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(HANSARD)

Wednesday, March 21, 2018

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, March 21, 2018

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1400)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Windsor West.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Simon Marciel (Mirabel, GPQ): Mr. Speaker, for the past few weeks, workers across Quebec have not been collecting employment insurance because their benefits have run out. They are in the spring gap, that time of the year when thousands of families without employment income are forced to turn to welfare because they have the misfortune of working in seasonal industries.

Quebec has at least 200,000 workers in seasonal industries such as fishing, agriculture, tourism, construction, and forestry. Seasonal work is a cornerstone of our regional economies. By refusing to eliminate the spring gap, the government is hurting our people, our economy, and our regions. By refusing to eliminate the spring gap, the government is doing harm not only to our seasonal workers, but to Quebec as a whole, and that is something we cannot accept.

The government needs to fix this problem once and for all as soon as possible.

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[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, I am honoured to see the Canadian War Museum open a new exhibit on Canada's tragic past.

The St. Louis: Ship of Fate tells the story of Canada turning away nearly a thousand Jewish refugees fleeing the Nazi regime. Our

country's immigration policies at that time targeted these people, families and children who were fleeing unimaginable horrors.

• (1405)

[*Translation*]

The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination reminds us all that we, as parliamentarians, leaders, and Canadians, must be vigilant and must do more. We must build more inclusive communities with real solutions to real problems: jobs, access to justice, and human rights.

I am proud to belong to a government that is taking action by consulting Canadians about a national anti-racism strategy. Together, we will build a more positive and inclusive future for our fellow citizens.

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[*English*]

ELMIRA MAPLE SYRUP FESTIVAL

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is officially spring in Canada, and that means it is time for the annual Elmira Maple Syrup Festival, the world's largest one-day maple syrup festival, held this year on April 7.

Members of the House have already received my invitation, but let me repeat it here and now. I invite them to please join me in enjoying some of the thousands of pancakes served with the world's best maple syrup. Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to serve you personally.

The festival is filled with great food, golden maple syrup, sugar bush tours, pancake flipping contests, and many other activities for all ages. Last year, over \$55,000 was raised in support of 32 local charitable and not-for-profit organizations.

Springtime, maple syrup, flowers pushing through the snow are all signs of new life. As we celebrate spring and approach Easter, let us remember the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, his perfect example of sacrificial love and his offer of new life.

I wish my constituents in Kitchener—Conestoga and all my colleagues in the House a happy and hope-filled Easter.

*Statements by Members**[Translation]***INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on March 8, 2018, the mayor of Boisbriand and I hosted a meeting of female elected officials from the three RCMs that make up the Lower Laurentians to celebrate International Women's Day. We invited the female elected officials from Mirabel, Deux-Montagnes, and Thérèse-de-Blainville.

Over 25 women attended from nine municipalities, specifically Bois-des-Filion, Blainville, Mirabel, Oka, Sainte-Thérèse, Boisbriand, Deux-Montagnes, Saint-Eustache, and Rosemère. They represented all levels of government, from school boards to municipal, provincial, and federal governments. We took the opportunity to discuss specific challenges facing women in politics. I was very pleased that the four municipalities in my riding are very well represented. The event was so successful that the women from Saint-Eustache decided on the spot to take up the torch and host the event next year, in 2019, in their municipality. I am told that the 2020 event will be held in Deux-Montagnes.

I am delighted to represent the Lower Laurentians region in Ottawa. My region is incredibly dynamic and well represented by some talented women.

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*[English]***INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION**

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, March 21 is the day for the elimination of racial discrimination.

The fight against racism and discrimination is re-emerging as one of the defining struggles of our generation. From systemic racism experienced by the first peoples, to hate incidents like the horrific attack on the Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec City, to the series of bomb threats at the Jewish Community Centre of Greater Vancouver, we have all felt the rising tide. Last March, as a Canadian of Chinese heritage, I was told by racists to go back to my country.

From 2014 to 2016, hate crimes in Canada have been on the rise, increasing from 1,295 reported hate crimes to 1,409. We must work hard to send a strong and clear message that we stand firm and united against racism. We must find the courage to speak up and speak out against hate, even if it is coming from the U.S. President.

Together, let us make racism wrong again.

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BASKETBALL

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while we were back in our ridings last week, I was able to catch up with the B.C. provincial basketball finals. Not only did Surrey Centre's small but mighty Khalsa School's Lions make the single A roster, but my former high school's Burnaby South Rebels won the quad-four championship.

What was most exciting for me was to watch my nephew, Nick Sarai of the South Kamloops Titans, win the AAA championship.

Nick was named the tournament MVP, with 28 points, nine rebounds, and 12 out of 12 free throws in the final game.

I congratulate coaches Tim Unaegbu and Bryce McMillan, team all-star Reid Jansen, player of the game Ripley Martin, and the entire Titans team for an outstanding performance.

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● (1410)

WORLD TB DAY

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark World TB Day, which will occur this Saturday, March 24. I along with fellow members of the House are standing in solidarity today with the communities and individuals affected by this devastating but curable disease as we wear the End TB pin.

In 2016 alone, tuberculosis claimed 1.7 million lives, more lives than to AIDS, malaria and Ebola combined. We must do better.

Around the world, funding for treatment and care is declining in many countries, and funding for research and development is stagnating. This year's theme focuses on building a political commitment to end TB.

I encourage all members of the House to wear their End TB pins and to join with Canadians on March 24 to shed light on this disease and end TB around the world once and for all.

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MARKHAM—THORNHILL

Ms. Mary Ng (Markham—Thornhill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is great to be back in Parliament after a couple of weeks of connecting with constituents and businesses at home in Markham—Thornhill.

It was a joy to visit the Coppard Glen elementary school to talk about being an MP to those energetic and smart fourth and fifth graders.

I toured businesses and saw first-hand some of the great employers like Autoliv and Estée Lauder, which are world leaders and have some of the most advanced manufacturing facilities that are providing great jobs in Markham—Thornhill.

Finally, attending the vision youth leadership program awards was truly inspiring, a program that through the Canada summer jobs program provides opportunities for young people to gain leadership skills.

I talked about the investments in budget 2018 and how our government was committed to working hard for the middle class and those working hard to join it.

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*[Translation]***ARIE VAN WINDEN**

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Châteauguay—Lacolle community recently lost one of its farming pioneers, Arie Van Winden.

Statements by Members

Mr. Van Winden left his native Holland and arrived in Saint-Patrice-de-Sherrington in 1954 for a better life and to provide for his loved ones. Through his experience with drainage and with help from his brothers, he converted swampland that no one wanted into one of the most beautiful farmlands in Quebec, fertile black soil.

From there the Van Winden family grew lettuce, carrots, and onions and eventually laid the foundation for a company known today as VegPro International, the largest fresh vegetable producer in Canada.

Mr. Van Winden was a trailblazer of the economy in our rural region, now called Jardins-de-Napierville, which has become the largest produce supplier in the province.

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[English]

CANADA SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend the Apple Creek Seventh-day Adventist Church gave me a petition, which I have sent to the clerk of petitions at the House of Commons. The petition asks that the government vote with the opposition and remove the values test from the Canada summer jobs program.

Even though the Liberal government has since voted down the opposition motion, I will continue to stand up for the freedoms guaranteed in the charter and the students affected by this Liberal values test. This values test has no place in a tolerant multicultural society such as Canada and organizations should be able to receive funding for summer jobs regardless of their private convictions and regardless of whether they choose to sign the application attestation.

* * *

SIKH CANADIANS

Mr. Raj Grewal (Brampton East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am a proud Canadian. I am a proud Sikh, but I am most proud that I live in a country that does not make me choose between my devotion to my faith and my devotion to my country.

Last week in my riding I met with university students who are now being asked if they are extremists simply for practising their Sikh identity proudly. I, too, have been asked these questions. My response has always been to deal with it in a positive manner and educate Canadians on how beautiful the Sikh religion and its people are. The principles of my faith have guided me in public service, especially the values of equality for all and performing *sewa*, selfless service.

Sikh history in Canada is 128 years old, and Sikhs proudly serve as leaders in all fields. Today, I ask all Canadians that if they have a question about Sikhs to come and speak to me or any other Sikh Canadian. We will be happy to share why our unique identity is so important to us and why advocating for human rights is a shared Sikh and Canadian value, protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

● (1415)

WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, World Down Syndrome Day happens annually on the 21st day of the third month of every year. This date was selected to signify the uniqueness of the triplication of the 21st chromosome that causes Down syndrome. Today is a day to raise awareness of the vital role that people with Down syndrome play in enriching our lives and communities.

It gives me great pleasure on such a special day to welcome to Parliament Hill some very amazing people from the Down Syndrome Association of Kingston. I would like to give a special welcome to my nephew, Aidan, who just celebrated his 17th birthday recently, as well as a big shout-out to Pip, an awesome little girl who, with the help of her mother, began the Happy Soul Project in Kingston, which attempts to have an open, honest, and sometimes funny take on the challenges, triumphs, and sweet moments of raising two little hooligans, one who just happens to have Down syndrome.

I am incredibly proud of our Down syndrome community in Kingston and I ask you to join me in welcoming them to Parliament Hill today.

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B.C. SPECULATION TAX

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many in this place will know that I have long advocated for breaking down barriers with more trade and investment flowing between interprovincial trade boundaries, and more so as we face increased uncertainty with NAFTA.

Recently, the B.C. NDP government enacted a punitive property tax selectively in some parts of my riding against those Canadians who made the decision to purchase a recreational property in British Columbia. Imagine being penalized for investing after-tax dollars on a recreational property in British Columbia instead of the U.S.A. However, that is precisely what the B.C. NDP is doing.

I submit that this speculation tax is anti-Canadian. I stand with the community of West Kelowna and all those in the Okanagan who are rejecting this unfair tax that penalizes our area and will do nothing to create more affordable housing.

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WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is World Down Syndrome Day. I was proud to join in a flag-raising at the City of Brampton to recognize this day.

The theme this year is “What I Bring to My Community”. I can tell members that Canadians with Down syndrome bring a lot.

Oral Questions

In Brampton South, we have a vibrant community of residents with Down syndrome who gather and find togetherness in a business made just for them. Cristina's Tortina Shop was created by a mother for her daughter to create work opportunities and engage other community members with exceptionalities.

I want to thank all who work to support individuals with Down syndrome in Brampton South, including 321 Peel. I also want to acknowledge the superheroes who will star in the play day fundraiser for this great organization. Each brings their own gift to our community, making Canada stronger, more compassionate, and more diverse.

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[Translation]

MARIELLE FRANCO

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, being a black woman is to resist and survive all the time. Those were the words of Marielle Franco, a Brazilian city councillor, human rights advocate, and passionate LGBTQ activist who was murdered in Rio de Janeiro on March 14.

Marielle Franco was a symbol of hope, a voice for the voiceless. She fought against poverty, police brutality, and corruption. Too many women like Marielle Franco, Miriam Rodriguez Martinez, and Berta Caceres are being killed for defending human rights.

In the face of these unjust deaths, we need to make sure we protect the women who are speaking out for our collective rights. Canada needs to support the front-line activists standing up for justice, indigenous rights, and the environment.

Let us remember Marielle Franco and continue her work. May she rest in peace.

* * *

● (1420)

[English]

CANADIAN NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE BLIND

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a century ago, World War I and the Halifax explosion left thousands of Canadians blind. However, they were determined to work and thrive, so they locked arms and created the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. It created job placements and even opened manufacturing centres where Canadians with vision impairment worked doing industrial sewing, broom making, and other important tasks. They proved that people without sight or with other disabilities could work and contribute.

Today, the Canadian National Institute for the Blind translates thousands of books into Braille, large print, and audio. It places young people in rewarding jobs and continues to give hope and empowerment to people right across the country.

I join with all Parliamentarians in congratulating the CNIB for their important work and for a century of service to Canada.

CANADIAN NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE BLIND

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member just said, today marks the 100th anniversary of the CNIB. For 100 years, the CNIB has provided innovative programs and vital services for the blind and visually impaired, and advocated on behalf of those with vision loss. Technologies and attitudes have evolved since 1918, but the CNIB has never strayed from its original mission to change what it means to be blind.

[Translation]

The CNIB is marking this historic milestone with a year of celebrations. Throughout 2018, events will be held to celebrate the success, generosity, and innovation of its volunteers, staff, and supporters.

[English]

I salute the hundreds of employees and volunteers who work at the CNIB headquarters in Don Valley West. They make this iconic Canadian institution what it is today.

We look forward to the next 100 years and the lasting impact the CNIB will continue to have on the lives of blind and partially sighted Canadians.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

PRIVACY

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we now know that the person at the centre of the Facebook data leak scandal is a Liberal Party operative.

Not only did Christopher Wylie work for two different Liberal Party leaders in opposition, but according to media reports this morning, he also worked on a project for this Prime Minister in the taxpayer-funded Liberal caucus research office.

Can the Prime Minister confirm that he hired Christopher Wylie, and explain exactly what role he had in the Liberal government?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all have a responsibility to protect the personal information of Canadians.

The Liberal research bureau has actually already addressed this issue with a statement earlier today. All major political parties engage in data-driven activities. In fact, the Conservatives did when engaging in a \$100,000 contract with Agility PR Solutions.

I would draw members' attention to the statement issued earlier today that in fact preliminary work done by Eunoia Technologies was offered to the Liberal caucus research bureau but—

Oral Questions

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not understand why the Prime Minister cannot answer these questions.

Protecting the personal and privacy information of Canadians should be a top priority for government, yet the Prime Minister has failed to be honest with Canadians about the Liberal Party's relationship with an individual who has exploited the private information of millions of people around the world.

We know that he has had a long history of working with the Liberal Party, and worked for this Prime Minister.

Can the Prime Minister confirm whether or not he has disclosed this information to the Privacy Commissioner?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, I would draw hon. members' attention to the statement issued by the LRB earlier today that said quite clearly that preliminary work was done by Eunoia Technologies, but after seeing what was offered, the Liberal caucus research bureau decided not to move forward. At no point did Eunoia Technologies have access to any data from the Liberal caucus research bureau.

• (1425)

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker—I apologize, I should not have used the word “Mr.” so I will start again.

Speaker, the whistleblower in the Facebook data scandal worked for the Liberal Party and for Donald Trump. In 2016, the Liberals reached out to their former employee to work on a pilot project to collect private data for political purposes. These revelations are troubling.

Can the Prime Minister confirm whether this individual was hired to work in the Liberal research office? If he was, taxpayers would have paid for it.

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, for the hon. member, the Liberal research bureau has actually issued a statement in which they provide a statement of work for the company. Again, the preliminary work was done by Eunoia Technologies as a pilot, but the Liberal caucus research bureau decided not to move forward with it.

Maybe the Conservatives would like to answer about the statement of work they had with Agility PR Solutions when they paid them \$100,000, using public funds.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Speaker, I will take that as a “yes”.

Since the Liberals acknowledged that these data collection methods are highly controversial, then that means that they were aware of this questionable practice. In spite of it all, they decided to reach out to this former Liberal employee, who worked on Donald Trump's campaign by the way.

Can the Prime Minister tell us whether he took action to inform the Privacy Commissioner and have him look into the matter?

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I actually spoke with the Privacy Commissioner this morning, and I expressed to him our support for the work that he does on an ongoing basis, including the investigation he announced yesterday into the Facebook issue.

We will continue to support the good work done by the Privacy Commissioner. We would hope all parliamentarians would support that work. We should let the Privacy Commissioner do his work.

* * *

[Translation]

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister interrupted a woman during a town hall meeting and told her to use “peoplekind” instead of “mankind”, he claimed that it was a bad joke, but the bad joke does not end there. We have learned that Service Canada will no longer refer to clients as “Mr.” or “Mrs.” in its communications.

Can the Prime Minister tell us why this bad joke has become a government directive?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. Service Canada will continue to use “Mr.” and “Mrs.”. Service Canada will continue to talk to Canadians and treat them respectfully, regardless of their identity, as part of its commitment to diversity and inclusion. Service Canada will continue to work hard to meet the needs, conditions, and expectations of all Canadians.

* * *

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for the past two years, the Liberals have scoffed at Canadians' concerns about tax evasion. They keep saying that they have invested \$1 billion to address this problem.

However, yesterday, we learned that the programs to address tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance have received only an additional \$15 million. That is only \$15 million of the promised \$1 billion.

Where is the rest of the money?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, fighting tax evasion, especially abroad, is a priority for our government.

Budget 2018 provides for nearly \$200 million in new investments to help us go even further, specifically by making legislative changes that will close the tax loopholes used by multinationals.

Oral Questions

I would also like to remind the House that we adhere to all provisions of the international standard for automatic exchange of information with OECD partners. Starting this year, we will have access to millions of records from other jurisdictions that will help us to combat tax evasion and tax avoidance.

● (1430)

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do not understand. This money is not going towards fighting tax evasion or aggressive tax avoidance. For over two years now, we have been denouncing the Liberals' inaction on tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance. For over two years now, we have been asking them to explain why they persecute ordinary taxpayers and let the big fish go. For over two years now, we have been listening to them falsely claim that they have invested \$1 billion to fight tax evasion.

Last week, the B.C. Court of Appeal ordered the Canada Revenue Agency to pay \$1.6 million in damages for its malicious prosecution of small business owners.

Is this where that \$1 billion is going? To maliciously prosecute the little people?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring that the CRA treats Canadians as important clients and not just as taxpayers.

The CRA undertakes a review of all court decisions in order to ensure that its programs and services are held to the highest standard. I would like to remind my colleague that this case began in 2008, under the previous Conservative government. The criminal investigations program has since been transformed to focus on the most serious cases of tax evasion.

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what pathetic answers. On tax evasion and abusive tax avoidance, we know the Liberal government is all smoke and mirrors. At a time when it is supposed to investigate the Panama papers, the Bermuda papers, and the paradise papers, incredibly, the government spent \$2 million less this year to investigate tax evasion and tax fraud than last year. Liberals support a profoundly unfair tax system by doing virtually nothing.

When will the Prime Minister start taking tax evasion and tax fraud seriously?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government promised to crack down on tax evasion. We are working with our international partners to fight tax evasion abroad by improving the exchange of information and improving our practices.

That collaboration is why I was at the OECD three weeks ago. I announced that Canada will host a Large Business and International Programme meeting of tax experts from around the world this fall. Information exchange is crucial to successfully fighting tax evasion.

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, "\$1 billion", the Prime Minister said. "We will fight tax

evasion", he said. What did he do? He spent a tiny, pathetic \$15 million more to fight massive tax evasion that cost Canadians billions of dollars. To fight massive tax evasion and tax fraud, one cannot just pretend to do it. Liberals pretend by unfairly going after people like small business owners and people with disabilities who request their tax credit, but they leave the massive tax evaders untouched.

When will the government crack down on massive tax evasion that costs Canadians billions of dollars?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to make it clear that the OECD has recognized Canada's leadership in using data to assess the risk of multinational corporations.

Canada is making sure that multinationals pay their fair share of taxes. One of the ways we are doing that is by playing a leadership role with the Large Business and International Programme. Country-by-country reporting also gives us easier access to some kinds of information about multinationals. Every year, we assess the risk associated with all large corporations' tax returns.

* * *

PRIVACY

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, another memorable moment in the annals of Liberal scandals is setting off alarm bells today. We have learned that another individual who worked with the leader of the Liberal Party in 2009 is making headlines, leading us to believe that the Liberal Party could have psychological profiles on Canadians going back as far as 2009.

Can the Prime Minister confirm that that individual was hired to work at the Liberal caucus research bureau, a taxpayer-funded bureau?

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal caucus research bureau earlier today issued a statement which clearly stated that preliminary work was done by Eunoia Technologies, but after seeing what was offered, the Liberal caucus research bureau decided not to move forward and that at no point did Eunoia Technologies have access to any data from the Liberal caucus research bureau.

● (1435)

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is hardly reassuring given that the Liberals have now twice toyed with data mining to tilt the democratic process.

Oral Questions

We are reassured the Privacy Commissioner has launched an investigation into the possible violation of Canadians' privacy through manipulation of their social media behaviour. As well, the ethics committee is moving toward an investigation of the developing Facebook scandal.

However, will the Prime Minister's Office and the minister explain to Canadians what the Liberal caucus research bureau was planning with Mr. Wylie in 2016?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in fact the LRB has made the statement of work public. It issued a statement, and I would draw the hon. member's attention to that statement, wherein the whole statement of work for the project is provided. Again, it was a pilot project that the company provided to the LRB and the LRB did not move forward on that beyond that specific pilot.

The Conservatives actually engaged in data research with a \$100,000—

The Speaker: The hon. opposition House leader.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear: the Liberal research office works hand in glove and is paid by the Prime Minister's Office. It is the Prime Minister's research office that hired Christopher Wylie, who is very well known in Liberal circles, to provide advice, new techniques for mining data, we do not know.

Would the Prime Minister tell us what he paid, using taxpayer dollars, Mr. Christopher Wylie \$100,000 to do?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in fact, the company, Eunoia Technologies, ran a pilot for the Liberal caucus research bureau among other things to design and organize several national samples of Canadians, to explore responses to government policy priorities and other issues of national importance, to assist the LRB in setting up infrastructure, to research the performance of Liberal members of Parliament in communications. This is all in the statement from the LRB, but the Conservatives actually did engage in a contract with Agility PR Solutions and paid it \$100,000.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister has confirmed that Christopher Wylie, who is the individual who is in the middle of this international Facebook scandal and is also very clearly and very widely known to the Liberal Party, provided advice to the government on how to get information from Canadians regarding government policy, and then used that personal information for the Liberals' own partisan Liberal purposes.

This is shameful. We have to know what the Liberals let this individual have access to. More important, what have they done and what are they doing with these techniques of Christopher Wylie?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, in the statement issued by the Liberal research bureau today, preliminary work was done by Eunoia Technologies, but after seeing what was offered, the Liberal caucus research bureau decided not to move forward. At no point did Eunoia Technologies have access to any data from the Liberal caucus research bureau.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, media around the world have recklessly reported on the connection between Christopher Wylie and Donald Trump because Christopher

Wylie claimed that he played a pivotal role in developing the data-mining techniques that helped carry Donald Trump to victory. However, he has not just worked for Donald Trump. He worked for former Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff, worked for former Liberal leader Stéphane Dion, and the government hired him just two years ago.

Will the Prime Minister finally answer how many tax dollars he paid Christopher Wylie, and what did Mr. Wylie do for the money?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, the contract for the pilot with Eunoia Technologies was actually issued after the 2015 election, in January 2016. At the completion of that pilot when Mr. Wylie made a proposal to the LRB, it was decided not to move forward at that time. The LRB did not move forward beyond that very specific pilot.

● (1440)

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's privacy watchdog has launched an investigation into Facebook regarding the shocking allegations of this data leak. The Liberals have feigned outrage that such a data breach could have occurred and condemned Donald Trump for using such techniques, but of course, they have hired the guy now three separate times in the Liberal Party.

Has the Prime Minister informed the Privacy Commissioner of the three times that Christopher Wylie worked for the Liberal Party of Canada? Will the Liberals finally come clean? Did he have access to Canadians' data and what was he doing for the money?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I spoke with the Privacy Commissioner earlier this morning and made it very clear that we will do everything we can as a government to protect the security of personal data of Canadians and the integrity of our electoral system. Again, the LRB issued a statement this morning and made it very clear that at no point did Eunoia Technologies have access to any data from the Liberal caucus research bureau.

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[Translation]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the recent budget is full of lofty rhetoric and missed opportunities. The government may claim to be feminist, but the fact is, the budget lacks substantive action to help women.

When will we see meaningful action to encourage the hiring of women for infrastructure projects?

When will we see investments to implement the pay equity legislation?

When will we see a universal, affordable child care program?

Oral Questions

When will we see federal funding to implement rape prevention policies on our campuses?

How much longer do women have to wait?

[*English*]

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the budget clearly invests and builds on previous investments to improve lives for women and communities across the country, with \$7.5 billion for child care and early learning and \$40 billion in affordable housing, 25% of which will support women and their families. Who will be building this infrastructure? We are providing grants and opportunities for women to enter the trades. We are also investing \$1.65 billion in an entrepreneurship strategy. When we invest in women—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, none of this is for the women who really need it now.

The budget mentions women hundreds of times, but fails to deliver for them. The so-called feminist government's budget has little concrete help for women on the ground right now. Why is there no money to put pay equity in place? Why are there no EI reforms so that women can actually access parental leave? How can the Liberals think they are for women's equality when they still have not funded universal, affordable child care?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, "Gender equality is good for Canada. It's good for the economy, it's good for families and it's good for women and girls. After years of slipping in global rankings, this is the change of direction we need." That was said by Maya Roy, the CEO of YWCA Canada, in response to the first federal budget in the history of this country to have an intersectional gender lens applied.

Pay equity is mentioned in this budget, along with over \$3 million to address pay transparency. When we invest in women, we grow the economy for everyone.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on February 27, the Prime Minister told this House that the Atwal invitation was part of an Indian government conspiracy to undermine his trip. The same day, a Liberal MP publicly apologized for the Atwal invite. Weeks later, the foreign affairs minister called the invite "an honest mistake", directly contradicting the Prime Minister.

That is a lot of invitations to Mr. Atwal. The opposition members have one invite they would like the Prime Minister to make: invite the national security adviser to the public safety committee so we can get answers.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the answer with respect to the invitation is already very clear. The invitation should never have been issued, and when that invitation was discovered, it was immediately rescinded.

Another point that needs to be noted is that the government has great confidence in the security and diplomatic advisers to the

government, who always act in an impartial fashion and always in the best interests of Canadians.

• (1445)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the minister, I would like to remind the House that a senior bureaucrat and the Prime Minister himself both confirmed that Jaspal Atwal's invitation to the event in India was a set-up initiated by the Indian government. However, the Indian government, Mr. Atwal, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Liberal member for Surrey Centre all deny those claims.

Will our transparent Prime Minister provide elected officials with the same debriefing that was given to the media, and allow us to call Daniel Jean to appear before the Standing Committee on Public Safety?

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the issue of the invitation, which is obviously the core element in the question that has just been asked, the answer is abundantly clear. The invitation should not have been extended. When it was discovered, it was immediately rescinded, because it should not have been issued in the first place. That is the complete and full answer.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in February, the Prime Minister called out a woman for using the term "mankind" and said that he preferred the term "peoplekind" because it is more inclusive. He later conceded that the remark was a dumb joke, yet another one. Today, Service Canada employees who interact with the public are no longer allowed to use terms like "Mr." and "Mrs." and now have to use gender-neutral language.

Can the Prime Minister confirm whether this new practice has truly been imposed because—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Families, Children and Social Development.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question and I invite her to listen carefully to the answer I gave earlier, when I said that we were very clear on the fact that Service Canada would continue to use "Mr." and "Mrs." as salutations and that Service Canada would continue to do its work and respect the diversity of Canada's families and the reality of their circumstances in 2018.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister said that his “peoplekind” comment was a dumb joke, apparently he was just kidding.

According to a report, Service Canada employees have been instructed to no longer refer to people as “mother” or “father”. It is now “parent number one” or “parent number two”. What is next?

Can the minister confirm if this instruction is indeed true?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad and grateful to be able to answer this question. I am also glad and grateful to say that in Canada in 2018, we have a diversity of families. We have grandfathers or recomposed families looking after children. We have parents of the same gender. These parents deserve the same respect and the same support as other parents in Canada. I am glad that we have a government that supports this view, and we will continue to work hard for that.

* * *

PRIVACY

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today the President of the Treasury Board has been referring to the Liberal research bureau as if it is a credible source. Having known the member for 16 years in the chamber, I would ask him to please stop. It is simply not factual, and it is not believable.

The reality is that former Liberal employee Christopher Wylie is part of this scandal, working with former Liberal leaders Dion and Ignatieff, and the current Prime Minister. The fact that Europe and the U.S. are investigating the Canadian content in this manipulation is embarrassing to all of us.

Could the Prime Minister explain why the Liberals would even consider helping design and engineer a system that abuses democracy—

The Speaker: The hon. President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not think we would want to credit that individual with the electoral successes of the Liberal Party of Canada in 2008 or 2011. He may not want to be associated with that.

The fact is that, in 2016, he completed a brief pilot for the Liberal research bureau, and the Liberal research bureau did not move forward beyond that pilot.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the problem is that not only does the government not care that Facebook does not pay its fair share of taxes, but it does not seem to care if Facebook is stealing Canadians' personal information either. There is no accountability.

[Translation]

People all around the world and in Canada are deeply concerned about Cambridge Analytica's use of personal data from millions of Facebook users. They fear that their personal information is being used to undermine our democracy. However, it is not just elections that are being targeted. Privacy breaches adversely affect many aspects of our lives.

When will we have legislation to legally and financially punish the offending companies?

• (1450)

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are currently gathering facts, as are other governments, on the Facebook issue. We have a responsibility to protect the personal information of Canadians and the integrity of Canada's electoral system.

I have spoken with the Privacy Commissioner to support his investigation. We have reached out and are engaged with Canada's top security officials. I have also spoken with Facebook. I have told them that we need answers and we need to know that the personal information of Canadians was not compromised.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that the safety of Canadians is of utmost importance to the government. Unfortunately, the Harper government's changes to the law meant that someone selling a firearm did not have to make sure the buyer was actually permitted to own one.

Thankfully, most businesses still check, but the loophole created by the Conservatives can allow firearms to fall into the wrong hands.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I do not know if members have forgotten that each side gets its opportunity throughout question period for various questions and various answers. We need to hear both the questions and the answers, so I would ask for order.

The hon. member for Oakville North—Burlington has the floor.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, now the current Conservative leader wants to further undermine public safety by increasing the number of bullets that magazines can hold.

Could the Minister of Public Safety please tell the House what the government is doing to make our communities safer?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we introduced common-sense legislation that prioritizes public safety and effective police work, while respecting law-abiding firearms owners. That legislation includes practical measures, such as making background checks more extensive, which I note has already been applauded by all parties represented in the House.

I also note that the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police says that it is “encouraged by the positive direction taken by [the government] towards sensible firearm legislation enhancing the tools available” to police to ensure public—

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

Oral Questions

[Translation]

FINANCE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, two and a half years ago, the Liberals came to power by telling Canadians that they would run small deficits and build a lot of infrastructure. Two and a half years later, the reality is that we have a large deficit and not all that much infrastructure.

We are not the ones saying this. The parliamentary budget officer, in last week's scathing report, said that the budget accounts for only \$22 billion of the \$91 billion overall.

Given that it is Wednesday, could the Prime Minister explain where all these billions of dollars have gone?

[English]

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government understands that infrastructure is the foundation of building a strong economy, creating jobs for the middle class, and providing opportunities for those Canadians who work hard every day to be part of the middle class. That is why we are making historic investments in infrastructure to support communities. We are putting forward \$180-billion long-term, sustainable, and predictable funding for our communities, something communities have been asking for, and something that, for a decade, the Harper government denied them.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised a deficit of just \$10 billion, and failed. It was more than double that. He said the money would go to infrastructure. He failed there too. We do not know where it has gone. He said the deficit would be gone in three years. He has failed on that. Now he says it will be another 25 years, during which half a trillion dollars will be added to the debt.

Given all these failures, how can we trust anything the Prime Minister says about Canadians' money?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me talk about one of the components of our historic infrastructure investments. We are investing \$33 billion to improve public transit systems in our communities to reduce pollution. We are investing in green infrastructure to make our communities more resilient to the impacts of climate change. We are investing in cultural and recreational community infrastructure to build healthier and inclusive communities.

I am also proud that, for the first time, we are investing \$2.4 billion in rural and northern communities to support them in a way they have never been supported—

•(1455)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, well, that is not what the Parliamentary Budget Officer says. In fact, I will quote from his report:

Budget 2018 provides an incomplete account of the changes to the Government's \$186.7 billion infrastructure spending plan. PBO requested the new plan but it does not exist.

I ask again, how is it even possible to spend \$180 billion with no plan?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we do have a plan, and that plan is to invest in communities to build the infrastructure they need, to help grow our economy, and to create jobs. We are unlocking \$40 billion of investment into affordable housing, something about which the Harper government cared less or not at all. This is the investment we are making so people have an affordable place to live, and women fleeing domestic violence have a decent place to go to seek protection. Those are the investments we are making to build healthier communities.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is becoming more and more clear to Canadians that the government has no control over its spending, and it cannot even tell us where its spending is going. First of all, it said the deficit would be \$10 billion. It has been more than double that. This year, the deficit will be three times what the Liberals promised. If the Prime Minister had been telling the truth in the last election, the budget would be balanced next year. We now know that this will not happen.

When will the budget be balanced?

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to remember that two years ago, during the election campaign and after ten years of Conservative management, Canadians asked themselves the following question: is Canada in a recession or headed for a recession? That was understandable after 10 years of the worst growth in jobs and exports.

Canadians decided to do what economists around the world had suggested. When interest rates are low and the economy is slowing, the right choice is to invest in our communities, invest in infrastructure, and invest in science, as we are doing in order to grow the economy. That is what we did and the results speak for themselves: 600,000 jobs have been created, and we have the strongest growth in the G7.

They should take notes on our approach.

* * *

[English]

CANADA POST

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is nothing worse than not getting paid what one is owed. Actually, wait: There is nothing worse than being a small business that is not getting paid \$29,000 by a crown corporation. That is right. Canada Post currently owes \$29,000 in rent to a small Vancouver Island general store in my riding because it has not paid rent in 53 months. How much is that rent? It is \$210 a month, and now it will not even negotiate with the owner.

When will the Liberals start standing up for small businesses and get this crown corporation to pay its bill?

Oral Questions

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member and all members of the House that we are looking into this. I have asked Canada Post to look into this file. I will get back to them as soon as I get an appropriate answer.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with just 76 southern resident killer whales remaining, people are worried they will be extinct unless the government takes immediate action. Increased tanker traffic from Kinder Morgan, ocean pollution, and drastically low chinook numbers pose serious threats to this iconic species and its recovery. Canadians are demanding that the ministers of environment and fisheries issue an emergency order under the Species at Risk Act to protect southern resident killer whales.

Will the government do the right thing and immediately issue an emergency order to keep these whales from being wiped from the face of this planet?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we share our colleague's concern about the importance of protecting the southern resident killer whale population in British Columbia. This is an iconic species for all Canadians. That is why our government announced an ambitious \$1.5 billion oceans protection plan, with significant investments in science, in partnerships with indigenous communities up and down the coast, to do what is necessary to ensure that these iconic mammals are in fact protected and the species recovers. I am going to be making management decisions around chinook salmon, for example, that will be part of a solution to ensure the recovery of these whales.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this question is for the Minister of Public Safety and it has to do with the removal of dangerous individuals under security deportation orders. My question is very clear. In 2017, the immigration review board issued 25 deportation orders for security, the highest in the last five years. In 2017, the Canada Border Services Agency said that it removed only four people, the lowest in five years.

My question is simple. This is a clear case of government failure. What is the minister going to do?

• (1500)

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, CBSA enforces removal orders as soon as that is physically possible and prioritizes, of course, the cases that involve security issues. An individual subject to a deportation order who poses a risk to the public can, in fact, be detained if that is necessary.

The issues generally involve the country of origin being unwilling to provide travel documents. CBSA is working with domestic and international partners, including the Five Eyes countries, to develop

the best practices to secure those documents so that the removals can happen.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since 2015, the immigration review board has issued 70 deportation orders for security, and the CBSA has conducted only 14 removals. What has been said is that the federal government has become increasingly ineffective in carrying out deportations on security grounds.

The federal policy is very clear. Security-ordered deportation is the prime focus of the government, and it is failing on this. Will the minister tell us what he plans to do?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the issue is obviously one of being able to physically carry out the removal order. That means getting travel documents from other countries to facilitate the removal of the individual from Canada to that other country. We are using every conceivable leverage, among federal government departments, to obtain those documents. We are also consulting with international partners, including countries in the Five Eyes alliance, to make sure that we are using every tool domestically and internationally to get the travel documents, to get them—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Milton.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, is the minister saying that we cannot do the job because of paperwork? That makes absolutely no sense. Our government, in 2013, recognized the problem, and we brought in legislation to ensure that we could actually get people out of the country when they threatened the security of Canadians.

This is absolutely unacceptable, but I am very glad to see that the minister got off his high horse today and is actually answering the questions instead of ignoring the problem, like he did yesterday.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the point is that the travel documents have to be obtained. The hon. member cannot sort of skip over that step and pretend that it does not exist. We are working very diligently to get the travel documents and to work down the backlog. It is true, as I said yesterday, that this backlog peaked under the previous government, and we are working very hard to catch up.

* * *

[*Translation*]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our passenger rail system is an important part of our national transportation system. The train is not only an ideal form of transportation for enjoying our country's beautiful landscapes, but it has also been connecting Canadians across the country for decades.

Could the Minister of Transport update Canadians and this House on what he has done to improve this important transportation service in the Quebec City-Windsor corridor?

Oral Questions

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Alfred-Pellan for his question and for his hard work on the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. Our government recognizes how important the passenger rail system is here in Canada. This is why, in budget 2018, we announced that VIA Rail passenger cars and locomotives in the Quebec City-Windsor corridor would be replaced. This means that by 2022, passengers will have access to more comfortable, safer, greener, and more accessible trains.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is still failing on the Trans Mountain expansion, risking thousands of jobs, billions of dollars in revenue and investment, and Canada's global reputation.

Canadians have the right to peaceful assembly, but the B.C. Supreme Court said that protestors must not obstruct the expansion. On Monday, illegal protestors harmed three RCMP officers, kicking one and causing a head injury. The other two suffered hand and knee injuries.

The Prime Minister's job is not just costumes, selfies, and ceremony. He must lead. Will he clearly condemn violence by illegal protestors? Will he unequivocally support the rule of law?

• (1505)

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, public safety officers of all kinds, including particularly police officers, defend Canadians on the front lines in communities from coast to coast to coast. They deserve our unequivocal support and admiration for the work they do to keep Canadians safe. Of course, all members of this House support the RCMP in the important work they do for public safety.

* * *

[Translation]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I presented a petition signed by several thousand people calling on the Minister of Transport to finally listen to them and to obtain the necessary powers to build railroad crossings, in particular for the railway tracks separating Laurier—Sainte-Marie and Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. These crossings are needed to keep the public safe and to give them more mobility.

Will the Minister of Transport put the interests of the public ahead of the interests of rail companies?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. I remind her that there is a mechanism for people to request that the Canadian Transportation Agency create railroad crossings.

If my colleague needs information on this process, I would be happy to provide it.

[English]

MULTICULTURALISM

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Recently the Prime Minister officially recognized the International Decade for People of African Descent and reiterated that we have much work to do.

I am pleased to see that budget 2018 is making investments in anti-racism initiatives.

[Translation]

Can the minister update this House on these initiatives aimed at ensuring a more inclusive future for all Canadians?

[English]

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to thank my colleague, the member for Scarborough—Rouge Park, for his important question and his hard work.

Today our government reaffirmed its commitment to the fight against racism. Through budget 2018, we are investing \$23 million, which will include support for multiculturalism programs.

[Translation]

We are also investing \$19 million to take meaningful action to address the problems faced by our black Canadian colleagues. We have come a long way, but of course, there is still much more work to do.

* * *

[English]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how the minister chose his colleague's brother to award the Arctic surf clam bid to is beyond me. According to the DFO website, Arctic surf clam applicants had to meet certain criteria. They had to describe the vessel used, except they did not have one, and they still do not. They had to provide an ownership profile, including all the partners, except there were none. They were not even incorporated until a week after the announcement was made.

If they did not have a boat and did not have multiple first nation partners, how did they win the bid?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am interested to hear my colleague's observations with respect to a specific bid. The only challenge is that he has not actually seen the bid he is commenting on. He is taking a series of media reports, which were inaccurate, and asking a question about a bid he has not read.

Our process was transparent. It was inclusive. Our process was designed to add indigenous partners to an important offshore fishery. We chose the proposal that offered the best economic benefits to indigenous people, and we are proud of that decision.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot will come to order.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

* * *

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, as millions of tons of grain sit on prairie farms and in grain elevators, on our coast of British Columbia, we have freighters and container ships waiting to pick up that grain at the Port of Vancouver backed up and using the waters of the Salish Sea as a free parking lot. In between, we have CN Rail, which has empty railcars but laid off 1,000 workers last year, as if it is a surprise to it, again, that we have grain to be shipped.

Can the hon. Minister of Transport assure us that he can get CN to do the job and deliver the grain?

• (1510)

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after the Minister of Agriculture and I wrote to CN and CP and told them that we were not satisfied with the movement of grain, they came back to us with plans that involve considerably more resources in terms of crews, in terms of equipment, and in terms of prioritization for the movement of grain.

We want to get our farmers' grain out to the west coast. I am monitoring this on a daily basis with the Minister of Agriculture, and we will continue to insist on this accelerated pace of movement of Canadian western farmers' grain to market.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of Her Excellency Dr. Fang Liu, Secretary General of the International Civil Aviation Organization.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Mr. Speaker, I believe that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: That this House recognize that when the Prime Minister was in Quebec City on January 18, 2018, he stated that negotiations with the Davie shipyard would begin on January 19 for the contract for four icebreakers; that this House recognize that on March 12, 2018, the Association des fournisseurs du chantier Davie asked the Prime Minister to commit to finally reaching a deal for the four icebreakers; that this House recognize that no announcements have been made to this effect to date and that hundreds of jobs at the shipyard and with its suppliers are at risk; that this House call on the Government of Canada to grant the Davie shipyard the contract for four icebreakers no later than March 31, 2018.

Points of Order

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[*English*]

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I and hon. colleagues have stood in the House a number of times on the fisheries file and have asked the Minister of Fisheries to explain how a proponent that is not a business has received a sizeable contract. The minister has said it is a company.

I ask permission to table the certificate of incorporation, which shows the company that received this sizeable contract from the government was incorporated one week after the announcement was made by the minister.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

INFORMATION PROVIDED TO THE HOUSE BY THE MINISTER OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today with respect to conflicting statements by a member of the government versus a servant of the House.

Earlier today, I pointed to a quote by the Parliamentary Budget Officer, which indicated that there was no plan for the government's expenditure of \$186.7 billion on infrastructure. The minister responsible for that very portfolio then rose and claimed there was such a plan. In fact, the Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed in his report, which is a document now of the House, that he asked for that plan and "it does not exist".

Herein lies the problem. If such a plan does exist and the Parliamentary Budget Officer has been denied it, then the Liberal government could well be in contempt of Parliament through the PBO, which is a creation of Parliament. On the other hand, if the plan does not exist but the minister says it does, then the minister will have been providing false information to the House. Either circumstance is very serious.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to put your investigative powers and skills to work to resolve this conflict and ascertain which of those two unacceptable circumstances arose today in the House of Commons.

• (1515)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Carleton for raising this. I am not sure to which investigative skills he is referring, but I will look into the matter and come back to the House.

*Routine Proceedings***PRIVILEGE**

ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON ARCTIC SURF CLAM FISHERY

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise this time on a question of privilege. Canadians right across our country have some questions regarding the Arctic surf clam bid. The opposition, in its job to hold the government accountable, has questioned the minister in his awarding another Liberal member's brother this contract. Time and again, the minister has been dismissive.

Today, in question period, he even said that the member had not seen the contract, or the RFP. Therefore, he is impeding my job as the shadow minister for Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, another member of Parliament, and he is also impeding the other members of the opposition in representing constituents from across Canada who have concerns regarding this RFP.

This question of privilege is with respect to the hon. colleague, the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard. By not tabling the RFP that has been asked for in recent days and the criteria used in awarding one of his colleague's brothers this lucrative contract, he is impeding our job as members of Parliament.

The Speaker: I thank the member for Cariboo—Prince George for raising his point. While, at first glance, it sounds to me more like a matter of debate, I will look into and examine the matter and come back to the House if necessary.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

FAIRNESS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-399, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (disability tax credit).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to bring this bill before the House for consideration at first reading. I thank the member for Calgary Rocky Ridge for seconding my private member's bill.

The bill is entitled "An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act". In fact, it deals with the disability tax credit. The short name for the bill is "Fairness for Persons with Disabilities Act". It would increase accessibility for disability tax credit for Canadians living with diabetes as well as those with rare disorders.

The bill would ensure that those who qualify for the DTC actually would receive it and would put a stop to the Canada Revenue Agency practice of denying the tax credit for diabetics and some patients with rare disorders.

Like we saw in 2017, it would do three simple things, and I will not go into the details right now. The bill would reduce the time to qualify for the DTC from 14 hours to 10 hours; it would add the calculation of dosage into the time to qualify for the credit; and it would finally add the words "medical food and medical formula" for the qualification for the DTC.

I want to thank two individuals particularly who helped me in the drafting of the bill: Patrick Tohill from the Juvenile Diabetes

Research Fund, as well as John Adams from the Canadian PKU and Allied Disorders.

I remain committed to improving the government's processes through this private member's bill to ensure all Canadians living with a disability receive the benefits they deserve and are entitled to. The bill has the support of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, Diabetes Canada, Canadian PKU and Allied Disorders, Canadian Nurses Association, and the Canadian Organization for Rare Diseases. I thank them all for adding their voices to the bill.

I look forward to debate in the House.

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

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PETITIONS

CANADA SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to table three petitions from 164 constituents.

The petitioners call to the attention of the government that as it is now written, the application form for the Canada summer jobs program forces employers to choose between the charter protected freedoms and eligibility for government programs. They call on the government to remove the discriminatory attestation requirement from the Canada summer jobs application and to respect the charter rights of all Canadians to have values different from the political ideology of the government of the day.

This brings the total number of petitioners to 309.

● (1520)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to present a petition on behalf of the residents of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook and over 750 Canadians.

The petitioners call on the government to continue funding support for the existing freshwater habitat conservation programs and to continue being a full partner in this important initiative.

MILITARY VOLUNTEER SERVICE MEDAL

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from Canadians who wish to bring the attention of the House to the fact that the Canadian government at one time issued a Canadian volunteer service medal, a volunteer service medal to recognize Canadians who served voluntarily in the Canadian Forces, the volunteerism of our veterans, and our troops. Unfortunately, this medal was terminated in March 1947. They would like to see it come back.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to recognize, create and issue a new Canadian military volunteer service medal to be designated the Canadian military volunteer service medal for volunteer service by Canadians in regular forces, reserve military forces, the cadet corps, support staff, and those who have completed 365 days of uninterrupted and honourable duty in service to our country.

ALGOMA PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table another petition in support of the Algoma passenger train. It is signed by constituents in my riding of Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, in particular from Debra, as well as from the riding of Sault Ste. Marie.

The petitioners remind the government that the Algoma train is still not back in operation and this has resulted in substantial hardship for the area's residents, businesses, and communities. The impact on the economy in the Algoma district has definitely been negatively impacted.

The petitioners call on the Minister of Transport to put the Algoma passenger train back in service.

CANADA SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition today signed by a number of constituents of mine, and ironically someone from Holland.

The petitioners call on the government to remove the discriminatory requirement in the summer jobs program application and allow Canadians to continue to exercise their freedom of religion and freedom of expression without facing institutionalized discrimination by the Government of Canada.

PENSIONS

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by members of the KODA Retirees Association, representing 600 retirees from Kodak Canada, living across Canada, with the majority in Ontario.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to change federal legislation to ensure both federal and provincial legislation are harmonious in protecting employee pension plans, implement legislation to ensure that pension plan deficiencies be a first and super-priority creditor when companies file for and are placed under protection of the CCAA or the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, and create legislation to hold foreign parent companies responsible for their Canadian subsidiaries' employees, debts, and responsibilities in the event of the dissolution of the Canadian subsidiary.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to present an e-petition, e-1360, with 902 signatures from residents of my riding of South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

The petitioners call upon the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to end the proposal of a national park reserve in the Southern Okanagan and ask that there be a referendum on this subject once and for all.

Routine Proceedings

ISRAEL

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions from residents of my riding of Dufferin—Caledon.

The first petition calls on the Government of Canada to immediately act in response to the impending humanitarian disaster in Israel, as Israel plans to forcibly deport thousands of asylum seekers, beginning in March.

• (1525)

CANADA SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my second petition is also signed by residents of Dufferin—Caledon.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to remove the discriminatory requirement in the Canada summer jobs program application and allow Canadians to continue to exercise their freedoms of belief and expression without facing institutionalized discrimination by the Government of Canada.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am incredibly proud and honoured to be standing in the House today to present a petition from the Village of Gold River.

The petitioners, who are residents of the village of Gold River, British Columbia, request that the Government of Canada provide funding to support the installation and expansion of mobile phone networks in rural and remote communities, such as Gold River, including Highway 28, Campbell River to Gold River; the village of Tsawwassen; the village of Tahsis; and the Tree to Sea Drive between Gold River and Tahsis.

This is incredibly important to the people of my riding, and I am happy to present it today.

PHARMACARE

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition. This petition garnered over 8,000 signatures, a grassroots petition that started in my community but reached out to all provinces and territories throughout the country.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to implement a federal law, a pan-Canadian universal pharmacare plan, within this 42nd Parliament; and implement a national formulary for medically necessary drugs, including a drug monitoring agency, providing regulations and oversight for protecting Canadians.

I recognize the government is currently working on this, but I, too, would like to lend my support to making it known that this is a great need in our country. I look forward to a result from that committee.

CANADA SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition from residents of Saskatchewan.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners point out that section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms identifies freedom of conscience, freedom of thought, and freedom of belief as fundamental freedoms and that the Government of Canada must defend the rights of all Canadians, regardless of whether they agree with their views or not. They believe that the current Liberal government's proposed attestation requirement that Canadian summer jobs program applicants hold the same view as the government would contravene the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The petitioners call on the Prime Minister to defend their freedoms of conscience, thought, and belief, and to withdraw the attestation requirement for applicants to the Canada summer jobs program.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise to table a petition on behalf of several British Columbians.

The petitioners are calling on the government to work with the provinces, municipalities, and indigenous communities to develop a national strategy to combat plastic pollution around aquatic environments. This would include regulations aimed at reducing single-use plastics; permanent, dedicated, and annual funding for marine debris cleanups; the cleanup of derelict fishing gear; and support for Motion No. 151.

British Columbians are on the front line of this global crisis and they are calling on the government to take real action.

AGRICULTURE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from residents of Saanich—Gulf Islands.

The petitioners recognize that most farmers around the world are women and that farming is a labour-intensive task. They point out that farmers primarily in the global south rely on being able to save their own seeds from season to season. The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to develop policies that would allow small family farmers to protect, use, exchange, and save seeds from season to season.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a petition dealing with human rights in China.

John McCallum, Canada's ambassador to China said that Canada has more in common with China than with the United States. These petitioners know better. They highlight that 13 family members of Canadians, including Canadian citizen Ms. Qian Sun and Canadian citizen applicant Ms. Aiyun He, are illegally incarcerated in China due to their spiritual beliefs in Falun Gong, also Falun Dafa. They highlight other facts about this persecution.

The petitioners call on Parliament and the government to call on Chinese officials to immediately end the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners and release all prisoners of conscience, including Canadian citizens and their family members, and to take every opportunity to establish measures to investigate the Chinese regime's

harvesting of innocent people for their organs. We have a private member's bill on that as well, Bill C-350.

ABANDONED VESSELS

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, these petitioners from Nanaimo call on the government to legislate action on abandoned vessels.

Although the announcement by the Minister of Transport last week in Ladysmith was nice, it was only \$64,000, which is clearly not enough.

The petitioners call on the government to designate the Coast Guard as the responsible agency to be the first to take action on abandoned vessels. They are calling for repair in legislation of vessel registration, and a pilot vessel turn-in program to deal with the tremendous backlog of abandoned vessels polluting our coastlines.

* * *

• (1530)

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the government's responses to Questions Nos. 1472 to 1483 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 1472—**Ms. Karine Trudel:**

With regard to federal spending from October 20, 2015, to December 31, 2017: (a) what expenditures were made in the following municipalities (i) City of Saguenay, (ii) City of Saint-Honoré, (iii) Municipality of St-Ambroise, (iv) Municipality of Saint-Fulgence, (v) Municipality of Sainte-Rose-du-Nord, (vi) Municipality of Saint-Charles-de-Bourget, (vii) Municipality of Bégin, (viii) Municipality of Saint-Nazaire, (ix) Municipality of Labrecque, (x) Municipality of Lamarche, (xi) Municipality of Larouche, (xii) Municipality of Saint-David-de-Falardeau; and (b) what are the particulars of all grants, contributions and loans, broken down by (i) name of recipient, (ii) date of funding, (iii) granting department or agency, (iv) amount received, (v) granting program, (vi) purpose of the expenditure?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1473—**Ms. Karine Trudel:**

With regard to the operating budget of the Canada Revenue Agency's Jonquière Tax Centre: (a) what was the Centre's budget between April 1, 2016, and March 31, 2017; (b) what were the operating expenditures, broken down by (i) type of expenditure, (ii) date of expenditure, for one-time expenditures; and (c) how many salaried employees worked at the Centre, broken down by (i) job category, (ii) tasks and position, (iii) salary?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 1474— Mr. John Nater:**

With regard to the Government's response to petition 421-01929: (a) in respect of the comment that the "Government promised to bring real change to Parliament and remains committed to fulfilling that promise", what changes remain outstanding and when will each change be pursued; (b) in respect of the comment that parliamentary secretaries "provide a direct link to ministers" by sitting on committees, have any parliamentary secretaries shared with ministers, their staff, or their relevant department, any confidential information from in camera committee meetings; (c) if the answer to (b) is affirmative, what are the details (without revealing the in camera information), including (i) date the information was shared, (ii) with whom it was shared, (iii) was the relevant committee notified; (d) what is each Minister's policy regarding the provision of in camera information by their Parliamentary Secretary; and (e) in respect of the comment that the "Government is working with all Members of Parliament to implement these changes", what are the particulars of these efforts?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1475— Mr. Alupa A. Clarke:

With regard to the Prime Minister's trips to the riding of Bonavista—Burin—Trinity in November and December of 2017: (a) what are the amounts and details of all expenses related to the trips; (b) what are the details of all official government business conducted on the trips; (c) what amount has been received by the Receiver General for Canada from the (i) Liberal Party of Canada, (ii) Official Agent for the Liberal Party of Canada by-election campaign in Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, (iii) Official Agent for the Liberal Party of Canada by-election campaign in Bonavista—Burin—Trinity for reimbursement related to the Prime Minister's trips; and (d) what are the details of any payment received in (c), including (i) date, (ii) amount, (iii) description of expenses for which taxpayers were reimbursed, (iv) sender?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1476— Mr. Dan Albas:

With regard to the Canada child benefit, since January 1, 2016: (a) how many (i) primary caregivers, (ii) other individuals have applied for the benefit; (b) of the applications in (a)(i), how many were rejected; (c) of the applications in (a)(ii), how many were rejected; (d) what were the reasons for rejection in (b) and (c), including the number of applications rejected for each reason; (e) how many applicants who were subsequently rejected were required to reimburse the government the amounts received in relation to the benefit; (f) what is the total amount recovered as a result of the reimbursements in (e); (g) how many individuals have had their marital status changed by the Canada Revenue Agency for taxation purposes following a rejection of benefits; and (h) for the individuals in (g), what was the number of each type of status change, such as single to common-law, married to single, and any other status changes, broken down by status change?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1477— Mr. Dan Albas:

With regard to the Prime Minister's trips to the riding of South Surrey—White Rock in November and December of 2017: (a) what are the amounts and details of all expenses related to the trips; (b) what are the details of all official government business conducted on the trips; (c) what amount has been received by the Receiver General for Canada from the (i) Liberal Party of Canada, (ii) Official Agent for the Liberal Party of Canada by-election campaign in South Surrey—White Rock, (iii) Official Agent for the Liberal Party of Canada by-election campaign in South Surrey—White Rock for reimbursement related to the Prime Minister's trips; and (d) what are the details of any payment received in (c), including (i) date, (ii) amount, (iii) description of expenses for which taxpayers were reimbursed, (iv) sender?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1478— Mr. Alexander Nuttall:

With regard to the Prime Minister's trips to the riding of Scarborough—Agincourt in November and December of 2017: (a) what are the amounts and details of all expenses related to the trips; (b) what are the details of all official government business conducted on the trip; (c) what amount has been received by the Receiver General for Canada from the (i) Liberal Party of Canada, (ii) Official Agent for the Liberal Party of Canada by-election campaign in Scarborough—Agincourt, (iii) Official Agent for the Liberal Party of Canada by-election campaign in Scarborough—Agincourt for reimbursement related to the Prime Minister's trips; and (d) what are

the details of any payment received in (c), including (i) date, (ii) amount, (iii) description of expenses for which taxpayers were reimbursed, (iv) sender?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1479— Mrs. Rosemarie Falk:

With regard to the Prime Minister's trips to the riding of Battlefords—Lloydminster in November and December of 2017: (a) what are the amounts and details of all expenses related to the trips; (b) what are the details of all official government business conducted on the trips; (c) what amount has been received by the Receiver General for Canada from the (i) Liberal Party of Canada, (ii) Official Agent for the Liberal Party of Canada by-election campaign in Battlefords—Lloydminster, (iii) Official Agent for the Liberal Party of Canada by-election campaign in Battlefords—Lloydminster for reimbursement related to the Prime Minister's trips; and (d) what are the details of any payment received in (c), including (i) date, (ii) amount, (iii) description of expenses for which taxpayers were reimbursed, (iv) sender?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1480— Mr. Ben Lobb:

With regard to expenditures on travel by departments and agencies since January 1, 2016: what is the total amount of expenditures for each of the following ledger codes (i) 51300, (ii) 51302, (iii) 51304, (iv) 51306, (v) 51308, (vi) 51310, (vii) 51312, (viii) 51314, (ix) 51316, (x) 51318, (xi) 51320, (xii) 51322?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1481— Mr. Ben Lobb:

With regard to expenditures by Environment and Climate Change Canada, since November 4, 2015: what are the details of all expenditures on Relocation within Canada (ledger code 51000), including (i) date, (ii) amount, (iii) vendor, (iv) description of goods or services?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1482— Mr. Ben Lobb:

With regard to the website of the Government Representative Office in the Senate: (a) did the government provide resources or support for the set-up, preparation, and launch of the website; (b) does the government provide resources or support for its ongoing maintenance and content updates; (c) if the answer to either (a) or (b) is affirmative, what are the details, including the cost or fair market value, of the resources or support, including (i) funding, (ii) physical assets, (iii) human resources, (iv) access to technical support or advice, (v) access to or use of computer resources (e.g., servers, internet connections), (vi) provision of cyber security; (d) what are the titles of all individuals who are involved in providing the resources and support for the website; and (e) what are the titles of all individuals who were involved in negotiating, preparing, and approving the arrangements for providing resources or support for the website?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1483— Mr. Ben Lobb:

With regard to overpayments by the government, since January 1, 2016, and broken down by month: what is the total amount of (i) salary overpayment (ledger code 10315), (ii) salary overpaid not recognized in Phoenix (ledger code 10321), (iii) overpayments to be recovered (ledger code 10324)?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*Privilege***MOTIONS FOR PAPERS**

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order pertaining to the session on the presentation of petitions.

I noticed in today's session that the Standing Orders have been ignored. When members present a petition, they should not state whether they are for or against the petition. They should simply state what the petitioners are presenting.

I noticed that the member for Kingston and the Islands stated that he was personally in support of a petition, and I am not particularly centring him out. I have noticed it on several occasions, particularly this time. I just wanted to point that out and let members know that the Standing Orders are clear. Members can present petitions from their constituents but they cannot speak to whether they support them or not.

The Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. member for Flamborough—Glanbrook for making this important point that members should be cognizant of. Sometimes it is true. We get tired of telling members this and we let them go a bit, but it is important to remind members that this is the rule. It is not the time for members to express their opinions about the petition but simply to say what the petitioners are calling for. That part is fine, which allows quite a bit as a matter of fact.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

INFORMATION PRESENTED BY GOVERNMENT

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a question of privilege regarding misleading information that has been presented to the House by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Public Safety.

During question period on February 26, 2018, I asked the government a number of questions regarding a briefing provided to the media by the Prime Minister's security adviser, Daniel Jean. The briefing attempted to explain how a convicted terrorist ended up at an event with the Prime Minister during his trip to India. The reason Mr. Jean gave was that the Government of India conspired and manipulated events in order to ensure the attendance of Jaspal Atwal at the reception. My first question to the government was simply, "What proof does the Prime Minister have that the Government of India did this?"

As you know Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Safety did not provide any evidence to this claim, nor did he refute it. Instead he said:

I can say that the invitation that was issued to this particular individual, Mr. Atwal, should never have been issued. Indeed, as soon as it was discovered, it was rescinded by the Government of Canada.

This statement supports the statement made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs when she told the Indian foreign affairs minister that Jaspal Atwal's invitation to the event was an honest mistake. If we follow the evolution of the responses from the Minister of Public Safety on that day, the answers begin to also support the theory of Daniel Jean, a theory that blames rogue elements in the Indian government.

The Minister of Public Safety said on February 26:

...Canada has very strong, very proficient national security and police agencies. They are well trained in what they need to do to protect and advance the Canadian national interest, and they have done their jobs in relation to the trip to India. They have done that job exceedingly well to make sure the best interests of Canadians are served and protected.

On February 27, 2018, the Leader of the Opposition asked the Prime Minister the same question, and the Prime Minister, in his one answer to the Leader of the Opposition's question, combined both the notion espoused by his Minister of Foreign Affairs that the invitation was a mistake, and Daniel Jean's theory laying blame on factions in the Indian government.

The Prime Minister said:

Mr. Speaker, as we have already said, this invitation should never have been sent. As soon as we realized that it had, the invitation was withdrawn.

Canada's national security and law enforcement agencies are non-partisan, highly competent, and very effective. We have faith in them to protect Canada and Canadians. They continue to work very hard to serve and protect the interests of Canadians.

Later in question period, on February 27, the Prime Minister introduced to the House a new character to this saga. He said:

Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times, this individual never should have been invited. As soon as we found out that he was, that invitation was rescinded. The member responsible for the invitation has taken full responsibility, and I will be following up with that member later this afternoon.

The member he was referring to was the member for Surrey Centre.

When pressed as to the conspiracy theory, the Minister of Public Safety out and out dismissed it as false when he said, in response to my question on February 27:

...the hon. member, both today and yesterday, has provided her interpretation of events. In fact, her insinuations and her accusations are false.

At the same time, that same minister and the Prime Minister continued to support the public servant who claimed, and has never retracted or explained to any member of Parliament, or clarified his comments, that the Indian government was behind the events that led to Mr. Atwal's attendance at the reception. This contradiction continued all last week, and it continues to this day, despite more evidence that the conspiracy theory may be bogus.

Mr. Atwal, at a press conference last week, confirmed that he asked the member for Surrey Centre for an invitation to the Prime Minister's event. We in the opposition have given the government ample opportunity to clarify this matter, and it refuses to do so.

Privilege

This contempt for the House is not unlike a matter that was raised in 2002. In 2002, another Liberal government refused to clarify the record, forcing the opposition to raise the matter as a question of privilege. It would seem that once again the opposition needs to take this extraordinary step and seek the authority of the House to cut through the contradictions and falsehoods to finally get to the truth.

In addition, the official opposition has dedicated its opposition day tomorrow to call on the Prime Minister to instruct Daniel Jean to appear before the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, to give the same courtesy to members of Parliament that he gave to the media about his government's theory regarding the Indian government's involvement in this matter.

● (1535)

It is my sincere hope that the Prime Minister will see fit to not show further contempt for this House and allow his official to at least treat members of Parliament the same as members of the press gallery.

In your ruling of yesterday, Mr. Speaker, while on an unrelated matter, you touched on the issue of respect that members of Parliament are expected to receive from the government and its officials in these situations. You said, Mr. Speaker:

...as Speaker, I understand the member for Abbotsford's frustration and the sense of disrespect that he feels in not having had priority access to a briefing on such a complex piece of legislation. In fact, the Chair not only finds this matter to be unfortunate, but also entirely avoidable.... There is no question that the work of members of Parliament is made more difficult without expeditious access to legislative information. Given this reality, there is a rightful expectation that those responsible for the information should do their utmost to ensure members' access to it. Not respecting this expectation does a disservice to all. It is particularly disconcerting when the government gives priority to the media over the members of Parliament.

On February 1, 2002, the Speaker ruled in a matter in regard to the former minister of national defence. The former hon. member for Portage—Lisgar alleged that the minister of national defence deliberately misled the House as to when he knew what prisoners taken by Canadian JTF2 troops had been handed over to the Americans. In support of that allegation, he cited the minister's responses in question period on two successive days. The Speaker considered the matter and found that there was a *prima facie* question of privilege. He said:

The authorities are consistent about the need for clarity in our proceedings and about the need to ensure the integrity of the information provided by the government to the House.

The authorities to which Speaker Milliken was referring included the following from *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, which states on page 115:

Misleading a Minister or a Member has...been considered a form of obstruction and thus a *prima facie* breach of privilege.

The Speaker, in 2002, accepted the minister's assertion that he had no intention to mislead the House and made the following statement. He said, "Nevertheless this remains a very difficult situation". The Speaker went on to say:

On the basis of the arguments presented by hon. members and in view of the gravity of the matter, I have concluded that the situation before us where the House is left with two versions of events is one that merits further consideration by an appropriate committee, if only to clear the air. I therefore invite the hon. member for Portage—Lisgar [ironically] to move his motion.

On February 25, 2015, the House leader of the official opposition raised a question of privilege regarding statements made in the House by the former member for Mississauga—Streetsville. The hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville had deliberately misled the House during debate on Bill C-23, the Fair Elections Act, when he stated that he had witnessed evidence of voter fraud first-hand. On February 24 and February 25, the member for Mississauga—Streetsville admitted that, contrary to his original claim, he had not actually witnessed what he originally claimed to have witnessed. The Speaker found that by taking something the member knew not to be true and presenting it as eye-witness evidence, something so egregious constituted contempt.

I believe we are faced with the same scenario today, except government members refuse to admit it, as the previous Liberal government refused to do. On March 3, 2015, the Speaker delivered his ruling, citing what Speaker Milliken was faced with in February 2002 when the then-minister of national defence provided contradictory information to the House. The Speaker went on to conclude:

In keeping with that precedent, I am prepared to accord the same courtesy to the member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

At the same time, the fact remains that the House continues to be seized of completely contradictory statements. This is a difficult position in which to leave members, who must be able to depend on the integrity of the information with which they are provided to perform their parliamentary duties.

Accordingly, in keeping with the precedent cited earlier in which Speaker Milliken indicated that the matter merited "...further consideration by an appropriate committee, if only to clear the air", I am prepared in this case for the same reason to allow the matter to be put to the House.

● (1540)

The House has been presented with several conflicting answers to one very simple question about the appearance of Jaspal Atwal at the event in India. This is a grave situation that has not had a satisfactory resolution.

Parliamentarians have a right to obtain accurate and non-conflicting information, even clarification, when asking questions of the government. If the media got this information, members of Parliament should have this clarification. In this instance, this has not occurred.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, if you find this to be a *prima facie* question of privilege, I am prepared to move the appropriate motion.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to thank the hon. House leader for the official opposition, the member for Portage—Lisgar, for her presentation today. She raised some really important issues. Obviously, we have some concerns also. Therefore, I would like to take the time to reflect on and go over some of the points that she put forward in the House today, and if need be, I will come back with my comments.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to review the comments that the opposition House leader has put on the record this afternoon, and we will return to you as quickly as we can.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. opposition House leader for raising the question.

The Budget

I look forward to hearing from the hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé as well as the parliamentary secretary, and I hope they will respond soon.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from March 20 consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Vancouver East.

I thought I might start my reflections on the budget just by noticing some things in the budget that I think are a step in the right direction. I am thinking specifically of the provisions for parental leave and of the now five days' paid leave for Canadians fleeing situations of domestic violence. That is good.

When the government announced this measure in the fall, it was three unpaid days. There was some great work by some of my colleagues on the NDP benches to point out that it would be hard to access for folks who are leaving difficult situations and do not have the luxury of missing paid days of work. I thought that was a positive change. For people in Manitoba, the province I represent, that now means they are covered both at the federal level and the provincial level, because the previous NDP government also introduced provisions for paid leave for folks fleeing domestic violence. It is good news for Manitobans to now be covered at both levels.

One of the major omissions of the budget, and it is important whether someone is looking at it from the point of view of fiscal responsibility or social justice, is the lack of serious action when it comes to going after tax evasion, whether that is through tax havens or other kinds of significant tax loopholes. On the fiscal responsibility side, that is lost revenue for the government that really ought to be contributing to balancing the books. On the social justice side, it is also money that can be spent on the kinds of things Canadians need, whether it is expanding their drug coverage through a national pharmacare plan or investing in affordable housing, which we know is a crisis for many Canadians across the country.

Whether we are looking at it from either of those sides, hemorrhaging that amount money off to other jurisdictions where we have special sweetheart deals is a serious problem. It is something I am sad to see the government did not take the opportunity to address. However, it is in keeping with the kind of sweetheart treatment the Liberals give a lot of big players, such as CEOs who continue to benefit from the CEO stock option tax loophole. This is infuriating for Canadians who are seeing the cost of housing and other important costs go up and who continue to watch the people at the top end of the earning spectrum save money on their taxes because they have the ability to be paid in stock options instead of by salary.

We see this special treatment when we think of financial consulting firms like KPMG, which have been reported to be right at the centre of some of the largest tax evasion schemes and yet are being treated with kid gloves by the government. We saw the kind of natural affinity that the finance minister has for the banking sector when there was controversy over the past year about the government depriving credible financial institutions like credit unions, all the credit unions across the country, from being able to use the language of banking services and banking, which is the common sense term Canadians use when they talk about making deposits, other kinds of investments, or getting their mortgage. They trust credit unions to do that. Credit unions do a good job of that. However, because the banks decided to undermine their competition and knew they had a friend in the finance minister, the finance minister was quick to jump when they said that maybe credit unions should not be able to use that language.

It is frustrating to see that kind of special treatment for banks when banks do not afford that same respect to the communities they serve. We are seeing that happen right now in Transcona, where the TD Bank, which has recorded the highest level of profits for any bank in Canada this year, is closing a local branch that has been the cornerstone of Transcona's downtown for decades and decades. TD is not saying it is because it was losing money at the branch. TD is saying that it wants to increase its overall profits across the country by 1% or a fraction of a per cent. It is closing branches in communities like Transcona all across the country regardless of the costs and the toll it takes on the people in those communities who have been faithful customers and want to be able to access in-person banking services in their community.

• (1545)

Contrast that with the credit unions which came under fire from the government in terms of using the language of banking and banking services that are responsible to the customers and are keeping local branches open, and doing that quite successfully from a financial point of view. The contrast is stark.

We have heard over a number of days now debate about the budget and we have heard it in question period. A theme of this budget, as reported by the Parliamentary Budget Officer, is the fact that, first of all, although having announced over \$186 billion in infrastructure money, most of which is to come long after this Parliament has come and gone, and hopefully long after the government has come and gone, despite having announced that big number, there is no plan for how to spend what it is calling a record amount of money for infrastructure. That is totally irresponsible, for one thing, but it is also important to note, when I talk about that money coming later after the next election, that of the small amount of money that is actually to be spent in this Parliament, the PBO reported that approximately 25% of that much smaller amount of infrastructure money will be allowed to lapse instead of actually being invested in our communities.

The Budget

We are living that right now in Winnipeg where Red River College, which is our biggest community college by far, wanted to make an investment in Winnipeg's downtown through a new innovation centre. That is a centre that is meant to help start-up businesses in the tech sector, among others, and to have a good collaborative relationship between the college and the private sector in Winnipeg's downtown. It has had to put a hold on the tenders for the \$90-million project because of the \$40 million that was announced to support it by the federal government. That money has a quite unrealistic deadline in terms of when they expect completion, when the federal government is demanding that the project be completed, so much so that the college has had to put a hold on those tenders.

What that means is the potential for missing out on a total \$90-million investment in post-secondary education right in the heart of Winnipeg's downtown, which would also have an important economic benefit to Winnipeg's downtown. When we hear about the lapsed funding, we often hear from the government it is because it takes time to finish projects and the receipts have not come in. In this case we see that quite clearly, and I am sure it is not the only instance across the country where it is actually unrealistic parameters being put on the project by the federal government that is the problem.

I understand that the Minister of Natural Resources, who is the member for Winnipeg South Centre, has been trying to advocate within his own government for that project, or at least that is my understanding, and members opposite can correct me if I am wrong on that. However, I think that signals a problem that he is not being taken seriously enough within his own government. Why it is that the only cabinet minister for Manitoba's say-so would not be good enough, or that the seven Liberals that represent Winnipeg ridings would not be able to have influence within the government is troubling.

I would forgive Winnipeggers for wondering about the value of electing seven Liberals to represent a city if it is going to mean that they get taken for granted and one of the major infrastructure projects committed to by the federal government does not get the follow-through they deserve. They may be wondering that, or they may be wondering if maybe this is a problem with the way the Liberals have set up the regional economic development agencies where, instead of having ministers from the region being responsible for economic development activities, it is all consolidated under one minister, in this case one from southern Ontario, who does not understand projects in Manitoba and does not understand the needs of Winnipeg, and is clearly ignoring his colleague from Manitoba instead of moving ahead with a very valuable project.

I say all of that just to show that when we talk about lapsed funding and infrastructure, the numbers sometimes are quite big, and it can be quite abstract and kind of hard to get one's head around. However, those are the kinds of very concrete problems that those numbers represent in Winnipeg and across the country when we start talking about lapsed infrastructure funding.

I am very sorry that I do not have more time to get into more of the issues with the budget. I have tried to show how some of those issues come right back home to affect us. As much as it sounds like bickering here in Ottawa, or as much as the numbers may be hard to

get our heads around, they really do have real consequences for us at home.

• (1550)

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my hon. colleague if he understands that the prosperity and standard of living Canadians enjoy today had earlier been based on our natural resources, such as forestry products, fossil fuels, and minerals, and to an extent on basic industries such as aluminum, steel, autos, and aviation. However, things are changing today.

About 25 to 30 years back, Canada was number two or three in the world in aluminum production, yet in the last 25 to 30 years, we have not seen one single new smelter. The future for Canadian jobs, today and tomorrow, is in the knowledge-based economy.

I would like to know if the member appreciates the kinds of investments we are making in the innovation and technology sectors and in leading the knowledge-based economy, which is creating a level playing field globally.

• (1555)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I understand quite well the importance of the information economy that is emerging and the role of innovation. That is why one of the major themes of my speech centred on a new innovation centre for Winnipeg, spearheaded by Red River College, which had over \$40 million in federal money announced and which the federal government itself is now putting in jeopardy by holding the college to an unrealistic deadline.

We are actually watching that member's government observe the collapse of a good project. I hope it will change its mind on this. It is important that it does. It committed that money, but now, because of unrealistic deadlines, it is not going ahead. The tenders the college was putting out for its innovation centre have been withdrawn because of uncertainty about the funding coming through if it does not meet what is an unrealistic deadline. That situation was created by a long delay by the federal government, within its own program, in approving the project in the first place. That is the truth. It was one of the last projects approved. It took somewhere in the vicinity of a year to approve that project. That is part of the reason for the delay. If the government takes innovation seriously, it should allow the project to proceed.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Elmwood—Transcona for his comments, especially on infrastructure. I was watching the Parliamentary Budget Officer last night comment that of the \$182-billion historic investment the Liberal government announced, \$90 billion was actually from holdover announcements and investments by the previous government, and \$70 billion could not actually be found.

My colleague was commenting on issues with his college. Yesterday I commented that in Alberta, we are underfunded by 20% per capita for transit infrastructure. I noticed that Manitoba, despite all these Liberal MPs, is underfunded by 43% per capita for infrastructure funding. I wonder if perhaps he could comment on the unfairness of how the government distributes its money.

The Budget

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, yes, this is a real problem. It has been a recurring theme that among our Liberal representatives from Manitoba, we do not have the kinds of champions we need to get what the Liberals are calling historic levels of funding.

I think there is some fun with numbers there. If the government were to announce federal spending into the year 2075, it would have a historic number. Whether it would have anything realistic or useful for a contemporary political debate would be another question entirely, but it certainly would have a large number. By its own admission, or according to its own claim, it is a historic number, but a lot of that money does not reach Manitoba. I would say to my hon. friend that we need Liberal champions to get that money into Manitoba.

There are some other issues and why some of that money is not making it to Manitoba. In particular, when the member mentioned transit, I thought of our Conservative government in Manitoba, which just brutally slashed funding to Winnipeg Transit and has apparently been sitting on a report on the electrification of its bus fleet for over 20 months, while saying that it did not have it.

There are some deep political issues when it comes to transit in Winnipeg right now. As much as we might like to, they cannot all be blamed on the Liberal Party of Canada.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have had the opportunity to speak to the budget in previous years, and I often refer to budgets as showing what a government's priorities are, and more importantly, what a government's priorities are not.

The inequality gap between Canada's wealthiest and the rest of Canadians has never been greater in our country. According to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, as of 2016, Canada's 100 highest paid CEOs now earn over 209 times more than the average Canadian worker. This year, Canada's CEOs could have stopped working at 10:57 a.m. on January 2 and taken the rest of the year off and they would still make as much as an average Canadian this year. Members can think about that for a minute.

Reducing this inequality is simply not a priority of the government. Despite promising to close the stock option deduction loophole, which is projected to cost some \$840 million this year alone, the government, under pressure from its wealthy friends, abandoned that promise. The finance minister has suggested that this is because small businesses and start-ups use this as a legitimate form of compensation. However, the data shows that this is not the case.

The CCPA found that 99% of benefits from the stock option deduction went to the top 10% of income earners in Canada. It found that, "In essence, there is no benefit from this tax expenditure to anyone making less than \$215,000 a year." These are not employees of small start-ups. These people are the government's wealthy backers and fellow French villa owners. This is just one tax loophole.

Unfortunately, despite its promise and its posturing as a progressive force, the government has left several of these highly regressive tax policies on the books. It has also failed to take real

action on the abuse of tax havens. Tackling these issues is simply not the government's priority.

For Vancouver East, housing remains the number one issue for many of our residents. It has long been declared a basic right by the United Nations, and Canada has signed and ratified a number of international human rights treaties that identify the right to adequate housing as a fundamental human right.

The NDP introduced Bill C-325 to enshrine the right to housing for Canadians in the Canadian Bill of Rights. To my dismay, every Liberal MP joined hands with the Conservatives to vote against that bill.

At a town hall I hosted, many attendees agreed on the necessity of a real, national, affordable housing program; the need for renewed and ongoing federal housing subsidies; the need for a long-term solution, not two-year transitional measures, for co-op housing; the importance of the Liberals honouring their election promise of incentives to build rental housing; and the need for dedicated funding for aboriginal housing.

The Liberals promised to bring back a national housing strategy, and there was much fanfare, by the way, with that announcement. However, what we learned was that 90% of the funding will not actually be spent until after the next election. The issue of housing affordability constitutes a crisis, with real, immediate needs, and the government's response was to say that it will get back to us after the next election. Honestly, we do not deal with a crisis by spending over 90% of promised funding after the next election.

The NDP has urged the government to bring the funding forward by increasing housing spending to \$1.58 billion in budget 2018 instead of in 2021. Sadly, budget 2018 failed to acknowledge this important call for action. According to the government, tax loopholes for the richest must continue. Funding for affordable housing can wait.

● (1600)

Homelessness costs Canada \$7 billion annually, \$1 billion in B.C. alone. Every dollar invested in providing housing has been found to yield over \$2 in savings in areas like health care, the justice system, and other social supports. Each dollar invested in housing construction has also been found to result in \$1.52 in GDP growth. These are investments that pay for themselves and simply should not be made to wait.

I had the opportunity, when speaking in support of Bill C-15, to draw attention to the work of the Vancouver East community and what it is doing in trying to obtain UNESCO world heritage site designation for Vancouver's Chinatown. With Canada having just celebrated its 150th birthday, partnering and investing in preserving heritage sites like this would have been welcome.

The Budget

B.C. was able to join Confederation through the labour and sacrifices made by Chinese railway workers, and 2017 marked the 70th anniversary of Chinese-Canadians winning the right to vote. Vancouver's Chinatown is number three on the Heritage Vancouver Society's top 10 watch-list of endangered sites. It is on the top 10 endangered places list of the National Trust for Canada.

Relentless development threatens the area more and more each year. Our community was hoping that the federal government would get behind our UNESCO push and provide preservation funding. There was not anything in budget 2018 for this important work. I hope that in future budgets, there is recognition from the federal government to help revitalize Vancouver's Chinatown and Chinatowns across the country.

On another critical issue, there is not an indigenous community in Canada that has not been touched by the systemic racism and sexism that allow indigenous women to be stolen from their loved ones and allow indigenous men like Colten Boushie to be killed without repercussions.

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls has been riddled with challenges since the beginning. The inquiry is the result of decades of work and advocacy by families and survivors. I feel very strongly that it must put the needs of families and survivors at the forefront. It is also vital that organizations that have been granted standing because of their expertise on the conditions and practices that cause and perpetuate the murders and disappearances of indigenous women and girls are also heard by the inquiry. To date, there has been no information regarding the process or the timeline for these experts and the institutional hearings of the inquiry. This is not acceptable. "No more stolen sisters" cannot just be a slogan.

Recently I had the opportunity to participate in the massive rally to stop Kinder Morgan. This call for action was led by indigenous leaders from across the country. Thousands gathered at Forest Grove park to send a clear message to the Prime Minister: no consent, no pipeline.

With eagles soaring above us, the leadership spoke eloquently and passionately about future generations and how it is our responsibility to "warrior up" to protect those who cannot speak for themselves. Their powerful and inspirational message united all of us: with one heart and one mind, let us all work together to stop Kinder Morgan.

•(1605)

The issue of pipelines brings us to the need for real action for a just transition to a sustainable future. What about bringing in a strategy to expand the use of solar panels for homes and public buildings? There is nothing like that in the budget.

On a critical issue, the government has also finally decided to provide the Immigration and Refugee Board with some funding to address the strain on the system caused by the significant increase in asylum claims in Canada. Unfortunately, because of how long the government put its head in the sand on the irregular crossings, this new funding will address the issue for only two years. That is not nearly enough. The added funding will only ensure that 18,000 cases are processed. At a time when there are over 40,000 cases in the

backlog, which is increasing by 2,100 cases per month, this is not sufficient.

This budget does not address the real needs of Canadians. Action is what really matters. It takes courage to act, and I call on the government to act.

•(1610)

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, millions of working Canadians do not have a workplace pension plan. Our government started in previous years a historic agreement with the provinces to change the CPP.

In this budget, we have initiated steps to consider and look into universal pharmacare. We have also introduced the Canada workers benefit, with an investment of \$1 billion, to help about two million working Canadians. It is also expected, under this particular program, that about 700,000 low-income working Canadians will come out of poverty in under two years.

Could the hon. member tell us what her views are on this particular program?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, if the member reads the fine print of the budget, he would note that in fact the CPP changes will not kick in for another 50 years. I suspect that I will be dead by then. Notwithstanding that, for real Canadians who need that help today, it is not going to happen for them.

I invite the member to come to Vancouver East and walk the streets. I will take him to Downtown Eastside to see the people who are homeless today in our communities. Telling them that the funding will flow to them after the next election is not going to help solve the problem.

The government likes to talk about equality and women's rights. Where is the funding in this budget that would back up those words? We do not actually see money that would flow. Talk is cheap.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a question for my colleague about housing. Actually, I just want to give her more time to talk about housing, because she knows a lot about that crisis.

I was just talking with people in my riding, in Penticton, who have been working on the housing crisis there. They are not only having trouble getting funding to tackle the housing crisis; they are having trouble hiring people to work on it, because they cannot find housing for the workers who are working on the housing crisis.

I just want to give the member some time to add more information on housing that the government really needs to hear.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his comments about what is going on in his community.

The Budget

We all see this, all across Canada. The reality is that housing is so expensive, so unaffordable that more and more people are left out in the cold. We have people who are homeless and who cannot find a shelter. We have people in shelters who cannot find a home.

One does not have to be a rocket scientist to figure this out. The issue of housing and homelessness is absolutely resolvable. What it needs is for the government to make that commitment, to invest in housing, to build housing, and to ensure that people are supported so they can be successful.

The issue around housing is not just for people who are on income assistance. Some people say that of course people who are on income assistance cannot find housing. The reality is that there are a lot of people who are living precariously because they are making minimum wage, some holding several minimum wage jobs trying to keep afloat. So many Canadians are now paying more than 30% of their total income toward housing. In fact, many pay 50% or 60% of their total income toward housing.

How is it possible that the government thinks it is okay, in the national strategy that it announced with great fanfare, that 90% of that money will not actually flow until after the next election?

By the way, having worked in the non-profit sector, I know that to even get a housing project off the ground, after getting through all the zoning, all the permits, and all the requirements, would take at least three to five years, if the money was floated.

How many people can wait until after the next election, another five to seven years, to get a roof over their head? Government members should ask themselves whether that would be acceptable if their families were out in the street today. If it is not, I would urge the government, instead of just talking about it and bragging about it, to take real action, do something about it, and put its money where its mouth is.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to support budget 2018. I will be splitting my time with the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Budget 2018 includes important investments in science and investigator-led research, a number of measures to advance gender equality from pay equity to improved parental leave, a nature fund to improve conservation efforts, new support for international development assistance, and significant funding for indigenous communities, including to address the Human Rights Tribunal child welfare decisions.

These priorities are a reflection of what I heard from my constituents in Beaches—East York, and what we heard from Canadians across our country. I could spend a good deal of time on any one of these measures, but today I will speak to a more general question: What does a smart and compassionate tax and benefit system look like?

Conservative opposition MPs occasionally act as if they do not believe in taxation at all. Under both Liberal and Conservative federal governments, there have been major transfers to provinces, including for infrastructure; major transfers to persons, including for seniors and children's benefits; and significant spending on our civil service.

As Oliver Wendell Holmes long ago noted, “Taxes are—

● (1615)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Just a moment. The question is whether there is quorum in the House. We will do the count.

We do have quorum in the House now. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Beaches—East York.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: As I was saying, Madam Speaker, while Conservative opposition MPs occasionally act as if they do not believe in taxation at all, under both Liberal and Conservative governments there have been major transfers to provinces, including for infrastructure; major transfers to persons, including for seniors and children's benefits; and significant spending on our civil service. As Oliver Wendell Holmes long ago noted, taxes are the price we pay for a civilized society. We should be able to have a thoughtful discussion in this House about how taxes can be fairest and most efficient.

Not all taxes are created equal. For example, as far as revenue generation is concerned, consumption taxes are most efficient. Laval professor and economist Stephen Gordon has written that “taxes on consumption are generally found to be less harmful to economic growth than taxes on income.” A thoughtful deliberation on taxes might actually see us move toward higher GST levels matched by broad-based personal income tax cuts. To address the potential regressive nature of the GST, we already have a system of GST tax credits to offset costs for low-income individuals, and those credits could be increased as needed.

Other taxes are not designed for revenue generation at all but instead are to internalize in the cost of a good or service the negative externality the product or activity imposes on society. In *The Tragedy of the Commons*, Garrett Hardin described how the rational pursuit of self-interest by individual actors can negatively impact the long-term sustainability of shared resources. The classic example, in his case, is unregulated grazing on common land. As a rational being, each herdsman seeks to maximize his gain. What is the utility to me of adding one more animal to my herd? As a positive component, I would receive all the profits. The negative component, the function of the additional overgrazing created by one more animal, would be shared by all, so I would bear a fraction of the cost. In Hardin's words, “each and every rational herdsman... is locked into a system that compels him to increase his herd without limit in a world that is limited.” He then aptly applies that same argument to our environment and pollution.

The Budget

The same market failure exists with respect to climate change. While private property is usually a good solution to this market failure, Hardin acknowledged that the air and water surrounding us cannot readily be fenced, and thus different means are required. To tackle climate change, those different means are carbon pricing and regulation. As the Ecofiscal Commission concluded, however, carbon pricing is the simplest and most cost-effective way to lower greenhouse gas emissions, so it should do most of the heavy lifting in reducing our emissions. The commission has also rightly highlighted the importance of stringency. We need to continue to steadily increase our carbon price beyond 2022, and well past \$50 per tonne.

In keeping with this evidence, budget 2018 states:

Central to Canada's plan to fight climate change and grow the economy is the understanding that pollution has a real, tangible cost... [T]he Government of Canada is committed to putting a price on carbon pollution.

Further, our government has committed to revenue neutrality. Budget 2018 states:

The direct revenue from the carbon price on pollution under the federal system will be returned to the province or territory of origin.

With this in mind, carbon pricing cannot sensibly be described as a tax grab. Rather, it is a corrective tax for a major market failure to address the negative externalities imposed on our planet by GHG emissions. I hope that we are all willing to engage in these tax debates more thoughtfully going forward.

On this and on many other issues, it is not possible to find consensus in this House. It is more common to find disagreement, and if one is optimistic, one simply hopes for reasonable disagreement. Where we do find agreement across party lines on certain issues, we should prioritize them, particularly if we can improve Canadians' lives in a fundamental way. To this end, I believe that we can build consensus in this House to improve basic income supports for Canadians in need. A key example of this in budget 2018 is our introduction of the new Canada workers benefit, a more generous and accessible basic income support for the working poor.

Specifically, the new Canada workers benefit would increase the similar older benefit by \$500 million per year, starting in 2019, which would come on the heels of a \$250-million annual increase previously. Together, this would amount to more than a 60% increase in funding for the benefit overall. Importantly, the new benefit would also expand eligibility criteria so that more people would be able to access the support. Last, the benefit would now be automatic. All Canadians who were eligible and who had filed their taxes would receive the basic income support by default.

This is an example of smart government. Behavioural economics has taught us the power of defaults. The change to the Canada workers benefit would embrace the lesson of Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein that small nudges, changes to choice architecture, can alter people's behaviour to their benefit, without restricting their freedom or changing their incentives.

Tens of thousands of Canadians would now receive a benefit they should have already been receiving, an estimated \$200 million in annual benefits. Finance estimates that 300,000 more Canadians would receive the new Canada workers benefit than its older version

because of the expanded eligibility criteria and automatic enrolment. Finance further estimates that 70,000 people would be lifted out of poverty.

● (1620)

This builds on the success of other basic income support programs that our government has strengthened, making an important impact on poverty reduction and helping to build a more humane and compassionate society.

According to a Library of Parliament analysis conducted at the request of my office, in 2017, largely as a result of changes introduced by the government in 2016 to children's benefits and the guaranteed income supplement for seniors, it is estimated that 695,000 individuals will be lifted out of low income. This number will continue to climb with the indexation of the CCB and the new Canada workers benefit.

In addition to building on the success of other basic income support programs, the new Canada workers benefit builds on what came before it, the working income tax benefit. The WITB was first introduced in a federal budget by then Liberal finance minister and now public safety minister, the member for Regina—Wascana. However, it became a reality in 2007, through the work of then Conservative finance minister, Jim Flaherty. If we fast-forward to last year's NDP leadership race, the member for Timmins—James Bay was calling for a significant increase and expansion of the WITB. In short, we see support for the program across the political spectrum, and a real potential for consensus. If we want to work across party lines and together make a major impact on the lives of Canadians in need, we should keep calling for an increase to basic income support programs, and especially the Canada workers benefit.

Together, we spend over \$50 billion every year on benefits for the elderly through OAS and GIS. We spend approximately \$23 billion every year on the Canada child benefit, and the GST tax credit is almost \$4 billion annually. However, after improvements to the Canada workers benefit, it will still be just over \$2 billion per year. There is room to make a bigger impact by continuing to expand this benefit in future years, and I hope there is room to build consensus in the House toward that goal. After all, there is little that is more fundamental to a person's life than economic security, and we have a very high proportion of Canadians living in poverty who are working. Basic income support programs like the CCB, the Canada workers benefit, and the guaranteed income supplement have proven to be efficient and effective.

The Budget

Dostoevsky wrote, “Money is coined liberty”. No doubt there is an emancipatory value to these basic income programs. Freedom from the stress of income insecurity, freedom from worrying about having the basic necessities of shelter, food, and clothing, also means the freedom to pursue one's happiness and the freedom to refuse harmful employment and other exploitative relationships.

We know that direct transfers to persons based on income tax filings are low-cost and efficient. We know that low-income Canadians spend their benefits on necessities, and that such spending can play a role in economic growth. We know there are serious costs to poverty for our society and for individuals. While there are important pilot projects going on around the world, and here in Ontario, we know from our own federal experience with the GIS, the CCB, and now the Canada workers benefit that basic income support programs work.

We know there is an opportunity for consensus across the aisle on this issue, to fundamentally improve the lives of Canadians in need in a way that is both smart and fair. We should all demand more of such smart and fair governance. Our government has made incredibly important progress on this file, but there is much more work for us to do.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for a very interesting discussion of policy issues, as always. In fact, there was probably more policy analysis in the last 10 minutes from my colleague than one can find in the entire budget 2018.

I would like to ask my colleague about his thoughts on the Parliamentary Budget Officer's observations and criticisms of the lack of detail within budget 2018, and the lack of a plan for infrastructure, for example. I wonder whether he might agree with me that the most notable aspect of budget 2018 is the lack of economic analysis.

• (1625)

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Madam Speaker, I certainly would not agree with the latter comment by my colleague, but I will certainly use his first comment in relation to my analysis in one of my householders.

To answer my colleague more seriously, I am also concerned about a lack of detail, and I would encourage my ministerial colleagues to provide any detail they can, not only to the PBO but to the House.

However, I would note that there have been major funding announcements for the city of Toronto, my riding being one part of the city. Oftentimes, the money is ready to flow but the city is not ready to spend the money. A good example is the \$600 million that has been allocated by our government to further the promise made by the previous government in relation to the Scarborough subway, but as we know, that is nowhere near ready to be under way. Therefore, the fault does not necessarily lie with the government.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member talked about the importance of climate action, and he noted some actions with respect to that.

His government has approved the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion, which is contrary to what the Prime Minister had said

during the campaign. He promised British Columbians and Canadians that he would not approve the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion under Harper's process. That is exactly what the government has done.

Therefore, in light of the issues around climate action, would the member agree with the decision of his government?

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Madam Speaker, I have concerns with any pipeline approval that obviously increases substantively the potential for emissions where we do not have an overarching plan to take into account those emissions and meet our climate targets.

Cancelling pipelines can be very costly to our economy. Therefore, so long as we have a plan, and I would view carbon pricing as the appropriate plan, if we are to approve a pipeline such as this, or other pipelines that are necessarily going to make it hard to meet our obligations under Paris, we need to ensure that the carbon price and other actions we take are stringent enough to ensure we meet our goals. If the approval of these pipelines in the end undermines our obligations under Paris, then we have failed in our task.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Madam Speaker, my friend from Beaches—East York knows I think a great deal of his riding, as I do the member.

The member is a policy person. Therefore, on the climate change file, would he agree with me that rather than imposing the price of carbon through tax on seniors with fixed incomes or on families he has been advocating for that are already struggling, would it not be better to incentivize large emitters and say that the Government of Canada will take less in tax from them if they do something that is a social good? Rather than a stick of a carbon tax hitting the most vulnerable, could we not solve the same problem by providing a carrot to the emitters? The one group that would have to sacrifice would be the government by taking in more tax revenue. Would that not be a pragmatic solution to climate change?

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Madam Speaker, not only do I disagree with the member, but carbon pricing, as I have said, is the most effective policy. That is not just me saying that. Virtually every intelligent economist in Canada and around the world says that. Whether it is cap and trade or carbon pricing through a tax, it is the fundamental, most cost-effective way of doing so.

More than that, this is not a cash grab. I have said previously in the House that this should be revenue neutral directed at citizens. The government subsequently made a decision to make it revenue neutral and provinces could then determine it. If B.C. wants to put its money directly to its citizens but Nova Scotia and Quebec want to do something different, it is up to those provinces to make those determinations. However, certainly at the federal level, money will not be kept by the government. Instead it will flow back to the provinces.

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Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Beaches—East York for splitting his time with me. More specifically, I would like to thank the government House leader. As one can imagine, it has been a difficult thing for me over the years to obtain speaking slots on important bills. I went too quickly on my last occasion, where the Liberals offered me a speaking slot, because it was on the application of time allocation on Bill C-69, an omnibus bill. It was certainly egregious to have applied time allocation and to have made the bill omnibus in the first place. However, there is no question, and it bears repeating, that the spirit of co-operation to members on the other side such as myself, who are not likely to give a speech cheering the government on, means even more when the decision is made that a Liberal member of Parliament will split speaking time to allow me to speak to the issues before us.

In the instance of this budget speech, there is much to like in this budget. Before I get to that, let me just step back.

This is a concern I have been raising for years, going back to my election in 2011. It has been some time since we have had a budget that one could honestly describe as a budget. By this, I mean in the old days, say before 2006, when I would go to budget lock ups on behalf of Sierra Club of Canada. I would open the budget and would be able to find a budget for every department in the Government of Canada. I would be able to see what it spent last year and what it would spend next year. It would be easy to verify if there was an announcement in the budget for x hundreds of millions of dollars for thus and such, if it was new money or reprofiled old money. We no longer know any of these things. There is no budget in the budget.

It is a fundamental principle of Westminster parliamentary democracy that Parliament controls the public purse. That is now a laughable anachronism. It is anachronistic to imagine we actually control the public purse because we cannot see into it. I started describing this in the Harper era, but the budget every spring should be called the “annual, thick, spring brochure”. It is very thick and it is full of good ideas and lots of good rhetoric. However, it does not tell us the revenue coming in, the expenses going out, and the bottom line. This is something a basic budget in every household knows.

We know we have a deficit and we know the bottom line. Beyond that, we have to wait for supplementary estimates and other things that receive very cursory review in this place.

I make the plea again. I have noted things in this budget that are truly puzzling, but they are not explained. At page 324, the Government of Canada is projecting virtually no increase in spending over a five-year period. There is no explanation for it, but it is almost magical that right now there will be \$95 billion in spending this year. In 2023, it will be \$97 billion. There is no explanation offered for how, over a five-year period, spending stays virtually flat.

I could be wrong, and we need to dive into this as there may be more explanations, but it appears to me, from reading the charts on page 311, as if there are \$20 billion found in savings to pay for some of the new programs in this budget, but it is not explained. There really is not much budget in the budget.

However, there are good things that will be funded, and I welcome those.

Let me mention the good things before I dive into the things that worry me.

The most important to the conscience of the nation is the commitment to fully implement the order of the Human Rights Tribunal in relation to the treatment of first nations children. This is fundamental, it is important, and it is stated in the budget that it is \$1.4 billion in new money.

I congratulate the Minister of Indigenous Services, our former minister of health. I hope she has all our support in the task ahead. She has been very candid in laying out the challenges of providing clean drinking water, ensuring every indigenous person has access to affordable housing, that every indigenous child has the same access to health care and educational opportunities as non-indigenous children. This budget goes a long way to make that so. Money alone will not do this. We need to see this in a non-partisan light as fundamental.

● (1630)

Another thing I was pleased to see, after two years of Liberal administration, is this. I have been disheartened to see our commitment to overseas development assistance falling. We have a commitment, which came to us from our former prime minister, Lester B. Pearson, that every country on earth that is a donor country should contribute 0.7% of its GDP, gross domestic product, to overseas development assistance. The closest we ever got to that was under former Prime Minister Mulroney. We went to 0.45%. When the new Prime Minister came in 2015, we were at 0.26%, and we dropped to 0.24%. Therefore, I am really pleased to see in this budget the first new money to overseas development assistance, a \$2 billion commitment over the next five years.

I am pleased to see changes to reverse some of the damage done by the Conservatives to those recipients of seasonal employment insurance. Many industries are seasonal, and people who have to get employment insurance more than once in their lifetime are not recidivists who need to be punished. They are people who work in the tourism or forest industries. We need to revisit that, and I would encourage the government to go further than it has.

Of course, we have seen a substantial commitment to the expansion of biodiversity protection to nature, and some money to the science of studying whales. I hope we are not studying them as they move to extinction. However, \$1.3 billion over five years certainly must be noted and noted with approval.

We have seen improvements in this budget in commitments to actual science.

I will never forget the words of the 2012 budget. It is terrible that I remember verbatim the words of Harper's budgets. In 2012, it was stated that money from the federal government to science must be for projects that were “business, land, and industry-friendly”, in other words, no such thing as intellectual inquiry and basic fundamental research. Therefore, I am pleased to see that is gone by the board.

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Most important, I am pleased to see a commitment, with no money, to pursue pharmacare for Canada. However, the Minister of Finance's comments immediately afterward suggests the Liberals do not understand the commitment.

Where am I disheartened, and I am fundamentally disheartened by this budget?

One thing we had been promised for small business was more clarity around the change in rules. It is true, and credit where credit is due to the Minister of Finance, that the controversial anti-small business provisions were eliminated. However, there is still a lot of uncertainty for small business about how income sprinkling will work. It said to not apply to those in the service sector, but that is not defined. Therefore, I would urge the government to consider giving the one-year delay in implementation so family businesses can sort this out, because it is not all that clear. They could be penalized a few years down the road when they are audited.

A second area where it was not quite what was promised is this. In October there had been a commitment that past savings accumulated by small business and family-held businesses would not be prejudiced by this, that there would not be retroactivity. However, when we really look at these passive investments, they are not really grandfathered, because they can boot that small business out of the small business tax rate and have a really large impact on their effective taxes. That needs to be revisited.

However, I am really horrified by the fact that in the year 2018 we have a budget with nothing new to address the climate crisis. In fact, we have some weakening of resolve. We were told initially that there would be a carbon price in place by 2018. The language we now find on page 151 of the budget is, "The Government will review each system", referring to provincial systems, "and implement the federal system in whole or in part on January 1, 2019." This is a very significant commitment, virtually the only one made by the Liberals in their election platform, and it is slipping into the distant horizon.

I also worry because another commitment made in the platform has not been acted on, which is to eliminate fossil fuel subsidies. We cannot keep subsidizing with tax dollars the very thing we are trying to reduce, which is the emissions of fossil fuels.

I was disappointed with respect to the budgets in 2016 and in 2017. In 2018, I am almost giving up. The Liberal government is capable of looking back to the budget of 2005, which was full of great climate programs, such as eco-energy retrofits, very popular job creators to fight greenhouse gases. We need to have an energy-efficiency revolution. I cannot find it here. We should be building the east-west electricity grid. It is not mentioned here. We are not seeing the programs to incentivize getting renewable energy for homeowners and small business, or for energy-efficient vehicles and electric vehicles. I ask the government to look again. It has to do more on climate.

•(1635)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before we go to questions and comments, it is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Calgary Rocky Ridge, Taxation; the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf

Islands, Rail Transportation; and the hon. member for Vancouver East, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

•(1640)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the concerns that the leader of the Green Party brings and raises consistently in regard to environmental issues. I like to believe that we have a government that has been very sensitive with respect to the environment, including incorporating it into all three budgets that we have presented.

My question is in regard to the social planning that has taken place. In this budget we see the Canada workers benefit. It is a take-off of another program, but we are seeing it greatly enhanced, which will allow many low-income individuals to receive that much more money back at the end of the fiscal year or for taxation purposes, thereby assisting those individuals who need that extra assistance in the work environment. When we look at that program in this budget or look at the Canada child benefit program, or the guaranteed income supplement program, these are all programs that have really helped put more money in the pockets of individuals who need that money. I am interested in the member's thoughts on those types of programs.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, first let me say parenthetically that when I speak of the climate crisis, I am not speaking of an environmental issue. The environment is involved, but it is no longer fundamental in the same way that drowning is very rarely described as a water issue. This is a matter of life and death. It is a security threat. We are not dealing with it as a security threat. We are dealing with it as one more thing, a bauble on the tree that we can attend to now and then.

That may have been acceptable in 1995 or 1996. Even in 2005 it was too late for that. I lament it from the position of someone who is terrified of what will happen if we continue sleepwalking to the precipice of the climate crisis.

To the parliamentary secretary's point, absolutely there is much that has been done to improve the status of people who are low income. I like the national housing program. It is taking a long time to get roofs over people's heads, but at least the federal government is back in housing and looking at low-income housing. I agree the child benefit is better, but in a gender budget, where is the national program that we had in 2005 for universal child care in Canada?

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her concern around climate change, which is something that I am concerned with every day here in this place. I am very concerned with the government's putting things off, year by year, into the future, where it will be more of a cost to our children.

The Budget

I would like to give the member more time to talk about things like the eco-energy retrofit program that was such a successful program under the previous government, which leveraged billions of dollars. Canadian consumers liked it. Canadian homeowners liked it, and the business and builders' associations liked it. Everyone benefited and the environment benefited as well.

When I talk to representatives from Germany, Norway, and Sweden about subsidies for electric vehicles, they cannot believe Canada is not doing anything in that regard. I want to give the member more time to talk about some of the possibilities.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, the list of things we can do to stimulate the economy while reducing greenhouse gases is very long, and they are proven technologies.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities, through its partners and climate protection program, has a litany of examples of where municipal buildings were built that circulated cold water through the building in summer to advance on the need for air conditioning and reduce electricity costs, and also circulated warm piping through. There are so many examples of the use of heat pumps and the use of better insulation, which saves money while reducing greenhouse gases and creating jobs. That is the true meaning of the economy and the environment going hand in hand.

To have an inconsistent statement like, "I can build more pipelines but because I am good person, therefore, the environment and the economy go hand in hand", those kinds of meaningless bromides do violence to these concepts that are well understood. When one does something that actually reduces greenhouse gases and creates jobs, then the environment and the economy go hand in hand.

The environment and the economy are not going hand in hand when we build new fossil fuel infrastructure and incentivize more greenhouse gases at a moment when a moral responsibility should be on all political leadership globally to redouble efforts. As things stand in Canada, we are nowhere near our Paris targets.

• (1645)

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Banff—Airdrie.

The easiest thing for a government to do is to spend money, because it is not its money. When cabinet ministers show up in communities with speeches and announcements, it is not that they are donating the money out of their own pockets. It is that the government has made a political decision to spend taxpayers' money on a particular expenditure.

There is nothing nefarious about this practice, except in the case where the government of the day starts spending money it does not have and has no rationale on why it is downloading that debt onto the next generation.

If we are looking for reasons for why spending is out of control, I suggest we look at how the government wastes taxpayers' money on outrageous items, such as a giant rubber duck, a temporary skating rink, or an international trip that had very foggy expected outcomes. I have always said that when the pennies are watched, the dollars will take care of themselves. Politicians need to be reminded, on a constant basis, that money does not grow on trees. It does not

magically appear out of thin air, and budgets do not balance themselves.

The government has increased spending by 20% in its first three years, and there is no evidence that it created any growth in the Canadian economy. Just 2% of additional spending over the five years up to 2020 is on genuine efficiency-enhancing infrastructure that would increase productivity. I know the phrase "fiscal responsibility" does not exactly roll off the tongue or elicit great emotional responses, but I believe it should be the mantra of every member of Parliament.

The money that any level of government spends comes from taxing the people who create it through their own blood, sweat, and tears. People do not willingly give their money to the government. We actually have to pass legislation that mandates it. To put a face on these individuals who provide the government with its funding, we can just walk across the street and look at the individuals working at the Tim Hortons, the shoe shop, the Hallmark store, and the local pub. They literally are in the very shadow of the Parliament Buildings, as they are across Canada.

Now when a government is not collecting enough taxes for its planned spending, it just goes out and borrows it, or in the Liberals' case, it raises taxes and goes out and borrows it. We do not need to go far to see an example of this sort of behaviour. It is in the budget we are debating here today.

Make no mistake, governments need to collect taxes to pay for the society we want to create. Those tax dollars pay for our roads, highways, schools, and hospitals. My argument is not that a government should not have the resources to carry out its fiduciary duty to its citizens, it is that the Liberal government has no sense of purpose in running up massive deficits. The country is not in a recession. There are no real economic arguments to spend more than they are bringing in, and worst of all, there is no end in sight. This is the dilemma in which Canadians find themselves.

Every government is going to receive way more asks for funding than it could possibly be able to implement. The thorn in every taxpayer's side is that the Liberal government's priorities are questionable, and that is being generous with what some of the other phrases are that could be used.

Case in point is when convicted terrorists are getting millions of dollars in settlements, and the Prime Minister has the gall to tell a veteran that he is asking for more than we can provide, or that Canada will be sending millions of dollars overseas to build infrastructure, and possibly even pipelines in Asia.

The Budget

That is why Canadians are rapidly losing faith in this government. I am sure it is causing great consternation across the way when they read that Stephen Harper had higher approval ratings at this point in office than the current Prime Minister. The Liberals have money, and time, for everything except for the real challenges we face at home.

Now instead of doing fake consultations or preordained budget requests, I did something that elected representatives should do. I listened to the people I represent. In the middle of some of the coldest days in January, I held six public town hall meetings across my constituency. I made sure that everyone and anyone was welcome to come share their priorities on what they wanted to be included in budget 2018.

Over the span of three days, we loaded up projector and screen, and we travelled hundreds of kilometres to reach people in the surrounding areas of Brandon, Virden, Melita, Pilot Mound, Glenboro, and Souris. I represent the southwestern part of Manitoba. It is a constituency made up of over 30 communities, where our economy is rooted in agriculture, natural resources, and the service industry. We have very unique challenges facing our communities, compared with a more urban riding.

• (1650)

It was within those town halls that I drew my idea for my budget letter which I sent to the Minister of Finance. There was a constant drumbeat of concern on the overall direction and priorities of the government. There was a sense of disbelief that the government had thrown out the idea of returning to a balanced budget. There were concerns on how much of their tax money is being spent on just paying the interest on the new debt that the Liberals are racking up.

It bears repeating that the Liberals immediately broke their promise on running modest deficits. Over three years in power, the Liberal government has piled \$60 billion onto the national debt. The deficit is \$18.1 billion this year, which is three times their own original projections. That is a staggering number.

Just this past week the PBO released a report which said that the government is also refusing to release the necessary information to account for its borrowing and spending plans. If the PBO cannot get the necessary information to produce his reports, then that is very telling as to how MPs in this House must feel with regard to how they can have a meaningful debate on the numbers contained in the budget.

What we do know is that according to projections from the Department of Finance, the budget will not return to balance until 2045, by then racking up an additional \$450 billion of debt. When the economy is growing at 3%, a responsible government would pay down debt so that we would have more fiscal room to deploy in case there is a downturn.

In 2008, the Conservative government was able to take decisive action to support the Canadian economy during a true recession. What makes this deficit hard to swallow is that the government has done a terrible job of explaining where the money is going. When I look across my constituency, there are no massive new projects to explain how this money is being spent. Even the PBO said that the government is failing to account for new infrastructure spending.

What I do hear from my constituents is how the government's policies are eroding their disposable income. There is very little in this budget that will immediately provide any form of tangible tax relief and improve anyone's quality of life. All this budget does is remind us of previously ill-thought-out Liberal decisions, like hiking Canada pension plan premiums on employees and employers, or hiking employment insurance premiums that will hurt small business owners and do nothing to create a better economic environment that would create private sector jobs.

What I was looking for in budget 2018 was a plan that actually improved the economic position of not only the constituents who I represent but the country as a whole. I was looking for timely and meaningful tax relief for those who need it. The mere fact that the Liberals' middle-income tax cut does not provide a nickel of relief to those making less than \$44,000 is indicative of the priorities of the government. I was looking for ways the government would immediately improve the quality of life for seniors and students in my constituency, such as my ideas to immediately prioritize seniors co-op housing and make it easier for students to get loans.

In closing, the government's budget falls short of providing solutions to many of the challenges my constituents are facing. It does not set Canada on the right course, nor has it any substance that would justify the Liberals' tax-and-spend ways. I would ask the government members opposite to listen to our ideas and concerns. They need to go back to the drawing board and return with a budget that contains some form of reasoning for breaking their promise of running even modest deficits

• (1655)

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my hon. colleague's thoughts on the budget, but I have a couple of points of concern.

I would ask the member to reconcile his comments on the deficit with the fact that the previous Harper government ran a total debt of \$150 billion over the period that the Conservatives were there, completely erasing the debt that was paid down during the Martin era. The Conservatives had the largest deficit in Canadian history. They ran deficits six years in a row and during that same period of time had absolutely anemic growth, the worst growth the country had seen in a generation, running at near zero per cent, at the back of the pack of the G7 countries.

Contrast that with where we are today, where we had campaigned on utilizing deficits to drive growth, job creation, and wealth for the middle class, where we have now moved to the top of the pack of the G8 nations in terms of job creation and growth, where we have left behind that period of anemic dead growth and are now driving forward with an economy that is working, creating more than 600,000 jobs.

How can the member reconcile his comments against a deficit when his party reigned supreme in the creation of deficits during its tenure on this side of the House?

The Budget

Mr. Larry Maguire: Madam Speaker, that is probably the question that if I had to write one I would want to answer. I would write it and give it to them.

My hon. colleague across the way has failed to realize that, as I said in my speech, we governed in a true recession. We had a plan. Stephen Harper did return the country to a balanced budget in six years instead of seven, which was his plan. We left the Liberals a surplus.

They say they have created 600,000 jobs. We created 1.2 million full-time jobs in the middle of the worst recession we had seen since at least the thirties, if not even longer than that. We left the Liberals with the best GDP ratio of the G7. We left them with a balanced budget. It is the height of hypocrisy. Deficits were run but there was \$150 billion, as the member pointed out, spent and invested in Canadian jobs by the Harper government during that recession.

The point of my speech was that there is no recession now. There was no plan by the Liberal government to do what it is doing today. There was a plan under the Conservative government and we returned to balanced budgets. We left Canada in a very strong position and the Liberals have wasted it.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague and I sit on the citizenship and immigration committee, where we learned this week from government officials that while the IRB will receive some money from this budget it is not nearly sufficient to deal with the increase in cases. Currently, there are 40,000 cases in the backlog. The amount of dollars from this budget will only process about 18,000 cases, which is not even half of the cases that are in the backlog. This is at a time when new applications are coming in at the rate of 2,100 per month.

I wonder what the member's thoughts are with respect to this urgent issue for the IRB. If we do not ensure that the IRB is functioning well and is resourced to do its work, it puts at risk the integrity of our entire immigration system. I would like the member to comment on that, please.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Madam Speaker, I immensely enjoy working on the immigration committee with my hon. colleague from British Columbia.

This is an area of great concern for all of us in Canada as we are seeing greater numbers of refugees and immigrants coming into our country. As I said in my speech, the government just does not seem to get the importance of prioritizing how it deals with the dollars it has at its disposal in the budget.

The government continues to say that it has lots of money for both infrastructure and immigration, but where is it? It must be hidden someplace, because the government continues to shirk its responsibilities in getting infrastructure development going and it continues to leave a shortfall in regard to the requirements of our immigration process.

Both the member and I have had the opportunity to put forward ideas and recommendations in reports that have been done by the immigration committee that would improve the situation, but the government has not acted on them yet.

● (1700)

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am rising today to speak about the federal budget and what a complete and utter disaster it is for Canadians. If a Canadian family ran its household budget the way the Liberal government runs our country's finances, that family would be in absolute, serious trouble. Of course, this is not something that is new or surprising to most Canadians. The only person who does not seem to get that is the Prime Minister.

It kind of reminds me of this cartoon I keep on my desk. Someone sent it to me during the days before the last election. There is a picture of the former prime minister, Stephen Harper, and behind him is a nicely built home. It talks about the home renovation tax credit that he put in place. Then there is a picture of the member for Outremont. He was leader of his party at the time. It says something relating to maybe he would not have to put a fourth mortgage on his house because of the home renovation tax credit. Then it shows the Prime Minister standing in front of a house that is kind of in ruins and shambles. Smoke is coming out of it, and it is falling down, and he is saying, "The house will build itself", just like he famously said that the budget would balance itself. We saw how well that worked. That cartoon was a good illustration of that.

This is the same Liberal government that promised balanced budgets by 2019. The Liberals had a balanced budget when they started, and they went into a huge deficit. They said they would have a small deficit, but it turned out to be a lot more than small. They said they would get back to the balanced budgets they were left with by 2019. However, there is no plan, obviously, that we have seen to do that.

In this most recent plan, the Liberals' so-called budget offers absolutely no tax relief for Canadians. It piles on debt for future generations, and attacks the backbone of the Canadian economy: small businesses. The best way I have heard the budget summarized, certainly by the Leader of the Opposition, was that never has a prime minister spent so much and accomplished so little. That really says it quite well. More and more Canadians are seeing through these empty promises of the Prime Minister and his government.

Here are the facts: 92% of Canadian families are facing higher taxes than when this government came to power. Middle-income families have seen their average income tax go up by \$840. Now, \$840 might not sound like a lot to the millionaire Prime Minister, but it is a huge difference for the household budgets of a lot of Canadian families. It might be a month's worth of groceries for a family of four or a couple of payments on the car. Maybe it is an opportunity lost for ballet or sports lessons for the kids or maybe a plane ticket to visit grandma and grandpa. That is what it means for an average Canadian family. It is significant.

The Budget

The government claims to be all about helping the middle class, but actions speak louder than words. Here are some of the actions the Liberal government has taken since coming into office: higher Canada pension plan premiums, up to \$2,200 per household; cancelled family tax cut, up to about \$2,000 a household; cancelled art and fitness tax credits, about \$225 a child; cancelled education and text book tax credits, up to \$560 a student; and a national carbon tax, up to \$2,500 per household. We can start to add that up.

The Liberals have taken more money from the wallets of Canadians while implementing measures like a carbon tax that has made the price of everything go up. Groceries are more expensive. Heating one's home is more expensive. Filling up one's car with gas is more expensive. In what convoluted way would a Liberal see that as somehow relief for Canadian taxpayers? I cannot imagine.

The Prime Minister and the finance minister inherited a surplus. They inherited a surge in the global economy and the beginning of the recovery of oil prices. Things should be running quite smoothly and Canadians should be benefiting from the situation, but of course, they have blown it. They have absolutely blown it. The government can try to take credit for growth in our economy, but the reality is that the growth was driven by an economic recovery. That happened not because of the government but in spite of it.

• (1705)

The sensible thing to do when our economy is growing at a rapid pace is to pay down debt, the approach that was taken by the former government, to ensure there is more room to manoeuvre in case of a global downturn. As we saw in 2008, Canada is certainly not immune to these global patterns.

This brings me to my second point. The Liberals have continued to add to our debt and to pile on to our future generations debt they cannot possibly hope to repay. The current government will be long out of power by that time, so it will be up to another generation to fix the problems left behind by this irresponsible administration.

In the less than three years since coming to power, the government has added \$60 billion to our national debt, over \$1,600 for every Canadian. Even projections from its own finance department are bleak, and that is that the budget will not return to balance until 2045, if we were to remain on this course. That means adding an extra \$450 billion of debt. That is almost half a trillion dollars, a number that most Canadians cannot even comprehend. This is what the government will add to the debt and will saddle that legacy onto future generations.

The government continues to live beyond its means.

What happens when there is a serious economic downturn? By adding more debt to our finances, the Liberal government is selling our chances at a speedy recovery should anything happen to our economy. Make no mistake, there are signs of trouble just over the horizon. The Liberal government certainly has no contingency should the United States terminate NAFTA, for example.

The budget also contains no policies that make Canada open for business or that allows our businesses to be able to compete. Our neighbours to the south recently announced sweeping new tax reforms that would help businesses and Americans. In response, what has the government done? Absolutely nothing. Why has the

Liberal government added \$60 billion to our debt? That is the question many are asking, as everyday Canadians are seeing none of this money going toward helping them.

The government's economic policies include spending \$35 billion on a new infrastructure bank that helps wealthy investors, but not everyday Canadians; and \$1 billion on superclusters that help big corporations, but not Canadians who are struggling to find employment.

The amount of debt that the government is accumulating is absolutely staggering, and it will be a major impediment for future generations. It is irresponsible and unacceptable.

Meanwhile, the government also continues to attack our job creators, the people who are the backbone of the Canadian economy, our small businesses. Remember last fall, when the Liberals decided they would tax small businesses at a rate of about 73%? I certainly remember, because I received thousands of emails, phone calls, and letters from concerned small businesses and employees in our communities. No doubt the members over there have received those same kinds of emails, phone calls, and letters.

I think the Liberals heard the message to some degree because they slowly, at least partially, backed away from those controversial plans. However, it took a huge outrage from Canadians to do it. There is never going to be an end with respect to the attacks on small businesses.

With the proposals the finance minister has made, thousands of local businesses will no longer qualify for the small business tax rate or will see it reduced. In many of our communities, we rely very heavily on small businesses to provide jobs and opportunities, sponsor charities and sports teams, and to make our economy thrive. All those businesses are concerned about the future as a result of the actions of the government.

The government has even gone so far as to try to tell some businesses that they are too small to be a small business, when it went after campground owners. Too small to be a small business, how does that make any sense? Those are the kinds of actions of the government.

The Liberals are continuing to ask Canadian families and Canadian small businesses to pay more for its out-of-control spending. That is simply unacceptable.

• (1710)

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, that speech was delivered with so little passion, I have to conclude that the member did not even believe it himself. Let me just fact-check a couple of things. The first thing we did was lower taxes for the middle class, hundreds of dollars a year. Then we made sure nine out of 10 Canadian families got an extra bonus through the Canada child benefit. Then we brought in the Canada workers benefit that gets Canadians over that welfare wall and into the workforce, providing better incentives for people to get off social assistance and into the productive workforce.

The Budget

The member talked about governments being unprepared. How about the unpreparedness of the Harper government, with \$150 billion in deficit spending and presiding over a worldwide crash in resource prices for which the Conservatives were woefully unprepared and for which that member's constituents walked the unemployment lines because their government was ill equipped to deal with a crash in resource prices in Alberta and throughout western Canada. What does the member have to say about that?

Mr. Blake Richards: Madam Speaker, let me tell the member that it is time for school to come in because we have some explaining to do and some lessons to give here.

This is a member who stands up and tries to somehow claim that the Liberals have cut taxes for the middle class. Did he listen to the speech at all? I do not think he did. If he listens to the analysis, 92% of Canadian families are paying more taxes than when the current government took office. What do they have to show for it? It is not a whole lot.

The member talked about being ill prepared. Again, I do not think he listened to the speech because that is exactly what I was talking about. When we were in power, when the Harper government was in place, in the first couple of years of the previous government, before there was a huge global recession, what was the government doing? It was paying down the debt so that it could be in a situation where, if something were to happen, it would be better prepared to handle it. It happened and we had a huge global recession, so the government invested to try to create jobs and opportunities. I remember the other side. The Liberals were over there in the corner at that time, which is where they belong, and they were claiming that they wanted to see more money being spent. Now they are saying it was too much.

At the end of the day, we can clearly see what they really believed because here they are in good times wasting money like it is going out of style. They are just tossing it out the window. When we hit another recession, we are going to be in huge trouble in this country because of the current government.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am the critic for the NDP and the member for Banff—Airdrie is the critic for the Conservative Party. As the co-critics for tourism, we have had a chance to sit on many panels and talk about tourism. Tourism is being talked about this week. We lost the last male northern white rhino in Kenya. Certainly we heard from our colleague today from Port Moody—Coquitlam about the fact that there are only 76 southern resident killer whales. I know that in the member's riding, the woodland caribou are at risk.

This is an important time in our history. We need to do more to protect our species and protect our environment. The government members have talked about their oceans protection plan. We need our salmon healthy and we have not seen that happen. Maybe the member could speak to where the government has failed to protect species at risk.

Mr. Blake Richards: Madam Speaker, this is certainly one more area where the current Liberal government failed, just like everything else that it has tried to do.

The member also talked about tourism. I did not get an opportunity to talk about some of our small business owners and our campground owners in this country whom the government is

attacking. The Liberals are saying those businesses are too small to be a small business. That is shameful. That is the kind of attitude we see from the government and it is the kind of attitude that has to stop.

● (1715)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 5:15, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the ways and means motion.

[*Translation*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In my opinion, the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Call in the members.

● (1755)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 463*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Amos	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Baylis	Beech
Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Bossio	Bratina
Breton	Brison
Caesar-Chavannes	Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chen	Cormier
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeCoursey
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Dzerowicz
Easter	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Eyking	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Freeland
Fry	Fuhr
Garneau	Gerretsen

Private Members' Business

Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale	Gallant	Généreux
Graham	Grewal	Genus	Gill
Hajdu	Hardie	Gladu	Godin
Harvey	Hébert	Gourde	Harder
Hogg	Holland	Hoback	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings	Johns	Jolibois
Iacono	Joly	Julian	Kelly
Jones	Jordan	Kent	Kitchen
Jowhari	Khera	Kmiec	Kusie
Lambropoulos	Lametti	Kwan	Lake
Lamoureux	Lapointe	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Laverdière
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	LeBlanc	Leitch	Liepert
Lebouthillier	Leslie	Lloyd	Lobb
Levitt	Lightbound	MacGregor	MacKenzie
Lockhart	Long	Maguire	Malcolmson
Longfield	Ludwig	Marcel	Masse (Windsor West)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney	Mathysen	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)		McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
May (Cambridge)		McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Moore
McCrimmon	McDonald	Motz	Mulcair
McKay	McKenna	Nantel	Nater
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Nuttall	O'Toole
Medicino	Mihychuk	Paul-Hus	Paupé
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)		Plamondon	Poilievre
Monsef		Quach	Ramsey
Morrissey	Murray	Rayes	Reid
Nassif	Nault	Richards	Saganash
Ng	O'Connell	Sansoucy	Saroya
Oliphant	Oliver	Scheer	Schmale
O'Regan	Ouellette	Shields	Shiple
Paradis	Peschisolido	Sopuck	Sorenson
Peterson	Petitpas Taylor	Stanton	Ste-Marie
Philpott	Picard	Stetski	Stewart
Poissant	Qualtrough	Strahl	Stubbs
Ratansi	Rioux	Sweet	Theriault
Robillard	Rodriguez	Tilson	Trost
Rogers	Romanado	Trudel	Van Kesteren
Rota	Rudd	Van Loan	Viersen
Ruimy	Rusnak	Wagantall	Warawa
Sahota	Saini	Warkentin	Waugh
Sajjan	Samson	Webber	Weir
Sangha	Sarai	Wong	Yurdiga
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke	Zimmer — 131	
Schulte	Serré		
Sgro	Shanahan		
Sheehan	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)		
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand		
Simms	Sohi		
Sorbara	Spengemann		
Tabbara	Tan		
Tassi	Tootoo		
Vandal	Vandenbeld		
Vaughan	Virani		
Whalen	Wilson-Raybould		
Wrzesniewski	Yip		
Young — 165			

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

The House resumed from March 1 consideration of the motion that Bill C-364, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and to make a consequential amendment to another Act (political financing), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-364 under private members' business.

● (1805)

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on the motion, which was negated on the following division:)

(*Division No. 464*)

YEAS

Members

Ashton

Barsalou-Duval

NAYS

Members

Aboutaif	Albas
Albrecht	Anderson
Arnold	Ashton
Barlow	Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu	Benson
Benzen	Bergen
Bernier	Berthold
Bezan	Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Block
Boucher	Boudrias
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brassard	Brousseau
Calkins	Cannings
Caron	Carrie
Chong	Choquette
Clarke	Clement
Deltell	Diotte
Doherty	Donnelly
Dreeschen	Dubé
Dusseau	Duvall
Eglinski	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Finley	Fortin

Private Members' Business

Beaulieu
 Blaikie
 Boudrias
 Boutin-Sweet
 Cannings
 Choquette
 Donnelly
 Dusseault
 Erskine-Smith
 Gill
 Johns
 Julian
 Laverdière
 Malcolmson
 Masse (Windsor West)
 May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
 Mulcair
 Pauzé
 Quach
 Saganash
 Ste-Marie
 Stewart
 Trudel

Benson
 Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
 Boulерice
 Brosseau
 Caron
 Cullen
 Dubé
 Duvall
 Fortin
 Hughes
 Jolibois
 Kwan
 MacGregor
 Marciel
 Mathysen
 Moore
 Nantel
 Plamondon
 Ramsey
 Sansoucy
 Stetski
 Thériault
 Weir — 48

Kent
 Kitchen
 Kusie
 Lambropoulos
 Lamoureux
 Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
 LeBlanc
 Leitch
 Levitt
 Lightbound
 Lobb
 Long
 Ludwig
 MacKinnon (Gatineau)
 Maloney
 May (Cambridge)
 McColeman
 McDonald
 McKenna
 McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
 Mendicino
 Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)
 Monsef
 Morrissey
 Murray
 Nater
 Ng
 O'Connell
 Oliver
 O'Toole
 Paradis
 Peschisolido
 Petitpas Taylor
 Picard
 Poissant
 Ratansi
 Reid
 Rioux
 Rodriguez
 Romanado
 Rudd
 Rusnak
 Saini
 Samson
 Sarai
 Scarpaleggia
 Schiefke
 Schulte
 Sgro
 Sheehan
 Shipley
 Sidhu (Brampton South)
 Simms
 Sopuck
 Sorenson
 Stanton
 Stubbs
 Tabbara
 Tassi
 Tootoo
 Van Kesteren
 Vandal
 Vaughan
 Virani
 Warawa
 Waugh
 Whalen
 Wong
 Yip
 Yurdiga

Khera
 Kmiec
 Lake
 Lametti
 Lapointe
 Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
 LeBouthillier
 Leslie
 Liepert
 Lloyd
 Lockhart
 Longfield
 MacKenzie
 Maguire
 Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
 McCauley (Edmonton West)
 McCrimmon
 McKay
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
 McLeod (Northwest Territories)
 Mihychuk

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
 Albrecht
 Alghabra
 Anandasangaree
 Arnold
 Arya
 Badawey
 Bains
 Baylis
 Bennett
 Bergen
 Berthold
 Bibeau
 Blair
 Bossio
 Brassard
 Breton
 Caesar-Chavannes
 Carr
 Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
 Chen
 Clarke
 Cormier
 Dabrusin
 DeCoursey
 Dhaliwal
 Di Iorio
 Doherty
 Drouin
 Duclos
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Easter
 El-Khoury
 Eyking
 Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
 Fast
 Fillmore
 Finnigan
 Fonseca
 Fragiskatos
 Fraser (Central Nova)
 Fry
 Gallant
 Généreux
 Gerretsen
 Godin
 Goodale
 Graham
 Hajdu
 Hardie
 Hébert
 Hogg
 Hussen
 Iacono
 Jones
 Jowhari

Albas
 Aldag
 Amos
 Anderson
 Arseneault
 Ayoub
 Bagnell
 Barlow
 Beech
 Benzen
 Bernier
 Bezan
 Bittle
 Block
 Boucher
 Bratina
 Brison
 Calkins
 Carrie
 Casey (Charlottetown)
 Chong
 Clement
 Cuzner
 Damoff
 Deltell
 Dhillon
 Diotte
 Dreeshen
 Dubourg
 Duguid
 Dzerowicz
 Eglinski
 Ellis
 Eyolfson
 Falk (Provencher)
 Fergus
 Finley
 Fisher
 Fortier
 Fraser (West Nova)
 Freeland
 Fuhr
 Garneau
 Genuis
 Gladu
 Goldsmith-Jones
 Gourde
 Grewal
 Harder
 Harvey
 Hoback
 Holland
 Hutchings
 Joly
 Jordan
 Kelly

Motz
 Nassif
 Nault
 Nuttall
 Olyphant
 O'Regan
 Ouellette
 Paul-Hus
 Peterson
 Philpott
 Poilievre
 Qualtrough
 Rayes
 Richards
 Robillard
 Rogers
 Rota
 Ruimy
 Sahota
 Sajjan
 Sangha
 Saroya
 Scheer
 Schmale
 Serré
 Shanahan
 Shields
 Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
 Sikand
 Sohi
 Sorbara
 Spengemann
 Strahl
 Sweet
 Tan
 Tilson
 Trost
 Van Loan
 Vandenbeld
 Viersen
 Wagantall
 Warkentin
 Webber
 Wilson-Raybould
 Wrzesnewskyj
 Young
 Zimmer — 250

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Routine Proceedings

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The House resumed from March 1 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development concerning the recommendation not to proceed further with Bill C-323.

● (1810)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 465)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Amos	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Ayoub	Badawey
Bains	Baylis
Beech	Bennett
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Bossio
Bratina	Breton
Brisson	Caesar-Chavannes
Carr	Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chen
Cormier	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
DeCoursey	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Di Iorio
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Easter	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Eyking	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Freeland
Fry	Fuhr
Garneau	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Graham
Grewal	Hajdu
Hardie	Harvey
Hébert	Hogg
Holland	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Khera	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Leslie	Levitt
Lighbound	Lockhart
Long	Longfield
Ludwig	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)	McCrimmon
McDonald	McKay
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)

McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendicino
Mihychuk	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Monsef	Morrissey
Murray	Nassif
Nault	Ng
O'Connell	Oliphant
Oliver	O'Regan
Ouellette	Paradis
Peschisolido	Peterson
Petipas Taylor	Philpott
Picard	Poissant
Qualtrough	Ratansi
Rioux	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Rota
Rudd	Ruimy
Rusnak	Sahota
Saini	Sajjan
Samson	Sangha
Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Schulte
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sikand	Simms
Sohi	Sorbara
Spengemann	Tabbara
Tan	Tassi
Tootoo	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Virani
Whalen	Wilson-Raybould
Wrzesnewsyj	Yip
Young— 163	

NAYS

Members

Albas
Anderson
Ashton
Barsalou-Duval
Benson
Bergen
Berthold
Blakie
Block
Boudrias
Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau
Cannings
Carrie
Choquette
Clement
Dellell
Doherty
Dresshen
Dusseault
Eglinski
Falk (Provencher)
Finley
Gallant
Genius
Gill
Godin
Harder
Hughes
Jolibois
Kelly
Kitchen
Kusie
Lake
Laverdière
Liepert
Lobb
MacKenzie
Malcolmson
Masse (Windsor West)
May (Saanch—Gulf Islands)
McColeman
Moore
Mulcair
Nater

Private Members' Business

Nuttall
Paul-Hus
Plamondon
Quach
Rayes
Richards
Sansoucy
Scheer
Shields
Sopuck
Stanton
Stetski
Strahl
Sweet
Tilson
Trudel
Van Loan
Viersen
Warawa
Waugh
Weir
Yurdiga

O'Toole
Pauzé
Poilievre
Ramsey
Reid
Saganash
Saroya
Schmale
Shipley
Sorenson
Ste-Marie
Stewart
Stubbs
Thériault
Trost
Van Kesteren
Vaughan
Wagantall
Warkentin
Webber
Wong
Zimmer — 134

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Accordingly, pursuant to Standing Order 97.1(2)(d), the proceedings on Bill C-323 shall come to an end.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from March 2 consideration of the motion that Bill C-375, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (presentence report), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-375, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (presentence report).

● (1820)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 466*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag
Amos
Arseneault
Ashton
Badawey
Bains
Baylis
Beech
Benson
Bittle
Blair
Bossio
Boulerice
Bratina
Brisson
Caesar-Chavannes
Caron
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chen
Cormier

Alghabra
Anandasangaree
Arya
Ayoub
Bagnell
Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu
Bennett
Bibeau
Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boudrias
Boutin-Sweet
Breton
Brosseau
Cannings
Carr
Casey (Charlottetown)
Choquette
Cullen

Cuzner
Damoff
Dhaliwal
Di Iorio
Drouin
Dubourg
Duguid
Dusseau
Dzerowicz
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson
Fillmore
Fisher
Fortier
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fry
Garneau
Gill
Goodale
Grewal
Hardie
Hébert
Holland
Hussen
Iacono
Jolibois
Jones
Jowhari
Khera
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc
Leslie
Lightbound
Long
Ludwig
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
Masse (Windsor West)
Mathysen
May (Saarich—Gulf Islands)
McDonald
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mihychuk
Soeurs)
Monsef
Morrissey
Murray
Nassif
Ng
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Peschisolido
Petipas Taylor
Picard
Poissant
Qualtrough
Ratansi
Robillard
Rogers
Rota
Ruimy
Saganash
Saini
Samson
Sansoucy
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sorbara
Ste-Marie
Stewart
Tan
Thériault
Trudel
Vandenbeld

Dabrusin
DeCoursey
Dhillon
Donnelly
Dubé
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duvall
Easter
Ellis
Eyking
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fortin
Fraser (West Nova)
Freeland
Fuhr
Gerretsen
Goldsmith-Jones
Graham
Hajdu
Harvey
Hogg
Hughes
Hutchings
Johns
Joly
Jordan
Julian
Kwan
Lametti
Lapointe
Laverdière
Lebouthillier
Levitt
Lockhart
Longfield
MacGregor
Malcolmson
Marcil
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)
McCrimmon
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-
Moore
Mulcair
Nantel
Nault
O'Connell
Oliver
Ouellette
Pauzé
Peterson
Philpott
Plamondon
Quach
Ramsey
Rioux
Rodriguez
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Sarai
Schiefke
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sohi
Spengemann
Stetski
Tabbara
Tassi
Tootoo
Vandal
Vaughan

Private Members' Business

Virani
Whalen
Wrzesnewskyj
Young — 213

Weir
Wilson-Raybould
Yip

● (1835)

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on the motion, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 467)

NAYS

Members

Aboultatif	Albas
Albrecht	Anderson
Arnold	Barlow
Benzen	Bergen
Bernier	Berthold
Bezan	Block
Boucher	Brassard
Calkins	Carrie
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Deltell
Diotte	Doherty
Dreeshen	Eglinski
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Finley
Gallant	Généreux
Genius	Gladu
Godin	Gourde
Harder	Hoback
Kelly	Kent
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kusie	Lake
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Leitch
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	MacKenzie
Maguire	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Motz	Nater
Nuttall	O'Toole
Paul-Hus	Poilievre
Rayes	Reid
Richards	Saroya
Scheer	Schmale
Shields	Shiple
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Strahl
Stubbs	Sweet
Tilson	Trost
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Viersen	Wagantall
Warawa	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Wong	Yurdiga
Zimmer — 85	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Consequently, this bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

● (1825)

[*English*]

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK ON DISTRACTED DRIVING ACT

The House resumed from March 20 consideration of the motion that C-373, An Act respecting a federal framework on distracted driving, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-373 under private members' business.

YEAS

Members

Aboultatif	Albas
Albrecht	Anderson
Arnold	Ashton
Barlow	Benson
Benzen	Bergen
Bernier	Berthold
Bezan	Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Block
Boucher	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brassard
Brosseau	Calkins
Cannings	Caron
Carrie	Chong
Choquette	Clarke
Clement	Cullen
Dabrusin	Damoff
Deltell	Di Iorio
Diotte	Doherty
Donnelly	Dreeshen
Dubé	Dusseault
Duvall	Eglinski
Erskine-Smith	Eyolfson
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Fergus
Finley	Gallant
Généreux	Genius
Gladu	Godin
Gourde	Harder
Hardie	Hoback
Hughes	Johns
Jolibois	Julian
Kelly	Kent
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kusie	Kwan
Lake	Lapointe
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Laverdière
Leitch	Liepert
Lloyd	Lobb
MacGregor	MacKenzie
Maguire	Malcolmson
Masse (Windsor West)	Mathysen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Moore
Motz	Mulcair
Nantel	Nater
Nault	Nuttall
Oliver	O'Toole
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Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
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Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser (West Nova)	Fraser (Central Nova)
Freeland	Fry
Fuhr	Garneau
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Hajdu	Harvey
Hébert	Holland
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Yip

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It being 6:36 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

* * *

[*English*]

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-344, An Act to amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act (community benefit), as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

• (1840)

Mr. Ramesh Sangha (Brampton Centre, Lib.) moved that the bill be concurred in.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Pursuant to Standing Order 98, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, March 28, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

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[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, several months ago I asked a question in the House regarding the disability tax credit and the repeated assertion by the Minister of National Revenue that nothing had changed, even as thousands of disabled Canadians were denied the disability tax credit. The answer that we had that day was wholly unsatisfactory and in defiance of what was obvious evidence that there had been a substantial change made to policy that resulted in the denial of the credit for many Canadians who had applied.

Subsequently to that, in December, the government announced it had reverted to the policy that had been in place before May 2, which later confirmed there had been an enormous change in that policy.

This raises many questions of concern about a number of things at CRA, namely, the extent of ministerial control and oversight, that a minister could rise in the House day after day, question after question, and claim that nothing had changed when in fact something obviously had changed.

We have seen a troubling series of events with the department and questions about the minister's ability to oversee her department. We have witnessed things like a folio change that announced the department would begin to tax the benefits of retail employees, something of which the minister seemed to be unaware. As soon as the political storm arose from media coverage of this event, there was a quick reversal on that.

More recent we have seen other examples of serious problems at CRA that the minister has just been unable to answer.

We remain concerned about the conduct of the agency in a number of areas, be it from the call centres where calls are not answered, or incorrect information being given if people should happen to get through to the agency. That is troubling to many Canadians. We have heard other stories of vulnerable Canadians who seem to have been targeted by the agency, be it single parents, or parents of disabled Canadians besides diabetics, including those suffering from autism and their families.

Not much has changed since that question several months ago. We remain concerned. Many Canadians are concerned about the minister's ability to oversee her agency. Wait times for people who have applied for the credit are exceedingly long. At committee in the fall, testimony was given that it was taking up to 40 weeks to get an answer on the disability tax credit. We have asked questions on the Order Paper about this and we still have not received the answers we need. Many of these questions remain still unanswered.

● (1845)

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to clear up any misunderstandings about the disability tax credit.

Let me be absolutely clear that there have been no changes to the eligibility criteria for the disability tax credit related to diabetes. Unlike my colleagues on the other side, our government is committed to ensuring that Canadians with disabilities not only

receive the credits and benefits to which they are entitled, but are also able to advise the CRA on how best to serve them.

That is exactly why the Minister of National Revenue has reinstated the disability advisory committee, which the previous government abolished in 2006. After more than 10 years without a voice, Canadians with disabilities, stakeholders, and experts are finally able to formally engage with the CRA and provide insight on how to best ensure they receive the benefits to which they are entitled.

Contrary to my colleague's misleading assertions, the CRA's processing times for the disability tax credit are currently stable with an average processing time of six to eight weeks over the last few months. Cases are processed on a case-by-case basis, and time frames can vary depending on the complexity of the application.

In addition to hearing directly from Canadians with disabilities, our government has taken concrete steps to make it easier for Canadians to apply for the disability tax credit. Budget 2017 allowed nurse practitioners to certify the medical information and the effects of the person's impairment on the application form, making the application process much easier and more accessible.

I am glad to report that over 80% of applications received by the CRA are approved, allowing more than 700,000 Canadians to claim the disability tax credit on their annual tax return.

Last, our government is committed to ensuring that not only Canadians with disabilities but all Canadians receive the benefits and credits to which they are entitled. That is why the CRA is working hard to better serve Canadians. For example, the new file my return service enables eligible Canadians, particularly those with a low or fixed income, to file their returns by answering a few questions over the phone. This year, paper tax filers were mailed their T1 forms directly. The CRA and Service Canada are working closely together to ensure indigenous communities across Canada receive the benefits to which they are entitled.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, tonight we have just heard a recitation of a number of consistent talking points that have come up over the last number of months on this issue. What was missing is a simple apology.

Everybody knows the government spent six months denying the disability tax credit to type 1 diabetics and other disabled and vulnerable Canadians. This has been well established.

Tonight the parliamentary secretary is assuring us that we are back up to the 80% approval rate that existed before the government changed the form in May 2017. A simple apology to the disabled community would have been more appropriate.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Mr. Speaker, let me be unequivocal that our government is committed to ensuring that Canadians with disabilities receive the credits and benefits to which they are entitled.

Canada is at its best and all of society benefits when everyone is included. That is why our government is committed to ensuring greater accessibility and opportunities for Canadians with disabilities in their communities and workplaces.

More Canadians were approved for this important credit last year than ever before. That is good news, and we will work to see that trend continue.

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to pursue a question I originally asked in this place on November 8 of last year.

I preface my question by talking about a quite remarkable program in my riding. A local public high school, Claremont Secondary School, raises money every year for Rails to Relevance. Kids from Claremont Secondary School get on a train in Vancouver and make their way to Ottawa. They also tour Montreal and Quebec City. The extraordinary learning experience of being on a train is irreplaceable. I ride with them as often as I can and discuss with them Westminster parliamentary democracy and the nature of Canada's democracy. It is quite an extraordinary experience, and one far too few Canadians have, of travelling this country by rail.

The Minister of Transport gave a very good answer that day. He said that he was very committed to passenger rail service. Therefore, one might ask why I am up at adjournment proceedings still concerned.

I am concerned because I am not sure that the management of VIA Rail understands the importance of passenger rail service across Canada. I know that the data collection about the people who use VIA Rail is often misleading.

I can give an example. I know that the Quebec-Windsor corridor, particularly since this government came to office, has had more money, and the schedules have been improved. However, on the service for Canadians from Montreal to Halifax, called "The Ocean" line, and from Toronto to Vancouver, called "The Canadian" line, the impression one gets from the way that service is run is that it is essentially a high-end, land-based cruise for tourists. The data collected by VIA Rail, when I last spoke to it about this, would suggest that this is the case.

It is not until one visits the economy sections of the train that one finds local transit. There are families, because while it is cheaper to fly from Toronto to Vancouver than it is to take the train, if one has small children and is travelling from Edmonton to Winnipeg, it is definitely not cheaper to fly. VIA Rail has discounts for seniors and discounts children.

If people want a cheaper way to travel, they are better off in the economy section of the train and bringing their own food. This is unfortunate. In the old days, VIA Rail would allow someone from economy to go forward and buy in the dining car. We have created a high-end luxury travel experience, and if that is how it is perceived, service for passenger rail will be at risk.

The report commissioned by the previous government, and prepared under former minister Emerson's guidance, basically said

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that all support for passenger rail from Toronto west and Montreal east should be eliminated.

What I am pleading for is that the management at VIA Rail, with the leadership of this government, recognize that we need a legislative framework for VIA Rail, just as the U.S. has for Amtrak. I have a private member's bill to that effect. We need to fund VIA Rail and conceive of it as part of a national transportation system in the context of a post-carbon economy. We need to do much more to modernize rail.

Where I live in Saanich—Gulf Islands, we used to have a Victoria to Courtenay daily railroad, the island corridor rail service. It needs funding. Where I used to live in Cape Breton Island, we used to have service from Halifax to Sydney. We used to have service a couple of times a day from Halifax to Yarmouth or from Halifax to Wolfville. There are many rail lines across this country that are still in place and could provide low-cost, low-carbon, efficient, modern passenger service.

● (1850)

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for her advocacy.

Let me start by reassuring her that the government is and has always been committed to passenger rail services as we recognize the value and historical importance of such services to the Canadian public. Canada's iconic coast to coast rail system highlights the connectivity and the unity of our country, while our intercity passenger rail also addresses many key mobility needs of Canadians. It does this by providing accessible transportation options for persons with disabilities and connecting communities with little or no alternative year-round public transportation.

Moreover, passenger rail is often acknowledged as a fuel-efficient means of transportation, thereby helping us lessen our carbon footprint on the environment. On this we definitely agree.

The minister's mandate is to ensure that the Canadian transportation system supports our economic growth while providing a service that is safe, reliable, environmentally responsible, and enhances the passengers' experience. That is why we have launched the transportation 2030 strategy, setting the path forward for Canada's transportation system. Within this strategy, we are committed to investing in innovative and green transportation that will allow Canadians to move freely and efficiently.

Currently, our government is considering options to enhance and modernize national passenger rail services to better meet the transportation needs of Canadians. In budget 2016, we allocated \$45 million to various VIA Rail projects, including \$7.7 million to support technical studies on the renewal of its fleet and for safety upgrades, as well as \$3.3 million over three years to support an in-depth assessment of VIA Rail's high-frequency rail proposal.

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After considering the results of this assessment, we have decided to undertake the additional foundational work required to advance any project of this scale with \$8 million of funding announced in budget 2018. Furthermore, we were pleased to announce, this Monday, funding for VIA Rail's fleet renewal. VIA will launch its procurement process in the spring of 2018 to replace VIA's coaches and locomotives in the Windsor-Quebec City corridor. New trains will improve reliability, enhance accessibility for passengers with disabilities, and reduce smog and cancer-causing emissions.

We are proud of investing in passenger rail to make travel more accessible and efficient for all Canadians. It will support economic growth and job creation, and promote a sustainable environment for generations to come.

• (1855)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful to the hon. parliamentary secretary for such a positive response. Let me mention one of the other big concerns that is structural. This will take real leadership.

Since the creation of VIA Rail in the 1970s, the tracks that were created for both passenger and freight were consigned to freight and then over time, by 1994, CN became a privatized corporation and the tracks whether CN, CP, or other private companies were leased back to VIA Rail. This impedes VIA's ability to provide on-time performance because their trains are always sidelined for freight.

I am very concerned about these twin threats. We have grain piling up in the Prairies that cannot get to Vancouver and we have passengers sitting on the sidelines hoping a freight train might pass. Ultimately we need to have a national rail service that serves passengers and freight. I know it is a tall order, but I am hoping the parliamentary secretary can do it.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Mr. Speaker, I would like to reassure my hon. colleague that the government does recognize the importance of intercity passenger rail service and we will continue to support it.

The Minister of Transport is responsible for making sure that the mobility needs of Canadians are met. Access to a safe, reliable, and efficient transportation network promotes economic growth and strengthens our middle class. Likewise, a mobile Canada means a more prosperous nation. That is why in our strategic plan, transportation 2030, we have given the traveller such a high priority. Notably, our strategy is aimed at providing more options and better service for travellers while securing the long-term financial viability of passenger rail.

We are heading in the right direction, but there is more work to be done.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House once again to urge the government to take action on the ongoing discrimination in Canada's immigration system against individuals with disabilities. Paragraph 38(1)(c) of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act allows for the rejection of an entire family of applicants if one individual has a disability or medical condition that officials believe could put "excessive demand on [Canada's] health or social services".

Witnesses who appeared before the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration confirmed that the numbers provided to assess excessive demand are arbitrary, inaccurate, and do not take into account the potential contributions of the disabled person and/or the family unit. This paragraph of the act has been explicitly and repeatedly recognized by parliamentarians, committee witnesses, and the Minister of Immigration himself as enabling discrimination against individuals with disabilities.

In fact, during the recent Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration study of this provision, the member for Surrey Centre stated:

I would say that initially I thought it was a good policy, because that would perhaps be a big burden on Canadians, but then I looked back—and I don't want to equate it to this—and it's no different from the slave trade, in which only those selected as the strongest and the most able-bodied were brought from Africa. It's not that that whole policy is good at all, but I'm saying it is akin to discriminating when we're picking only people who are healthy, fully functioning, with no intellectual disabilities and no physical disabilities.

The member for Surrey Centre also stated:

As you can tell, almost all of us have an inclination that this policy is discriminatory. We already can see that even within immigration there's a two-tiered policy.

The member for St. John's East, in an exchange with the minister, said:

I must say that at this point in time I do not see how raising the threshold and excluding fewer people changes the fact that excluding anyone is *prima facie* discriminatory and violates Canadian values.

The parliamentary secretary, in the House, when I asked him this question, said, "The excessive-demand provision is indeed an outdated policy". He also said, "From a principled perspective, the current excessive-demand policy simply does not align with our country's values on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in Canadian society."

However, widespread recognition of this blatantly discriminatory policy has instilled no sense of urgency from the government to rectify the issue. The government has been consulting on this policy since October 2016, even though this provision is a textbook case of discrimination, one that has affected the lives of hundreds of immigrants who are good enough to work but not good enough to stay if their loved ones are affected by a disability.

That foot-dragging is both irresponsible and an insult to people like Mercedes Benitez and Monica Mateo. These women came to Canada under the live-in caregiver program and have cared for our children and seniors. After years of waiting to be reunited with their families, because one of their children has a developmental disability, they are now being discriminated against. These families deserve to be treated with respect and dignity.

Will the government commit to taking my private member's bill, Bill C-398, turn it into a government bill, and repeal paragraph 38(1)(c) of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act?

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•(1900)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am going to use my speaking time this evening to clarify certain points related to the Government of Canada's agenda on accessibility and immigration applicants.

As the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship has said, our government is currently reviewing the fundamental aspects of this policy to ensure that it still lines up with the direction our government is taking.

As members know, Canada's medical admissibility rules for immigration applicants help lighten the load on Canada's publicly funded health and social services systems.

Under the current legislation, the immigration officers reviewing these applications determine whether the applicant could place excessive demand on health and social services, by examining what services the applicant needs, the cost of these services, and the impact on waiting lists.

I want to make it clear that the policy does not apply to refugees or to certain sponsored family members. I also want to point out that there is no health condition that leads to the systematic rejection of an application and that every applicant is evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

The policy is meant to strike a balance between two fundamental principles, namely protecting publicly funded health and social services and promoting family reunification and refugee protection.

As my colleague pointed out, the minister has said that the excessive demand policy is some 40 years old and is not in line with our accessibility agenda.

Our government recognizes that the policy needs to be fairer and that the inclusion of persons with disabilities must be taken into account. At the same time, we must protect our publicly funded health and social services.

As a result, officials at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada reviewed the excessive demand provision, and the department conducted a comprehensive review of the provision regarding excessive demand on health and social services. This commitment was made public in April 2016, as part of senior management's response to an internal evaluation of the health screening program.

The department is considering the views of all stakeholders, including disability advocates and, of course, the provinces and territories.

I can assure my colleague and all members that the minister is also taking into consideration the recommendations of the Standing

Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, of which my colleague is a member. It is important to hold such consultations in order to identify new options and ensure that the policy is satisfactory and stands the test of time.

Again, our government is committed to ensuring that the policy on accessibility and immigration applicants strikes a balance between the need to protect social services, education, and health and the need to deal with these applications fairly. Once again, we want to ensure that issues regarding family reunification are resolved and that this policy is fair. That is why we are currently reviewing the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. We will have an answer in this regard very soon.

•(1905)

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, paragraph 38(1)(c) goes against Canada's stated values on inclusion and the ideals we purported to uphold when we ratified the UN convention on the rights of the disabled. From 2013 to 2016, 68 individuals were denied status in Canada due to impaired hearing, and 21 were denied for impaired vision. Imagine that. Further, 697 individuals were discriminated against due to developmental delay or an intellectual disability.

It has taken the government almost two years to recognize that breaking these families apart or denying them status in Canada based on a discriminatory law is wrong. The only way forward is the full repeal of paragraph 38(1)(c). Nearly all the witnesses at committee stated that it was the only option, and even government members at the committee recognized the discriminating nature of this provision. The time to act is now. No more delays.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Mr. Speaker, as my colleague knows, the minister himself appeared before the committee and clearly stated that this policy is outdated, since it is over 40 years old.

As I said earlier, the policy seeks to strike a balance between protecting publicly funded health and social services and promoting family reunification and refugee protection. We also want these applications to be dealt with fairly, and we are carefully examining the committee's recommendations in this regard. I can assure my colleague that the minister is taking those recommendations very seriously. I hope that we will have an answer in the very near future.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:07 p.m.)

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