issues, including the statistical analysis of tax return data, the monitoring of the tax literature, and consultations with the Canada Revenue Agency, academics, tax professionals, and other stakeholders.

When the analysis identifies a need for action, options are developed and assessed against a range of criteria such as their impact on the fairness of the tax system, economic efficiency, and the ease of administration of the tax system.

This process was followed in the development of the proposals contained in the consultation document released on July 18, 2017. Tax data and other information were used to assess the scope of the issues and the impact of different options. In particular, the number of businesses that could be affected by the various options to estimate the fiscal impact of the proposals was assessed, within constraints imposed by available data.

Draft legislation was also released for two of the three proposals contained in the consultation document. Stakeholders, including farmers, were invited to comment on the proposals and the draft legislation. Stakeholders were also specifically invited to provide their views and ideas on whether and if so, how, it would be possible to better accommodate genuine intergenerational business transfers in the Income Tax Act while still protecting the fairness of the tax system.

The government will not be moving forward with measures relating to the conversion of income into capital gains. During the consultation period, the government heard from business owners, including many farmers and fishers, that the measures could result in several unintended consequences, such as with respect to taxation upon death and potential challenges with intergenerational transfers of businesses. The government will work with family businesses, including farming and fishing businesses, to make it more efficient, or less difficult, to hand down their businesses to the next generation.

In the coming year, the government will continue its outreach to farmers, fishers, and other business owners to develop proposals to

better accommodate intergenerational transfers of businesses while protecting the fairness of the tax system.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the government's response to Questions Nos. 1149 to 1152, 1154 to 1156, 1158, 1161, 1163 to 1167, 1169, and 1170 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 1149—**Mr. David Sweet:**

With regard to the call for proposals for government funding through Natural Resource Canada's Energy Innovation Program allocated for Clean Energy Innovation that closed October 31, 2016: (a) what criteria were used to select approved projects; (b) what projects received funding, broken down by the (i) name of the recipient, (ii) type of project, (iii) date on which the funding was received, (iv) amount received; (c) what projects have been selected to receive funding in the future, broken down by the (i) name of the recipient, (ii) type of project, (iii) date on which the funding was received, (iv) amount received; and (d) for each project identified in (b) and (c), was a press release issued to announce it and, if so, what is the (i) date, (ii) headline, (iii) file number of the press release?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1150—**Mr. Kevin Sorenson:**

With regard to the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority: (a) what was the total airport screening budget for the following fiscal years (i) 2014-15, (ii) 2015-16, (iii) 2016-17; and (b) what is the projected total airport screening budget for the following fiscal years (i) 2017-18, (ii) 2018-19, (iii) 2019-20?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1151—**Mr. Kevin Sorenson:**

With regard to contracts signed by the government with Sparks Advocacy since November 4, 2015, and for each contract: (a) what is the (i) value, (ii) description of the service provided, (iii) date and duration of the contract, (iv) internal tracking or file number; and (b) was the contract sole sourced?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1152—**Mr. Kevin Sorenson:**

With regard to ministerial regional offices, as of September 19, 2017: (a) what is the location of each office; (b) what is the overall annual budget for each office; (c) how many government employees or full-time equivalents are assigned to each location; and (d) how many ministerial exempt staff or full-time equivalents are assigned to each location?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1154—**Mr. Peter Van Loan:**

With regard to the threat of a missile strike from North Korea on Canadian soil: (a) what specific measures has the government put in place to prevent a North Korean missile from striking Canadian soil; (b) what is the official government response to the recent missile tests conducted by the North Korean military; and (c) has the government developed any plans or procedures to be enacted in the event of a missile strike and, if so, what are the details?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 1155— Mr. Tood Doherty:**

With regard to government expenditures in relation to the wildfires in British Columbia in the summer of 2017: what are the details of each expenditure, including for each the (i) vendor providing service or recipient of funding, (ii) date, (iii) amount, (iv) description of goods or reason for expenditure, (v) file number of contract?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1156— Mr. Dean Allison:

With regard to contracts signed by the government with Treetop Strategy since November 4, 2015, and for each contract: (a) what is the (i) value, (ii) description of the service provided, (iii) date and duration of the contract, (iv) internal tracking or file number; and (b) was the contract sole sourced?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1158—Mr. Dean Allison:

With regard to official “advisory councils” or “advisory boards” set up by the government since November 5, 2015, and broken down by department, agency, crown corporation or other government entity: (a) what is the complete list of councils and boards; (b) who are the members of each council or board; (c) what are the details of each meeting, including (i) date, (ii) location, (iii) topic; (d) how much is each member financially compensated for their participation on a board or council, broken down by board or council and individual; (e) who is the chair of each board or council; (f) how much is each chair financially compensated for their participation in the board or council; and (g) which minister is responsible for selecting the members and chair of each board or council?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1161— Mr. Steven Blaney:

With regard to statistics regarding homelessness maintained by the government: (a) what was the number of homeless veterans, or estimated number of homeless veterans as of (i) January 1, 2015, (ii) January 1, 2016, (iii) January 1, 2017, (iv) September 19, 2017; and (b) what is the breakdown of all statistics in (a), by province?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1163— Mrs. Karen Vecchio:

With regard to the January 1, 2017, policy clarification to the interpretation to eligibility criteria for the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) Involuntary Separation Provision: (a) did the government perform a Gender-Based-Analysis Plus (GBA+) when the policy clarification for GIS involuntary separation was being considered, and if not, why not; (b) if the answer to (a) is affirmative, what was included in the GBA+ of the decision and was a policy consideration checklist done as a mandatory component of the Memorandum to Cabinet development as part of the Government’s Action Plan on Gender-based Analysis (2016-20) and, if so, what was included on that checklist; (c) if the answer to (a) is affirmative, what was the conclusion of the GBA+ concerning how the policy clarification will impact men, women, and those with other intersecting identities (including but not limited to race, ethnicity, geography, physical or mental disabilities, sexual orientation, education, religion); (d) if the answer to (a) is affirmative, did the GBA+ analysis conclude that the January 1, 2017, policy clarification for the involuntary separation provision for GIS will equally impact men and women and those with other intersecting identities; and (e) if the answer to (d) is negative, inconclusive, or unavailable, why was the policy clarification issued despite being in contravention of the government’s commitment to make GBA+ a key competency in support of the development of effective programs and policies for Canadians?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1164— Mrs. Karen Vecchio:

Regarding the proposed tax changes referred to in the Finance Minister’s July 18, 2017 discussion paper: (a) did the government of Canada perform a Gender-Based-Analysis Plus (GBA+) before proceeding with these tax changes; (b) if the answer to (a) is negative, why was such an analysis not performed; (c) if the answer to (a) is affirmative, what was included in the GBA+ of these changes, and was a policy consideration checklist required as a mandatory component of the Memorandum to

Cabinet development as constituted in the Government’s Action Plan on Gender-based Analysis (2016-20) and, if so, what was included on that checklist; (d) if the answer to (a) is affirmative, what was the conclusion of the GBA+ concerning how the tax changes will impact men, women and those with other intersecting identities (including but not limited to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, education, geography, mental or physical disabilities, and religion); (e) if the answer to (a) is affirmative, did the GBA+ conclude that the tax changes will equally impact men and women and those with intersecting identities; (f) if the answer to (e) is negative, inconclusive, or unavailable, what is the rationale for having the tax changes issued despite being in contravention of the government’s commitment to make GBA+ a key competency in support of the development of effective programs and policies for Canadians?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1165— Mrs. Carol Hughes:

With regard to disability benefits for veterans: in each of the last ten years, how many veterans have (i) applied for disability benefits for ulcerative colitis, (ii) been approved for disability benefits for ulcerative colitis?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1166—Mr. Pierre Poilievre:

With regard to the calculations that produced chart eight in the Minister of Finance’s consultation document titled “Tax Planning Using Private Corporations”: in each scenario mentioned (savings after income-tax dollars and savings after-small-business-tax dollars), what would be the total taxes paid including on the final distributions to the individual?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1167— Mr. Bob Saroya:

With regard to expenditures at the Canada 2020-Global Progress Conference held in Montreal in September 2017, and broken down by department, agency, crown corporation, or other government entity: (a) what are all expenditures related to the conference, including cost of tickets and travel costs; (b) what is the detailed, itemized breakdown of all expenditures referred to in (a) including for each the (i) date, (ii) amount, (iii) description, (iv) vendor; (c) which employees, ministerial exempt staff members, or ministers attended the conference; and (d) for which individuals referred to in (c) did the government pay the conference registration fee?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1169—Mr. Tom Lukiwski:

With regard to the comments in the House of Commons by the Minister of Canadian Heritage on September 18, 2017 that “we invested \$1.9 billion in arts and culture”: what is the itemized breakdown of this investment, including for each investment the (i) recipient, (ii) project description, (iii) amount, (iv) location, (v) date amount was paid to recipient?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1170— Mr. Tom Lukiwski:

With regard to government expenditures on detainee meals by Canada Border Services Agency at Vancouver International Airport and at Pearson Airport in Toronto, since December 1, 2015: what are the details of each expenditure including (i) vendor, (ii) date, (iii) amount, (iv) location, (v) file number?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[Translation]***BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2017, NO. 2**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-63, A second 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.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Pursuant to order made on Wednesday, October 18, I wish to inform the House that, because of the statements made earlier today, government orders will be extended by 27 minutes.

[English]

Resuming debate, the hon. Minister of Employment.

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to rise in this place and talk about the budget implementation act.

[Translation]

Before I talk about that bill, I would like to talk about the measures that the government has taken to date to give all Canadians, particularly the middle class and those working hard to join it, the opportunities they need to succeed.

[English]

To start, we raised taxes on the 1%, so that we could lower them for the middle class. We then brought in the new Canada child benefit, which has lifted hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty. As a result of our CCB, nine out of 10 Canadian families are getting more in benefits than they did under the previous system. Compared to the previous system of child benefits, the CCB is more generous, and it better reaches those who need it the most.

Recently, as announced in the fall economic statement, we are helping those who need it most by enhancing the Canada child benefit, indexing it to the rising cost of living. We are also strengthening the Canada pension plan, increasing the benefit for workers by as much as 50%. This will not only help those who are retired now have more money in their pockets, but it will also help future retirees save enough for a dignified retirement.

On top of that, our government is doing more to help those working hard to join the middle class, by enhancing the working income tax benefit by an additional \$500 million per year starting in 2019. We know that many people work long hours, sometimes in more than one job, to advance their careers and to support themselves and their families. By letting low-income workers take home more money, the working income tax benefit offers real help to 1.5 million Canadians.

The steps we have taken to date are having a positive impact on our economy, and for Canadians. Optimism is on the rise, and for good reason. Job creation is strong, with over half a million new jobs created since we took office, and the unemployment rate is at its lowest level since 2008. Youth unemployment is at a historic low, and Canada is the fastest growing economy in the G7 by a wide margin, growing at an average rate of 3.7% over the last year, which is the fastest pace of growth since early 2006.

Growth is forecast to be 3.1% in 2017, significantly above expectations at the beginning of the year. The fiscal outlook has improved by more than \$6.5 billion annually, on average, from what was projected in budget 2017 last March. That is why we are here today, to consider and discuss the important measures contained in Bill C-63.

I will briefly describe a few of the key elements.

- (1545)

[Translation]

This budget implementation act supports the middle class and those working hard to join it by protecting the rights of federally regulated workers when they request flexible work arrangements from their employers.

[English]

Canadians increasingly face pressure to balance work and family responsibilities. We all know a single parent struggling to find balance or someone taking care of an aging parent, or even someone who is supporting a spouse through chemotherapy. Our government was elected on a commitment to give workers and federally regulated workplaces the right to request flexible work arrangements, and we are delivering on that commitment. Things like flexible start and finish times or the ability to work from home will benefit both employers and employees, through increased productivity, lower absenteeism, and greater retention.

Budget 2017 also contained a gender-based analysis, ensuring that the implications of budgetary measures on men and women are considered thoroughly. Our government believes that having meaningful and transparent discussions around gender and other intersecting identities will help us better understand the challenges that Canadians face, and help us make informed decisions to advance the goals of gender equality, fairness, and stronger workforce participation. We know that our prosperity relies on the participation of all Canadians, so our efforts are focused on ensuring our growth as a country leaves no one behind.

Our government also recognizes that young Canadians today face challenges when it comes to finding and maintaining good, well-paying jobs. Many young Canadians tell us that not being able to get meaningful work experience is a significant barrier to getting a good job. While internships can give young Canadians the hands-on work experience they need to make that successful transition to the workplace, some internships, in particular those that are unpaid, can be unfair and exploitative.

Government Orders

The budget implementation act proposes to eliminate unpaid internships in federally regulated sectors where the internships are not part of a formal education program. These changes would also ensure that unpaid interns who are part of an educational program are entitled to labour standard protections, such as maximum hours of work, weekly days of rest, and general holidays. It is the right thing to do for our young people trying to gain the necessary work experience to enter the labour force.

Small businesses are a key driver of our economy and a cornerstone of communities across the country. As our plan works to grow the economy, small businesses see the benefits of that growth with lower taxes. Our government committed to reducing the small business tax rate to 9% from 11%, effective January 1, 2019, while ensuring that Canadian-controlled private corporation status is not used to reduce personal income tax obligations for high-income earners rather than supporting small businesses. This means up to \$7,500 in federal corporate tax savings per year that will help entrepreneurs and innovators do what they do best.

Our government's plan to grow the economy is indeed working. Because of our strong economic growth, we continue to invest in the middle class and those working hard to join it. Whether it is ensuring that more families can pay for the high cost of raising a family, ensuring more low-income workers can make ends meet, or implementing flexible work arrangements, smart investments like these will ensure that more Canadians have a fair chance of success.

● (1550)

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I applaud the government for moving forward on a number of changes to the Canada Labour Code.

I would like to hear the minister's comments on some of the unpaid leave provisions, especially those for victims of domestic violence. I brought to the House's attention that unpaid leave for victims of domestic abuse may prevent many women from accessing that unpaid leave because of the dynamics or things that happen within relationships in which victims are often controlled economically by their partners. Being able to access unpaid leave may be a barrier for them, because coming home with a paycheque that is less than it is supposed to be may cause the abuser to take it out on the victim.

I am asking the government to be open to making this paid leave, so it is accessible to all victims of domestic violence.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, the member obviously has compassion for women living in violent situations. The leave that is included in this act is intended to address just that. We know that oftentimes one of the prohibiting factors for a women fleeing domestic violence is whether she will be able to take leave and return to the job as she sorts out the details of her life that have to be sorted out when leaving a partner, especially in very urgent situations.

I am proud that this leave is thoughtfully included in the types of leave available to all people experiencing domestic violence, but, generally speaking, women. It is an incredibly important acknowledgement that this government understands that women need that time to settle their affairs, so they can move forward into either safe spaces or new circumstances and have their jobs protected while arranging their affairs.

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister this specifically. I know how important the student summer jobs program is to the students and young people in my riding and how its near doubling in funding has helped increase the number of jobs and, in some cases, given these students their first jobs. Could the minister comment on what she is hearing about that program right across the country?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. Part of my summer was spent meeting with students all across the country in the various communities I had an opportunity to visit to talk to them about how that experience was transforming their lives, not just in terms of their ability to earn a bit of money to put toward either school or their other expenses, but also often to gain that tangible first-time job experience. In one community I visited, the executive director of a not-for-profit organization had started with that organization as a Canada summer jobs' student. Can members imagine that 25 years later she was actually running the program?

You are absolutely right. Our government committed to doubling the Canada summer jobs funding, and that is in fact what we have done. This investment has enabled MPs all across this House to ensure that students in their ridings are getting that formative job experience. As well, students all across the country are receiving a variety of experience from the really great organizations that are contributing to the wellness and social fabric of their community, or from entrepreneurs who are running small businesses.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I just want to clarify that I am sure the hon. minister did not mean I was absolutely right; she meant that the hon. member for Avalon was absolutely right. I just want to remind hon. members to speak through the Chair.

We have time for a very quick question. The hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway.

● (1555)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people have told me recently that under federal jurisdiction in the non-union sector, if employees are sick they do not get any pay. There is no requirement for paid sick leave under the Canada Labour Code. Of course, this leads to people coming to work sick, or they are being punished for being sick because they lose a day's wages. Does the hon. minister have any thoughts on amending the Canada Labour Code to require employers to give three or four paid sick leave days a year to the non-unionized workers of this country?

Government Orders

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague raises an important part of my mandate. Of course, it is on the mind of the Prime Minister that we need to make sure that those who are most vulnerable, often those who are young or working at low wages, have the best possible scenario in their workplaces. That is why we have just started consultations looking at the Canada Labour Code and how we can improve it to protect, most poignantly, those very vulnerable workers. I look forward to working with him regarding those consultations and hearing the member's thoughts on what needs to be included in the revision. The Canada Labour Code was last thoughtfully looked at in its entirety in the 1960s, and I am very much looking forward to that work.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-63, a second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2017 and other measures.

When it comes to budgets, it is extremely important that we do everything in our power to meet our fellow citizens' sustainability requirements. Sustainable development has three pillars. Yes, one is economic, but there are also the social and environmental pillars. It is through the lens of these three pillars that I will analyze the bill before me.

First, I must point out one troubling fact. Yesterday, we learned from the paradise papers that fundraisers who are very close to the Prime Minister were implicated in this tax haven scheme. However, Bill C-63 contains no concrete measures to fight tax evasion or tax avoidance. It leaves the CEO stock-option tax loopholes untouched and does not demand the co-operation of major corporations.

It is a little ironic considering that in question period today, we in the NDP asked dozens of questions, trying to find out what the Liberal government was going to do to stop billions of dollars from going to tax havens. We were told that the government is going to continue doing the same thing, so there is nothing new. The Liberals are not going to change any laws to stop this tax evasion and put an end to this scam, which is currently legal. Indeed, they are allowing many millionaires and billionaires to put money in tax havens and avoid paying their share of taxes. As a result, Canadians are seeing a reduction in services as well as an increasing fiscal burden, all because some people refuse to contribute what they should. If we had more money, we could do much more than we currently are to complete our shift towards green energy.

In addition, before the budget was presented, we wrote to the Minister of Finance and asked him to include certain provisions to make our society fairer and greener. Unfortunately, none of those provisions were included. I will come back to that in a moment.

Bill C-63 does contain some positive measures. For example, it would change the Canada Labour Code to allow federally regulated employees to request greater flexibility from their employers, and it would also expand the tax incentives for geothermal projects. However, these incentives pale in comparison to the changes that are needed.

COP23, the climate change conference, starts today in Bonn. In 2015, when the Canadian government went to Paris, the Prime Minister said, "Canada is back", but unfortunately, Canada was back

with Stephen Harper's old targets and almost the same measures. There was very little progress.

I want to quote an article from *Le Devoir*, published on October 31, entitled "UN on Climate: 'Catastrophic' gap between commitments and actions".

On Tuesday, six days before COP23, the UN's environment chief warned that there is a 'catastrophic' gap between the national greenhouse gas reduction commitments and the reductions that would be needed to keep global warming below 2°C.

In short, there have been some lofty promises, but countries are not taking the necessary measures to follow through on them.

● (1600)

In an economic update, and with the climate change conference opening today, we would have expected a number of measures to support the shift to clean energy. Unfortunately, there is virtually nothing there. We made some recommendations, as I mentioned, in a letter to the Minister of Finance.

The Lancet Commission on pollution and health recently published a very important report. It is an extraordinarily well researched scientific report written by health experts.

I would like to read their conclusions, which are very important. Clearly, when it comes to sustainable development, issues related to society, the economy, and the environment all go hand in hand. We are zeroing in on a huge and serious problem. Indeed, dangerous climate change is having serious consequences on people's health. We are currently talking about pollution, but this is also about climate change. I would like to quote the summary of the report from the Lancet Commission on pollution and health:

Pollution is the largest environmental cause of disease and premature death in the world today. Diseases caused by pollution were responsible for an estimated 9 million premature deaths in 2015—16% of all deaths worldwide—three times more deaths than from AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria combined and 15 times more than from all wars and other forms of violence. In the most severely affected countries, pollution-related disease is responsible for more than one death in four.

Why is fighting climate change and pollution in Canada so important?

Unfortunately, Canada's efforts have been quite weak. We sent a number of recommendations, including, for example, introducing a massive energy efficiency program. A group of people recently came to the Hill to talk to us about the importance of fighting climate change, and one way to do so is by investing in energy efficiency.

Energy efficiency creates jobs because people are needed to do the renovations or other related work. It also improves the living conditions of people living in poorly heated homes by reducing heating or air conditioning costs. Finally, the negative repercussions of pollution and climate change are also reduced. There would be benefits everywhere. The Liberal government has done nothing.

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When discussing climate change and the environment, it is also very important to consider all of the recommendations by the Green Budget Coalition regarding the 2018 budget. All of those recommendations should have been adopted by the current government. One of them is very important: international climate change financing.

Clearly, we suffer, but let us think about the countries that suffer the most, the poorest countries. Those countries must be supported so they can adapt to climate change. We are the main emitters, but they are the main victims.

For example, the federal government could increase its financial participation through a tax on bunker fuels used in international aviation and maritime transportation. Aviation and maritime transportation do not currently contribute to the fight against climate change. Taxing the bunker fuels they use would be a way of redistributing money and assisting in international climate financing. There are a lot of other solutions, but my speaking time is ending. I would have liked to have the time to talk about the circular economy that could also be put forward. Those are examples of what is missing in Bill C-63, in this economic review.

● (1605)

[English]

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member spoke about tax avoidance, economic updates and what the government was doing about tax cheaters. Could he give the House an update about the so-called inappropriate spending of over \$2.7 million of taxpayer money that was used on satellite offices? Has any of that money been paid back or will all of it be paid back, including interest?

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, I would indeed like to talk about the fight against tax evasion and tax avoidance, as Canadians really want to know what is happening in that regard.

After the Panama Papers, now we see the Paradise Papers, and they include the name of the Prime Minister of Canada's own chief fundraiser.

So, when the Liberals are asked if they will truly fight tax evasion and why they are not taking action, we understand why. It is because they are too close to those who abuse the system. We need tax reforms to correct this as soon as possible.

[English]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what is not in this budget update bill is the most troubling. In the budget the Liberals tabled, which I know by heart, on pages 149 to 150 were a lot of promises to support the conversion toward a cleaner energy Canada, but the vast majority of the dollars would not come until after the next election.

The Auditor General has been calling on the government to move forward on its commitment to deal with, reduce, and phase out the perverse subsidies for the fossil fuel industry. The grants and subsidies amount to more than \$6 billion a year. Could the member speak to how disappointing that is and how little the government is doing to deliver on its commitments?

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona for her extremely important question.

I say this in almost all of my speeches because it is very important, but I forgot to mention it today. The \$1.3 billion in subsidies to the fossil fuel industries could quickly be reinvested in renewable energy and energy efficiency. This would help us truly transition to a low-carbon economy, something that needs to be done right now.

Another thing is that the government always forgets the north. This is where renewable energy is most needed, but there is almost nothing in the Liberals' budgets. I will repeat the recommendations from the Green Budget Coalition. They are there in black and white, and this is not the first time the Coalition has said so. It recommends that we take back the money allocated to subsidies for fossil fuels and use it to transition towards clean energy. This is urgent, but unfortunately, the government is still twiddling its thumbs.

● (1610)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Avalon asked a worthy question about the NDP. I think \$2.7 million were spent on satellite offices. It was an abuse of taxpayer dollars. How much of that money has the NDP actually paid back to Canadian taxpayers? They are owed that money.

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, I am trying to stay calm. My colleague knows that this case is in court. I can assure the member for Winnipeg North that not only will the ruling be in our favour, but the members of the Board of Internal Economy, those who hid behind closed doors to prevent us from saying what we have to say, will owe us an apology. I do not mind saying this. We will defend our case in court. There is no doubt about it.

The truth is that we used to hear about the Panama papers, but we now have the paradise papers. Whose hands are dirty and whose credibility is being questioned in this whole story? It is once again the Prime Minister's chief fundraiser. We did not get any answers about that today during question period. It is disappointing. We need action, but nothing is being done.

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to Bill C-63, the budget implementation act, 2017, No. 2. This bill implements certain measures from budget 2017.

Since our party was elected, we have applied ourselves to investing in our economy in order to make it work for the middle class. We reduced taxes for the middle class and implemented a fairer and more equitable non-taxable Canada child benefit based on income. Accordingly, the benefit is more advantageous for those who are most in need and helps them to pay for activities, warm clothing, and school supplies or to save for their children's education.

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For example, in my riding, Alfred-Pellan, more than 17,000 children from 10,000 families benefited from the Canada child benefit last year. More than \$5 million went directly into these families' pockets, and they were able to spend the money in local stores or to pay for sports and cultural activities offered by local businesses or organizations. Obviously, this measure is advantageous not only for families, but for the economy as a whole. Each of us benefits from strong economic growth.

We also enhanced the financial security of Canadian seniors by improving the guaranteed income supplement and ensuring that eligible seniors are enrolled automatically. We also lowered the retirement age to 65, and improvements will be made to the Canada pension plan starting in 2019. We also instituted a tax credit and employment insurance benefits for family caregivers. This is a very important file for me, since I was a caregiver for my mother for many years. I am proud to see what we have accomplished in this area to give family caregivers access to measures providing financial relief.

Of course, we launched an ambitious infrastructure program to stimulate the economy, create quality jobs, and build modern, green, and sound communities. This is in addition to our historic investments in social housing, which will help meet major needs in affordable housing in our communities. We are also investing in loans and bursaries programs, as well as in innovation. All of these measures foster the well-being and individual growth of all Canadians, helping them achieve their full potential. That was a quick overview of some of our budget measures.

Let us now talk specifically about Bill C-63, one of the cornerstones of our budget. This bill contains various measures and 10 minutes is hardly enough to talk about each one. I will focus on one measure that I think is especially important for Canadians, one that amends the Canada Labour Code.

I will read the part I am talking about for the benefit of my colleagues and those watching:

Division 8 of Part 5 amends the Canada Labour Code in order to, among other things,

- (a) provide employees with a right to request flexible work arrangements from their employers;
- (b) provide employees with a family responsibility leave for a maximum of three days, a leave for victims of family violence for a maximum of ten days and a leave for traditional Aboriginal practices for a maximum of five days; and
- (c) modify certain provisions related to work schedules, overtime, annual vacation, general holidays and bereavement leave, in order to provide greater flexibility in work arrangements.

In short, our government is creating provisions to ensure that federally regulated workers can ask for more flexible working conditions.

• (1615)

If we are honest and realistic, we know that these are the types of measures that will help women most. Women are often the ones who need to strike a work-family balance because they are more likely to be responsible for childcare and household tasks, compared to men.

These measures will allow workers to ask their employer to change their work schedule, for example, in order to adjust to their children's daycare or school schedule, or to telework on PD days.

These are only two examples of a number of family situations that can require a flexible work schedule.

Division 8 will also create new leaves, specifically three days for family obligations. When your child is sick or a close relative is in the hospital, you want to be there to provide care and ensure his or her well-being. Federal employees will get these days off for family obligations.

We are also instituting leave for domestic violence. Women who make the decision to leave a violent environment are vulnerable and experience extreme stress. Often, they cannot report to work for a few days, and they do not know what type of leave they can ask for to justify their absence. This 10-day leave may encourage women who have been victims of violence to get out of a violent environment knowing that they have leave they can use without being penalized.

This amendment to the Canada Labour Code is a concrete example of our government's determination to improve the living conditions of middle-class workers. Although a number of employers already have work-family balance measures in place and offer flexible work schedules, by amending the Canada Labour Code, we are clearly and officially saying that this is no longer a matter of choice.

It is a key principle and an important right. Workers are entitled to ask for flexibility and leave to balance their family and work responsibilities. People should not have to choose between their job and their children. In 2017, it is high time that the workplace adapted to diverse family situations and the obligations they entail.

I will close by pointing out that families and the middle class are at the heart of our commitments and the measures we are implementing. A strong economy is beneficial for the entire country, and it is based on families and a middle class who have access to quality jobs, who earn enough income to be able to spend, and who have access to opportunities unleashing the full potential of individuals and businesses.

• (1620)

[English]

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with respect to economic viability and the direction, the Liberals always said that they would have a small deficit of \$10 billion. Now it is actually more than double that. The debt is increasing at a rate not seen before. There is no projection of when they will balance the budget. We now know that the tax laws that have been introduced target the middle class, protecting those who are very wealthy and the friends of the finance minister and the Prime Minister. Eighty per cent of the middle class are paying more tax now, about \$840, than they were before you took office two years ago. Why are you taxing the middle class and protecting and sheltering those wealthy Liberal friends?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Again, I want to remind the hon. members to address their questions through the Speaker.

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[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Alfred-Pellan.

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

I know the opposition is somewhat obsessed with the amount of the deficit. What we need to keep in mind, however, is that the more important figure is the debt-to-GDP ratio, which was 32.5% when we came to power. It has shrunk steadily since then to 30.5%, and it will continue to shrink.

Furthermore, based on our projections, that ratio will reach its lowest point since the 1970s. We brought it down to that level thanks to a healthy economy and a plan that is working. Revenues are up, and people are confident.

[*English*]

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we welcome the changes to the Canada Labour Code that would allow employees more flexibility at work and also prohibit unpaid internships.

I would like the hon. member to respond to a couple of things. What really would help those working hard to get into the middle class would be a federal minimum wage and pay equity legislation. Those things need to happen to have an impact on those vulnerable folks and those who are not making enough money to make ends meet.

My final comment is that the unpaid leave for victims of domestic violence would pose a barrier, especially for those women who are poor. We know that women who suffer in relationships of domestic violence are often economically controlled by their partners. Their ability to access unpaid leave to deal with issues like lawyers and child care and to then go home and interact with someone who now knew they had brought home less income and wanted to know why would be a huge barrier for women trying to access unpaid leave. I encourage the government to be open to making that leave paid leave so that it is accessible to all women.

• (1625)

[*Translation*]

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

I am always surprised when the NDP opposes some of our key measures that primarily benefit low- and middle-income people.

For example, in the 2016 budget, we introduced the Canada child benefit, which reduced child poverty by 40%. The NDP voted against it, but we are now going to make it even better. I cannot believe the NDP was against that. It is an honour for me to be here to talk about the initiatives in our 2016 and 2017 budgets that put Canada back on track for growth, job creation, and prosperity.

Since coming to power, we have put Canada back on the path toward the kind of growth that is good for the middle class and everyone.

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize my colleague from Alfred-Pellan, who provided us with information.

However, I will try to debunk what he has said, as it is not consistent with the facts.

I am pleased to rise in the House to discuss the second bill to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2017 and other measures.

First, I would like to give a reminder. This Saturday, November 4, was the second anniversary of the Liberal government coming to power.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Joël Godin: I am not certain that all Canadians are applauding. It is limited, here, to one side of the House. What are the results of those two years? Only broken promises.

Through the Chair, I would like to inform those watching on television that I do not want to be alarmist. I only want to share facts. Canadians have enough judgment to be able to understand what is really happening and they will not be blinded by words or by flashes from the various cameras that follow the Prime Minister around.

During the election campaign, the Liberals went out to meet Canadians. Among other things, they said one important thing. They said to trust them, to vote for them, that they would create a slight deficit of \$10 billion, and they assured their dear fellow Canadians that they would return to a balanced budget in 2019. They applauded earlier, but we cannot hear them now. They talked about \$10 billion the first year; they finished the year with a deficit of \$18 billion. This year, the deficit will be \$20 billion. In 2018, it will be \$18 billion. I remind you of their promise because it is a fixed date election. In 2019, they were to return to a balanced budget. Their economic update mentioned \$17 billion. They talked about a balanced budget in 2019, but if I add it up, that makes \$73 billion dollars in deficit over the four years that the Liberal Party is in power.

They have admitted that the budget will never be balanced. What hypocrisy and what a lack of respect for the Canadians who trusted them. That is unacceptable, but we are stuck with them for the next two years. We will live with the situation, but everyone needs to know that we, as the opposition, will be doing our work.

They promised transparency and a new way of governing. Wow! The Minister of Finance acts like a king who thinks he is above the law. He states that he created a blind trust for his company in which he has shares, Morneau Shepell. It took two years and hard work by the opposition to make the minister take action. A few weeks ago, with assistance from the commissioner, he was able to understand the form, deposit his assets and opt for a blind trust. You have to take people for... I will not finish that sentence. People at home are able to finish it.

Government Orders

He tabled a law regarding pension plans for Canadians. Until recently, he was a shareholder in Morneau Sheppell. We know what Morneau Sheppell does: the company manages pension plans. So he is both judge and jury. Indeed, he establishes a law and his fellow shareholders and colleagues benefit from that law. How much money does the Finance Minister receive—I am not talking about his salary as a parliamentarian—as a shareholder in Morneau Sheppell? He receives \$65,000 per month.

Let us not forget his villa in Europe and the numerous companies we keep pestering him about because we want to know exactly what they are about. It is because we suspect that the Minister of Finance has other sources of revenue. He is giving us no reason to think otherwise.

• (1630)

If he does not want to come completely clean, that is his choice, but until he does so, some doubt will always linger. We live in a democracy, not a dictatorship. The minister and his Prime Minister are not above the law. They have no right to take advantage of honest Canadians. That will conclude my opening remarks.

I will now focus on Bill C-63, an omnibus bill. Last week, my colleague for Carleton asked the Speaker for an analysis of Standing Order 69.1 introduced by the Liberals last June. I will read it to make sure everyone understands:

(1) In the case where a government bill seeks to repeal, amend or enact more than one act, and where there is not a common element connecting the various provisions or where unrelated matters are linked, the Speaker shall have the power to divide the questions, for the purposes of voting, on the motion for second reading and reference to a committee and the motion for third reading and passage of the bill. The Speaker shall have the power to combine clauses of the bill thematically and to put the aforementioned questions on each of these groups of clauses separately, provided that there will be a single debate at each stage.

This government has hidden a lot of things its Bill C-63. In June the Liberals put in place regulations, but they are not even able to manage the application of a regulation they implemented three months earlier. They are all mixed up in the management of a regulation. Imagine how the government manages finances.

We can also talk about the Asian Bank. The March 2017 budget presentation announced \$256 million for the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. In today's bill, however, we see that it is instead \$375 million U.S. After converting, that gives \$480 million Canadian. No problem, they will spend recklessly and then try to take money out of the pockets of middle-class Canadians. In other words, the omnibus budget implementation bill proposes something that was not originally provided for. As a result, Mr. Speaker, you have the authority to split the components of the bill.

The other problem is that the extra \$224 million is being invested in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank instead of the Canada infrastructure bank. We are investing that money in a bank in Asia. That is one way of looking at things. This inconsistent and irresponsible government is spending recklessly.

The Fraser Institute confirmed that over 80% of middle-class families pay more taxes than they paid under the Harper government. Wow. They say one thing and put money in one pocket, but they take twice as much out of the other pocket. More money is being taken

from middle-class Canadians. That statement is not from the Minister of Finance, it is from the Fraser Institute, which I trust.

In closing, I cannot give my vote of confidence to this government and its finance minister, who is determined to tell honest Canadians that he is a man worthy of his office. In my opinion, a finance minister must be above any doubt or reproach regarding credibility and integrity. He must comply with the law and be whiter than white. This finance minister, however, is very grey, bordering on black.

I would encourage the Minister of Finance, our national Superman, to come back to reality and to be sensible in managing Canada's public finances.

• (1635)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the consistent comments we get from the Conservative opposition is concern about the deficit. It is important to realize a bit of the history of deficits. When Stephen Harper was prime minister, he inherited a multi-billion dollar surplus and turned it into a multi-billion dollar deficit, even before the Canadian recession got under way. Year after year, the Harper government had nothing but deficit after deficit. In fact, I suspect we would find that the Harper government accumulated more in those annual deficits than in the history of any other prime minister, in terms of real dollars.

Given how disastrous the Harper government was in dealing with the deficit, why should any government take advice from a Conservative government that did so poorly and generated so little in terms of actual economic activity, especially compared to what we have done in the last couple of years?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Speaker, my colleague has a very colourful way of speaking. However, speaking in a colourful way does not necessarily guarantee coherence. In 2007, the debt-to-GDP ratio was the lowest ever, and members cannot say whatever they want in the House.

I would like to add that we left the House in order. When we left the government to the Liberals in 2015, there was a surplus. In 2016, there was an \$18-billion deficit and, this year, there will be a \$20-billion deficit.

We cannot call that responsible government. The government has only been in power for two years. It is unacceptable. I will also mention what the Liberals actually did to hurt Canadians: they eliminated the universal child care benefit; eliminated the child fitness tax credit; eliminated the arts tax credit; eliminated the tax credits for post-secondary education and textbooks; eliminated income splitting; and cancelled the tax break for SMEs. They also reduced the TFSA contribution, cancelled the tax credit for public transportation, and more.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to listen to this discussion. The Liberals are pointing out that the Conservatives ran seven straight deficits in the House between 2008 and 2015, although they did balance the budget in the last year. The Conservatives are yelling at the Liberals about another six to 10 deficits in a row. Listening to the Liberals and the Conservatives accusing each other of running deficits all the time is not very productive. What both parties have in common is that they are not willing to address the fundamental basics of deficits.

Deficits are easy, and Canadians know it. It means that we are spending more money than we are taking in. The Conservatives did it after a recession, so at least they had the economic conditions in which we had to prime the economy from 2008 to 2011. The Liberals are going into deficit when the economy is firing on all cylinders. Traditional Keynesian thinking would be that a government runs deficits in poor economic times and pays down those deficits in good economic times. I am not sure what economic philosophy the Liberals are following. The bottom line is that a government has to have its revenue match its expenditures.

Would my hon. colleague suggest that the government cut spending right now, or would he agree with New Democrats and say that we have to raise some revenue, in an equitable manner, maybe by restoring the corporate income tax up a couple of points so that we can get the budget back in balance by getting more revenue into government?

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, who acknowledges that the Conservatives practised sound management during an astronomically serious financial crisis, and that Canada was the first country to recover. Thank you for acknowledging that.

I suggest that we stop spending without a plan. There is always the possibility of running a deficit in a specific context. However, the plan must be to return to a balanced budget. The government must practise responsible management.

Some programs are poorly managed. For example, the clean water and wastewater fund (CWWF) is an infrastructure program. The government is giving municipalities a certain amount of time to make a decision and present their projects. It is closing the window as much as it can. This leads to increased costs. Then, it changes the rules. In my riding, there are municipalities that did not submit projects because they could not satisfy the requirements. The Liberals can extend the program, but they are choking municipalities so that they do not have to pay.

Let us be honest, let us respect our regions and Canadians in general, and let us practise sound management of the country's budget.

• (1640)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order. It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, the Environment; the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, National

Defence; the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan, Public Services and Procurement.

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today about Bill C-63, the budget implementation act, No. 2.

This bill includes key measures of our government's second budget, which will create jobs, grow our economy, and provide all Canadians with more opportunities for success.

[English]

Before I move into the details of Bill C-63, I would like to provide a brief update on the strength of the economy as we reach the midpoint of our mandate.

In 2015, we assumed office in the wake of 10 long years of a Conservative government that had run multiple deficits, despite promises to the contrary; that had cut essential services, despite the needs of hard-working Canadians; and that had led to the weakest economic performance since the Great Depression, despite claims of being a champion of growth.

Over the last two years we have turned it around, thanks to some smart investments, which have included lowering taxes for nine million Canadians; creating the Canada child benefit plan that is putting more money in the pockets of nine out of 10 families, an average of \$2,300 per family, and lifting approximately 300,000 children out of poverty; making enhancements to CPP, OAS, and GIS, all of which is improving retirement security and the quality of life for seniors; adding scholarships, bursaries, debt relief, and training for students in adult learning; and creating a national strategy on innovation and climate change to foster a competitive and sustainable economy.

When we take the cumulative effect of these measures and add them to the \$180 billion we have earmarked for infrastructure spending to build better transit, roads, bridges, and clean water initiatives, we see concrete evidence of an economy that is heating up. Specifically, unemployment has dropped from 7.1% to 6.2%, the lowest since 2008. The debt-to-GDP ratio is forecast to drop below 3.1% this year, the lowest in nearly 40 years, on the way to and over the next five years. Half a million jobs have been created since we were elected, the best record in over 14 years. Together these indicators demonstrate how, in just two years, we took a workforce that was sluggish and underperforming and transformed it into the fastest growing economy in the G7, with an average of 3.7% GDP growth over the last four quarters. These results are ones that every member in this House should celebrate.

To keep the momentum going with regard to our economic performance, we are proposing a number of additional measures in this bill, which represents the second phase of the budget implementation act for 2017. Let me highlight a number of those now.

Government Orders

[Translation]

I will start with the measures to support the middle class and those working hard to join it.

This budget implementation act protects the rights of federally regulated workers when they request flexible work arrangements from their employers. Flexible work arrangements include flexible start and finish times, the ability to work from home, and new unpaid leave to help employees manage their family responsibilities. These work arrangements benefit many women who continue to do the majority of unpaid work in the home.

Budget 2017 was the first budget in Canada's history to include a gender statement. It seeks to present a frank and honest analysis of the impact the budgetary measures will have on women. In addition, in its fall economic statement, the government announced that it would strengthen the Canada child benefit by indexing it to annual increases in the cost of living effective July 2018, which is two years earlier than planned.

What this means, in practical terms, is that for a single parent with two children and income of \$35,000 the Canada child benefit will contribute an additional \$560 in the 2019-20 benefit year towards the cost of raising his or her children.

• (1645)

[English]

Beyond strengthening the Canada child benefit, starting in 2019 we will also add \$500 million to the working income tax benefit, sometimes referred to as the WITB. This will put more money in the pockets of low-income workers, including families without children and the growing number of single Canadians. These two actions alone will boost the total amount the government spends on the WITB by about 65% in 2019, increasing benefits to current recipients and expanding the number of Canadians receiving this support, which is essential for those who need it the most.

Finally, our government is going to help small and medium-sized businesses by lowering their tax from 10.5% to 9%, effective January 1, 2018, and then again January 1, 2019. This will provide a small business with up to \$7,500 per year in corporate tax savings to reinvest in and grow its business. These kinds of savings are crucial for small business to grow, which is the engine of our economy.

The steps taken to date are having a positive impact on our economy and for all Canadians. Optimism is on the rise, and with good reason. Job creation is strong. As I said, there have been 500,000 new jobs created in the last two years, most of them full-time.

Growing the Canadian economy helps the government improve its record. Canada's financial situation remains solid, and the government will see to keeping the debt-to-GDP ratio on its downward trend.

Every Canadian deserves to benefit from this economic growth. The government has lowered taxes for middle-class Canadians and has committed to ensuring that the tax system does not offer unintended benefits to the wealthiest Canadians or those with high incomes.

For all these reasons, I urge all hon. members to vote for this bill that will benefit all Canadians.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the parliamentary secretary in his role in justice. I am deeply concerned about the lack of access to justice by Canadians. We heard a major report on CBC today about how many people are having to represent themselves in court, causing further delays in the judicial process and ending with some serious cases being dropped that should proceed.

In my province of Alberta, even though the provincial budget may be stressed for dollars, it has increased legal aid, yet in this budget, we see no increase whatsoever for legal aid so that all Canadians can have access to justice, including middle-class families.

Can the member speak to that and to why this budget update does not include additional monies for legal aid, which is a pressing need in the country?

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, let me begin by saying how proud I am of the work the Minister of Justice is doing on this side of the House to advance access to justice. She is doing so in several concrete ways. First, with regard to our judicial appointments process, we renewed that process so it would be open, transparent, and focused on merit-based appointments. In the last two years, we have appointed 130 judges. In my hon. colleague's province, I am very proud to tell her that she has received 19 new federal judges since we have taken office. These are extremely capable and well-respected individuals who reflect the best this country has to offer. Simply by having them on the bench, we are enhancing justice.

We are also providing additional training. We have topped up legal aid in the last two years. We are running two pilot projects on providing additional legal services and advice to victims of sexual assault so they can have access and have their day in court. All these things together are speeding up trials and enhancing access to justice.

• (1650)

[Translation]

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the key promises the Liberals made in 2015, before they were in government, was to invest \$120 billion in infrastructure. The Conservative Party supported the idea from the get-go; indeed, it ran the largest infrastructure program in Canada when Mr. Lebel headed the infrastructure department. This program had planned investments totalling \$80 billion, which was unprecedented in Canada.

That said, what I find interesting is that, today, two years after the election, very rarely do we hear about a specific project benefiting from the \$120 billion that have supposedly been invested since 2015.

I wonder if my colleague is able to name a single project in a single province that has benefited from this \$120-billion investment in infrastructure.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: I thank the member for his question, Mr. Speaker.

Government Orders

We are no longer at \$120 billion; since we have increased our investments in infrastructure, we are now at \$180 billion. Among others, these investments are funding projects in Montreal, Quebec, aimed at expanding and improving public transit. This is great news for the people of Montreal and Quebec.

[*English*]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the member's last response, he talked about services to Canadians.

Canadians have benefited from the Canada child benefit, seniors from the guaranteed income supplement, and WITB gives the most vulnerable Canadians more money in their pockets. However, it is on the services to Canadians, where we saw the past government cut jobs in EI processing and call centres, and the Phoenix fiasco that began with the 700 jobs cut from payroll departments, that I would like a comment.

Can my colleague comment on where those reinvestments are being made in the public sector, so that Canadians can get the services they expect and deserve?

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague, who is a role model for every member on this side, for his thoughtful question.

In short order, one of the ways we are reinvesting in the public sector is by showing good faith when it comes to collective bargaining. The Conservative opposition spent 10 years eroding labour rights. On this side of the House, we believe in every single member of the public service who provides world-class service to Canadians.

I want to thank the hon. member for all of the work he does in that portfolio.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise in the House to discuss Bill C-63, which arises from the budget, of course. On March 22 the Minister of Finance introduced his second budget, which basically seeks to create growth for the middle class and those who work hard to join it.

The idea is very simple: when we lend a helping hand to our fellow citizens in need, the whole society benefits. Lowering the income tax rate for the middle class was the first thing we did when we came to Ottawa. That was a tax cut for 9 million Canadians.

The official opposition party, who supposedly is the champion of taxpayers, voted against that initiative. Today we can perhaps see why: the Conservatives voted against that initiative possibly because we also raised the income tax rate on the wealthy.

[*English*]

The second measure we put in place to ensure more inclusive growth in Canada was the Canada child benefit. Again, the principle is very simple: those who need it more will get more help, and those who need it less will get less help. The previous approach from the Conservatives was to send cheques to millionaires. No matter one's revenue, everyone got the same cheque. To add insult to injury, they

made it taxable. In Conservative la-la land, the principle of equity simply does not exist.

Under our plan, almost 18,000 children benefited from the Canada child benefit in Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, which is my riding. Families received an average payment of \$510, which is non-taxable. The Canada child benefit directly impacts families and local businesses in Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

The official opposition likes to talk the talk on defending the taxpayer, but when it comes to walking the walk, well, they voted against our plan and in favour of a plan that would tax families, which they still defend to this day. I would like to see them quote that particular impact in the Fraser report.

The question is on whether this plan is working. The answer is yes. The unemployment rate in eastern Ontario in September 2015 was 8.7%. Today, it is almost 2% lower, at 6.8%. The economy in Canada has added more than 500,000 jobs in less than two years. We have the lowest unemployment rate since 2008, and our economy is growing faster than any of the G7 countries.

● (1655)

[*Translation*]

This year, GDP growth will be 3.7%. This better-than-expected rate of growth means that the government will be able to index the Canada child benefit two years ahead of our original plan. That will mean an increase of \$560 a year for a mother with two children who earns \$35,000. We know that this will directly contribute to our country's economic growth. We are not the ones saying that. It is the Governor of the Bank of Canada.

What is more, we are enhancing the working income tax benefit by \$500 million as of 2019. That is another measure that will have a significant impact on workers in my region. We are able to implement these measures because of our strong economic growth, and we are doing so while ensuring that the debt-to-GDP ratio continues to drop.

I would like to take a few moments to talk about the reason why we decided to carefully invest rather than make cuts. We cannot talk about deficits without mentioning the infrastructure deficit in Canada. None of the mayors in my riding are asking the government to cut infrastructure programs. This year, for the first time ever, the community of Maxville will finally have access to water thanks to a federal investment of \$15 million. That is going to make a real difference in the lives of Maxville residents.

What is more, there has been talk about expanding Highway 17/174 for 40 years. With the announcement of light rail, \$50 million will be allocated to build the interchange at the intersection of Highway 174 and Trim Road. This will have a direct impact on people who commute to Ottawa and on those who will be travelling to Trim station to take the train. More work remains to be done, but this is a step in the right direction.

*Government Orders**[English]*

I could name other infrastructure projects in Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, but the point is that there is tremendous need for our communities. As I have said before, not a single mayor is asking me to cut funding towards infrastructure.

What is the legacy we want to leave to our children and our children's children? We could balance the budget at all cost and kick the can down the road for major repairs to infrastructure, or we could own up to our responsibilities and reduce the infrastructure deficit so that our children and our children's children can benefit down the road. I choose the latter approach, because it is the responsible approach. If we have a leaky roof, we cannot simply balance the family budget in the hopes that the leaky roof will go away. We must take responsibility.

[Translation]

We are doing this because although the Conservatives supposedly balanced the budget during their 10 years in office, they did so by ducking their responsibilities towards our municipalities. “Too bad, so sad” was their refrain as they told our municipalities that their citizens would have to wait for clean drinking water and that fixed-income seniors, the most vulnerable members of our society, would have to wait for social housing. However, the fact that we have an aging population did not come out of nowhere. We need to make sure that the decisions we make today have an impact on tomorrow.

That is why I am proud that we are investing \$11.9 billion in social housing. These investments will help seniors, single mothers, and women in domestic violence situations. We know that one of the barriers women face in trying to leave an abusive relationship is a lack of housing. Incidentally, I would like to thank the Centre Novas, which continues to advocate for the most vulnerable women in Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

This goal is within reach, because we have chosen the path of investment and growth. Our track record on growth is good, the best in the G7, but we need to keep the momentum going.

● (1700)

[English]

The more our companies prosper, the better it is for our economy. In order to spur that growth, we are investing \$400 million over three years in a venture capital catalyst initiative that will help young businesses scale up to the next level. With leveraged funds from the private sector, we could be looking at a \$1.5 billion injection into our economy.

We will also honour our promise to our small businesses to lower taxes to 9%, down from 10.5%, by 2019. This will leave more money in the pockets of our entrepreneurs, so they can in turn invest it in their businesses.

[Translation]

In closing, Bill C-63 to implement certain provisions of the budget supports the growth of the middle class and helps those working hard to join it. The tax cut for the middle class, the Canada child benefit, the improvement of the Canada pension plan, the investments in our sewer systems and social housing, the tax cut for small and medium-sized businesses, the working income tax

benefit, the improvement of the guaranteed income supplement—all of these measures help the middle class and those working hard to join it. Strengthening this class will benefit society as a whole, and I am proud to support this bill.

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell attacked us a bit in his speech when he said that the Conservatives had forgotten the municipalities. That is a bit rich because when we were in government, following the recession, we set in motion the economic recovery plan that allowed every municipality in Canada to benefit from an \$85-billion infrastructure plan that did not include a portion for social housing. It was entirely for municipal infrastructure such as bridges and waterworks.

By the end of that economic recovery, we had the highest job creation rate in the G7 with 1.2 million jobs created. How does the hon. member explain his government's decision for the past two years and especially in the past few weeks to do away with the regional development minister position for good?

How does that reflect any respect for the municipalities in Canada's rural regions?

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Speaker, I would put it to my colleague that we gave power back to the members of Parliament. In his province of Quebec, it is the role of Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, and in mine, FedDev is still the one investing. No one has lost their voice. In fact, I made several announcements aimed at helping several businesses in my province. We do not need a minister. All members have a voice in cabinet. They have only to speak to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development. I am certain that he would be most attentive to Quebec's concerns.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to what my colleague said he liked about the budget. My question concerns something that, surprisingly, is not in the budget. During the last two election campaigns in 2011 and 2015, the Liberals were very firm in their promise to cap the amount that can be claimed through the stock option deduction. Tax fairness is actually quite important to the middle class everyone keeps talking about. The Liberals repeatedly promised to address this perceived iniquity, and yet, they went back on their promise as soon as they came to power.

My question for my colleague is as follows. Why did the government decide to renege on its promise to close a tax loophole that only benefits wealthy CEOs?

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•(1705)

Mr. Francis Drouin: First, Mr. Speaker, stock options do not only benefit wealthy CEOs. They also benefit start-ups. Sometimes, it is the only option they can give investors. I like that the hon. member reminded us of the promises we made during the election, because I, too, remember a promise the NDP made during the same period, which was to balance the budget. Today, the New Democrats are saying that they want us to invest more in the fight against tax evasion, although we have already invested more than \$1 billion. I wonder how the NDP would go about investing more while still balancing the budget. Perhaps we should ask the new leader of the NDP, as we are unsure what his position is. Will he balance the budget at all cost, or will he decide to invest?

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Earlier, Mr. Speaker, we heard our colleague opposite speak of the recession that happened when his party formed the government. Back then, revenues were at an all-time high. Oil was selling at \$110 a barrel. All of these resources boosted revenues. Now that oil is selling at \$40 or \$50 a barrel, sound management was needed in order to provide Canadians all of the benefits we have been able to offer. I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

Mr. Francis Drouin: I could not agree more, Mr. Speaker, and would like to thank my colleague for his fine question. Indeed, the Conservatives often talk about how they only went into deficit during the recession, and yet, the recession happened in 2008-09, and the largest deficit in the history of Canada was recorded in 2010. It had reached \$62.5 billion. The Liberals are not even close to that number yet. We have decided to invest in infrastructure because that is what every municipality has asked us to do. As I said earlier, I have yet to meet a mayor who has asked us to stop investing in infrastructure and to stop offering support. We have not gotten that request from a single mayor.

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, hon. colleagues, dear Canadians who are watching us, I just want to say, “wow”. One hundred and fifty years ago, on November 6, 1867, the first Canadian parliamentarians from Upper Canada and Lower Canada, as well as the colonies of New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Nova Scotia, gathered here in a federal Parliament for the first time. It was surely to have a debate, but I imagine that first day must have been rather solemn. I do not know if they started any work that first day. I imagine they wanted to get started right away on working hard to build a federation from coast to coast. It must have been extraordinary to take part in achieving that dream.

I wanted to take a minute or two to say that I agree with what my leader said about his vision of the country, and his take on the parliamentary system and the role of parliamentarians. I was impressed by his speech.

Certainly, I want to thank the Prime Minister for taking the time to deliver a speech on this solemn day. I also found it extraordinary that four former prime ministers were here today. I appreciated the speech of the House leader of the New Democratic Party and that of the Bloc Québécois member who took the time to say a few words despite his opposition to our great federation.

I am more mature now as I begin my third year as MP than I was at the very beginning. There are three things I consider important and that I would like to bring back to the Canadian political agenda. If I

come to Ottawa every week, it is not to talk about rights but about duty. It is not to talk about about pride, but about honour. More importantly, it is not to talk about entitlements but about each individual's responsibility and their role in community development.

Guided by these three beacons that shape my approach to parliamentarism and Canadian politics, I come here each week in an attempt to improve things in this country, even only a little bit.

I would like nothing more than to be able to speak at length in this House about the Constitution of Canada, the role of the provinces in our constitutional order and the dialogue that Philippe Couillard would like to open about Quebec's place in Canada.

I would like to talk about our founding peoples, linguistic rights, creating new provinces to pursue Canada's territorial and economic expansion, as well as international relations and Canada's role in the 21st century in light of all the world's emerging powers on all continents who are challenging us in ever more extreme ways. I would also like us to discuss our vision of federalism for the hundred years to come.

However, I cannot talk about that today, as the government is busy introducing a bill to confirm and put in place the budgetary measures which were announced in March, as is the custom in this great Parliament.

We returned to the House two months ago, but we have not touched on the constitutional debates and the international relations debates I talked about, debates I would really like us to have here. This all started in July, when the government put forward its tax reforms, which amounted to tax hikes for small and medium-sized businesses. It really botched those reforms. Just two weeks ago, the Minister of Finance presented his economic update. He tried to convince us that his tax reforms are working well and that he merely adjusted a few elements of it in response to what he heard from Canadians.

Simply put, the tax reform is a thing of the past. It is moot. The government backtracked thanks to some very good work by the official opposition of Canada and our leader, the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle. Every sitting day from September to November, our leader proved to Canadians that the tax reform benefited the rich, those who want to avoid paying taxes, and, it bears mentioning, even the Minister of Finance, as we all know. The whole thing is absolutely unbelievable.

•(1710)

The reform benefits the rich rather than ordinary Canadians—the workers, the mechanics, the labourers, the farmers. The Liberal economic update is merely a repeat of the same measures and broken promises we have seen from the beginning of their mandate in 2015. The only thing that is new is that they are going to lower the overall tax rate for small and medium-sized business.

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Once again, that was nothing really new, since the Liberals had announced it during the campaign. They first decided not to keep that promise, but faced with the political uproar created by their ethical scandal, they thought they might present a gift to shift the media's focus. It did not work.

Then, at the end of September, the scandal linked to the finance minister himself, personally, was uncovered. This is not a debate about whether this is a good policy, nor is it a debate on the tax measures he wants to bring in. Indeed, thanks to research done by our party and by some investigative journalists, it became clear that the Minister of Finance was in a total conflict of interest, both personally and with respect to his significant financial assets. He made his fortune by working very hard, good for him.

According to the Liberal members, Morneau Shepell, and the government, everyone believed that the Minister of Finance had taken his fortune, including the \$20 million he owned in Morneau Shepell shares, and placed it in a blind trust back in 2015. That was not the case. For the past month, I have been expecting him to stand up in the House and make a formal apology. In the end, he made a donation to charity, which is nice, but he has yet to apologize to Canadians.

We have been talking about this issue for a month and a half. There was also the property in France, which he hid from the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, as well as Bill C-27, which directly benefits his family business, Morneau Shepell. The proof is right in front of us: the Minister of Finance is in a direct conflict of interest. He has yet to apologize to Canadians.

Yesterday, it emerged that the Liberal Party of Canada's own chief fundraiser is implicated in tax avoidance schemes involving tropical tax havens south of here. The news has made this government even more of a laughingstock.

Today, on this 150th anniversary of the first parliamentary sitting of November 6, 1867, four former prime ministers, unfortunately, had to witness a question period that I found to be shameful and that did not focus on the issues that we should be discussing. As I said, we should be discussing the Canadian federation, the coming century, and how to always strive to make Canada the best country in the world.

Instead, we are talking about this government's hypocrisy. We are talking about the things it does that create conflicts of interest. In short, we are talking about its real intentions, which are to help interest groups, not Canadians. These interest groups, whatever their cause, may be chartist groups that go through the Supreme Court to impose new policies on our country rather than coming and fighting in the House, economic interest groups, like the finance minister and his Bill C-27, or groups that fight for the government's own party. What is worse, the Liberals are shamelessly claiming that theirs is a feminist budget. I have never heard anything so ridiculous in my life. Well, perhaps that is a bit of an exaggeration, but even so. This should not be a feminist budget. It should be a Canadian budget for all Canadians.

Since when does a government have the nerve to rise in the House and claim that a budget has been put in place for a particular group, to cater to a certain ideology or stripe, or individual interests? How

does this government have the nerve to talk about a feminist budget? What would happen if it was a masculinist budget? It is completely ridiculous.

What have the Liberals done in the past two years? They have eliminated tax credit after tax credit, to the point where, according to the Fraser Institute, a typical Canadian family with two children is now paying \$840 more in taxes a year.

It is unprecedented in Canada for a government to run a deficit that is double what was promised with no plan to balance the budget. That is the Liberal government.

• (1715)

Rather than celebrating the Constitution on this 150th anniversary, we are celebrating the Liberals' hypocrisy.

[English]

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

Mr. Speaker, the member referred to the issue focus. Let there be no doubt. We have a Prime Minister who has been focused from day one. When he was first elected as leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, he established that his priority was Canada's middle class and those working hard to be a part of it. Then we can look at the first piece of legislation, the first budget, the second budget, and the many other things our government has done. The common thread is how we can enhance Canada's middle class. That is about as focused as I have ever seen, and I have been a parliamentarian for 25 years. We have a Prime Minister who is focused on Canada's middle class.

Why does the Conservative Party, which continues to be out of touch with Canadians, not recognize that instead of focusing its attention on being critical of personal issues, it should be focusing on listening to what Canadians want? They want a healthier economy. They want a government that is sensitive to the needs of Canadians in all regions. Our government is delivering that. Why does the Conservative Party continue to be out of touch with what Canadians want?

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Speaker, with all due humility, from day one, and we have seen it more than ever in the last three months, the government has been focused on enhancing the privilege of the Liberal elite. It has focused on enhancing the privilege of the Liberal bagmen. It is trying to work for interest groups. That is why the budget is called the feminist budget, when it should be called the Canadian budget.

On the contrary, from 2006 to 2015, our focus was to govern the country in all aspects, not just for one class but for all Canadians. That is why we would never have called it a feminist budget and only talked about the middle class. We were always talking about Canadians. Every day our leader, the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, stands in the House of Commons and talks about the mechanics, the farmers, the tractor repairmen, the person who does haircuts, the pizza man, those who work on the ground, the people who send taxes every day to the government, to the House of Commons, so we can govern the country. The focus should be to govern the country.

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• (1720)

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague talked about the budget, how it created a distraction for Canadians, and how it was very confounding. In fact, it is not focused, as my colleague across the way mentioned. It is a distraction from very severe tax loopholes and evasions, and some judgment calls.

My hon. friend mentioned that this was a feminist budget. However, Canadian women today are still making 74¢ to the dollar compared to men. There has been inaction on pay equity. It has been very superficial.

Is my friend concerned at all with some of the issues around the Asian infrastructure bank? In budget 2017, it was to be \$256 million over five years. Now, under Bill C-63, that amount would increase to \$480 million. Is he concerned about that kind of distraction as well?

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I also have read that we have no assurance there will be any return for the people in Canada on the money we invest in Asian Infrastructure Bank. It is like a blind trust in the Chinese financial world. It is probably to get a deal on free commerce with China, which I kind of understand, but the Liberals should try to have better tactics to come to that end.

It is distraction after distraction. Two weeks ago, when we spoke about the finance minister, they came out with Bill C-24 to change the titles from ministers of state to ministers. It is complete nonsense. It has been like that for two years.

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak today again about our budget. I have been talking with constituents in my riding of Hastings—Lennox and Addington about a few of the highlights from our fall fiscal update and it has been going over really well.

I hear all the time about how important the Canada child benefit has been for helping families. To take a snapshot, in the month of July of this year there were a total of 8,710 tax-free payments made in my riding, which benefited 15,860 children. The average payment was \$610 for a total of over \$5.3 million. This happens every month and it has been doing a lot of good by injecting money into our local economy.

I was impressed to hear the announcement that we will be expanding the tax-free Canada child benefit to keep pace with the increasing cost of living two years ahead of schedule. We can do that because our economic plan is working. The economy is booming, with over 500,000 jobs having been created since we came to office, most of them full time. I will get back to that.

I was reminded recently that it was close to this time two years ago that I was on the campaign trail in the town of Stirling in my riding. I was going door to door and came up to a playground that had several young mothers there with their children. I stopped to say hello and of course we talked about what our party was proposing to do to help families. The Canada child benefit was a huge hit and the reason is that low and middle-income families have needed extra help.

We promised to help families who needed it the most and we have kept that promise. The tax-free Canada child benefit has lifted over 300,000 kids out of poverty.

In a riding like mine with higher than average child poverty rates, this has had a huge impact. It has put more money into the pockets of those who need it the most. They have been able to spend it to put food on the table and clothes on their kids' backs, and pay for books, sports, arts programs, and broadband Internet.

This is so important since the data shows that with the rising cost of living, a family of four in the western part of my riding had to pay almost \$1,400 more for groceries in 2016 than it did five years earlier.

The Hastings-Prince Edward poverty round table and Hastings-Prince Edward Public Health have rightly pointed out that income is one of the best predictors of health. We know that when money is tight, healthy food is one of the first things to be cut in order to pay rent and other bills. In order to save money, people may skip meals, eat fewer vegetables and fruit, drink less milk, and fill up on high-calorie, low-nutrient foods because those foods are cheaper.

The result of this unhealthy diet is an increased risk of chronic disease and poor growth and development in children. This affects everyone. In comparison to food-secure households, annual health care costs are 23% higher in households with marginal food insecurity and 121% higher in households with severe food insecurity in Ontario.

The Canada child benefit is tax-free money upfront so families can use it whatever way they want for their kids. For some that is as fundamental as putting food on the table and clothing on their kids' backs. For families in a stronger position, that can still mean help for sports or arts programs, or both. The point is, since it is not a tax credit that tends to only help families who already can afford to spend money up front, we are able to help even more families who need it most.

In the eastern part of my riding, the Food Policy Council for Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington has pointed out that 24.6% of all families in the area are single parent families, with 80% of these being female led.

Given that there is still an unacceptable pay gap where women in Canada are earning only 87¢ to every \$1 earned by men, these mothers can use help. In the cases where it is the dads or grandparents, they are getting help as well.

Living under the low income cut-off after-tax group is 15.4% of the population of the Lennox and Addington area, and 25% of youth between the ages of 15-24 live under the low-income thresholds.

There is a clear need for help in my riding, and so we are helping to lift kids out of poverty.

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● (1725)

Of all the things that our government has done, the Canada child benefit is the one that I am the most proud of. Even if it were for this measure alone, I hope that all members in the House will be supporting this fiscal update, but that is not all, there is more good news.

Combatting poverty and giving people the tools to find work is important to constituents in my riding. The Hastings-Prince Edward poverty round table has put together an employment and security working group to work on this issue. Our government will help. We know that individuals in families who are working hard to join the middle class should not have to struggle each month just to make ends meet.

We are proposing to strengthen the working income tax benefit. This is a refundable tax credit that puts more money in the pockets of low-income workers and gives people a little extra help as they transition to work. By letting low-income workers take home more money while they work, the working income tax benefit encourages more people to join the workforce and offers real help to nearly 1.5 million Canadians who are working hard to join the middle class.

We are investing an additional \$500 million in the program every year starting in 2019. We will be working closely with the provinces and territories to find the best ways to expand this program and giving an update in our next budget. This is being well received. The Canadian Labour Congress has pointed out that for the second year in a row the feds are taking steps to improve lives of low-income Canadians with the working income tax benefit. The National Housing Collaborative also pointed out that extra help for the working poor is welcome news in the fall economic statement.

Finally, I would like to return to how we are doing this. Our government's economic plan is working. We are putting money in the pockets of those who need it the most and working to rebalance so many inequities that exist in our society. We have improved the guaranteed income supplement for low-income seniors and strengthened the CPP. We cut taxes on the middle class and raised them on the wealthiest %1. We are investing in the infrastructure programs, innovation, and green technology, which is making our economy more resilient and creating the jobs of the future. We are also stimulating the economy through the Canada child benefit.

As a result, we are seeing Canada have the fastest economic growth in a decade and the best in the G7. That is excellent news for jobs with over 500,000 created since we came to office, and most of them full-time, including 35,000 created in the last month and 17,500 of those created under youth employment which is very positive and once again, something that is so important within our rural communities to try to create as much employment as we possibly can.

That is a plan that is worth supporting. Our infrastructure investments are really making a difference to increase the productivity of our businesses. We need to be able to make investments that increase productivity. We need to make investments that will decrease the inequalities that exist within our society. We need to increase investments into climate infrastructure, innovation,

and resiliency so that we create an economy that is going to benefit all Canadians.

In the redistribution of that wealth through the Canada child benefit, through the working income tax benefit, through the increase to the guaranteed income supplement, we rebalance the distribution of wealth within our society that we have been talking about for over a generation that has gone too far in one direction. We need to balance the economy so that we can grow our middle class because when the middle class does well, then we all do well as Canadians, especially in our local economies.

The great thing about the Canada child benefit is that every cent of that money is spent in our local economies. If we talk about building rural sustainability, that is how we go about building sustainability in rural communities. Increases in the guaranteed income supplement, increases in the CPP, these are all things that are going to put money in the pockets of those who are going to spend it and that is great for our economy, great for creating jobs, and great for rural sustainability.

● (1730)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his comments outlining all of the money the Liberals are spending. It is spend, spend, spend, but what he failed to say is that the spending is resulting in an \$8-billion increase in interest per year over the next four years. It will go from \$24 billion a year in interest payments to \$33 billion a year by 2021. That does not bode well for the next generation. My children and grandchildren are going to be forced to repay that debt.

The other thing my colleague commented on is investing in infrastructure. On this side of the House we are all for spending on infrastructure. In fact, we did a great job of that, but the current government is investing in infrastructure in Asia, no less. How can the member say that he is supporting the middle class when he is actually taxing the middle class? My children and grandchildren will be paying for infrastructure in Asia when in my riding there are bridges that need to be replaced, roads that need to be resurfaced, and water treatment facilities that need to be upgraded. There is light rail transit that is being built that could be extended farther on into Cambridge if it were not for the spending, spending, spending in Asia and other places that is not helping Canada at all.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Mr. Speaker, investing in infrastructure is a no-brainer. We need to improve our economy in every area. We want to increase the amount of trade that exists within our world. We do not want to rely on one single market. An avenue to get to that trade is to invest in them and they will invest in us. It balances out, in the end.

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What is most important, the member is absolutely correct, is that we need to invest in and build local infrastructure so that our companies can be competitive on the world stage. However, it goes beyond roads and bridges, which are very important. I come from a rural riding and, believe me, I know how important roads and bridges are. It is also investing in innovation and the jobs of the future. It is not just a one-size-fits-all, that we do one thing in one area and it will benefit everyone. We need to take a multipronged approach, and that is what this government has done. It has focused not just on infrastructure but on the redistribution of wealth, building up the middle class, innovation for future growth, and jobs for our youth, the next generation, and our kids' generation.

As far as the amount of money we are spending in those areas, let us face it, we have made the investments and now there is 4.5% growth, the highest growth in the G7. We have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7. Therefore, our plan is working, and we will continue to work on that plan.

• (1735)

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am really happy the hon. member talked about poverty, because whenever I meet with food banks or community groups, month after month, year after year, food bank use goes up, sadly. It is not just seniors but people who are working and students. Every year, it goes up. I was really hoping to see some kind of solution or proposals in this budget to help fight poverty. The agriculture committee did consultations on the food strategy, but to deal with food insecurity, we need to make sure that people are making enough money to buy good, healthy food. I was wondering if the member could comment on basic income and raising the minimum wage.

He also brought up pay inequity, which he said is unacceptable. I am wondering what kind of pressure he is putting on his government to make sure that women are getting paid for equal work.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Mr. Speaker, the member and I are on the same page completely. I could not agree more that pay equity is very important. It is important to our government, and we are going to take measures to move in that direction. However, it is an evolution, not a revolution. There are measures we put in place. Just tying the Canada child benefit to the cost of living, I am sure the member would agree, is another great step in trying to decrease the level of inequity and the level of food insecurity around poverty that exist. There is so much more that needs to be done, I could not agree more. We are on the path to get that done, but we need to do it in a responsible and evolving way. The approach that we are taking as a government tries to balance those two key issues that we need to be concerned with. Like I said, I totally agree that we need to do more work in these areas.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure and privilege to be able to rise to speak inside in this beautiful chamber.

Today, being November 6, is a very special day worth noting. We had four prime ministers sitting in the gallery. We had speeches by the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, the NDP representative, and the leader of the Green Party. They stood and recognized just how fortunate we parliamentarians are to be here,

representing the interests and the will of Canadians in every region of this beautiful nation.

I want to start my comments by reflecting on how much I truly and genuinely appreciate representing the residents of Winnipeg North and the confidence they have expressed in me over the years. Having said that, let me get into the debate that is currently under way.

I have had an opportunity to ask a number of questions today and on a previous day when we listened to many opposition members speak about the budget. I want to reflect on some of those things I have been listening to. The most telling statements from the Conservative benches seem to focus on the deficit, which I have attempted to address by talking about how that deficit is not as bad as they try to portray it.

I asked one of my colleagues across the way if he could explain how Stephen Harper had turned a multi-billion dollar surplus he inherited as prime minister into a multi-billion deficit even before a recession got under way. At the end of the day, he continued to have deficit after deficit, accumulating more real dollars in overall debt as a direct result, in all likelihood more than most any prime minister.

I also asked my colleague why we in government should be taking advice from the Conservatives based on their historical perspective. The answer was interesting. He said, "Look at what we Conservatives did while we were in government". My colleague talked about the debt-to-GDP ratio, as if that would excuse what the Conservatives did in terms of the size of the debt. Personally, however, I thought it was a good answer. The member has something there. The fact is the debt-to-GDP ratio is something that needs to be taken into consideration. It is something the government talks about. We have a very successful debt-to-GDP ratio that continues to go down. That is very healthy for our country.

In one sense, the Conservative member, unwittingly no doubt, conceded that the real issue is the debt-to-GDP ratio. On that account, the government is doing exceptionally well, especially compared to other industrialized nations, in particular in Europe, including the United Kingdom, and other countries like the United States and Australia. In comparison, Canada is doing exceptionally well.

• (1740)

If we are looking at results, there is a long list of things the government has accomplished in just two years. I will reflect on a number of those. At the end of the day, we have seen an economy that is envied around the world for what we have been able to accomplish. It is significant. There are over 450,000 new jobs. How does that compare to the former Stephen Harper government? In 10 years under that government, there were just over a million jobs; in just two years under ours, there are 450,000 jobs and counting. I would argue that the economic policy of this government is working. We are seeing significant signs.

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One of my friends across the way talked about focus and asked why this government was not focused. I indicated that we are in fact focused, indeed very focused, on Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it. However, it goes even beyond that. Listening the last week or so to the opposition benches, and to be fair to the Conservatives, they are not alone, the longer we are in government the closer the NDP and Conservatives want to be. They want to focus on the negative as much as possible. They want to engage in character assassinations in the House, but we will continue to remain focused on what is important to Canadians. That is something this Prime Minister and our caucus are committed to doing, because we were given a specific instruction by our Prime Minister long ago to work with our constituents. Our responsibility is to bring their ideas to the House of Commons and what they have to say, as opposed to bringing Ottawa to our constituents. It is materializing in a very real, tangible way.

If we look at the last couple of budgets or initiatives this government has entered into, we get a better understanding why the economy, relative to any other country in the world, is doing as well as it is. We recognize that a healthy economy means investing in Canada's middle class. It is the middle class and those striving to be a part of it that drive the economy. That is how to create jobs: having confidence in the middle class.

I talked about the legislation, I believe it was Bill C-2, that set in place some of the things that enabled us to have that tax cut for Canada's middle class. We literally puts hundreds of millions of dollars, going into the billions of dollars, into tax cuts for Canada's middle class. Those tax cuts were in good part covered by the special tax increase on Canada's wealthiest 1%. We made great enhancements to the Canada child benefit, investing hundreds of millions of dollars in the children of our country, and lifting tens of thousands of them out of poverty. We saw the same thing done with our guaranteed income supplement, which again resulted in tens of thousands of seniors being lifted out of poverty. We are increasing the disposable income of Canadian, and by doing that we are seeing them invest that income in our economy. Finally, after seeing 10 years of very little, we see a government that is investing in our infrastructure in a very real and tangible way. Not only does it create jobs for today, it creates opportunities into the future.

• (1745)

On that particular note, we can talk about the agreements that have been achieved to invest in Canadians' future.

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that the member opposite talked about what the real issue is.

The real issue here is that the average Canadian is actually paying more in tax, because they have a Liberal government. It is not really that complicated. Small businesses now are going to see an increase in their tax rate to about 73%, and my colleagues, as physicians or those in other professions, are being driven out of the country because of these high taxes. It is an opportunity taken away from them to practice medicine in this country they love. They would rather go to the United States where they can actually take care of more people. This is the type of thing that Canadians are facing with the Liberals.

I have a pretty simple question for the member opposite. When is he finally going to stand up to his government and say that these taxes are unacceptable and that he is going to the other side?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that will never happen.

The Conservatives have a story and want to stick to that story. They do not care about whether it lines up with factual truths. Just take a look at the person who is actually getting those child benefit increases, who had the—

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch: Let me think who it is. It is the doctors who told me they would be paying more taxes. I guess they do not know how to do math—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Excuse me. I want to point out that I am trying to hear the answer, but I am having a hard time, as I am hearing some interference.

It seems to have calmed down a bit. I will let the hon. member continue.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, my concern is that the member is chewing into my time, but I suspect it will be added.

The member talks about small businesses, but get this: we have now put in place a massive reduction in taxes for small businesses, from 12% down to 9%. One would think the opposition benches would recognize it, but this is the difference. This is the reality of government policy by us that does not necessarily abide by the type of script or scenario the opposition wants to try to portray to Canadians. They will distort the facts. They will distort the reality. It is all a part of being out of touch with Canadians.

Whether it is small business or the middle class, the average Canadian is benefiting from the many initiatives undertaken by this government over the last two years, and they will continue to do so, because we in government will not take them for granted. We are committed to working hard for each and every Canadian, because we want to make a better society for all of us.

• (1750)

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Winnipeg North spoke about opposition members wanting to stick to a script. One script the Liberal government has stuck to almost slavishly over the past two years has been to talk about the middle class and those working hard to join it. I do not know if it is a little later in the evening or if the member across the way is ad libbing a little, but he really enriched the discourse with some new permutations of that phrase through the evening. He talked about those “aspiring” to join the middle class. It was very poetic and I did want to give credit where it was due.

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The question I would like to ask my colleague is about the allocation of federal transit funding among the provinces. The government has chosen to allocate transit funding mostly according to existing transit ridership, as opposed to population. My home province of Saskatchewan comprises more than 3% of Canada's population, but we are getting only about 1.5% of federal transit funding because our current transit system does not have as large a ridership. I wonder if my fellow Prairie MP is advocating for a fair share of transit funding for our province.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that my fellow prairie member of Parliament should be delighted with the fact that we have, for the first time in the history of government, seen in excess of \$2 billion allocated for rural communities. All sorts of communities will be provided an opportunity to establish priorities as to how they would like to see that money spent.

At the end of the day, no matter what region it is, we will see a commitment by the national government to infrastructure and to asking municipalities, provinces, territories, and others to get engaged to assist us in establishing those priorities. In co-operation and working with the stakeholders, we are seeing record amounts of projects under way. They are fuelled with hope, because we have a national government that is prepared to invest in Canada's infrastructure.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise to speak to Bill C-63. I intend to focus on commitments made by the government of the day, and the previous government, on the phasing out of inefficient or perverse subsidies for fossil fuels.

This commitment was made repeatedly since 2009 to the G20, including by the Liberal government in 2016. Canada, Mexico, and the United States committed to remove these perverse incentives by 2025. The government has voiced a commitment to phase them out in the medium term. The question then arises, as we move at a snail's pace, what exactly is the medium term?

The government also committed to take action to reduce greenhouse gases. They made that commitment in Paris, and we are now hearing from world leaders that this appears to be a sliding commitment on behalf of the Government of Canada, leading into the climate meeting in Bonn.

I would like to start off reminding those in this place of what the Prime Minister's mandate letter said about the phase-out of these perverse subsidies. The mandate letter for the finance minister is very clear.

First, his mandate was to work with the President of the Treasury Board and his colleagues in the cabinet to review tax expenditures and other spending to "reduce poorly targeted and inefficient measures, wasteful spending", and ineffective initiatives.

Second, his mandate was to work with the Minister of Natural Resources to "enhance existing tax measures to generate more clean technology investments and work with the provinces and territories to make Canada's tax system highly competitive for investments in the research, development, and manufacturing of clean technology."

Third, the Minister of Finance was mandated to work with the Minister of Environment to fulfill the government's "G20 commit-

ment and phase out subsidies for the fossil fuel industry over the medium-term."

It does not end there. The mandate letter for the finance minister also says that if the government is to tackle climate change, the work must be "informed by performance measurement" and "evidence". Then the mandate letter says that the government has committed to a "higher bar for openness and transparency", and that the Prime Minister expects the minister to deliver on these commitments during this mandate in the first four years. However, two of those years are gone and we are now sliding into the third year.

What has a leading international entity said about Canada's sliding commitment to addressing greenhouse gases, including our commitment to remove the perverse incentives?

Jose Angel Gurría, the Secretary-General of the OECD, has expressed great pain at the sliding commitment. He says it is "a bit of a paradox" that Canada seems to be espousing the political will to reduce greenhouse gases, but does not seem to be going down that road. However, in the United States where the political will is gone, they have moved far ahead of Canada in taking action. He also stated that, "While at the same time, the local situation is showing that speed of reduction is not as fast as one would have wanted", that emissions in Canada should have fallen 17% from 2005 levels, and instead the drop has been more like 2%. He also stated that Canada is "on a path where, by 2030, you may not be able to get to the target."

It is very concerning. Therefore, it is not only Canadians expressing concern about the lack of commitment of the government to deliver on its commitments to reduce greenhouse gases. There will be growing concern about the failure to deliver the commitments to the G20 and their commitments in Paris.

This is reiterated by Canada's Auditor General in a letter sent by him on June 2 to the chair of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. It states:

This audit focused on whether the Department of Finance Canada and Environment and Climate Change Canada, in a manner consistent with their respective roles and responsibilities, supported Canada's 2009 G20 commitment to phase out and rationalize inefficient fossil fuel subsidies while providing targeted support for the poorest.

● (1755)

It continues:

Overall, we found that [these departments] did not define what the 2009 G20 commitment to phase out and rationalize inefficient fossil fuel subsidies means in the context of Canada's national circumstances.

The Auditor General then continues, and states:

We found that since 2009, six subsidies to the fossil fuel sector were reformed by legislation. Other tax measures for this sector were not reformed. We also found that the Department of Finance Canada did not consider all tax measures to determine whether they were inefficient fossil fuel subsidies under the commitment. The Department also did not develop an implementation plan with timelines to support the phase-out and rationalization by 2025 of remaining tax measures that are inefficient fossil fuel subsidies.

The Auditor General closes with this, which states:

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...without a clear understanding of the fossil fuel subsidies covered by the G20 commitment and without an implementation plan with timelines, the departments cannot ensure that they are providing the support needed for Canada to meet the commitment by 2025.

Clearly serious concerns are being raised, in all quarters, about the failure of the current government to deliver on its commitments both to reduce greenhouse gases and to take more expedited action to remove the perverse subsidies. In this budget, the government appears to be partially addressing Canadian development and Canadian exploration expense deductions. With respect to the removal of these subsidies, it may be noted that the Canadian exploration expense deduction used to be 100%, but is now being slid into the Canadian development expense deduction, which is 30%. It is hard to tell from what is in the budget document how much further the government is going, but clearly it is not rapid enough to meet the demands of the Auditor General.

It is important to consider that these corporations can continue to defer the deductions. Therefore, while the budget document appears to suggest that by a certain date, which I think is 2021, they can no longer claim them, the corporations can hold those off and claim them at an end date. Therefore, we may have hundreds of millions of dollars being claimed in the near future, at a time when we need to be spending that money on supporting renewable energy.

Why is this of deep concern? I have gone through the reports where people have been adding up the subsidies and grants for the fossil fuel industry. It adds up to an astounding \$5.8 billion a year, so the government has a long way to go, given the meagre measures it has in this budget document.

Therefore, the obvious question for the government is this. When will it step up to the plate, move this forward, and respond to the call by the Auditor General to provide a plan of action and a timeline? Further, is it going to begin to become transparent, instead of holding discussions on these perverse subsidies behind closed doors?

• (1800)

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a simple question for the member. We are always hearing how the Liberal government feels that it has been so invested in making sure that the lives of average Canadians are improved, whether it be with this budget bill or with those previous. I would like to have the member's comments on how she is finding her constituents in Edmonton are reacting to this budget bill. Does she believe that this is helping her citizens, or are there things that the Liberals should be focused on to make sure that Canadians are better off than they are currently?

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, indeed I am hearing the same kinds of concerns that all members in this place are hearing, particularly given that I am from Alberta. We know there is a downturn in the oil industry and a depleted price for oil and gas. Today I read another report on how many oil field workers are trying to get into training so they can get into the renewable sector. However, we do not see a cent from the current government towards a just transition. I am proud that the Government of Alberta is working on a strategy with unions and workers in Alberta and trying to move this forward, but where is the strategy? People across Canada need work. There are a lot of people being laid off. People want to work. They do not want to go on welfare. They want to look

after their family. They would probably prefer to go back to the communities that they came from. The renewable sector can clearly provide a lot of jobs, as it has around the world. Therefore, I am deeply disappointed that there are a lot of things that are not in this budget that would help Canadians obtain employment in the new energy economy.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I like to think we have seen a great deal of sympathy in terms of what is taking place in Alberta. Being from the Prairies, I know there has been a great deal of concern, which goes well beyond my province. In fact, all Canadians want to see Alberta play the prominent role it has, and that I ultimately argue continues to play in Canadian society.

To try to give an impression that the government is not working for Albertans is just wrong. The member across the way talks about energy and energy jobs. We have pipelines that have been approved. We have a minister of infrastructure who has worked with other ministries to ensure that some of those infrastructure projects are expedited as much as possible to assist the province of Alberta. This is in addition to all the other benefits I was able to highlight, at least in part, such as the Canada child benefit, which is putting more money into the pockets of Albertans.

Can the member tell me what she believes the former Conservative government did that we have not done in terms of assisting the province of Alberta?

• (1805)

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure I want to compare the two. I was pretty clear in my speech that it is not what I am calling for, it is what the Auditor General, OECD, and what all those countries that will be gathering in Bonn are calling for. Canada made big promises but is failing on delivery.

Frankly, I did not just speak to Alberta. I hear it day after day in my riding, and I know there are a lot of people from across this country, the Maritimes, Quebec, Ontario, and B.C., who have come to work in the oil industry in Alberta. Everyone knows there is a downturn. A lot of those young folk call me and ask what they can do to get into the renewables sector, because they know there is a lot of potential for jobs. There is a waiting list for the renewable energy program at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology.

For heaven's sake, when is the Liberal government going to step up and give some of the money over to help with this just transition?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Breton (Shefford, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today to speak to the second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2017 and other measures.

Government Orders

First, I would like to recognize the citizens of Shefford who trust me and allow me to serve in the House. It has been a great privilege for me to represent them for the past two years.

Also, as the municipal elections were held yesterday in Quebec, I want to thank the 250 candidates who ran for the various public positions in my riding. Of the 250 candidates, 20 mayors and 124 councillors were elected last night, and it will be a pleasure for me to work with each one of them for the betterment of our community.

As a preamble, I would like to point out that the government's plan to invest in the economy and to strengthen the middle class has yielded good results for my constituents in Shefford. Since the government was elected, the unemployment rate in my region has steadily decreased, and it is now—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Speaker, we are now debating Bill C-63. The member for Shefford just used up two or three minutes of his time to thank the candidates in yesterday's elections. We could all do the same for the 78 ridings in Quebec and thank our colleagues who ran for office. He should move on to the heart of the matter, which is Bill C-63.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Usually we let members direct their comments as they see fit. It may seem that they are taking a different direction, but they usually come back to the relevant subject. I will let the member for Shefford continue and I am sure his speech will be very interesting.

Mr. Pierre Breton: Mr. Speaker, I was just saying that the unemployment rate has dropped steadily and is now at 4.1%. That is a 40-year low.

Massive job creation and the Canada child benefit are boosting consumer confidence. This key measure, which is more focused and more generous than previous benefits, has channelled \$115 million into my riding since July 2016. That tax-free money was distributed to 22,000 children in my riding. It has put more money in the pockets of 15,000 families so they can invest in their children, enabling them to participate in sports, arts, ballet, and more.

At the same time, the middle-class tax cut and major infrastructure investments have helped support and grow my riding's economy. Our government is funding a new aquatic centre in Shefford. This major infrastructure project will enrich the daily lives of people in my community while creating economic growth and well-paid middle-class jobs. Other parts of my riding are benefiting too. There is going to be a bike path in Waterloo, cultural events in Valcourt, a community centre in Rougemont, water and waste water infrastructure in Ange-Gardien, and so much more.

I also want to convey to everyone in my riding and indeed to all Canadians that the two budgets tabled by our government are working and producing meaningful results in creating jobs, strengthening the middle class, and helping others to join it. For two years now, our government has worked tirelessly to boost the economy and improve the financial situation of Canadians who could use some support.

One measure that I am particularly proud of is how we improved income security for low-income seniors. Canadian seniors who live alone and are the most vulnerable could receive up to \$947 more annually in the guaranteed income supplement top-up benefit. Thus, our government is improving the financial security of 900,000 seniors across the country, including 3,000 in my riding.

Another key measure was the increase in the student grant program, which will allow students to focus on their studies and continue working hard to realize their dreams without having to worry about student debt. We have increased Canada student grant amounts by 50%, thereby helping over 350,000 students in Canada. On the heels of budget 2016, budget 2017 offers immediate help to those who need it most and helps guarantee everyone a real and fair chance of success.

More specifically, budget 2017 is part of the government's ambitious plan to make smart investments that will create jobs, grow our economy, and provide more opportunities for the middle class and those working hard to join it. It puts the skilled, talented, and creative people of Canada right at the heart of a more innovative economy of the future, an economy that will create jobs for the middle class of today and tomorrow.

I want to stress the fact that the investments that our government has made in people, our communities, and our economy are working. Among the G7 countries, Canada's economy is growing the fastest, and we are reinvesting the profits from that growth into the people who are contributing the most to this success. Thanks to this solid economic growth, the government has enjoyed better results and has been able to do more to help people in the middle class. For example, we kept our promise to lower the small business tax rate. The rate that was 11% in 2015 will drop to 9% in 2019.

● (1810)

Small businesses are key to growing our economy. We are committed to giving them full support to grow, invest, and create stable, well-paying jobs for the middle class. We also enhanced the Canada pension plan.

In that vein, I applaud the Quebec government's initiative, which adapts the Canadian formula to Quebec society. The Canada pension plan will get a boost from coast to coast to coast thanks to the Government of Canada's efforts.

This means young workers and young families can rest assured that they will have a better and more secure retirement. What they save now will be returned to them at the end of their working lives.

Government Orders

Of course, there is also the working income tax benefit. Just like everywhere else, some people have trouble getting off social assistance. They find it difficult to choose between getting back into the job market and continuing to receive social assistance. The measures we just announced will enhance this tax credit, which will make it easier for people to choose to go back to work, get back into the job market, and contribute more to society because they know they will get a tax credit, they know the federal government supports them, and they know that, financially, going back to work makes sense.

The budget implementation act we are debating today has the same objectives as previously stated, namely to grow our economy and to support the middle class and those working hard to join it. For example, more flexible work arrangements are being provided to federally regulated employees in order to help them balance their work and personal responsibilities. In practical terms, this measure will ensure they have more flexibility to take vacation and other annual leaves, such as up to 10 days of bereavement leave to deal with the loss of a loved one. There would also be more flexibility in granting unpaid leave for employees to manage various family responsibilities. Through those measures, the government is showing compassion and taking concrete steps to make life easier for hard-working people.

Students are not being forgotten. In my riding of Shefford, 160 organizations received \$1.2 million over the last two years, to create 380 jobs. That is a major achievement.

Budget implementation act, 2017, No. 2 will also enable us to pursue our innovation and skills plan through an investment of \$600 million in clean technologies and businesses.

It is an honour for me to be part of a government that works very hard to strengthen the middle class, grow the economy, and help families in tangible ways. I am convinced that our budget is excellent for my constituents. They give me confirmation of that every day. On their behalf, I congratulate the government and acknowledge the thousands of constituents in my riding who put their trust in me.

• (1815)

[English]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned near the end of his remarks that the budget is good for the middle class. A recent study has shown that 81% of middle-class families are paying more taxes now than they were two years ago, when the government took office. The average middle-class family is currently paying \$840 more in tax than it did two years ago.

I want to ask my colleague the same question I asked a colleague earlier, who sort of skirted around the answer. Why would the government, through the budget implementation act, be investing millions of dollars in an infrastructure bank that would benefit Asians but would take money from middle-class families in Canada to pay those taxes? How does investing in infrastructure in Asia help middle-class families in Canada? In fact, it would hurt them by making them pay for something they will never get to use.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Breton: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to respond to the preamble of my colleague's question.

Here are the facts. We lowered taxes for middle-class Canadians as soon as we took office in 2015. That was an important measure that we wanted to put in place, and we kept our promise. We also created the Canada child benefit, a historic measure for Canadian families. It puts extra money in the pockets of Canadians. On average, families receive \$540 per child. These measures are better targeted, more generous, and tax free.

I would like to remind my colleague that, just recently, we lowered taxes for small businesses. It was a first step. Next year, in 2018, we will lower them again. Finally, in 2019, the small business tax rate will be 9%.

• (1820)

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, by way of information, the riding of Shefford, which my colleague represents, is next door to Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, which means that we share some realities. For example, the agrifood sector is important to the economic development of both our ridings.

As it has been said several times since the beginning of this debate, the problem with this budget is what is missing from it. Since I was elected, people in the agrifood industry have been asking me why there is nothing for them in the budget and why the government is not thinking of them. The only mention of the agrifood industry in the last budget was when the Minister of Finance said that he discovered during the consultations that the agrifood industry was an important economic sector. At least he recognized that.

For their part, milk producers ask me why they are not getting any real compensation for the losses they will incur when 17.7 tonnes of European cheese appears on the market. They are asking me why the export permits were shared among processors and distributors. They want to know why they only got a small innovation program which was used up in a week. People from supply-managed sectors constantly ask me why the budget does not contain any strong measure which would show that their sector will really be protected and that the government is not only paying lip service to supply management. That is what I am worried about.

The fact is that the member mentioned not a single measure in his speech. We would have known if he had, because we would have heard him promote it to his riding's agrifood sector. Why did he not do so?

Mr. Pierre Breton: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, who represents a riding which borders mine. It is always a pleasure to talk with her.

The government is fully committed to protecting supply management, since it is a priority for us. As my colleague said, we are strongly in favour of supply management. That said, 350 million dollars were made available for the agrifood sector in Canada, including 250 million dollars for agricultural producers and 100 million dollars for processors. I think it is an excellent measure which helps them innovate and increase productivity on their farms.

Government Orders

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am always pleased to rise in the House, especially to speak to the fall economic statement.

I want to begin by thanking my leader for the excellent speech he gave today for the 150th anniversary of what we have become. He demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt that he is a statesman. I am very proud to stand side by side with him. He is a great man.

Let us talk about the fall economic statement. This fall, we were treated to even more scandals. Unfortunately, I think that the Minister of Finance has lost the confidence of the House. He should have done the right thing. He is responsible for the country's finances, but he hides his assets from Canadians. Every member is required to declare all their assets to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner within 90 days, but it took him two years to do so. It is unbelievable and very troubling. We have been asking questions for over a month, but as everyone likes to say, it is question period not answer period. We have yet to get an answer from across the way.

Yesterday, we learned of the existence of the Paradise Papers. Who is named in these papers? The Liberals' friends. If anyone was wondering if the Liberals learned anything during their 10 years in purgatory, the answer is probably not.

At the time of the Gomery commission, I was working at the National Assembly and had friends who worked for the Liberal Party. Today, those friends say that the more things change, the more they stay the same. It saddens me, because they used to be staunch Liberals, and they lost their jobs because of the Gomery commission. I believe that the more we dig, the closer we get to a second Gomery commission. That would be sad.

I liked what my NDP colleague said about the fall economic statement, that the most striking thing about it is what it does not say. It has nothing to say about farmers. They are not mentioned at all. They got \$250 million, far less than we Conservatives had promised them. Let us talk about that \$250 million. Within a week, there was not a cent left. Farmers are still coming to see us at our constituency offices because they do not understand why this program only lasted five days. I do not understand it either.

The 9% tax cut the member opposite was talking about is all well and good, but it was not even the Liberals' idea. It was Stephen Harper's government that wanted to do that 9% tax cut. They took that idea from the Conservatives and put it out there as their own. That is what bothers me. It is one thing for them to come up with their own ideas, but I would like them to be honest and say that this was not their idea. They have set themselves up as saviours, but they stole that idea from the Conservatives because they could not come up with an idea of their own. That is pathetic.

•(1825)

The Liberals have to look at other parties' platforms to come up with their own. Maybe they should give that some thought, because what we are seeing nowadays is pretty pathetic.

What saddens me is that the more things change over there, the more they stay the same. I am not saying there is nothing good in Bill C-63. Some things in it are good, but many more are bad. The

Liberals should have split the bill in two so we could vote on the parts that make sense. As it whole, it does not make sense.

I will not vote in favour of a bill that does not give Canadians the truth. We are getting used to this now because the Liberals are often all about the smoke and mirrors, but dig a little deeper, and things start to not make sense. It is sad because this is no longer the Liberal Party of Canada; it is a one-man party, the Prime Minister's party. His selfies are all over the place. I am sure Canadians are picking up a hefty tab for all those photos. I think that is a real shame.

The Liberals are claiming these are the facts, but that cannot be entirely true; either that or there are still things we do not know, because the parliamentary budget officer, or PBO, is saying exactly the opposite. He is saying that over 80% of middle-class Canadians are paying more tax than before. This statistic comes from the PBO, not us, and the Liberals over there are trying to tell us that that is not actually true.

We are used to seeing the Liberal Party give with one hand and take away with the other, but one day they are going to have to be consistent. If they cannot come up with sensible tax breaks of their own, they are going to have to stop pretending that they have. They are taking things from another party's election platform because they are unable to keep up with the times.

What saddens me most is that the Liberals are not listening to Canadians. They travelled around a lot. They did a bunch of consultations, but they did not listen to anyone they consulted. The same thing happened with small businesses. The official opposition parties had to rise in the House and organize round tables for the Liberals to realize they were headed in the wrong direction. People had to badger and hurl questions at them for three straight weeks before the Liberals finally came to the realization that what they were doing made no sense.

For three weeks now, practically a whole month, we have been asking questions about the finance minister's ethics. The finance minister is the one who manages Canadians' money, and yet he cannot even answer our questions, even now that the Paradise Papers scandal has erupted. There will come a point where the more newly elected Liberals, who were not around for Gomery and who certainly do not want to end up in a similar situation, will have to start asking questions. Perhaps they will get more answers than we have been getting.

•(1830)

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague across the way for her speech. She is also a member of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-food, and I thank her for her excellent work.

My colleague said that we stole their ideas. It is all well and good to have an idea, but putting it into action is another thing altogether. I think the government should be very proud of doing that successfully.

Government Orders

I have a question for my colleague regarding our budget and the great things we have done. Take summer jobs for example. Last summer, I had the opportunity to travel around my riding and meet with students and employers. They had good things to say, since we doubled the number of jobs.

I would like to ask my colleague if she had an opportunity to travel around her riding and hear from students and employers, knowing that we doubled the number of jobs.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Speaker, to answer my colleague, yes, I like to travel around a lot, too. I am a grassroots politician. It did some good, but at what price? One has to think about that.

When you say that, yes, we are the ones who thought of that, I would point out that, two years ago, you were the ones elected. It was already in our platform and that is what we would have done, but we were not elected. You were.

Before saying something and taking someone else's ideas, you should have thought about it first. You did not think about it.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I would like to remind the member to address the Chair. I am sure that she was talking to the members opposite and not to the Speaker of the House.

The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

• (1835)

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

We have talked a lot about spending today. My question is about the income we are depriving ourselves of. The member ended her speech by talking about the Paradise Papers.

Does she believe that the government should be much more aggressive in combatting tax evasion? The people in my riding talk to me about this. They do not believe that everyone is paying their fair share.

One Thursday evening in January, 70 people came to my office to watch a one and a half hour documentary on tax havens called *The Price We Pay*, which, by the way, is an excellent Quebec documentary. We should be proud of Brigitte Alepin, Harold Crooks, and Alain Deneault, who have been documenting the situation with tax havens for so many years.

We need to do something. Right now, we are leaving billions of dollars in other countries because we do not have any real measures to combat tax havens. The government may well have voted in favour of the motion the NDP moved in the spring, but a month later, it was signing a new agreement with another tax haven.

My question for my colleague is as follows. Do we need to ask the government to be more aggressive in combatting tax evasion? The answer we have been given by the Minister of National Revenue is that the investigators are looking into the situation and that the government has allocated \$1 billion to combat tax evasion. Today, with the Paradise Papers, we see that they will tell us that what is happening is completely legal.

The laws need to be changed. That is what needs to be done. Does my colleague agree?

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

Of course, it is important that Canadians and Quebecers have the impression that everyone is paying the same kinds of taxes. We often hear that that is not currently their impression. As for tax havens, of course I think we need to address this problem.

Today the Minister of National Revenue often repeated the same answer. However, looking at all the names listed, we saw that they were friends of the Liberals. My advice to the minister would be that she speak to her boss and get a list of his friends. She would also get their phone numbers.

[English]

Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour for me to rise today to speak to Bill C-63.

This bill is excellent news for my constituents in the riding of Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas and for our ambitious city of Hamilton. Our city properly earned the title of “ambitious city”. It is a city that is on the move, with one of the hottest real estate markets in Canada and one of our city's lowest unemployment rates since 2015. At the heart of Hamilton's success is a new wave of investments from our Liberal government, from the private sector, and, of course, the new wave of entrepreneurship that is happening.

Since the beginning of this government's mandate in 2015, more than 89,000 children in the city of Hamilton have received tax-free payments, equalling a total of \$30 million, through the Canada child benefit. That is absolutely fantastic news for middle-class Hamiltonians and it is amazing news for our children. I am proud that our government has worked so tirelessly to help raise these children out of poverty. It gives me immense pride to see that through Bill C-63, we will be strengthening the CCB.

We are reaffirming our belief that by investing in the middle class, we are strengthening and growing Canada's economy, which, by the way, is the fastest growing economy in the G7.

I would like to highlight the provisions in Bill C-63 that put in place measures to give greater flexibility to Canadians working in federally regulated industries to balance work and family responsibilities, such as greater flexibility for annual vacation days and holidays, more bereavement days in the event of losing a loved one, and more unpaid leave for family responsibilities.

Government Orders

Our government recognizes the importance of having strong labour rights for Canadians. One just has to look at our current NAFTA negotiations to see that our government is fighting the good fight for workers' rights. Through Bill C-63, constituents in my riding like Cathy, who works for the CRA, will have improved rights. By providing employees with the right to request flexible work arrangements from their employers, by providing employees with family leave, by providing a leave for victims of family violence, by providing a leave for traditional indigenous practices, and by modifying certain provisions related to work schedules, overtime, annual vacation, general holidays and bereavement leave in order to provide greater flexibility in work arrangements, this government is demonstrating its commitment to our dedicated civil servants. Workers' rights are extremely important to me and my constituents in Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas.

I was recently contacted by a grade 5 student in my riding. Her name is Natalya. She asked me what our government was doing that made me proud. I was delighted that a grade 5 student was reaching out to me, engaged, wanting to know what I felt most proud about with respect to what our government was providing. I was very happy to share with Natalya the many things that our government had done that made me extremely proud. We have a strong record and the strength of the economy is evidence of that.

Today, the provision for workers' rights in Bill C-63 also makes me exceptionally proud. For decades, Canadians and Hamiltonians alike have fought for fair workers' rights and this provision is helping to enhance workers' rights and needs. The provision provides for people in a time of need when they feel most vulnerable and fragile, the loss or sickness of a family member, or the experience of domestic violence. It also acknowledges the importance of indigenous spiritual practice. The bill would help the marginalized as well as recognize indigenous spiritual practices.

• (1840)

Bill C-63 would also make important investments in clean technology. This legislation is going to take the next steps for innovators and creators. Our government's innovation and skills plan focuses on individuals, and addresses the changing nature of the economy to ensure it works for all Canadians.

Bill C-63 would enact key sections of our plan, such as \$600 million in new financing for clean technology firms. Our government is also showing that being responsible stewards of the environment that our children will inherit and creating prosperity are not mutually exclusive. Rather, we are proving that being green and growing our economy go hand in hand to create health, wealth, and a prosperity for all Canadians.

Bill C-63 also designates \$400 million for the venture capital catalyst initiative. As I mentioned earlier, my beloved city of Hamilton is becoming a Canadian hotbed of innovation and creativity. Indeed, Hamilton is an attractive place to live and start a business. It offers many attractive circumstances to investors and people who wish to move: more affordable housing than its sister cities a short drive east down the QEW; an easily accessible nature trail system that takes one to the most beautiful spots that are largely unspoiled in the Niagara Escarpment, in which Hamilton is nestled; the nearby world-famous Niagara wine region; its three major post-

secondary institutions, McMaster, Mohawk, and Redeemer; and the fact that it is a major transit hub. All of these facts mean that Hamilton is home to a rapidly growing number of innovators and creators.

One only has to look at the growing number of start-up incubators and young professional networks that are mushrooming to see that this is true, whether it is Hamilton's innovation factory working with small business people to help them grow, Hamilton HIVE, which is a growing network of young professionals who are succeeding in the business world and teaching young people how to succeed as well; The Forge at McMaster University, which supports new tech companies and students interested in entrepreneurship by providing co-working space at McMaster Innovation Park in downtown Hamilton; other innovation co-working locations like CoMotion 302 or The Seedworks Urban Offices, which are providing space and allowing community start-ups to thrive; or the CoBALT Connects, which is both a network of spaces and people for artists to work and create in.

All of these things show that Hamilton is open for business for start-ups, innovators, and young professionals. The \$400-million venture capital provision is outstanding news for them. Our 21st-century economy needs these fire starters and innovators. We need their ideas, their hard work, and their passion.

Let me talk about one of Hamilton's young fire starters. I recently met with Geordie, a McMaster graduate who started his own tech firm. He took a huge risk starting his own small business, but he had a brilliant idea, and with hard work and determination, his idea has taken off. Now he employs many middle-class individuals, and collectively their ingenuity and visionary outlook on life are having a positive impact on our society. I am proud that we are lowering the small business tax rate to 9% by 2019, and also extremely pleased that we are investing in small tech firms like Geordie's.

Our government recognizes the fantastic work that our tech sector adds to our industry. It is fantastic that our government is making such a significant investment in venture capital to help create the conditions for success for these brilliant and creative minds. They are creating the businesses that will ensure the future of meaningful, well-paid, middle-class jobs and prosperity for Hamilton and Canada.

This bill introduces many measures that make me confident that our government is a careful steward of workers' rights, entrepreneurship, and our economy. Bill C-63 is good for Hamiltonians and Canadians.

Government Orders

• (1845)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague talked about policies aimed at enabling indigenous spiritual practices. I would be curious about her thoughts on some of the critical comments made about faith by the Governor General and supported by the Prime Minister. I would be curious to know how that squares with that.

She also spoke about the NAFTA negotiations. This is an important point, because she praised the way the NAFTA negotiations have been used as a vehicle for the Canadian government to try to push, for instance, for changes to American right-to-work policies. Those are obviously contentious policies and are much debated within the United States. However, we are seeing a government that is not prioritizing Canadian economic interests in those negotiations. We are seeing a situation where the government is putting at risk our economic position in these critical negotiations, because frankly, it is prioritizing trying to push social change in the United States instead of standing up for Canadian workers. I am concerned that we are not advancing our interests and that there is a big risk to Canadians and Canadian jobs associated with that.

I wonder if the member can comment on whether she thinks our priority in these negotiations should be protecting Canadian interests or trying to influence social and political change in the United States.

Ms. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the first matter, I remind my colleague that we are the party of the charter. With respect to rights and freedoms, including religious rights and freedoms, we support these rights. I am delighted that in this legislation we are talking about today, we include indigenous spiritual practices. That is further evidence of the support and strength of the charter.

With respect to the NAFTA negotiations with respect to labour rights, we are holding firm. There is no question that in these negotiations we are working very hard to ensure that Canada comes first and that we get the best deal for Canadians. I would like to reassure my colleague that it is exactly what we will be doing at the NAFTA table.

• (1850)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague talked a lot about workers in Hamilton and protecting workers' rights, and also today, my colleague from Hamilton Mountain introduced a bill to protect pensions.

I would like to know my colleague's opinion, considering that in the 2015 election campaign, she promised many things to her constituents in Hamilton. I would like to hear what she told them about protecting workers' pensions and what she has to say to them now about the fact that, since this government came to power, it has not introduced any bills that include amendments to better protect workers' pensions, like the workers in Hamilton. Bill C-63 also does nothing in that regard.

What does she have to say to them?

[*English*]

Ms. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Speaker, as the proud daughter of a steelworker, I can assure everyone that workers' rights are something

that have always been very important to me. The protection of pensions is important. In my own riding in Hamilton, I have heard heart-wrenching stories from Stelco employees about the issues they have faced and gone through.

I want to assure this House that the protection of pensions is an important issue for me. I look forward to discussions with the opposite side so that we can come to an agreement on how we can balance protecting pensions with ensuring that businesses continue to thrive and people are willing to invest.

With respect to the comments today, in this bill there are protections related to work flexibility. The Canada Labour Code would be amended to ensure that there were more flexible work arrangements for employees. Families would have a maximum leave for family issues. Victims of family violence would have a maximum of 10 days when they experienced family violence. As I have said, traditional aboriginal practices would have a maximum of five days.

What we are trying to do is ensure that workers have rights and that those rights are protected. We are very proud of what would be implemented with this bill.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Resuming debate. The hon. member for Sherbrooke will have five minutes of speaking time today. He will be given another five minutes when the House resumes debate on Bill C-63 at a later date.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, five minutes is not a lot of time to go over the reasons why we must oppose the bill.

To me, we must oppose this bill for many reasons, including for its lack of substantive measures for fighting tax evasion and for the problems raised a few minutes ago at the Standing Committee on Finance regarding the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. We have a lot of problems with this bank. It raises a lot of questions.

Let us start with the fight against tax evasion. Yesterday, there was another leak regarding the Paradise Papers. According to an army of lawyers representing wealthy Canadian clients, everything is legal, there is no problem, everything is fine. They are entitled to do this, there is no problem.

That is precisely the fundamental problem that we tried to address in question period in the House today. The government should have addressed this issue in its Bill C-63, the budget implementation bill. It failed to do so yet again. There is no measure in place to make illegal what is morally unacceptable or what we might describe as legalized fraud.

They use tax treaties like the ones with the Cayman Islands and Barbados and tax agreements to avoid double taxation. Those tax information exchange agreements are supposed to give us information about taxpayers who have interests and accounts in the Cayman Islands, but the fact is, the government has had a tax information exchange agreement with the Cayman Islands since 2010. That is where Mr. Bronfman had his tax-free trust, which apparently netted him some handsome returns.

Agreements like those, like the one with the Cayman Islands, legalize what should be illegal. Those information exchange agreements were supposed to provide information to the revenue minister and the finance minister in exchange for that tax benefit, if I may call it that.

It is becoming clear that the revenue minister is once again completely in the dark with respect to the information hidden in those tax havens. She never got any information. Information leaks and data about Canadian companies and interests in that country reached her at the same time as they reached the rest of the public.

What, then, is the purpose of these tax information exchange agreements? We get no information, but those who register their trusts, their companies, their subsidiaries, and their shell companies over there get tax benefits. We get nothing at all out of the deal.

It is time for our government to step up and review our tax treaties. It also needs to review schemes like these, which allow rich taxpayers to get out of paying the Canadian government what they owe. These people benefit from our infrastructure, our roads, our public transit, and our health and education systems, but what do they give back to society in return? Zilch. They stash their wealth in overseas accounts and contribute nothing to the development of our communities and our country.

Now more than ever, it is time for the government to take action on this issue. With Bill C-63, the government missed its opportunity to take action and show that it really does intend to solve the problem. Now we see that it has been infiltrated by people who are exploiting the system and the status quo to get out of paying their fair share of taxes. Today, we really have to wonder what the government's true agenda is.

The other thing I wanted to mention is the Asian infrastructure bank. Close to \$500 million of Canadian taxpayer money will go to creating a bank in China that will be controlled primarily by China. This bank will invest in Chinese interests and in privatized Chinese infrastructure projects. We saw the same thing here with the Canada infrastructure bank. This is shameful. We need to speak out against this bill for the sake of Canadians, perhaps even for the sake of people overseas.

•(1855)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Sherbrooke will have five minutes and 21 seconds when debate on this bill resumes.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*Translation*]

ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on June 5, 2017, I rose in the House to ask a question regarding the measures needed to protect all of our lakes and rivers.

Adjournment Proceedings

As we know, the Liberals promised to reinstate the measures to protect our navigable waters that were eliminated by the Conservative government. I felt that the answer given by the Minister of Transport was too vague, and the government still has not kept that promise. Our waterways and lakes have been left vulnerable to environmental attacks for too long. It is high time the government reinstated the protective measures eliminated by the Conservatives. By refusing to act, the minister continues to deprive 99% of Canada's navigable waters of environmental and regulatory protections. That does not make any sense. In my riding, the Yamaska, Noire, and Le Renne rivers have been left unprotected, and this has had devastating consequences, particularly for the ecosystems those rivers support.

The former government's two omnibus bills have had obvious consequences. According to an article published in *La Voix de l'Est* last February, the North Yamaska and Le Renne rivers in Acton Vale contain a number of contaminants that have rarely been seen to date. The presence of these contaminants is affecting the water quality and fish health.

If the Liberals are so concerned about the environment, why are they not taking action? I would remind the House that there are currently no regulations for development projects that will affect Canadian waterways. In the decision-making process for granting building permits, only factors related to navigation are taken into account. Environmental impacts are summarily dismissed. It is unacceptable that proponents are no longer required to inform the government when a project will negatively affect navigation. It is unacceptable that citizens and advocacy groups are the ones who have to shoulder the responsibility of taking project proponents to court when their navigation rights are threatened.

In 2012, hundreds of Canadians signed the petition calling for the protection of public navigation rights. They were also calling on the government to restore the environmental assessment process for proposed development projects on and near bodies of water. Nothing has changed since 2012. The Liberals still refuse to reinstate the automatic triggering of environmental assessments, despite their election promises. Many will recall the comments of the current President of the Treasury Board on the Conservatives' policy. He described the changes as catastrophic and said that the Conservatives were endangering the health of our lakes and rivers, and yet, nothing has been done. The Liberals are shirking their responsibilities in this area.

In his response to my question last June, the Minister of Transport said he wanted to restore important navigable waters protection measures as recommended by the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, but the Liberals' response is once again unsatisfactory. We are disappointed that the Liberal members are recommending that the federal government maintain the schedule that excludes 99% of lakes and rivers from the necessary protection. By making that choice, the Liberals are not basing their recommendation on the evidence heard in committee.

Is the minister aware that the conclusions in this report conflict with the opinions of the expert panel on environmental assessment?

Adjournment Proceedings

That is why, in January, the NDP highlighted the situation in its dissenting opinion. The Navigable Waters Protection Act safeguards our natural heritage and our landscapes.

To conclude, my question—

• (1900)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot for her interest in the Navigation Protection Act. Our government is determined to provide a safe and sustainable transport system that protects the public right of navigation on our waterways. As my colleague pointed out, in 2014, the previous government made changes to the Navigation Protection Act, which reduced the scope of navigation protections to the lakes, rivers, and oceans set out in the schedule.

In June 2016, our government launched a review of environmental and regulatory processes. The 2014 amendments to the Navigation Protection Act were studied as part of that comprehensive review. Consultation and engagement are at the heart of the review process. Since June 2016, many stakeholders have shared their views on the amendments and on how to reinstate the previous protections. We have had the opportunity to hear from many experts, including the independent panel on transport, and representatives of the public, indigenous communities, the provinces and territories, interest groups, and the industry.

Indigenous people told us that Canada's waters are sacred and that they want to be consulted about what is built on their traditional lands. That is why we are looking at new approaches so that we can work in partnership with indigenous peoples to monitor navigation in their traditional territories.

We heard from paddlers and other recreational users of our waterways. They want reassurances that they will be able to continue to use Canada's waterways safely. Our government commits to maintain protections for Canada's navigable waters.

We heard from industry and other levels of government that an effective regulatory system is needed for building the important infrastructure that recreational travellers need and that allows businesses and industries to get their products to their destination. Our government is determined to provide a clear, transparent, and public process that proponents can be proud of.

Finally, we heard from Canadians that they want to know more about how we develop our regulatory process. Our government will establish a new standard of inclusion and transparency in protecting navigation. We take environmental protection very seriously and that is one of the reasons why the Minister of the Environment is currently reviewing the assessment process to ensure that the environment is protected when projects move forward. We will keep working and the results of the review will help us ensure that navigation on all of Canada's navigable waters is protected.

• (1905)

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Mr. Speaker, the answers are always the same. It is not enough to just listen. Nothing has changed in months.

This government needs to change its tune and make a decision to act now. It is time for the government to uphold its commitments and reinstate the necessary measures to protect all our lakes and rivers. The situation is becoming increasingly critical for our waterways and the ecosystems they support. We need to act and fix the problem caused by the previous Conservative government's Bill C-45. Despite their election promise to reinstate the protections that had been taken away, the Liberals are showing yet again that, sadly, their word cannot be trusted.

It is disappointing that the government is ignoring the advice of the environmental assessment expert panel. There is a fundamental and urgent need to protect our waterways. These lakes and rivers are valuable, and water is a precious resource.

I will ask the same question one last time: when will the government finally reinstate the necessary measures to protect all our lakes and rivers?

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying earlier, we have been studying the issue since 2016 and want to make sure that we have the right answers to give waterway users.

Our government is committed to maintaining a safe and sustainable transportation system that preserves the public's right to navigate while promoting economic development. The review of the Navigation Protection Act is part of a larger strategy to review the legislation and processes that apply to development projects.

Canadians have shared their views with us regarding the aspects of navigation protection that are important to them. We are taking a transparent approach to implementing these propositions with a view to restoring lost protections, establishing partnerships with indigenous people and preserving the public's right to navigate our waterways, just as we had promised in our platform.

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to address a question I raised originally on June 5.

First, this is the beginning of Veterans Week and I want to take the time to thank all our veterans for their sacrifice and for their service during wartime and times of peace. They are the ones who have given us our rights and our liberties. They are the ones who have protected our democracy and have ensured that Canada is peaceful and prosperous.

Adjournment Proceedings

I want to thank the current members of the Canadian Armed Forces because they are the ones who are protecting us today. They are standing on the wall, they are in the air, and they are on the sea, ensuring we are safe each and every day, 24/7. Often, they are not just defending our sovereignty, but they are also out there as part of coalitions, working with our allies. They are right now fighting ISIS during Operation Impact in Iraq and Syria. Also many of our people are involved in NATO's Operation Reassurance, 450 troops serving right now in Latvia in the enhanced forward position. Members of the Canadian Armed Forces are in Ukraine in Operation Unifier. Of course, there are many other missions around the world, including UN peacekeeping missions and other operations in which Canadians are serving.

Finally, I want to thank the military families for standing by their loved ones who have served and who are currently serving. They are the force multiplier that make it possible for us to have a Canadian Armed Forces.

On June 5, in question period, I asked questions about the replacement of our CF-18s. As I have said in this place, the Liberals have turned our fighter jet replacement program into a circus.

Going back in time, first it was the Prime Minister's ill-advised campaign promise not to buy the F-35. To then live up to that campaign promise, the government had to dream up an imaginary capability gap and change the numbers on planes required, which had not been used in the past or based on any proper research by the Defence Research and Development Canada. The Liberals then said they would sole source 18 Super Hornets from Boeing. Then, of course, Boeing and Bombardier got into a fight over a trade deal with the C Series, and the government decided it would not buy the Super Hornets. Now the Liberals are talking about buying used legacy Hornets, the F-18s, similar planes we bought in Canada and are in Australia. They said that they were going to use those planes.

The Australians are not in the position yet to provide those planes to Canada. The auditor general in Australia has said that its planes have major issues, including corrosion, limitations on flying manoeuvres, and are higher than that of the U.S. to having fatigue. All of this presents significant risks for the F-18 fleet in Australia. Canada is now looking at buying this plane.

As I have said before, the only way we can fix this is to get to an open competition right now. Let us get the best plane for the Royal Canadian Air Force. Let us ensure we get the best plane for our aerospace industry and its workers. Let us ensure we get the best plane in the interests of Canadian taxpayers.

• (1910)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. We both want to make sure that the men and women in our armed forces are properly equipped. What he and I do not agree on is how to reach that goal.

On November 22, 2016, our government announced its plan for replacing Canada's CF-18 fighters jets. Pursuant to the mandate our government has been given, we will undertake an open and transparent competition to permanently replace the CF-18. This

competition will be launched during the current term and we will ensure that the Canadian Armed Forces have the equipment they need for many years to come.

However, in the meantime, Canada must remain a dependable ally. Through NORAD, we have established a strong and important defence relationship with our closest ally and number one commercial partner, the United States. Canada is also an important member of NATO and, as such, we need to always be ready to make a significant contribution to alliance missions. Our commitments to NORAD and NATO are cornerstones of Canada's defence policy. These are missions in which Canada must be successful.

To that end, we have decided to consider acquiring an interim fleet to complement the existing CF-18s until the permanent replacement fleet is fully in place. We are actively looking at the possibility of acquiring 18 Super Hornet fighters or surplus F-18 fighters and parts from Australia. No decision has been made yet. Once we have all the information, the various options will be reviewed to determine whether they meet our requirements and are acceptable for Canada in terms of capability, cost, schedule, and economic value.

Beyond allowing Canada to meet its NORAD and NATO commitments, the interim fleet will mitigate the risks associated with our dependence on our current CF-18 fleet and with any delay in the competition for the acquisition of the permanent replacement fleet. An open and transparent competition can take time.

What is more, we want to make sure that the industry can fully take part in the process. Our government will keep its word and undertake, as promised, an open and transparent competition to replace the CF-18. We are determined to get the best value for taxpayers, to create good jobs and to bring economic benefits for Canadians.

We also want to make sure that Canada remains a dependable ally and that our armed forces have all the equipment they need to accomplish the missions we ask of them.

[*English*]

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary has said that we will have an open and fair competition, that it is a promise the government has made. We are two years into the Liberal mandate and it has not bought one fighter jet yet. It has not made a decision on which fighter jets to buy. If it really wants to deal with the so-called capability gap, the quickest way it can fix it right now is to get on with the competition. There is no reason why we are sitting around talking about this when all the interim purchases it was going to get, whether the Super Hornet from Boeing or the older rusted out F-18s from Australia, is going to work.

Adjournment Proceedings

Therefore, let us get on with the competition and ensure we get the best plane for taxpayers, the best plane for our pilots, the best plane that will work with our industry, and ensure we meet the requirements and our responsibilities with NORAD and NATO.

• (1915)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Speaker, as I said, we will undertake an open and transparent competition for the acquisition of a permanent fleet.

In the meantime, we want to ensure the safety of Canada and North America by working with the United States and NORAD and we want to meet our commitments. That is why we want to acquire an interim fleet that will allow the government to meet all its commitments around the world while taking into account the cost, the capability we need and the schedule. Most importantly, we want to do business with companies that are friends of Canada and are not hostile to our aerospace market, as some have been.

[*English*]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to rise in the House today, the 150th anniversary of the first-ever sitting of our federal Parliament. For most of those 150 years, the Government of Canada had no great difficulty paying its employees.

The Phoenix payroll system is a huge embarrassment not only in terms of the Government of Canada's history, but also in comparison to other countries and to provincial and municipal governments that have no great difficulty paying their employees correctly and on time.

A lot has already been said in this place about the problems with Phoenix, so I do not want to focus on repeating those stories this evening. What I would like to do is put forward three concrete solutions to the Phoenix boondoggle, and I would be very interested in hearing the government's responses to these proposals.

The first solution is to develop and make use of the expertise that exists within our federal public service. A big part of the problem with Phoenix was the notion of contracting out quite complex federal government payrolls. I fear the other chamber of Parliament, the Senate, is going even further down the road of contracting out by trying to find an alternative supplier for its payroll system. Certainly, I understand the Senate's frustration with Phoenix, but yet more contracting out is not the way to go. We need to rebuild a publicly administered system, and that includes better utilizing a lot of the competence that already exists. For example, at Shared Service Canada, there are a huge number of employees with a lot of expertise in PeopleSoft, which is essentially the Phoenix program. Yet these workers have not been directed to focus on solving the Phoenix problem. They are doing other things. Let us recognize the urgency of the problem and make use of employees in the federal public service who already have expertise that is quite relevant to solving that problem.

The second solution to the Phoenix boondoggle I would like to present is empowering managers in departments and agencies to write cheques to employees whom they know are not being paid.

Every employee's first paycheque is a paper cheque, because it is recognized that it takes time to incorporate people into an automated system, so the Government of Canada obviously has the capacity to write cheques. Managers know how much their employees should be getting paid. If someone is not getting paid, rather than allowing them to miss mortgage payments and lose their home, why are we not empowering managers to simply cut them a cheque?

The third solution is creating a hotline for our MP offices so our staff are able to contact the Phoenix pay centre and help constituents who come to us with these pay problems.

• (1920)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank once again my friend from Regina—Lewvan for his very constructive arguments throughout this debate. I commend him for that.

[*English*]

Specifically on the member's suggestions, first, in terms of rebuilding capacity in IT in the public service, that is a recommendation the government accepts. We continue to build on that capacity. I do not want to cite a number as authoritative, but we have enlisted in the area of 25 to 30 computer science specialists in the effort to bring technical and technological enhancements to Phoenix. Indeed, we are working on making sure that this capacity continues to maintain and improve the Phoenix pay system inside of the public service.

Second, on managers writing cheques, we have a system, as the member may know, of emergency pay advances. It is a very simple process, and again, I do not want to speak authoritatively because heaven knows there are always exceptions, but anyone who is not receiving a paycheque has ready access to these emergency pay advances. Managers in departments and HR folks can make sure they get those resources.

Third, the hotline is something we have struggled with. I invite the member and all members to forward particularly troublesome or nettlesome cases to my attention. There is a triage system, and we have to make sure, obviously, that the worst cases go first, which is what we are endeavouring to do. I would offer to the member, as I would offer to any member of this House, that we would verify anything identified by him or any other MP as a nettlesome case.

I want to reflect on a few things with respect to Phoenix. Of course, this government has an ardent desire to make sure that we get to the end of the problems associated with the Phoenix pay system, which is what we are working on every day. It is what I wake up very motivated to do on any given day. We are getting to the bottom of these issues. We have invested significant resources and are doing significant work in rebuilding that capacity, which was so drastically torn away from the HR and pay communities in the Government of Canada by the previous government when it sacked 700 public servants, the very people required to do an IT transformation of the scope and scale of Phoenix.

Adjournment Proceedings

There is no shortage of cynicism on the part of public servants when they see the other place, the Senate, and the hon. member identified this issue, populated by senators appointed by Mr. Harper, whom the leader of the opposition is refusing to call to order and say that public servants are seeing them as trying to get away from the problems they helped create, and that it is unacceptable to him. It is unacceptable to us as well. We work hard with departments in trying to solve their problems, and the Senate should stick with the program.

Mr. Erin Weir: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary seems to suggest that the emergency pay system is simple and working properly, which is clearly not the case. We have instances of federal public servants losing their homes, because they cannot make mortgage payments. One of the fundamental problems is that emergency pay is essentially a loan that the employee has to pay back. In fact, what we should be doing is writing cheques and crediting them against the pay that employees are owed rather than expecting them to return the money later on.

On the whole issue of a hotline for MPs' offices, I think it is a very important point. Constituents come to our constituency offices expecting service, and if they need help with immigration or EI, there is usually a number our staff can call to help resolve the problem. There is no such number for the Phoenix pay system, which is something I proposed eight months ago and would like to see.

●(1925)

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure the member and this House that these problems are a major preoccupation of the government. We continue to work away at implementing these collective agreements that the previous government did not negotiate. We were having to negotiate agreements with our public servants, agreements that were on the verge of expiry because the previous government let all agreements not only expire, but to go well past their deadlines. We are now implementing those, which is, of course, added to the very large volume of work engendered by the Phoenix pay system.

We are getting on top of it. We are very confident that once these collective agreements are implemented, we will then be able to make continuous improvement in the system, which I know the member is seeking. They are certainly improvements that I am very motivated to secure.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted.

[*Translation*]

Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:26 p.m.)

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