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Chair

The Honourable Wayne Easter

Standing Committee on Finance

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•(1530)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order.

Pursuant to Standing Order 81(5), we are looking at supplementary estimates (C), 2016-17: votes 1c and 5c under the Canada Revenue Agency, and vote 1c under the Department of Finance, referred to the committee on Tuesday, February 14, 2017.

In the first hour we have, as witnesses from the Department of Finance, Mr. Meyers, chief financial officer; Mr. Recker, director of fiscal policy division; and Mr. Purves, general director.

Before we start, Ron, you have a point you want to make.

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Yes, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

I have a motion on notice and I would like to move it today. I'll read the motion. It is:

WHEREAS Alberta has suffered significant job losses in the last two years;

WHEREAS Alberta is an important economic driver of the economy;

WHEREAS Members of Parliament have been meeting with constituents and stakeholders throughout Alberta to discuss what the Government can do to improve the job situation in Alberta;

AND WHEREAS a report with recommendations entitled the Alberta Jobs Task Force Report has been produced and presented to the Minister of Finance;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Standing Committee on Finance undertake a study to review the report produced and its conclusions, invite witnesses to provide expert testimony on the situation in Alberta, and create a report to identify both short term and long term actions the Government could take to enable continued economic growth in Canada.

Mr. Chair, in looking at our calendar, we see we have three meetings scheduled in the month of March. To the best that I can determine, we have a clean slate for all three of those meetings after today. The members of Parliament of Alberta decided about three months ago to take on the task of meeting with Albertans to try to identify and make some recommendations as to what kinds of measures could be taken, whether provincial, federal, or by the business community, to improve the job crisis in Alberta.

And it is a crisis, Mr. Chair, because we have in my city alone, Calgary, an unemployment rate above 10%. That's unheard of in Calgary. I know, Mr. Chair, that on many occasions Atlantic Canada experiences high unemployment rates, and they are probably going through that today, I would think, because for the past decade there have been literally thousands of Canadians who have been flying in and out of Alberta and earning good money in the oil and gas business. In fact, I know you've mentioned on several occasions that

you couldn't get a seat on a flight from Prince Edward Island because of all the Islanders who were transiting through Ottawa to Edmonton or Calgary to their employment.

I know that many of the folks who had been flying in and out of the oil sands are no longer able to do that because construction has dried up, and there just aren't jobs there anymore. I know that in my particular riding of Calgary Signal Hill there are—and this is not an exaggeration—hundreds, maybe even thousands, of unemployed, highly trained professionals, whether they're geologists, geophysicists, or petroleum engineers, who are out of work. These are people who have young families. They are maybe in their thirties or forties, maybe even in their fifties. Many Albertans have two-income families that are no longer working, and so we have in Alberta today a jobs crisis.

I'm putting forward this motion today because I believe we, as the finance committee, have the duty and responsibility, when reports like this come forward, to examine them, consider them, interview people who can add to the report itself, and in fact then make recommendations to the government. It's up to the government whether or not it accepts recommendations of the finance committee, but clearly the finance committee's having an opportunity to review this report would give it considerably more weight than the report itself.

We all know that many of these reports sit on a shelf and frankly don't get a lot of attention, but I think that when the finance committee takes the opportunity to review something and does a study, it has special extra clout. I really believe that when we've had consultation in Alberta with literally thousands of Albertans and have come up with some very interesting concepts and ideas, it's incumbent upon this committee to take a look at this report.

I'm putting forward this motion today because the Canadian economy is struggling. When Alberta struggles, Canada struggles. When western Canada struggles, Canada hurts deeply. I believe that's what's happening today.

•(1535)

We have an opportunity here as a committee to do work that I would say would be of interest to Department of Finance officials. I think it would probably be of interest to the folks who are sitting at the table here today, Mr. Chair.

I want to make sure that committee members have an opportunity to deeply think through the various recommendations that are in this report. On a couple of occasions on this side of the table, we've attempted to put forward recommendations for this committee to study. I know my colleague had a couple of recommendations or a couple of motions last week that were rejected offhandedly without a lot of discussion. I think this particular report and this motion need some time for assessment. I want to take a little bit of time today and talk in depth about the situation in Alberta and why this particular report has merit.

We all know that growth in Canada has not improved as the government hoped it would. We know that the government, in its last budget, went deeply into debt in order to try to stimulate the economy, and that simply hasn't worked. We also know that we probably have a challenging situation coming before us over the next three or four years as the U.S. administration is clearly going to make an effort to stimulate its economy, cut red tape, and reduce taxes. All of that is going to have a major impact on the Canadian economy. I think a report like the one that was produced by the Alberta MPs has an opportunity to maybe cut some of that off early.

There are a number of recommendations in there, and the important thing is that these are recommendations that came not from the civil service or from elected officials but simply from regular Albertans, many of whom are unemployed and many of whom have small businesses that if they haven't gone out of business are getting pretty close to doing so. There is an opportunity for us to take a position and to examine in depth and in detail how a report that was done with literally hours and hours of work by elected officials can contribute to the overall Canadian economy.

As I said earlier, we know that for many years Alberta and western Canada contributed more than their share. In fact, I think at one point in time while Alberta's population was 10%, its GDP contribution was 20%. I think there's an opportunity here to get some of that back. I don't know where it stands today, but it's nowhere near what it was a number of years ago.

We look at some of the things that we were told during our hearings. One example is how a small adjustment to the small business tax could make a tremendous difference when it comes to small businesses deciding to put more money into their business or to hire more employees. It seems as though this kind of thing is absent from anything we've seen coming before this committee from department officials. I know department officials are only putting forward what their elected officials are prepared to allow them to bring to the table, but bringing a report like this before committee gives us an opportunity to study it and to bring before our committee representatives of small business in Alberta or, for that matter, from anywhere in western Canada, and if we wanted to we could even expand that outside of western Canada, because there is a significant impact.

● (1540)

In the manufacturing sector in Ontario a while back I don't think you had to go very far to find someone in manufacturing in Ontario who would openly acknowledge that somewhere between 20% and 50% of their business came from the Alberta oil patch. The Keystone pipeline is now going to move forward, so there are going to be a

number of opportunities for manufacturing facilities in central Canada to benefit because of that. I'm sure there are lots of opportunities in the province of Quebec and elsewhere to piggyback on that. Hopefully we're going to have Kinder Morgan and some of the other initiatives move forward, which is certainly a step in the right direction.

Unfortunately, however, many of those things are not going to put Albertans back to work in the short term.

This particular report talks of both long term and short term. Some of the short-term initiatives are things like an orphan well program. I was reading the other day that in the last year alone, 158 orphan wells in Alberta were cleaned up with the orphan well fund, but 258 further wells have been abandoned because companies have gone bankrupt and they've walked away from them.

If the federal government jumped on it immediately, this is the kind of initiative that this coming summer could put thousands of unemployed Albertans back to work in an industry that they're comfortable with. Many of these people are rig workers or construction workers who could easily slide into the orphan well reclamation program.

In addition to that, one of the things we haven't calculated into our economy—and I don't think the finance minister has calculated it well—is the complete drying up of the construction industry in Alberta. I know there is a lot of talk about infrastructure projects, but I haven't found one constituent who can point to an infrastructure project that has commenced as a result of this extra spending that the federal government undertook in last spring's budget.

I would hope that in this particular budget some attention could be paid to the work that was done in this report and that some time could be taken to study some of the recommendations that have been made by everyday Albertans and to seriously look at approving this motion.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I would ask that this committee hear from some of the other members and consider the motion and have it approved.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Liepert.

It is open for debate. It's in the proper form and was given proper notice, and you have the right to pull it off the table at any time, regardless of the business we have before the committee.

On my list I have Mr. Deltell, and people have raised their hands who want to speak following that.

Mr. Deltell, the floor is yours.

● (1545)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I am indeed very moved by what is happening in Alberta. We, the Canadian federal elected representatives, are very sensitive to the cruel reality Alberta citizens have been experiencing for two years now.

In addition, as a simple citizen and Canadian, I know very well that Alberta contributed substantially to the creation of wealth in Canada. And I in fact had the pleasure of going to Alberta precisely two weeks ago, on February 13, to mark the 70th anniversary of the Leduc No. 1 well, which launched the Canadian oil boom in February 13, 1947.

Seventy years later, the oil situation is difficult globally and this has had colossal effects on Alberta. As Canadian parliamentarians, we cannot be unmoved by that sad reality.

That is why the official opposition has created a group for immediate reflection on the creation of jobs in Alberta: The Alberta Jobs Task Force. To us it is indeed obvious that jobs create wealth. It is through jobs that we can create ambition, a future, satisfaction as a citizen, and the pride of going to work. But people have to have that opportunity.

Over the past few months, some colleagues from Alberta got together to listen to what Albertans think, want, wish, hope and want to do to see the situation improve.

The group travelled, not from coast to coast and oil well to oil well, but to the four corners of Alberta to listen to entrepreneurs and what we call civil society in Quebec, in order to ensure that it is sensitive to this reality.

The official opposition parliamentarians did their work as elected representatives regarding this crucial issue, the creation of jobs and wealth, as Alberta faces a serious problem.

Mr. Chair, my colleague Mr. Liepert mentioned a 10% unemployment rate in Calgary. That is unacceptable. I am a member from the Quebec region, and I am very proud of my region and its economic dynamism. Our unemployment rate is barely 4%, which represents full employment. We must admit that Alberta is experiencing something different.

Its situation is due to the fluctuations in the international oil market for the past two or three years, and also to the Fort McMurray disaster last summer.

Mr. Chair, when disaster struck northern Alberta, the forest fires and all the rest, we saw Canadians at their best. We saw them join hands and join ranks. We saw Canadians from coast to coast ask how they could help people who were victims of a terrifying situation. But at the same time, we could do almost nothing given the enormity of the situation. We saw Canadians at their best. They stepped up, and the situation in Fort McMurray was addressed.

That said, the reality is brutal for the Alberta economy. The fact that my official opposition colleagues have acted and suggested solutions merits our attention.

Equalization is mentioned in the recommendations made by this group. I'm a member from Quebec, and God knows I am sensitive to the reality of equalization. As everyone knows, Quebec receives funds from equalization. I want to say to this committee, as I have said hundreds of times in the course of my federal government life, and in my past provincial capacity, that I dream of the day when Quebec will finally pay into equalization.

Quebec has extraordinary potential and natural resources. They have to be developed in an intelligent, positive, environmentally sensitive way, and there have to be good outcomes for everyone. I dream of the day when we will be able to do that and thus pay out sums of money rather than receiving them under equalization.

The group created by the official opposition suggests that we maintain the equalization principle. That is a fundamental element, but rather than assessing it every two or three years, the group is asking that it be evaluated on an annual basis, which is quite logical and appropriate. In fact, we know that there can be rapid fluctuations in the economy of the various Canadian provinces, and that we have to face new realities, new challenges.

● (1550)

Recommendation number seven merits our full attention. It would help Alberta, which is going through a crisis. Clearly, it's a temporary crisis, but a crisis no less. The unemployment rate sits at 10%, and oil market prices are plummeting. Oil is Alberta's number one natural resource, and the province is forced to operate in a context based on outdated figures from two or three years ago. Consequently, Alberta has to make equalization payments, when, for once, it may need the money more than others. It's rather unfortunate to see that the formula does not allow for any flexibility.

This is just one example, among many, of the tremendous efforts our fellow opposition members are making to put forward meaningful, positive solutions. The idea is not to advance proposals that turn the country on its head but, rather, to identify ideas that offer the necessary flexibility to deal with the brutal reality facing Albertans today.

Without trying to toot my own horn, an article that came out today highlights the pride I feel as a Canadian and as someone who, on three occasions, visited the place where it all began on February 13, 1947, in a suburb north of Edmonton. About 20 miles—that's 36 kilometres, for the young people—from Edmonton sits the Leduc No. 1 well. When I meet residents of the town, I always enjoy saying Leduc No. 1, which obviously comes as a bit of a surprise.

[English]

What I am talking about, members of Parliament, is

[Translation]

Leduc No. 1

[English]

This is Leduc No. 1, and I'm very proud of that. Yes, as a Canadian, I'm proud. I'm proud of Leduc No. 1. I think, Mr. Chair, that we should teach this discovery as we teach the creation of the railway in Canada. This is a backbone of the wealth of Canada, the petroleum industry in Alberta especially, and it all began in 1947. As Canadians we should recognize that February 13 should be maybe not be a national holiday, not at all, but at least it should be taught in school that this is when it all started.

[Translation]

In the *La Presse* article, I talk about how proud I am, as a Quebecer, of the James Bay project. I think every Canadian should be proud of the James Bay project and the Leduc No. 1 well because they are part of Canada's wealth and heritage. As Canadians, we should be proud.

Furthermore, we have a moral obligation to pull together. When economic misfortune strikes a region of the country, it is our duty and responsibility—especially as parliamentarians—to proudly see what we can do to make things better, to give the region a boost and help it grow. Above all, it is important that we listen to the people. Mr. Chair, the official opposition tends to not want to tell people what to do but, rather, to listen to them. We prefer to ask how we can help, how we can work together, and how we can identify ways to help the oil sector and related industries empower themselves so they can come out of the crisis standing strong.

Mr. Chair, you will recall that the first committee meeting I attended took place in Toronto. The leader of the official opposition, Ms. Ambrose, had just bestowed upon me a tremendous honour, appointing me the Conservative Party's finance critic. I was deeply moved when she gave me the news over the phone. I was then quickly shuttled to Toronto for a parliamentary committee meeting to hear recommendations from Canadians.

The committee will recall hearing from an Albertan in Toronto. I always wondered, for that matter, why that person went to Toronto when the focus was on Alberta, but so much the better. The person suggested using inactive wells as the primary thermal source to heat homes. The suggestion was to use thermal energy, which comes from the ground. That's an extremely compelling idea worth exploring.

Mr. Chair, I am very proud to point out that Alberta's oil production does have advantages for Quebec.

• (1555)

A bit later, perhaps I will come back to the pipeline issue, which was the subject of a study by Quebec's finance department.

My riding is home to a company called CO2 Solutions, which is affected by the current oil crisis.

Why?

In my riding, a company has spent more than 10 years working with Natural Resources Canada and private partners from Alberta in pursuit of positive new approaches—constructive environmental solutions. As a result of those efforts, during the decade our government was in power, greenhouse gas emissions were reduced by 30% in connection with oil from the oil sands, which some people derogatorily, nastily and unfairly call dirty oil. That's not my term but, rather, one used by those who know little about the subject, in my view.

Furthermore, I was very glad to read an article in *La Presse* last week, by journalist Denis Lessard, about a study conducted by Quebec's finance department. The study found that, if, by chance, the government gave the go-ahead to the energy east pipeline, it could be used to ship Albertan oil all the way to the Atlantic sea lanes—

which takes into account the maritime provinces, especially New Brunswick, and would be profitable for Quebec as well. That's exactly what I told the House of Commons on January 29, 2016, in one of my first statements to the House. I listed all the benefits the pipeline project could have if it were ever given the green light.

Quebec's finance department came to the exact same conclusion.

I will wrap up by saying that our parliamentary committee is responsible, first and foremost, for identifying the financial problems facing the country and finding ways to fix those problems. With that in mind, it is imperative, in our view, that the committee consider the study conducted by our counterparts in Alberta's official opposition, who listened to what Canadians had to say.

As luck would have it, we have nothing specific on our agenda for the next three meetings. What a golden opportunity for these parliamentarians to submit their proposal and, above all, for all parliamentarians of all stripes here in the House of Commons, particularly on this committee, to consider the observations, suggestions, and potential opportunities put forward by our counterparts in Alberta.

Therefore, Mr. Chair, in case you hadn't noticed, I second my colleague's motion.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Deltell.

Next on my list I have Mr. Jeneroux, replacing Mr. Albas, followed by Mr. Ouellette and then Mr. Sorbara.

I hope we can be as brief as possible in order to get to the supplementaries. If we don't, we don't.

The floor is yours, Mr. Jeneroux.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would love to be brief. However, this is an ongoing issue in Alberta. We have seen family after family lose their jobs, their homes, and their livelihoods. We have families coming into my office and asking when they will have an opportunity to work again.

There's a family I spoke to the other day in which there's a landscaper. He lost his job because of the downturn in the economy and he's looking for support. He's looking for help. His wife is a stay-at-home mom of four kids, and they had a flourishing business when the Alberta economy was strong, but now it's a terrible situation for them and for many others.

We also have families from Fort McMurray who have had the terrible situation of losing their jobs. They are now at the food bank, of all places.

I spoke with the food bank in Edmonton, and the Edmonton Food Bank is saying that they are at maximum capacity. I asked them about opportunities and about what would help them and the families they serve. They told us that what they don't need are a lot of the initiatives happening at both the provincial and federal levels.

We talked at length about a carbon tax, and that happens to be in the number one recommendation in the “Alberta Jobs Taskforce Report”. There are 11 recommendations in total, but the number one recommendation is to scrap the carbon tax. It's a burden on already-struggling Albertans, as well as already-struggling families not just in Alberta but across the country. This is particularly true in Alberta because of the high unemployment rate. It hurts the pocketbooks. It hurts the businesses. It hurts everywhere in Alberta.

We have a provincial government that unfortunately is going full speed ahead with that, but also a federal government that appears to be in lockstep with our provincial government.

It's a terrible time for many Albertans, and that's why we launched this jobs task force to begin with. It was a non-partisan approach to—sorry, I get passionate—finding solutions for Albertans and for struggling families.

These are real solutions from real Albertans, everyday Albertans on the ground, who unfortunately have just had an absolutely terrible time in the last year to year and a half. Some may say that it dates back to the beginning of 2015, but things have gotten worse.

As we went through the report...this was done at town halls and round tables with many Albertans who were in tears as they entered and in tears as they left, looking for something that the government could do and could help with. We took their stories, their ideas, and their thoughts, and put them in.

I encourage you to study it. It's only a 35-page report, but it tells their human stories about why they're struggling and what you as a government, and we as parliamentarians, can do to assist them in the process.

The carbon tax is number one, but throughout the report there's a strong focus on youth. In Alberta we're losing a generation of young workers who are graduating at the height, the excitement of their careers, and now they're being told there are no jobs for them. There is no opportunity for them in Alberta.

● (1600)

As we in this room all know, Alberta has been a strong economy in Canada for years, and has really driven our economy. To see that now these young students, whose parents and grandparents and previous generations have been a part of the Alberta fabric, are now having to move out of the province and often out of the country because they can't find work.... Again, this is a whole generation of young people. This is their report. These are their words, the reason we're doing this. You have them in front of you; they're graduating in six months and they're scared. They're in tears asking what to do. How do they combat the closing of all these businesses, all this tax that's now put upon them through the carbon tax and the CPP increases? The provincial government's not helping at all.

We have to do something. I encourage everyone in this room to please look through this report and study what opportunities we have. This is months and months of hard work by me and our Alberta caucus colleagues going across the province, from town halls to round tables to one-on-one meetings in our office to big group events where we asked them about their ideas, their solutions for putting Alberta's economy back on the map.

We often say that a strong Alberta is a strong Canada. We need a strong Alberta to pull us out of this economic downturn. Again, from a non-partisan approach, this is an opportunity to do that. We can show Albertans that everyone in this room cares and everyone in this room wants to help Alberta, wants to support Alberta.

I recognize a lot of colleagues across the table aren't from Alberta, but that shouldn't matter. At the end of the day, this is about Albertans who want to work hard. Often various ministers ask about all the EI increases they've provided, but Albertans don't want the handouts. First of all, it took a while to get the EI extension. We want a solid path forward to get Albertans back to work to ensure that the economy's moving forward, the economy's strong, so we have the opportunity to again contribute to Alberta, to Canada, and be a leader in the country.

I go back to the carbon tax. There is nothing but disdain for the carbon tax and a pleading not to impose a carbon tax. A provincial carbon tax is already in place, and now the federally mandated carbon tax is tearing away at many Albertans, who are struggling to pay their bills. People are foreclosing on their homes, having to sell their cars, moving in with their parents. There's a lot of pride in Alberta, a lot of dignity that's now being essentially eroded by the additional taxes and so on. It's disappointing to us on this side of the table and to our Alberta caucus to not see any real action.

I've pleaded with the members from Alberta. We even called an emergency debate on this topic, and we shared personal stories. The natural resources minister at the time mentioned all the things that have been done already. That's not what Albertans want to hear; Albertans want to hear what you're going to do to allow Albertans to get back to work.

That's the essence of this report. We've looked at every option. We don't shy away from the provincial aspects, but we really focus on what can be done federally. I've done a lot of different media shows, different talk shows, on this. Again, this is a non-partisan report, but we're essentially doing the work of the finance minister for the Prime Minister.

●(1605)

This makes his job a lot easier. This is essentially a blueprint for the finance minister to take into the next budget. It's for him. It says, "This is what we think you should do and this is what we feel is important to help Alberta." It's been signed off by every single one of my Alberta colleagues, including our leader, Rona Ambrose. It's something that we've all heard in our offices. We've all listened to the phone calls, the emails, everything. We've heard from the oil and gas industry and from the not-for-profits. We've been able to listen in depth and, again, to compile it for the finance minister in doing his work for him.

Again, we're not looking for credit for it. At the end of the day, we're looking for real solutions and real actions for the task force and the government to take to make sure that Albertans get back to work. The food banks and the charities that Albertans have supported for years are now looking to support Albertans. It's sad to see the number of businesses in downtown Edmonton that are closing and the office towers in Calgary that are vacant.

There's a 30% vacancy rate in Calgary. That's insane. Think of that a few years ago, a 30% vacancy. We have an unemployment rate of 9.1%. It has hit 10% at times in Calgary. Who would have thought of double-digit unemployment in Calgary, of all places? Edmonton's rate is slightly lower, around the 8.5% mark, but that's also deceiving, because there is a provincial government and there are unions and so on and so forth, many of which we met with and talked with about this report. They have jobs only because the provincial government has put on a hiring freeze, or a freeze....

These are the facts and figures, but again, behind all these numbers are the many Albertans who have stood in front of many of us and cried. We were elected to be members of Parliament to support those people and to support those families, and to have them in front of you when you say you want to do something and that you're encouraging the government to do something....

We stand up time and time again in question period saying that we need you to do something. We talk to the infrastructure minister, who is from Alberta, and we plead with him to please do something. That's often met with talking points. Granted, maybe that's not where the minister or other ministers want to make announcements, but at the end of the day, something has to be done. We took it upon ourselves as the Alberta caucus to go out and do that work and to take it right to Albertans in community halls. They were packed. We had over 200 people coming to a small community hall just to hear about this and to share their thoughts on what they think the government can and should do.

To think that there is something hyper-partisan about that is absolutely false. This is very focused on what was said at all these meetings. It's incumbent upon us as members of Parliament to bring this forward to ensure it's studied at length to see what possibilities there are from here.... I would encourage you to go through each recommendation one by one. Again, there are 11 of them. It's not entirely onerous to look at 11 recommendations and their possibilities.

Not listening to Albertans will be to their detriment. You will hear that for Albertans the number one thing is to get rid of the carbon tax

and number two is to review corporate taxes and to immediately reduce small business taxes. Number three is to reverse the mandatory increase in CPP contributions. These are things that can and should be done to ensure that Albertans get back to work.

You can blanket a country with policies and legislation; however, when you look at the situation that Alberta is in, that doesn't support Alberta.

●(1610)

As I said before, a strong Alberta is a strong Canada, and we need to make sure that we get these people back to work and ensure that they have jobs. The devastation that happened up in Fort McMurray was yet a further blow to Albertans and to a community that has been the backbone of Canada for a very long time. That's not to take away from our communities in western Canada. Saskatchewan is doing great things, as are British Columbia and the rest of the country. However, Alberta has really been an engine of this economy, and seeing the situation it's in right now is something that makes me fearful for its future if nothing is done.

We also heard a lot in the report about the provincial government, which is going full steam ahead with ill-advised policy ideas. However, it appears that this federal government at exactly the same time will give lip service to Alberta and will have the Prime Minister come to Alberta and say that, oh, he had a slip of the tongue, and he's not phasing out the oil sands. The message that sends to Alberta is that he said it once and now he's back in Alberta and he apologizes for it, but if he said it one time, that's one time too many for us in Alberta.

As an Albertan born and raised, I can tell you that anything along the lines of phasing out the oil sands is not something that my tongue would ever slip about. All of us in Alberta, and our caucus especially, recognize the significance of Alberta and the oil and gas sector. We would hope that the other side would do the same.

There are a lot of industries across the country. However, the oil and gas industry is a major industry that we certainly have a strong and proud history of supporting in Alberta. Under recommendation 2, we say, "Honouring decisions of the National Energy Board that will see the approval and expansion of pipeline projects in order to safely get Canadian products to market and create jobs". That seems simple to do. Again, these are thoughts of everyday Albertans.

The other recommendation they put through is "Reducing the regulatory burden and bureaucratic red-tape on natural resources projects to ensure competitiveness of the Canadian industry." Again, it seems logical. I imagine all of us in this room would agree, so I encourage the committee to review these in particular and to go into depth about what's needed in order to make them a reality. The budget's coming forward, hopefully soon. We're not yet sure when, but hopefully it will be soon. At that time we would love to see every one of these recommendations in the budget.

I know that the first one, eliminating the proposed carbon tax, is a tough one, a tough pill to swallow. However, on the other side there was the decision to back away from electoral reform. It's about making the right decision when we see what that is. Eliminating the carbon tax would be the right decision to make, especially for Albertans and western Canadians. It hits every single person, every single person who drives a car. Maybe in downtown Toronto you're able to take the bus and there's a more fluent subway system, but we don't have that in Alberta. We don't have that in Edmonton in particular. A lot of us still have to get in our cars. A lot of us still go to the grocery store to buy food that's being shipped from one side of the country to the other. The carbon tax hurts all of us. The intent to reduce emissions—

• (1615)

The Chair: You've mentioned the carbon tax a number of times. If the motion was an attack on the carbon tax, I'd accept it, but I'm not accepting any more discussion on the carbon tax from you on this debate. The motion is referring to a study on the "Alberta Jobs Taskforce Report". I don't want this to be a political rant. We're dealing with a motion, so stick to the motion or I'm going to cut you off.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: If I may, Mr. Chair, it was the number 1 recommendation, but I'll move on. As I say, there are 11 recommendations in this report.

Going to the recommendation I spoke to earlier about youth, ensuring we have youth sticking around in the province is recommendation number 3. This is to encourage retraining and education programs by increasing their promotion and to offer incentives to workers and employers who use them.

It also says:

b) Review the Employment Insurance program to improve efficiency, increase fairness, and encourage professional development.

Again, this is key because right now we're losing an entire generation of young employees, potential employees, who are absolutely integral to the Alberta economy. To lose them to other countries is going to.... We're not going to get them back. They're not coming back at the end of the day. They're going to move to other countries and they're going to find a home there. Then when our economy does get back to where we hope it could and should be, at that point we're going to have a whole generation of workers who are no longer in Alberta. We will then have to again go through what we went through in the early 2000s, which was a tough time for us in Alberta. Also, it depleted a lot of the workforce in Atlantic Canada.

That's recommendation 3.

There are 11 recommendations in total. I encourage everyone on this committee to take this report seriously. Again, it's everyday Albertans who have helped write this report. It's their tears and their hard work that got us here.

With that, Mr. Chair, I'd like to call a vote on the motion. I'll hand over the floor.

• (1620)

The Chair: I have more people on my list, Mr. Jeneroux.

I have a question for Mr. Liepert, who has proposed the motion. I haven't seen the "Alberta Jobs Taskforce Report". I don't know whether I should have or not. Has the report been sent to other members for their preview?

Mr. Ron Liepert: I believed it had been, but I would have to check. I thought it had been sent to the clerk.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Ron Liepert: I can't confirm that.

The Chair: Okay.

I have on my list Mr. Ouellette and then Mr. Sorbara.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's very kind of you to give me the floor.

One of the problems with this motion is that it concerns only Alberta. I know that my colleagues in the opposition feel very passionate about Alberta. However, our Parliament doesn't take care of only one region at the expense of others. Other regions also need our support.

I've looked at the employment statistics. I can see that Prince Edward Island's unemployment rate is 10.7%, Nova Scotia's rate is 8.3%, New Brunswick's rate is 9.5 %, and Newfoundland and Labrador's rate is 13.4%. Alberta's unemployment rate is 8.1%, according to the statistics before me.

Therefore, I don't understand why we're focusing on only one province. I know the region is extremely important to the members from that province. At the same time, I'm thinking of certain aboriginal communities whose unemployment rate is 80%.

I've had the chance to visit some of these communities. If as much time had been spent on preparing a similar report, in the last 10 years, these aboriginal communities wouldn't have been in such bad condition. We must move heaven and earth to help these aboriginal communities.

That's one of my concerns regarding the motion. We can't focus on only one region at the expense of others. We must look at the entire country since our Parliament is national.

I also want to draw attention to part of Mr. Liepert's speech. He spoke of granting subsidies to major oil companies.

Oil wells have been abandoned by bankrupt companies. I think there's already a fund whose goal is to help both restore oil wells and protect the environment. However, I don't think our role is to make sure subsidies are granted to companies that can't fulfill their responsibilities.

Representatives of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation who appeared before the committee told us that they have already stated their opposition to any form of subsidy for these companies. I know the group has a major impact in these regions.

As a result, I don't think much of your suggestion. I think the requirement to subsidize companies that can't fulfill their responsibilities shows a lack of respect for taxpayers in Alberta, Manitoba and across the country. Even though the cause is good, these people must fulfill their responsibilities if they decide to undertake an economic activity or establish a business.

I now want to talk about the report, which I never had the opportunity to read. Even though the report is mentioned in the motion, I never personally received a copy in either English or French. There's an extremely partisan website that describes the report in question.

Mr. Jeneroux, you said that the member who spoke a few minutes earlier wanted to take a non-partisan approach. Unfortunately, his whole speech was very partisan. The report itself is partisan, especially given that no other party participated in it.

• (1625)

There's another problem. To speak on behalf of all Albertans, I think the report should have involved representatives and municipal councillors in Alberta, members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, and other members from Alberta, and not only Conservative members from Alberta. This would have allowed for a broader range of ideas rather than a restricted ideology. It would have provided for an overall picture of the situation. I think that's one of the problems.

Let's talk about the report. The report concerns the Alberta Jobs Taskforce, which focused on job creation. It's a good idea. However, as a former university professor, if this report had been submitted to me, I would have analyzed it more critically.

One of the first recommendations is to reduce the tax burden on Alberta's families and businesses. We know that our government has done a great deal in this area. We've already reduced the tax burden. At the committee, we've had the opportunity to study this idea a number of times in the meetings on the recent budget and the budget following our election.

We can see that you didn't stop there. You spoke about the carbon tax, the price on carbon and the cancellation of the mandatory increase of Canada Pension Plan contributions, even though it's a way to prepare for the future. I think it's extremely important to think of the future and it's one of the things you addressed. We're trying to keep the long term in mind for the good of our constituents. What can we do for them over the long term? In that case, I find your first recommendation contradictory.

Recommendation 2 states the following:

The Taskforce recommends that the Government of Canada increase support for job creation in Alberta's Oil and Gas Industry by:

- a) Honouring decisions of the National Energy Board that will see the approval and expansion of pipeline projects in order to safely get Canadian products to market and create jobs,

The government has already approved certain pipeline measures to get gas and oil to markets. I think we've already been working very hard, before even looking at the report, on trying to implement this recommendation.

Recommendation 3 states the following:

The Taskforce recommends that additional support be immediately provided to help unemployed Albertans transition through this crisis. Specifically, it recommends that the Government:

- a) Encourage retraining and education programs by increasing their promotion and offering incentives to workers and employers who use them, and
- b) Review the Employment Insurance program to improve efficiency, increase fairness, and encourage professional development.

I know that we've already been discussing this aspect for several months to make sure that everyone from Alberta in need receives extended employment insurance benefits, which can help families.

Unfortunately, we can't continue to help these people for years to come. However, I know they were entitled to an extension. Temporary measures were implemented to help certain regions of the country. I remember that Alberta, therefore Edmonton, was included in the measures. It was an extremely important moment because the government was initially questioned about the need for the extension and the temporary measures.

• (1630)

In the end, after a discussion with Alberta members Randy Boissonnault, Amarjeet Sohi, Darshan Singh Kang and Kent Hehr, the government took into account the arguments raised by these members of the Conservative caucus and decided to implement these measures so that everyone in Alberta could have access to employment insurance.

Recommendation four states the following:

The Taskforce recommends that the Government of Canada provide immediate critical support to Alberta's families by:

- a) Investing in programs and partnerships to help local food banks respond to the growing demand,

I think our government has already done this. It can continue to do better, because the work is never finished. For example, the Canada child benefit includes a number of measures aimed at increasing the income of young families so they can better meet the needs of their children.

The president of the Winnipeg Harvest food bank, which is in my constituency, has noticed a significant decrease in the number of families using the food bank's services. The organization wasn't meant to still exist after 20 years. It should be noted that, initially, the organization was supposed to provide the services only on a temporary basis. As a result of the services, the families' situations have started to improve, since it's a type of guaranteed income for them.

I know it's never enough. I want the government to be able to help everyone, all the time. Nevertheless, these measures have greatly contributed to bringing children out of poverty by helping families meet their food and housing needs.

Recommendation four also asks the federal government to implement new programs and provide increased mental health funding. The federal government and the Minister of Health, Jane Philpott, are already working on this. The government proposed to the provinces an increase in the equalization payments for health to help the provinces provide mental health services. It's extremely important. Obviously, it's never enough and we can always do better.

Since before the holidays, the government has been working on having the proposal accepted across the country. Thankfully, a number of provinces have accepted it because they consider mental health services extremely important. Those provinces are currently using the funds to provide more services to their residents.

● (1635)

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Ouellette, while you're taking a breath there, we're beyond the 4:30 for the Department of Finance officials. We will release them.

This discussion, by the looks of my list here, is going to go on for some time. We can deal with the supplementary estimates by vote if we have time. In any event, we will hold the Revenue Canada officials here in case we get an opportunity for them to come forward.

I thank you for coming. Other motions have taken over. That's the way it is. These are important issues too in terms of this motion. We recognize that.

Thank you, Mr. Purves, Mr. Recker, and Mr. Meyers.

The floor is yours again, Mr. Ouellette.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's extremely kind of you to let me continue.

I also want to thank the witnesses who have travelled a great distance and whom we haven't been able to hear speak about the supplementary estimates, a very important matter.

Let's get back the report. Recommendation five states the following:

The Taskforce recommends that the Government of Canada immediately provide assistance to Alberta's job creators by:

- a) Reducing red tape and regulatory hurdles for new small businesses,

I know that Bardish Chagger, Minister of Small Business and Tourism, is working very hard on the issue. It's a bit difficult for the federal government. Small businesses are often primarily tied to the municipalities and provinces, which regulate their activities. This is especially true at the municipal level.

That said, I would have liked to know how the taskforce worked with municipalities such as Calgary, Edmonton, Ponoka or Vegreville on determining what could be done to create jobs and enable small businesses to launch more quickly and easily without getting bogged down in red tape. As we know, red tape can sometimes be extremely demanding. If a small business must obtain a permit, submit a diagram of its office and pay \$2,000, \$3,000 or \$4,000, this greatly increases its costs and decreases its ability to act.

If people want to start a business and to simply see whether it works and whether others are interested in purchasing their products, but the permits are too expensive or they take too long to obtain, the people may not want to continue selling their products or even trying to sell their products. However, the problem has more to do with the municipalities. I encourage the taskforce to see what can be done in cooperation with the municipalities and local politicians. I know that,

in Winnipeg, it's sometimes extremely difficult to obtain these permits and to be flexible enough to meet market needs.

Recommendation five also states the following:

- c) Creating incentives to encourage young and new Canadians to consider business development.

In this case, you should be pleased that we've increased funding for the Canada Summer Jobs program for the students and youth in our country. We've seen an increase in the number of jobs available to the youth. As members from Alberta, you have access to these funds. You can encourage the people in your region and towns to submit an application and maybe encourage youth to start their own business. You have a considerable amount of control.

In my region, I decided it was important to support and encourage the arts and bring artists into the street. I wanted to promote community spirit and motivate people to go out. I wanted to bring people from the suburbs to downtown Winnipeg so that they could not only enjoy the arts in the streets, but also the restaurants, bars and taverns. The idea was to enjoy the time spent together out in public. I established these priorities for Winnipeg Centre.

You can decide to do something completely different in Alberta, such as encourage a young person who is starting a business by helping the person during the summer. That was one of your options.

I want to know what your taskforce would have liked to do in that case. It's an important matter.

● (1640)

Recommendation 6, which is partly related to recommendation 5, reads as follows:

The Taskforce recommends that the Government of Canada introduce immediate solutions to help Alberta's youth [...]

We have already dealt with student debt and jobs, but here you say "reduce the burden of student debt for those challenged to find employment". You also talk about increasing financial literacy across Canada. Financial literacy is important. This should be an objective elsewhere as well, not just in Alberta. As you said, this falls under provincial jurisdiction.

It could even be done in aboriginal communities, in Winnipeg-Centre and right across the country. Very few young people have good financial literacy. When you pay for something, you have to be able to pay off the debt later on. This is a longer-term issue about the ability to pay.

Recommendation 7 reads as follows: The Taskforce recommends that the long-term economic prosperity of Alberta would be enhanced if the Government of Canada improved federal-provincial relations by:

- a) coordinating bureaucratic processes, reducing unnecessary regulations, and removing trade barriers;

In this regard, it would be helpful for us to understand more clearly which administrative processes, unnecessary regulations, and trade barriers hamper Alberta's economic prosperity.

- b) making targeted and fiscally responsible infrastructure investments; and
- c) reviewing the equalization payment formula, specifically the use of two-year old data to calculate a province's fiscal capacity.

As to the equalization formula, the use of data over two years is probably the result of the following. If you use data for just one year, there can be a major change or reversal in the fortunes of a province. Regardless of the reason, there can be a sudden spike in a province's unemployment rate and its debt. The following year, it could be lower. The goal is not a radical change; we want some stability in funding. We do not want to see that the province's costs have suddenly increased or dropped by a billion dollars. We really want to be able to think in the longer term.

I imagine that people in Alberta want a more favourable equalization formula for their province and to see the period be reduced to just one year. Perhaps it should be spread out over five years. Initially, that would not help Alberta, but in five years when the province is doing much better and its finances are better, it will help the province. Under this equalization formula, everyone will get their due. I wonder what the Taskforce was trying to say in the seventh recommendation. You should explain your objective more clearly so we can understand.

Moving on to recommendation 8: The Taskforce recommends that the long-term economic prosperity of Alberta would be enhanced if the Government of Canada increased Canada's competitiveness by:

- a) building on Canada's bilateral relationship with the United States and adjusting domestic policy decisions due to the new United States administration;

I think we have done an exemplary job of that. We have been working very closely with the U.S. administration all along. Moreover, the chair of this committee, Mr. Wayne Easter, who has travelled a great deal, is the co-chair of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group.

• (1645)

I am sure that all members, whether they are Liberal, Conservative, NDP, Bloc Québécois or from the Green Party, will work together to optimize Canada-U.S. relations and ensure that they meet our needs.

I will read out paragraphs b) and c) of recommendation 8:

- b) expanding free-trade agreements around the world and communicating with Canadian businesses on the re-negotiations of NAFTA; and

- c) publicly supporting and promoting Canadian industries at home and abroad.

The government is already doing what these two paragraphs say. It is already pursuing free trade in the world and is trying to keep Canadian companies informed.

You can attend the meetings of the trade committee. I'm not sure of the committee's name in French. Perhaps Mr. Deltell can tell me.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: It is the Standing Committee on International Trade.

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette: The Committee on International Trade. Good to know. I am still trying to perfect my French. Thank you Mr. Deltell and Mr. Fergus.

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): *[Inaudible]*

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette: In recommendation 9, you recommend that the Government of Canada stimulate Alberta's long-term economic prosperity through economic diversification.

I grew up in Calgary, Alberta. As I child, I remember Don Getty, the premier of the day, talk about economic diversification. Alberta spent billions of dollars and took on a huge debt to diversify its economy. There was a crisis and then Ralph Klein, "King Ralph", got into office. Who can forget "King Ralph", the former mayor of Calgary and outstanding politician? I have some admiration for the man. I met him a few times and even my mother met him. Everyone in Alberta has a story to tell about Ralph Klein. He liked to have a drink at the bars near Calgary's city hall.

Mr. Klein tried to clean up the mess left by a government that had tried too hard to diversify the economy. To achieve that, you really have to take the long view. I remember that he then talked about diversifying the economy and how to go about that. It was a massive, long-term undertaking that continued for decades.

I would like to know what happened to those plans to diversify Alberta's economy. In a way, it is very sad that we are still debating economic diversification. If Alberta wants to learn something, it should go to my province of Manitoba to see what is happening.

Manitoba does not have a huge manufacturing sector or a large insurance and banking services sector. It is not a leader in a range of fields, but it is involved in a number of fields, including aerospace and the aircraft industry. Manitoba has a number of companies in various smaller sectors. It is not the leader in the size of its companies, but its economy is incredibly diverse. We do not have all the natural resources or hydroelectric power found in other places.

A hundred years ago, Manitoba decided to diversify its economy, and this seems to have worked to some extent. In the early 1990s, the unemployment rate was very high, but then it dropped. It stayed at 4% or 5%, and more recently has risen to 6% at most.

If you want to see a diversified economy, you should come to Manitoba. It is not in the same situation as Ontario, New Brunswick or Prince Edward Island, for example. There is perhaps something that Manitoba does extremely well. You should come to Manitoba to see what we do well and then base your recommendations on that.

In recommendation 9, you call for clean tech development. I agree with you on that, and the government continues to work on that. You recommend that we invest in "innovation infrastructure in Alberta to attract skilled workers and encourage investment". No one can argue with that.

Paragraph c) of this recommendation reads as follows:

partnering with first nations communities in economic growth activities and investing in programs to help Alberta businesses fully leverage the power of new free trade agreements.

•(1650)

Mr. Jeneroux talked earlier about natural resources development. In this regard, I think Mr. Jeneroux should have mentioned his recommendation on partnering with first nations communities. When people are considering a natural resources extraction project, I often find that they do not think of consulting the first nations until after they have developed their project. They then present their project to the first nations, who in turn wonder what exactly they are supposed to do. The extraction companies say they are consulting them and that they might give them a few jobs. To their mind, that is enough and they will carry on with their project. Maybe they should change a thing or two.

On the other hand, from my conversations with my colleague from the Northwest Territories, Michael McLeod, I can see that they take quite a different approach there. When someone is considering a project, they go see the first nations and the aboriginal peoples first, they develop the project together, and then they go to the government, even if it is a comprehensive project that has already been done elsewhere and the people have already worked together.

I hope Mr. Jeneroux will have the opportunity to read the speech I am giving here. My recommendation to him is to take the time to consult the first nations and to encourage natural resources extraction companies to develop projects in partnership with the first nations, from the outset. The goal is for all communities in Canada to benefit. The first nations must not be an afterthought, with the companies saying they forgot about them and that perhaps they should be consulted.

Here is recommendation 10:

The Taskforce recommends that the long-term economic prosperity of Alberta would be enhanced if the Government of Canada considers reviewing the immigration system by:

- a) reforming credential matching for new Canadians;
- b) reforming the temporary foreign worker program to address the issues of wage distortion and the over use of the program; and
- c) consulting with the provinces and territories prior to setting the mix of economic and humanitarian immigrants, and strive to meet the requests for increased numbers of immigrants under the provincial nominee program.

I believe our government is in fact already examining this recommendation itself. I know that our minister Ahmed Hussen is working day and night on this, and that our former minister, John McCallum, now ambassador to China, has also worked on this.

You have to be very specific in your recommendations and indicate exactly what you are looking for. For example, what exactly do you mean by “consulting with the provinces and territories prior to setting the mix of economic and humanitarian immigrants”? Are you saying there are too many or not enough immigrants? How can we determine the formula? What exactly are you suggesting? In my opinion, this leaves a lot of questions and I am not sure I understand what exactly you want.

To my mind, we have to be able to settle newcomers and make sure they can find work. At the same time, we have to know how many immigrants are needed. This was considered 20 years ago, and I think the rate was set at 1% per year for the entire country. Should that be changed?

I would have liked recommendation 10 to more clearly state your suggestions. Do you think the number of newcomers to Canada should be increased or decreased? How many people do we want to welcome on humanitarian grounds?

As to reforming the temporary foreign worker program, Mr. Jeneroux stressed in his speech the need to keep workers in Alberta, not to lose them.

•(1655)

I remember that Mr. Harper's government had decided at the time to rely heavily on the temporary foreign worker program, which might be having repercussions now. Perhaps some of the people who are still in Alberta should not be there. I wonder whether Alberta could have called upon aboriginal communities. I am not talking about preventing people from elsewhere, from abroad, in particular, from coming to work here, but rather about giving jobs to Canadians first.

In this regard, I am very proud of Jim Carr, our Minister of Natural Resources. With regard to pipelines, he has asked that priority be given to Canadians and aboriginal people. He wants to give these people the opportunity to demonstrate their know-how, their passion for their work, and their ability to support their families.

If there is a pressing need in this sector later on, we could find people from abroad who have the necessary skills to help our nation grow and continue to be a leader in a number of fields.

Recommendation 11 says:

The Taskforce recommends that the long-term economic prosperity of Alberta would be enhanced by the Government of Canada:

- a) committing to balance the budget within the next five years; and
- b) presenting a clear plan that outlines the spending and tax changes that will be used to bring the budget back to balance, and how those will affect Canadians and Canadian businesses.

With regard to the debt, we are facing a deficit this year. If we were to decide to cut the budget by \$30 billion, where exactly would we cut?

Who would not be paid?

Should we cut the credits for children and families, employment insurance, youth, language training for newcomers, immigration services for newcomers, which have been offered for many years, the services offered to the first nations, drinking water, new hospitals that are under construction, or new schools in the communities?

We acknowledge that we must respect our ability to pay in the long term, but we must also truly act for the long term. We must use the capacity resulting from these initiatives to ensure that all members of society can contribute to economic growth. In my opinion, it is extremely important for aboriginal peoples, youth, women, and newcomers to be able to contribute to our economy, and to maintain the services offered to these people and to Albertans. They need them. If we decide to cut back on services, we are not helping ourselves. We want to balance the budget.

If we were to make cuts here and there, it would be as though numbers were more important than people. I think our government is showing through its work every day that people, families and communities are the priority.

To my mind, our plan is extremely clear. We see it every day. Ms. O'Connell, Mr. Grewal and Mr. Sorbara have already worked for several hours developing the questions we would like to ask the finance minister.

•(1700)

During the study of the last budget and the one before that, it was clearly demonstrated what our plan is and what we will do for our citizens for the future.

After reviewing your report, I would say it is a good start and it is interesting, but it is not complete. You should do this not only for Alberta. You should not do something political and partisan for Alberta. You should do something that addresses the needs of the people of Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, of all the provinces, and even of the Northwest Territories. They must be included in your report and you must say what can be done.

Of course Alberta is still important; it is dear to my heart. I was born in Alberta. I was a redneck, as people like to say. I was proud of being a redneck. I worked on a farm when I was young; I worked with horses, it was very enjoyable. Unfortunately, I developed farmer's lung disease and could no longer breathe during the harvest because of the hay in the air.

Alberta is important, in my opinion, but we have to look at how things work overall to see how much of a hub it is. How would you work with the municipalities? How would you work with provincial politicians? Perhaps they have something to say, a different perspective. Who could you have interviewed instead of submitting a report to the government? It is always interesting to read something that will end up on a shelf at some point!

Perhaps an anthropological or sociological report should be done and combined with an economic report. Different work methods have to be combined. A broader paradigm is needed that is more scientifically rigorous. Then, when you approach the government, you can say what you did with all your colleagues from all the parties together. I would be one of the first ones to commend you for that.

If Randy Boissonnault is with you, I will fully support you, I will give you my support. In my view, however, you are missing a lot of key aspects, other voices from Alberta. Alberta does not speak with a single voice. There is diversity among Albertans, different ways of thinking and seeing the world. Everyone sees the world slightly differently. I would have liked to see how you would put all that together.

Looking at your work as an educator, I would say it is a good start, but it is not complete. You should go back to the drawing board, incorporate other elements and put them together to produce a better report. It could be an excellent paper that could help your province move forward and rethink things.

I remember when Ralph Klein was elected. He conducted a very broad public consultation among his fellow citizens. Some people

were opposed to him and did not like what he was doing, but Albertans took part in it all the same. I was 15 or 16 at the time, and I remember filling out a form that had been sent to our home. Hundreds of thousands of people filled out the same form. It was a huge undertaking. Perhaps no one really read my form, but I know they tried to do something for Alberta for the long term.

•(1705)

It is a bit sad, but we are thinking of the future.

Before that was Don Getty, and before him, Peter Lougheed. He did the same thing, my mother told me about it. The late premier Lougheed created the Alberta heritage savings trust fund, which you do not even mention in your report. Alberta should convert its Canada pension plan into a sovereign provincial fund and use it for its own purposes. You can make some suggestions to Albertans to improve their lives.

Imagine that you had a fund, such as the Alberta heritage savings trust fund, with billions of dollars collected from oil company royalties, which you invested, as Norway has done, in a sovereign fund for Alberta. It would be much easier to make decisions in Alberta now.

I will finish with a story I remember that I always like to tell. I am sorry that it is from the Bible, but it is.

[English]

This is from Genesis 41. It interprets Pharaoh's dreams:

After two whole years, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile, and behold, there came up out of the Nile seven cows attractive and plump, and they fed in the reed grass. And behold, seven other cows, ugly and thin, came up out of the Nile after them, and stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile. And the ugly, thin cows ate up the seven attractive, plump cows. And Pharaoh awoke. And he fell asleep and dreamed a second time. And behold, seven ears of grain, plump and good, were growing on one stalk. And behold, after them sprouted seven ears, thin and blighted by the east wind. And the thin ears swallowed up the seven plump, full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream. So in the morning his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was none who could interpret them....

We know the rest of the story. Joseph is brought out of prison to see the Pharaoh, and he interprets the dreams. We know that those seven good cows, as Joseph says,

...are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one. The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty ears blighted by the east wind are also seven years of famine.

There will come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt, but after them there will arise seven years of famine, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt. The famine will consume the land, and the plenty will be unknown in the land by reason of the famine that will follow.

As the former government in Alberta, as the former national government, you could have had your report take a longer-term approach in looking at some of the problems and structural issues facing Alberta and setting Alberta up for a long-term future. I think you have to do greater work in establishing it with your municipal politicians and your provincial politicians to ensure that it is not just a narrow-minded viewpoint of one ideology or one party, but that you are working with all parties and bringing everyone together around the table, because I think what you're trying to do for Alberta is a worthwhile enterprise.

At the same time, I think you need to think long term about what you do with oil resources and how Albertans protect and husband those oil resources for the future so that hopefully one day we will never have to sit here and debate what happened in Alberta, but will instead ask what Alberta had been doing so well and how they were able to weather such terrible storms economically and socially.

Mr. Chair, I know I'm speaking on and I think I've run out of time a little bit. I appreciate this, but I'd also remind people that back in 1983 and 1984, the unemployment rate in Alberta was a terrible 11.3%. We lost our house. Interest rates were 24%, 25%. They were climbing, and that wasn't even a subprime mortgage. My mother lost that house. It was a terrible bankruptcy that affected and impacted her health.

● (1710)

Unemployment is very difficult. It can impact people. I hope one day we're able to learn from our past mistakes and prepare for the future so we never have to relive those mistakes over and over again.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ouellette. Most of the time you were on topic. A couple of times you were off.

I have two people on my list, Mr. Sorbara and Mr. Liepert. Hopefully we can conclude our list.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to my colleague for bringing this motion forward.

As a born and raised westerner from British Columbia, I have experienced the boom-and-bust cycles of commodity prices and their impact on small towns in rural Canada. I still remember, as a young lad, unloading hopper cars that were being sent from western Canada to the Prince Rupert grain terminal, or working in the pulp mill and shipping pulp and paper out to waiting vessels. The impact of declining commodity prices in the last two and a half years has obviously been heart-wrenching to those who moved to Alberta to work in Fort McMurray and other areas, and to those Albertans who have witnessed this experience in prior boom-and-bust cycles of commodity prices.

When we look at and go through what my colleague and other colleagues have produced in this report, the message we need to deliver here is that our government has not just stood around. Since we came to power, we have been running and we have been working. We have been helping out Alberta, and we have been helping out the citizens of Alberta. Our government has undertaken a number of actions that have improved the situation, that will improve the situation, and that will ultimately create jobs. That's what we're talking about: good middle-class jobs for Canadians, and for Albertans and people in western Canada. It's not only for them, but for firms across this country, because we know that when Alberta is going like gangbusters—and I think it is projected to lead economic growth in Canada this year, according to some of the reports I've read—it benefits all provinces, including my home province of Ontario, where firms supply materials to the oil patch.

When we look at what was in the report and how our government has responded within that, we can look at infrastructure. We've

approved 127 projects worth \$1.4 billion in federal funding since we took office, with 70% under way. With regard to the oil sector, we've approved a number of pipelines: the Enbridge Line 3 replacement, with approximately 7,000 jobs; the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, with nearly 16,000 jobs; the Nova gas pipeline expansion, approximately 3,000 jobs. As a supporter, personally, of Keystone XL, I will say that we obviously, as a party, continue to support Keystone. That would be the fourth leg.

Why is this important for Alberta? There are a number of reasons. For example, we want to diversify the export of commodities—in this case, oil and natural gas—to different markets. That's what the expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline will allow.

What we also wish to do, which the prior government wasn't successful in doing, is to bring resources to tidewater. That's important for a number of reasons. First of all, we want to narrow that gap we received and that Alberta receives in their oil from Western Canadian Select versus the benchmark prices of WTI. Our government's initiative on the approvals of the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion and the Line 3 replacement is a step forward that will narrow that differential. The Alberta government and Alberta residents will receive a higher price for the oil they mine and produce, whether it's in situ oil or whether it's on the mining side.

It's very important. We know that our actions with regard to modernizing the National Energy Board so Canadians from coast to coast have confidence in it and in the processes that have been documented are another bonus for the province of Alberta, and that's what we see in terms of the approvals.

The process under Energy East will be going forward. Canadians and Albertans will know and understand that they can have full confidence that that process will be consultative. We'll look at all aspects and we'll balance the interests of both the economy and the environment.

● (1715)

Those are just a number of actions we've taken.

In terms of the plan we just announced with regard to imported drywall in Alberta, the Minister of Finance was in Alberta last week in the impacted areas where the forest fires occurred and announced that approximately \$12 million in anti-dumping duties that were collected since September would be used to assist the Fort McMurray residents who are building their homes.

In addition, I noted nearly \$1.4 billion in infrastructure projects. I do understand Alberta is in a situation with a number of projects that were built. Altalink had built a number of transmission lines in the Alberta area. Not only did Alberta and Albertans face declining commodity prices, but they were also facing a decline in the number of large construction projects that were nearing completion. The trades folks who needed jobs needed a turn. We answered, our government answered, with our infrastructure program. We invested and announced \$78 million to the University of Calgary to accelerate over eight infrastructure projects to improve energy efficiency. We invested \$2.3 million in Calgary in the FLYHT Aerospace Solutions Limited for upgrades to equipment and software.

Those are just some of the actions we took.

In our signature programs, including the Canada child benefit, which will benefit nine out of 10 families in Canada, there are a significant number of benefits. For example, just in October 2016, approximately \$63 million went to the city of Calgary. The number of children benefiting in October 2016 from the Canada child benefit was nearly 200,000. The number of single seniors in Calgary who benefited from an increase in the guaranteed income supplement of nearly \$1000 a year was approximately 14,000.

In investing in the affordable housing agreement with Alberta, nearly \$100 million went to this agreement. I should note that support for shelters for victims of family violence received \$6.1 million.

Mr. Chair, the actions that we've taken as a government have not been in isolation. Other folks have commented on it, including the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, and their comment was quite telling. Tim McMillan from CAPP said, "There is a balance between responsible oil production and the ability to reach climate targets. CAPP believes the two are connected and that they can be achieved together."

From Calgary, the president and CEO of Calgary Economic Development said, "The Trans Mountain pipeline expansion supports the responsible production of energy for global customers and, among the considerable benefits for Canada, this crucial infrastructure project will provide a foundation for much-needed jobs in Alberta as we diversify the markets for our oil exports."

Now, that's not me speaking. Those are folks that are on the ground. The Honourable Perrin Beatty said:

The government has taken a difficult decision, but one that is in the best interests of Canada. These pipelines will diversify our international energy markets, create much-needed jobs for Canadian families and benefit every region of the country. We have confidence that Kinder Morgan and Enbridge can work with government, communities and First Nations to ensure the highest standards of safety and environmental protection.

Mr. Chair, that's called leadership.

When we go over each of the recommendations made by my colleagues in terms of eliminating the proposed carbon tax, I look at what the Bank of Canada commented on a day or two ago about negative externalities and making sure we're pricing negative externalities. That's exactly what we're doing.

If I refer back to my graduate school days, using Coase's theorem, we need to ensure that negative externalities—e.g., pricing carbon

pollution—are factored into the cost of doing business and also factored into our environment, into the health of Canada's citizens, the health of our global planet, to ensure that we do it in a responsible way.

We've done that.

We've implemented a price on carbon so that each province will get to decide how and where it chooses to use the funds. We've allowed them flexibility, which I think is prudent, on where they can invest it. They can cut taxes. In Alberta's case, I believe they've reduced the small business tax rate, and they've announced that.

That is responsible leadership, not only in Canada but, I believe, globally.

● (1720)

We've noted that over 60 high-profile business, labour, and environmental groups have commented that the government's plan for pricing carbon is the right plan to go with. These are diverse groups. They include Pierre Gratton, the CEO of the Mining Association; Steve Williams, the president and CEO of Suncor, a company I used to cover; the president and CEO of Cenovus Energy; and the president and Canada country chair of Shell Canada, Michael Crothers. These are all individuals who understand the oil and gas sector much better than I do, and they have commented that the direction we've taken on pricing carbon is the right one.

In terms of the recommendation on the mandatory increase to CPP contributions, our side views the CPP as an investment for Canadians not only today but for generations to come. The other side views it as a tax. These are two fundamentally opposite positions. I believe we're on the right side. The CPP is portable, inflation-adjusted, and truly what you would call a defined benefit program. It will be there for my kids and for future generations. As well, in a situation where a lot of firms are removing their defined benefit pension plans for various reasons, this fills a huge gap.

Recommendation two is with regard to the Government of Canada increasing support for job creation in Alberta's oil and gas industry. I read that, and with regard to the NEB decisions, again, we've approved the Trans Mountain expansion. We've approved the Line 3 replacement. We're in support of the Keystone XL pipeline, leg four. The first three legs have actually already been built, and do you know what? That will benefit Alberta today, Alberta tomorrow, and all of Canada, particularly with the narrowing of the differential between WTI and WCS in increased oil production.

With regard to the fourth recommendation, which is that the Government of Canada provide immediate critical support to Alberta's families by investing in programs and partnerships to help local food banks respond to growing demand, reversing the scope of new mortgage rules, and providing increased mental health funding, it is with great pride that I look to and speak about the Canada child benefit. I've spoken about it several times in the House and here on committee in terms of the incremental spending and new investment in Canada's families, with approximately \$4.5 billion going to low- and middle-income families. If a family is earning less than \$150,000 to \$200,000, they will average an increase of approximately \$2,300 a year.

In terms of the mortgage rules, you've obviously talked about that quite a bit. I would say that we're looking at the mortgage market and the housing market in Canada to ensure that we have a stable market and that Canadians do not get in over their heads.

The fifth recommendation concerns reducing red tape and regulatory hurdles for new small businesses, the hiring of young folks, and tax credits and work-sharing programs.

We have doubled the funding for the Canada student jobs program. Happily, we'll be announcing that the next cycle of that will be occurring in a month or two. We are doing what's needed to make sure our youth are trained and also receive the experience they need to succeed in today's job market.

Recommendation six regards "immediate solutions to help Alberta's youth". Well, I'm glad to say that in our budget 2016 we brought in a boost to Canada student grants of approximately 50%. We changed the rules so that no student has to pay back their student loan until they have a well-paying job. I think the level is approximately \$25,000. We are also rolling out an increase in financial literacy across Canada.

Mr. Chair, and to my colleagues across the way, we are doing a number of things that answer a number of your recommendations and go further. On recommendation seven, in terms of long-term economic prosperity, reducing processes and unnecessary regulations, and removing trade barriers, I'm glad to say that we finalized CETA and brought that into place. We are working on continuing to remove interprovincial trade barriers. I think that's important. In terms of bilateral talks, we're also reaching out to Asian nations, whether it is Japan or other nations, to provide better access to foreign markets for Canadian firms.

We have also done this on the LNG front, approving two projects, I think, for LNG exportation. Now it's up to those private sector firms to make the decision on whether they want to proceed with those projects, looking at the cost of capital and their returns.

• (1725)

But you know what? We're taking the right steps to ensure that western Canada prospers and continues to prosper.

With regard to responsible infrastructure investments, I think we've committed to invest over \$180 billion over 12 years. This is at a time when we can utilize the low interest rates that currently face us and invest in Canada to make sure we have the ability to move our goods, services, and people efficiently and that our exporters can get their products to market efficiently. This is the largest infrastructure

investment that has ever taken place in Canadian history, and one that I argued for a long period of time was well needed and fills an infrastructure deficit left from prior governments.

Mr. Chair, how much time do I have left?

The Chair: You have one minute.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: One minute?

I'm going to adjourn here, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: It will take a majority to adjourn the meeting.

You've asked that the meeting be adjourned. It takes a majority to do so.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: No, I said I was going to stop speaking.

The Chair: Oh, you're adjourning your discussion.

Mr. Liepert, to close off on this debate, we don't have to adjourn at 5:30 unless there's a majority who want to do so. If you want to close the debate, we can vote.

• (1730)

Mr. Ron Liepert: I suggest you put it to a vote if you want to have an adjournment, because it is 5:30. If not—

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): To be clear, it seems to be the practice of most committees that unless there's unanimous consent that we cut off...

Mr. Ron Liepert: At 5:30 it should be done.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): We went through this before and argued the opposite

The Chair: I'll ask the clerk to explain this, if she could, Mr. Albas.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Suzie Cadieux): Typically when there's implied consent from the committee to adjourn at the regular time, we do, but it doesn't require unanimous consent. It's really the majority of the committee that decides if they will adjourn. Usually it's implied, because we go by the regular time slots. If it's implied, we can adjourn.

The Chair: Unless there's a call to a vote, and then that's a different story.

The Clerk: Yes.

The Chair: I don't see anybody asking that we adjourn. Do you want to vote?

Mr. Ron Liepert: I'm going to ask that we adjourn.

The Chair: You're asking that we adjourn. Okay, we'll vote on that.

Mr. Ron Liepert: I'll ask for a recorded vote, please.

The Chair: Yes.

The motion is to adjourn the committee.

(Motion negatived: nays 6; yeas 3 [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Mr. Liepert, you have the floor. We're calling the motion on the—

Mr. Greg Fergus: Mr. Chair, given that we've gone beyond the regular time, we might want to release the guests from the Canada Revenue Agency.

The Chair: We can do that.

I want to thank Mr. Gallivan, Mr. Huppé, and others for coming. We have had an interesting discussion, but not a lot of it on CRA estimates.

Thank you for coming, and you are released.

Go ahead, Mr. Liepert.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Obviously our colleagues across the way do not want to talk about this issue any longer, so we will—

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Adjourn.

Mr. Ron Liepert: —end up bringing it to a vote.

Mr. Chair, I have the floor. The member had every opportunity to get up and speak and did not.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Put me on that list.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Well, that's good.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: I'm on that list.

An hon. member: Okay, then I'll go on it, too.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Yes?

An hon. member: We can keep this up.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Liepert. You have the floor.

Mr. Ron Liepert: All I would say in closing, Mr. Chair, is that I think what our colleagues across the way have missed here is the intent of the motion. The intent of the motion was to study the report. There was nothing in the motion that said this committee had to accept the report. We heard lots of good arguments on the other side of the table about what was wrong with the report, but what we wanted to do is study the report, and they would also have had every opportunity to do that.

We knew from the outset that this motion was not going to be accepted, so this was a great opportunity to have a two-hour discussion on the "Alberta Jobs Taskforce Report", and nobody on this side made a better case than the folks across the way, who went through every recommendation. We're really pleased that all of the work we did got two hours of discussion and recommendations clearly laid out by the government members. We're really happy about that.

With that, I would only say that I think what we should do is have a vote. If others want to participate in the discussion, that's great, but I'm quite happy to have a vote.

The Chair: Do I have others who want to speak?

I do. Okay, we'll have Ms. O'Connell and then likely Mr. Albas.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm happy to speak and correct the record for any Albertans or Canadians listening to this debate today or in the future, because the irony is the Liberal members and our colleagues in the NDP actually voted to support debate on this issue. It was the Conservatives who, on a recorded vote, asked to adjourn this vote and not even take a vote on their own motion.

• (1735)

Mr. Ron Liepert: Until Wednesday.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: That's interesting to me. On the non-partisan report, as they claim, they wanted to shut down debate before we could vote. Still, I'm happy to be here and to talk about it.

My colleagues who spoke, Mr. Sorbara and Mr. Ouellette, listed the items and the work our government has been doing to help Alberta as well as the provinces and the people across this country who have been hit hard by the commodity downturn. It's not just Alberta that's been hit; there are several provinces facing this. However, I'm not going to go through the list that my colleagues have, because I think Canadians can see that we have been taking this issue very seriously, not only for Alberta but also for Canadians across the country.

I want to highlight a couple of points so that anyone listening to this debate sees it for the partisan work that it is. The fact is, Mr. Liepert just mentioned that we should study the report. We need to study this report—the very report they forgot to provide to this committee. We had to look it up on our iPads as this debate was happening. The report was so important they forgot to send to this committee. I find the timing interesting.

It was said earlier that it's a non-partisan blueprint for the finance minister. Well, my colleagues pointed out the work our government has done in a short number of months that the previous government failed to do in nearly a decade, so I don't think we need the Conservative blueprint for economic growth in Alberta. In fact, Albertans chose differently.

If this report truly wasn't partisan, then, as my colleague pointed out, why weren't others included? Why weren't MPs from Alberta who were not Conservatives included? Based on the website—because, again, no documents were actually submitted to the committee, and the report wasn't even submitted to the committee to look at—it looked like seven meetings were held in developing this report. There were no submissions presented to this committee about what was said at these meetings, how many people attended, who attended, or where the recommendations came from.

It's important, because it was the Conservative members of this committee who said that it was the recommendations of the people and that this was not partisan. In that case, why didn't they invite any members who weren't Conservative?

Ultimately the situation in Alberta and across the country is a debate our government takes very seriously. My colleagues have highlighted all of the work we are doing. I think it's really sad that the Conservative members tried to end the debate before taking a vote. I'll highlight once again that if studying the report was so important, they should have provided the report to the committee.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault): Thank you, Ms. O'Connell.

Mr. Albas, please go ahead.

[English]

Mr. Dan Albas: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I want to thank members for their engagement on the issue.

With regard to Mr. Liepert's last intervention, when he said it's important for us to be discussing things like the economy, particularly where there are widespread impacts, this is particularly true for my area, where there have been impacts such as local unemployment. Many people will work in the oil patch and then return back, pay their taxes, and spend in the local Kelowna and Okanagan economy. I want to say that I appreciate my colleague for raising that point.

I have a couple of brief notes, Mr. Chair.

First of all, the committee does have free time available this month, and we should be using that time to the benefit of Canadians. While I recognize that there was a lot of debate on certain recommendations, those, I believe, would be best put to witnesses who can come before us. You can make your points about the recommendations and whether you agree with them and you can get testimony from people on whether or not they agree that those are good.

Perhaps if we had MPs from Atlantic Canada—who all happen to be Liberals—who did a similar task force and went through all that process that we saw here with the Alberta task force, I would hope that we would be willing to listen to them, to listen to Atlantic Canadians or to Canadians from any region of the country, particularly when they are suffering through a hard time and want to have their voices heard, so let's just refocus on what we were asking. We were asking to study the work of local members of Parliament engaging in Alberta. I think that in broad strokes, we should be welcoming any members of Parliament from a region facing similar challenges. If they wish to come to a parliamentary committee to have their situation further examined, I think we should be open to that.

Again, I would just point out that we do have free time available. I've made suggestions previously on the studies we could do. Members had other ideas, and that's fine, but right now we do not have anything on the docket, so rather than letting that time and energy go to waste, another member has presented an idea, something that would be good for Canada, and we would have an opportunity for Albertan MPs to substitute in, to share their knowledge and make that part of the official record here in Parliament and make recommendations to the government.

I'm sorry to hear that some members opposite are not supportive. I think that this would give them an opportunity to give voice to some of the issues that they think they've engaged on. We'd be able to have people come in and comment on whether or not those initiatives have been successful and clarify their record. As well, we would be able to ask them whether they felt that the work presented by those members of Parliament who submitted this work was of value and would help take the country forward.

I'm sorry to see that members of the government side have viewed this report as a partisan angle. Even if it is, even if there are elements of that, don't you think it would be worth the effort to say to Albertans that we're willing to take their concerns front and centre, particularly since you don't seem to have any other ideas that this committee can be going for?

I guess we'll see the outcome in a vote, but Mr. Chair, I just want to go on the record that, one, I support my Albertan colleagues; two, I'm supportive of any members of Parliament likewise doing reports, bringing them here, and having us review them, if this committee deems it important; and three, I would like to see our committee work on some of these issues, because ultimately the finance committee should be looking at things that are fiscal or economic or in the long-term interests of this great country.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1740)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Albas.

Mr. Fergus is next, and then Mr. Grewal.

[Translation]

Mr. Greg Fergus: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I am happy to have this opportunity to talk about these concerns related to the situation in Alberta, a province that is very dear to us.

As a Quebecker, I firmly believe that we have to look after all our fellow citizens right across the country, particularly in Alberta, whose economic situation poses a great challenge to the Canadian economy, to say the least.

I have to admit, Mr. Chair, that I am disappointed by the debate today. In the vote, we saw that the member from the third party and the government members voted to continue the debate, while the official opposition voted against its own debate, its own report. I'm sorry, but I have to say—

• (1745)

[English]

The Chair: Greg, I'm going to try to keep people on the motion.

[Translation]

Mr. Greg Fergus: I will continue, Mr. Chair, because I think the motion is very important. I simply wanted to point out that they voted against their own motion by not wanting to continue the debate.

[English]

The Chair: Greg, I'm going to cut you off, because that has nothing to do with the motion. The vote is on the record. People can see the vote if they want to look at it. Keep the discussion on the motion, or I'm going to cut people off.

[Translation]

Mr. Greg Fergus: I understand, Mr. Chair. I will continue to speak to the motion before us then.

I am very happy that we have had this opportunity to discuss the economic issues in Alberta, the opportunity to discuss the pros and cons of certain initiatives. As my colleague from outside Toronto just said, this is important. We cannot say this is a non-partisan exercise. It is unfortunate, but that is where we are at.

It seems that the members of the official opposition do not have enough confidence in their own report since they did not even have the courtesy to send it to the members of the Standing Committee on Finance. Unfortunately, since they do not have faith in their own initiative, I feel obliged to vote against the motion.

Mr. Chair, I hope we can proceed with the vote now.

[English]

The Chair: I first have Mr. Grewal.

Mr. Raj Grewal (Brampton East, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to take a moment to say that any work done by members of Parliament from any party is extremely important and I want to congratulate the members for taking the time and the effort to talk to their constituents.

I was born in Alberta, so I have a soft spot in my heart for the province. I want to mention that in the middle of the 1980s, my parents were new immigrants to the country. My older sister was born in British Columbia, and I was born in Alberta. My parents were moving eastward in search of economic opportunity. I was born in 1985. In 1986 there was a severe recession in Alberta. It was an economic downturn in terms of—

Mr. Ron Liepert: It was called Trudeau's national energy program.

Mr. Raj Grewal: Thanks for the educational lesson, Ron.

Mr. Ron Liepert: You were too young to know.

Mr. Raj Grewal: Again, it had to do with falling oil prices. My parents, in search of economic opportunity, moved to Toronto, and the rest is history.

However, we're sitting here today talking about a motion to study a report that was never presented to this committee. In essence, that's where I feel the heart of the motion kind of falls apart. If you're asking for something to be studied, at a bare minimum it should have been presented to the committee.

I will also say that when the members opposite say that the government doesn't recognize the pain of the people of Alberta, that just isn't true. At the end of the day, I think we all understand that when our Canadian brothers and sisters are struggling, whether that's on any coast or in any province or in any territory, the Government

of Canada has a role to play. If Brampton East is thriving and people in Calgary are struggling, that's still my problem too, as a member elected to this House.

I will also say that the government recognizes that. It has done a lot in terms of federal funding to the Province of Alberta and it will continue to do that and support the Province of Alberta, and I think that's where we can all work together to ensure that all Canadians have great opportunity for success.

I wanted to get my comments on the record because I really think it does a disservice to the country when we try to pit one area of the country against another. I think that as members of Parliament elected in a democratic country, we are here to serve the interests of all Canadians.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

● (1750)

The Chair: Does that conclude our list?

Okay, we are on the motion.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Could we have a recorded vote?

The Chair: We'll have a recorded vote, Madam Clerk.

(Motion negatived: nays 5; yeas 4 [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Do you want to vote on the supplementary estimates? Do they automatically go, or do you want to vote on them? Okay.

First are the estimates from the Department of Finance that you have in your documents. I will read it.

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE

Vote 1c—Program expenditures.....\$1,500,000

(Vote 1c agreed to on division)

The Chair: Shall I report the supplementary estimates 2016-17 (C) under the Department of Finance to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

The Chair: The second vote is on Canada Revenue Agency.

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Vote 1c—Operating expenditures, contributions and recoverable expenditures.....\$15,741,118

Vote 5c—Capital expenditures and recoverable expenditures.....\$2,877,612

(Votes 1c and 5c agreed to on division)

The Chair: Shall I report the supplementary estimates 2016-17 (C) under Canada Revenue Agency to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

The Chair: Are we ready to adjourn?

Mr. Dan Albas: On division.

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

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