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Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, November 19, 2018

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

•(1105)

[*English*]

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The House resumed from October 3 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands has eight minutes remaining in his speech.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will attempt to pick up where I left off on this when we last debated it. I do again want to thank the member for Mississauga East—Cooksville for bringing forward this motion.

I know that one of the criticisms that we heard a little bit when the debate happened in the first hour was the fact that this was only focused on one particular area of the country. I think that when we look at one area rather than the entire country as a whole, we have the opportunity to see exactly and to dive deeper into the issues that are affecting the trades and why we are getting people to start work and careers in the trades.

For that reason, it would be very prudent of this House to pass this motion that directs the HUMA committee to look specifically at this one area of the country, a very important and largely populated area, so that decisions and recommendations can be made to this House in terms of how the government can bring policy forward that will better create opportunities and encourage people to get into the trades.

I know that when I was last speaking in the first hour of debate that I briefly mentioned an individual who is a TV personality named Mike Rowe in the U.S. who has programs called *Dirty Jobs* and *Somebody's Gotta Do It*. Basically, what he attempts to do in these shows is to highlight the fact that there are jobs out there that for some reason many people are no longer interested in getting. He exposes us to why it is important that people fill these jobs and how the jobs can be huge opportunities for people to make a lot of money and have well-meaning jobs for years to come. To understand why

there is this shortage, we might want to look back at how we got to this shortage. Something else that I mentioned in the first hour of debate is that I think, personally, it has to do a little bit with the fact that when we as parents look at our children, we want to encourage them to grow up to be better than we are.

I think back to my grandparents who immigrated here after the Second World War, from Holland and Italy. When they got here, they were individuals on both sides of the family who worked tough, rigorous construction jobs in various trades and fields of employment. For that matter, it was both my grandmothers and grandfathers. All they wanted was to see their children become better people than what they thought they were, in professions such as doctors, lawyers and politicians. Therefore, they encouraged them to go to school, to graduate and go to university so that their children could have what they perceived as more professionally aspiring careers.

What we have done through this process over several generations is to create a stereotype that says if one wants to be a carpenter, mason, plumber or an electrician, there is something wrong. That means one has decided to take a second-tier career. In reality, as we see today, those jobs can pay massive dividends in terms of one's ability to grow as an individual or to provide for themselves and their families. As a matter of fact, it has been said that by the year 2020 in Canada, we will have a skilled trade shortage of roughly a million people.

There are some interesting statistics that I have been able to research, between the time we first debated this and now. A 2007 study found that Canada has 361,000 job vacancies, of which 38,000 are in the construction industry, which equates to more than 10% in Canada. Construction is the third-largest industry for job vacancies in Canada. A shortage of skilled labour could bring a challenge to delivering infrastructure projects in Ontario, which is exactly what we are seeing here and why the hon. member has brought this forward. He is relating this back to the housing shortage. There are just not enough people to work in various different jobs.

Therefore, what we are seeing is an opportunity. I am really happy to see that the way this has been brought forward is to look at how the government could develop policy and bring in direction to make sure these opportunities can be realized by people who might have an interest in them.

Private Members' Business

While I am on the topic of opportunities, I will relate this back to a private member's bill I introduced into the House that is currently before the Senate. It has to do with females who want to get into construction and hazardous work. It would probably be even more burdensome for a female than a male to become a plumber or electrician or carpenter. That is why we see in Canada only 4% of the skilled trades are currently held by women. In the construction fields, more specifically, only 0.5% of the construction jobs are filled by women. This would give an amazing opportunity to start to fill some of these positions with women who want to get into trades. There are many women who do, like Melodie Ballard, a welder, who comes from my community. She has faced some challenges because the government does not have the necessary programs and policies in place to make sure that happens.

I am very supportive of the motion. I am glad to see that the member for Mississauga East—Cooksville has brought it forward. There is a great opportunity here to study what is going on in the GTA, and the Hamilton area specifically, to develop some policies that could be brought forward that the government could implement. Later on down the road, we can see how we could extend those to other parts of the country.

This is exactly what we need. It is extremely timely, given some of the shortages we have. I look forward to seeing how we can continue to advance not just this particular bill, but this topic. This is going to become one of the biggest challenges for Canada in terms of how we are going to continue to physically build the infrastructure we need to sustain our country.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing me to finish my speech in the second hour of debate on this. I look forward to continuing to hear the debate this morning and voting in favour of the bill when we get to that point.

• (1110)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak before the House today on Motion No. 190, tabled by my colleague, the member for Mississauga East—Cooksville, on this very important topic. Before I begin, I would like to thank my colleague for his work and for bringing this topic to the attention of the House. I certainly enjoy serving with him on the international trade committee.

This motion asks that the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities be instructed to undertake a study on labour shortages of the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, in particular, in the construction industry, and to analyze models used in Atlantic Canada.

I am very pleased to have this topic brought to the attention of the House as it will be of the utmost importance for the years to come.

Adam Morrison, vice-president of the non-profit Ontario Tourism Education Corporation, characterized the labour shortage problem as “a slow-motion train wreck you've always been told is coming.” I believe as parliamentarians we have an obligation to make the best recommendations so we can ensure that we can contain as much of the damage as possible. Therefore, I believe this is a very worthwhile study.

As was mentioned previously, in the next decade Canada will see more than one-fifth of its construction labour force retire. The construction industry is one of the backbones of Canada's economy, certainly in my community of Oshawa. It employed 712,000 people in 1996. Today, that number has grown to 1.4 million Canadians. However, by 2027, about 21% of the labour force will be older than 65 years old. To add to that, young people are not joining the workforce in these trades fast enough to fill this gap, which makes finding skilled labour difficult for companies.

Because of the demand to increase for construction in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, the GTHA, the labour shortage is more acutely felt. The association representing the masonry, block and stone industry has warned that the labour shortage that currently exists, and which will get larger with time, will create extreme difficulties for delivering on the many infrastructure projects the government has planned.

While I am excited to see the booming construction sector all around the GTHA, I believe it is our responsibility to develop the tools to help companies address this labour shortage. If we do not, companies will have a much harder time completing projects on time or will have to stop taking on more projects because they do not have the resources to provide the level of service they know they can provide, which affects families, communities and entire regions. Canadians are very hard-working and they want to work more. Therefore, we have to help them with that.

In the absence of federal leadership, organizations have already started to work to solve this problem. For example, in my region of Oshawa, the Durham District School Board hosts information sessions on the Ontario youth apprenticeship program, a school-to-work program that opens the doors for students to explore and work in apprenticeship occupations. This can show parents how viable a career in the skilled trades is for their kids. Parents always want the best for their children and just need to be reminded what a wonderful career they can have in these fields. The board also holds a number of tours so students can actually see what working in the shops is like and get some hands-on activities.

Unfortunately, the problem is not contained to the construction industry. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce members cite the inability to find new employees as one of their biggest obstacles, according to a survey released in February. Of the 60% of businesses looking to hire in the last six months of 2016, 82% of them said they had experienced difficulty finding employees.

The issue spans across sectors, affecting for example the retail and service industry sectors as well. There is no shortage of stories of restaurant owners having to close down on certain days because they do not have enough staff or hotels having to close down entire floors because they cannot staff the rooms.

Private Members' Business

Over 90% of Canadian businesses are small and medium-sized businesses. This year, BDC, the Business Development Bank of Canada, conducted a survey of 1,208 entrepreneurs from SMEs and found that 40% of them are having difficulties finding new employees. Because of a retiring workforce, Canada's labour growth is forecast to fall near zero. This affects the growth capacity of companies and affects all Canadians, because when businesses are thriving, Canada thrives.

● (1115)

I would like to echo what my colleague from Foothills mentioned earlier in his remarks. This problem is not confined to the GTHA. The problem in the construction sector is also acutely felt in British Columbia and Atlantic Canada. In British Columbia, for example, nearly one in 25 jobs are going unfilled. According to the Canadian Federation for Independent Business, 3.9% of jobs were unfilled in the fourth quarter of 2018.

In fact, one does not even have to leave the province to find out that there is a labour shortage problem. Many rural areas in Ontario are struggling to attract and retain talent and workers. The jobs are there, but there are barriers, such as transportation, that must be discussed so that we can find solutions that work for all Canadians. Canadians living in rural areas face challenges starkly different from the ones those living in the GTHA face. However, that does not mean that we should not take the time to carefully examine the issues they face.

One often cited barrier is that young Canadians and their parents do not see a career in the trades as a viable option for them or their children. The current government has, unfortunately, failed in changing that perspective. Through its actions and comments, it has made Canada an unattractive country for energy investments and has shut down projects that would have created many jobs in the trades and in these sectors. If we look at Bill C-69, as an example, it would basically guarantee that no major resource project would ever be built again in Canada. What kind of message does that send kids who would like to get into the trades?

To add to that, instead of doing what was best for Canadians and Canadian workers, the government decided to snub its nose at our ally again and again. Now we find ourselves with a bad trade deal for Canada, the USMCA, and with section 232 tariffs on steel and aluminum still in place. Again, what kind of message does that send to young people looking for jobs in those industries?

Throughout our study on the Standing Committee on International Trade on the impact of these tariffs on the steel and aluminum sector, we have heard over and over again that the situation is dire. Companies are shutting down, moving to other jurisdictions or reducing shifts. In this environment, it makes it very difficult to encourage young Canadians to pursue careers in the trades.

Like my colleagues, I will be supporting this study, because I believe that it would address a very important issue. I believe that with good recommendations, we can help the businesses and hard-working people in my riding of Oshawa. However, I think we should expand the scope of the study to include all of Canada, because this is an issue that does not discriminate based on geography. It affects people in every province, in urban and rural communities. It would also provide an opportunity for Canadians to show how innovative

we can be. It would allow us the opportunity to come up with solutions to these complex problems. I look forward to receiving the results of this study when presented in the House.

A very important thing is happening here in the House this week. The Minister of Finance is tabling an economic update, or, in other words, where the priorities of the current government are.

As I said in my speech, I believe that this is an incredible motion to bring forward at this time. However, I do not see the same commitment from the government in what it says and what it does. We are hearing over and over again how uncompetitive a place Canada is to do business in, whether that is the uncertainty of new regulations, and I mentioned Bill C-69, or, as I mentioned, the uncertainty moving forward, as the government wants to bring forward a carbon tax, which each and every one of us in the House is going to be affected by. It will affect each and every Canadian, each and every family, not only on direct costs for things they buy in the energy resource sector but also downstream, whether it is groceries, heating buildings or more taxes for municipalities. It is going to affect every aspect of Canadians' lives.

I will be supporting this motion, but I do not have high expectations, because this motion alone is not going to fix the problems Canada is facing. We hope the government takes these issues seriously, especially in regard to competitiveness, because human resources are only a piece of it. We look forward to the minister's economic update later this week.

● (1120)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to begin by thanking my colleague for moving Motion No. 190.

The problems addressed in this motion are as bad as they have ever been and will keep getting worse if we do not take action now, so the committee needs to study them. This is an issue of real concern to us all, and we have got to find sustainable solutions.

The labour shortage affects the entire country, even my riding, Jonquière. That is why I would like the committee to look at the impact in places other than the GTA and Hamilton and to consider sectors other than construction. Many sectors and many parts of Canada have critical labour shortages. Still, this is a start, and I hope that the recommendations in the report will be relevant to every member's region, including my own.

Private Members' Business

We know the problem is not going to go away on its own. According to Pierre Cl  roux, chief economist at BDC, quite a lot of people think the shortage is temporary. It is not. On the contrary, the labour shortage is likely to get worse over time. We are seeing signs of that all across the country. Restaurants have no choice but to close their doors at the end of the summer because there are no workers to be found. There are customers aplenty, but restaurants hire students in the summer, and nobody else is available to do those jobs when the students go back to school in the fall.

Some farmers lose their crops because they do not have enough workers to harvest their fruits and vegetables. That is not to mention another problem that we are experiencing in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, namely a serious lack of welders and other skilled workers. Businesses have to contact their competitors and ask them to lend them welders so that they can fulfill their contractual obligations. That makes no sense. In my region, there are many jobs going unfilled, and it is a serious problem.

Ensuring that skilled workers are available to meet labour demands is a responsibility the government should take very seriously. A more sustainable and equitable solution would be to see Canadian workers, employers, unions, educational institutions, and federal and provincial governments working together strategically to meet our labour force goals.

According to a Conference Board of Canada report, the wave of retirements, combined with the declining birth rate, will create a labour shortage that will continue to grow for years. Something needs to be done. Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean is already feeling the effects of the labour shortage. In 20 years, Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean has gone from having a shortage of jobs to having a shortage of workers. I never thought I would see that. It is estimated that the region's population will increase by only 0.4% from 2016 to 2021, while the population of Quebec as a whole will increase by 3.8%. If this situation continues, over the long term, the revenue generated by SMEs could diminish because there are not enough workers.

The forestry industry is also an important economic driver in my region. The future of Quebec's forestry industry depends on new employment access policies for women and indigenous peoples and on better targeted immigration strategies to deal with the labour crisis in our plants. This labour shortage is already having a negative impact on economic growth in my region of Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean.

In March 2018, at the Action   conomique conference in Alma, the CEO of B  ton pr  fabriqu   du Lac said, "We invested \$25 million in our plants outside Canada, but we invested zero dollars [in those in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean]. Why? There are no workers."

Several initiatives are already under way to solve this problem in order to make the region more appealing and attract workers.

• (1125)

Let me share an example of something that happened recently, about two weeks ago, in my riding. The Saguenay-Le Fjord chamber of commerce and industry organized an event to woo about 30 immigrants who have arrived in Quebec over the past five years. The purpose of the event was to encourage those workers, whom our

economy badly needs, to settle in the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region.

I went to the airport to welcome them personally. An entire day was set aside for them to meet with employers, bring their CVs and tour businesses. The event was an effort to attract workers to our region, and I hope it pays off, because we really need them.

I would also like to talk about other organizations in my riding, such as Place aux jeunes en r  gion and Carrefour jeunesse-emploi Saguenay, which are doing a wonderful job of recruiting and attracting people from outside our region, keeping them in our region and facilitating their integration. I personally applaud their efforts. As an example, the goals of Place aux jeunes en r  gion include preventing and slowing the exodus of young people to large urban centres, promoting and facilitating the professional integration of young people in the region, supporting and promoting the social engagement of young people in the region, educating young people, those close to them and local stakeholders about the impact of the exodus, and encouraging business creation in the region.

In Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, four migration officers are posted to different areas. The migration officer is the resource person for matters related to youth migration, settlement and retention in the region. The migration officer's mission is to attract a growing number of young people to the area they represent.

Migration officers are front-line, well-informed resources who support young people and engage the community. Their job is to support young people remotely through the process of settling in the region, organize and run familiarization visits, be familiar with the labour needs of local businesses and with local economic development projects, and post job offers and regional news. They also work with local employers to help them find qualified graduates to hire, encourage local teens to see the potential in their home region and learn about local labour needs, and make their community aware of the consequences of the youth exodus and come up with strategies to welcome and retain young people.

In a region like mine, Saguenay—Lac Saint-Jean, retaining young people is very important, but we also have to ensure that immigrants who come to our region find the resources they need to tour businesses and to settle in our region for good.

Those are the reasons I will be voting in favour of Motion No. 190. A study of this kind would help us make the economy more dynamic and competitive and ensure that employers get the workers they need and that workers get the opportunities they deserve.

• (1130)

[English]

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak in favour of Motion No. 190, "That the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities be instructed to undertake a study on the labour shortages of the greater Toronto and Hamilton Area."

Private Members' Business

I want to thank the member for Mississauga East—Cooksville for his ongoing passion for, and work on, this issue.

One-fifth of Ontario's current construction workforce will be retiring in the next 10 years. Sustaining industry capacity through recruitment and training efforts is, and will continue to be, a high priority for industry leaders. The number of major refurbishment, infrastructure and transportation projects is expected to rise significantly in the coming decade, and even today these projects are developing at a rapid pace across the country.

Parts of my riding of Don Valley West feel like an ongoing construction zone. Once finished, the Eglinton Crosstown will be one of many projects that significantly improve the lives of all of us, but it is taking a huge number of skilled workers to make it a reality. New condo and apartment construction, home renovation and city infrastructure projects are everywhere. The economy is booming and the development of our communities is necessary to keep up with a fast moving, growing population. With the booming Toronto economy and more projects like these just around the corner, recruiting highly qualified tradesmen and tradeswomen will be vital to the growth of our community and our country as a whole.

From the perspective of my home province, it is clear that Ontario requires the recruitment of workers in the construction industry from outside the province. The aging workforce, along with many retirements, will account for a higher share of new job openings within the next decade. While the Ontario population ages, natural population growth will not be enough to sustain our labour requirements. Immigration and migration to the province will be necessary to sustain labour requirements, especially in the construction industry.

I very much expect that a study on labour shortages in the GTA and Hamilton area would help Canadians understand the great need for immigrants who are skilled in the trades and other jobs. It would add to the sense of urgency to address this problem.

The Carpenters' District Council of Ontario recently appealed to me in my role as chairperson of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration about this pending crisis in the labour market. The council represents hard-working, skilled women and men across Canada and is committed to providing training and apprenticeship programs that allow people from a diverse range of backgrounds to enter the workforce and build meaningful careers in carpentry, drywall and resilient flooring, to name just a few.

The Carpenters' Union, like many other trade unions, has known for some time that Canada is facing an increasingly significant shortage in the skilled trades. In 2018, BuildForce Canada reported that by 2027, 21% of the nationwide construction labour force will need to be replaced. Further, to meet the overall labour requirements of Canadian construction over the next decade, nearly 30,000 new skilled workers will be required. BuildForce recently reported that with the growing demand for construction services in Ontario, our province alone will face a deficit of some 23,000 skilled workers in the next decade. Finally, a Stats Canada report noted that the construction industry is working at 92% capacity, the highest rate in nearly 30 years.

The Carpenters' Union and other unions say that we need a fresh look at how Canada recruits and hires workers in the trades industry. Altered immigration patterns and the lack of young workers joining the trades in the numbers required demands that we find a new way to attract people to work in our skilled trades sector. Immigration programs need to be adjusted to ensure that the right candidates are being selected to work in the right areas to relieve specific and consistently expanding skilled labour shortages.

Our government is committed to addressing these concerns. We eliminated the four-year cumulative duration rule, imposed by the Conservatives, in order to prevent unnecessary hardship and instability for both workers and employers. Our government is further increasing opportunities for temporary workers looking to transition to permanent residence.

These are all constructive steps, but we know that more work needs to be done. Undertaking the study called for in Motion No. 190 would address the concerns of the construction industry in an important and constructive way. A study designed to provide solutions for how to increase construction skill development in the Hamilton and Toronto region would be a vital tool in moving forward and addressing industry trends. The time to take further action is now.

• (1135)

Last November, the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration completed a study entitled "Immigration to Atlantic Canada: Moving to the Future". This study was similar to the one envisioned in this motion, focusing in large part on labour shortages, this one particularly on shortages in the four Atlantic provinces.

The study showed that in order to combat both short and long-term labour shortages in the region, immigration levels in Atlantic Canada needed to be increased. Low birth rates, elevated death rates and an increasingly aging population mean that Atlantic Canada will require other sources to stabilize and grow its population. The study found that immigration provides an important piece of an overall solution. The study made it clear that the four Atlantic provinces need to recruit and retain more immigrants to fill the labour shortages gap. This was particularly relevant for the Atlantic region's infrastructure industry.

That is the key aim of the Atlantic immigration pilot program. As of March 2017, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada started accepting permanent resident applications through this pilot program, a three-year immigration project that includes a specific stream for international graduates. Outreach to individual businesses has led to significant interest and participation in the program. Jobs have been identified in various sectors, with teams overseas already having success in recruiting qualified immigrants as a result of the pilot program.

Private Members' Business

One of the goals of Motion No. 190 is an analysis of the Atlantic immigration pilot and its initiatives. This pilot project could serve as a model to address the skilled worker needs in the greater Toronto and Hamilton areas. I know that the pilot project in Atlantic Canada is already showing signs of success, and introducing something similar in Toronto and Hamilton would benefit the province and, subsequently, the whole country.

As the MP for Don Valley West, I know this study would assist our government's ability to address the current need and trend in the construction industry. It is abundantly clear that Ontario needs to do more to recruit and retain new Canadians who are skilled in the trades. My constituents need strong, qualified people in the construction industry if we are going to continue to take advantage of a booming economy, maintain our quality of life and grow the middle class.

From carpentry to landscaping, and everything in-between, addressing the labour shortages via Motion No. 190 is a step in the right direction. For that reason, I fully support this motion. Again, I thank the member for Mississauga East—Cooksville for this wonderful initiative.

[Translation]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Madam Speaker, people driving along Casavant Boulevard in Saint-Hyacinthe will see school buses parked near the Viandes Lacroix plant. This might seem odd, but it is not. On the contrary, it is a symbol of Quebec's labour shortage. The Saint-Hyacinthe family business was forced to buy three buses to transport employees living in neighbouring towns and the greater Montreal area to the plant every day. Like Viandes Lacroix, 70% of Quebec employers are having a hard time finding workers. This is a real problem for our businesses, which are forced to refuse contracts, increase overtime, miss deadlines and more.

This issue is not unique to Viandes Lacroix. Olymel also runs a free shuttle bus to take workers from Saint-Hyacinthe to Saint-Damase. In Quebec, there are more than half a million jobs to be filled by next year. Over the next 10 years, there will more than 1.3 million jobs to be filled. It is urgent that we take action and implement a national labour strategy. The Liberal government's failure to take action on some key points is a factor in the ongoing labour shortage.

I visited businesses in Acton Vale and Saint-Hyacinthe and met with owners. All of them told me that they are struggling with the labour shortage. They also told me that all of the red tape with the temporary foreign worker program makes it hard for them to hire staff. Immigrant workers are necessary to make up for the labour shortage.

This problem is not unique to these businesses. Businesses across my riding of Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot struggle with this same problem, and this is clear to me every time I travel around my riding and see signs that say "We're hiring" in English, French, Arabic and Spanish. I saw one just yesterday at VIF Plastics.

The economic and business communities of Saint-Hyacinthe and Acton Vale are being bold and innovative in addition to working on recruiting staff.

I want to recognize all members of my riding's economic community and their teams who are doing an extraordinary job. This includes the Acton Vale CFDC; the Acton RCM Développement économique et local; the Acton region chamber of commerce; the chamber of commerce of the greater Saint-Hyacinthe region; the Relève en affaires committee; the Femmes d'affaires maskoutaines committee; the Comité Resource humaine, which brings together managers from manufacturing, service, retail and government businesses; and the Saint-Hyacinthe Technopole.

I also want to point out that Emploi Québec in Montérégie and Développement économique in the Maskoutains RCM have been doing excellent work and have hosted a job day for the past four years. The fourth event, held on March 22, was a huge success. These events are tangible proof that our ridings need workers.

Michaël Morin runs a sharpening shop in my riding, and he told me how hard it is to recruit skilled, motivated people to help his business thrive. Mr. Morin would like to recruit a skilled young man with temporary foreign worker status. Unfortunately, the current criteria are getting in the way. Mr. Morin wants to recruit people to grow his business, but he is being denied permission to hire foreign workers because his business has fewer than 10 employees.

Small businesses like Mr. Morin's are crucial to maintaining the integrity and vitality of our communities. They are the ones suffering because of this situation, and their attempts to find solutions should not be stymied by red tape.

I wrote to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and asked him to adapt temporary foreign worker hiring rules to the reality facing Quebec, and especially rural regions such as Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, which are being hit hard by the labour shortage. On October 15, I also asked the minister to set up a service office for employers in Saint-Hyacinthe to make the process easier for them and our constituents. When I talked to employers in my riding, they also pointed to the importance of adapting various kinds of skills training to meet their actual needs.

• (1140)

I also believe it is essential to focus on training and knowledge transfer. That is why I propose developing a system as part of a training program that would pair a newly hired young person with an employee who is close to retirement.

Private Members' Business

Businesses have talked to me about the problem of knowledge transfer. A retiring employee often leaves with the wealth of 30 years experience, but the businesses do not have the budget to keep the retiring employee on as the new, often young employee is getting started. We have to develop either a tax credit or a program, some sort of support for businesses to help them keep both these employees at the same time for a month or two to allow for a real transfer of knowledge.

In addition to allowing practical and technical knowledge of the job to be transferred, the goal is to transfer love for the job, establish human connections, and develop social skills that create an ideal work dynamic for everyone. Young people would then benefit from the mentorship and experience and expertise they need to carry on the work.

I think we should support associations such as Espace carrière, Action Emploi and Parcours Formation that not only connect workers and businesses, but also provide counselling to immigrant employees who need it. I want to commend these employee integration and economic development businesses. Parcours Formation and Action Emploi do remarkable work in our riding.

It is difficult to integrate an individual into a work environment without considering the social and personal reality that affects their work. I had the opportunity to accompany the Minister of Labour to the meeting of G7 labour ministers in Turin, Italy. We met with a state organization that is mandated to do exactly that. In addition to helping young people integrate into the job market, this organization helps employers.

Employers look after the professional and technical job integration of staff. However, young workers may come to work and find it difficult to do their job because their family lives in extreme poverty, one of their friends died of an overdose the night before, their mother lives with domestic violence, or because they are financially supporting their family at a young age. Employers often need the support of such an organization because they do not have the resources needed to help this young person deal with social issues.

The Italian organization I mentioned meets with youth at their place of employment and offers help. It also works with the family at home and with existing community and government resources because the young person's social and personal issues can hinder their integration at work.

I believe that we need to develop programs to help these people truly integrate and keep their jobs. I was the director of a community organization that helped youth at risk and our job was not to ensure that they went to work the first day. Our job was to help them stay motivated and keep going to work every morning, despite their problems, and to continue integrating into the workplace.

The labour shortage is a real economic drag on our business development. Since my riding is experiencing a labour shortage, I will be holding a round table on the economy with my riding's economic development organizations, chambers of commerce and community organizations.

We need to work together to identify solutions and develop a common action plan that will maintain co-operation between stakeholders and pinpoint specific solutions for our riding that we

can propose to the government. Many economic stakeholders and municipalities in my riding support this undertaking. I therefore invite as many businesses, community and economic development organizations and chambers of commerce in the riding as possible to attend this round table.

The labour shortage is a complex problem and we all need to be part of the solution. By joining forces and combining our different skills, we can improve the situation. Solutions do exist.

● (1145)

[English]

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased we have this opportunity to debate Motion No. 190, a private member's motion brought forward by my colleague from Mississauga East—Cooksville.

One of the first things we talked about following the 2015 election was the ongoing problem of labour shortages and what we could do about it. All of us know very well the various unions that represent people throughout the country. We also know that the labour shortage is a very serious problem. I was pleased that the member for Mississauga East—Cooksville put forward Motion No. 190, which provides us with a way to focus on this issue.

As we heard from previous speakers, this is not just an Ontario problem. It is in fact a problem in various parts of our country. It is important to try to focus some attention on how we can meet the demands.

I applaud my colleague for the work he has done in putting this together. His continued passion for the skilled trades is like no other. He had a former career as a provincial member of Parliament, so he is familiar with labour issues and labour shortages.

The study that is being proposed by the motion would examine ways to solve the skilled labour shortage problem throughout Canada.

Ensuring that skilled workers are available to meet labour demands is a responsibility that our government takes very seriously. Following the 2015 election, we have had many discussions with colleagues of all parties on how to better deal with the labour shortage.

I have been monitoring the progress and path of the motion for quite some time, as it would have a significant positive impact for the constituents of my riding, an area within the GTA.

Private Members' Business

Whether we are talking about carpenters, bricklayers, masonry workers, the shortage is there. One of the challenges with our young people today is getting them interested in the trades. They are much more interested in IT and so on. When I speak in schools, it is hard to get them interested in this type of work, even though I tell them that great jobs can be found in the building trades, that the jobs pay well and that they will not be out of work. When they see workers outside on snowy, cold days doing the things they have to do, this does not exactly interest them. However, for those who do go that way, they have positive careers. They are able to buy houses and purchase cars. They have everything they need. However, there is a real challenge in trying to get people interested in that.

We are investing millions of dollars in infrastructure projects throughout Canada. This increases the need for many skilled workers. I cannot tell people the number of companies with which I have spoken. They have a lot of work, but they cannot get workers to get the jobs done. We want infrastructure money hitting the road, so new buildings can be built and so forth.

There were many examples of the shortage with respect to finishing up the renovations to West Block. There was a lack of a sufficient workforce.

The current employment numbers are estimated at approximately 413,600 jobs, which are evenly split between residential and non-residential construction.

The demand in the construction industry is expected to grow, and we want to see it grow. I have always found that if the construction industry is doing well then Canada is doing well.

Many years ago, my husband, who is a carpenter, immigrated to Canada from Italy. As a result of his skill trade as a carpenter, he went on to build a very successful career, and we have a successful family.

There are many needs out there and Motion No. 190 focuses on finding solutions to the problem. Workers currently in the country who are looking to sponsor family members to come here will help to continue to build on that.

• (1150)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Mississauga East—Cooksville for moving Motion No. 190, which calls for a study on the labour shortage in the construction industry.

Like my colleague, I am concerned about the growing labour shortage in Canada's construction industry. A viable solution must be found to the challenge facing the construction industry, which employs over 1.4 million people in Canada.

[*English*]

According to the Canadian Construction Association, 132,000 workers will retire between 2016 and 2025, yet only 127,000 new workers will enter the workforce, which leaves a shortage of at least 5,000 workers to fill in that gap.

[*Translation*]

The economic impact of this labour shortage is equally troubling. It is absolutely vital that we support the work of those who build our schools, our workplaces, our ports and our highways. It is also crucial that we support those who are building our country, one brick at a time.

Motion No. 190 moved by my colleague from Mississauga East—Cooksville is a solid recommendation, because it is in everyone's interest that we ensure that the supply of labour in the construction industry can meet Canada's needs in that regard.

The construction sector is a source of pride for Canada.

• (1155)

[*English*]

Numerous solutions to combat the labour shortage were discussed during the first hour of debate, mainly to intensify the inclusion of under-represented demographic groups in the construction industry in Canada, such as indigenous people, youth and women. Calling upon these under-represented groups will bring many advantages to the industry.

[*Translation*]

That is why it is crucial that measures and initiatives be implemented that take into account our specific northern reality while creating jobs for this under-represented demographic group.

The contribution of women to the construction industry must also be explored as a possible solution. Many women have carved out a prominent place for themselves in a traditionally male-dominated field.

Earlier this session I had the honour to rise to speak to the labour shortage in the aviation sector. That is why I support Motion No. 190, which calls on the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities to undertake a study on the labour shortage in the construction industry in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will first thank the members who just spoke on Motion No. 190. The member for Kingston and the Islands advocated bringing more women into the workforce, particularly the trades. The member for Oshawa understands the dilemma and is looking for a solution to help businesses. The member for Jonquière provided very touching personal stories from her riding about the gaps that businesses are experiencing. The member for Don Valley West, whose riding I drove through and saw all of the construction there, explained how much of it has been delayed. The member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot shared experiences from her riding. Indeed, we are hearing that labour shortages are being experienced from coast to coast to coast, particularly in construction. The member for Humber River—Black Creek has advocated and championed tremendously for this issue to be addressed, not only over the last number of years but decades. We heard how it touches not only her riding and region, but also her family. I also thank the member for Alfred-Pellan for his remarks.

We are hearing all members say that they are experiencing labour shortages in their ridings. Motion No. 190 is specific to construction in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area so that we can do a more in-depth, focused study. If we find solutions, they could be rolled out across Ontario and all of the provinces and territories, which would benefit the country. It would give us the opportunity to do that, and in short order.

Do we have a challenge? Yes, we do. We have a challenge because unemployment is at a 40-year low. There are massive projects. The biggest private sector project ever in this country was just announced a few weeks ago, a \$40-billion LNG project in British Columbia. Moreover, in 2016, construction and maintenance workers built, installed, maintained, repaired and renovated infrastructure, estimated at \$250 billion across our nation.

The construction and maintenance industry has 1.4 million workers. Cumulatively, that accounts for 7.7% of all employment in Canada. Indirectly, the industry accounts for almost 12.5% of employment in our nation. These figures are a testament to a robust industry that has provided well-paying jobs for generations of Canadians.

We need to understand that we have an aging workforce. Two years ago, there were more people over the age of 65 than under the age of 25. Much of the aging workforce comes from baby boomers, who have made up a disproportionate share of our construction workers. The reason is that over the last number of decades, many young people have not gone into the skilled trades or construction. One of the things we want to find out through a study is why that is. These are good-paying, family-sustaining, strong middle-class jobs. They would help people climb the ladder into the middle class, and that is what we are encouraging more and more.

To put numbers on this in terms of growth, the industry is growing at about 4% in Ontario, but the GTHA is experiencing about 8% growth. Contractors in this industry were surveyed and asked what kept them up at night. Seventy-one per cent of them indicated that recruitment was their most significant concern and one-third of them said they are not able to find the people to do the work.

With all of our infrastructure across this land—bridges, roads, hospitals, schools, and businesses—we need a solution. That is why I encourage all members to vote in favour of the study proposed by Motion No. 190, so that we can keep building our great land.

• (1200)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

Business of Supply

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—FINANCE

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC) moved:

That the House call on the government to tell Canadians in what year the budget will be balanced, and to do so in this week's Fall Economic Statement.

He said: Madam Speaker, it is only about 42 more sleeps until this Prime Minister is scheduled to keep his promise and show us how the budget will balance itself, because 2019 will soon upon us, the year when the Liberal election platform said the budget would be balanced. We remember those modest temporary deficits that were promised, of no more than \$10 billion and for no more than three years. "Back to balance by the end of the term," he said, and we were all to be comforted by that commitment. In fact, if we go to the Liberal Party website today, we still find that election platform and that commitment.

Unfortunately, no one at the Liberal Party headquarters has talked to anyone over at Finance Canada. There, officials report, though the finance minister refuses to confirm, that the budget will not be balanced until 2045, a quarter century later than the Liberal Party says it will. The Liberal Party says it will be next year; Finance Canada says it will be in 25 years. Who are we to believe? We are here today to find out. I have put forward a motion with the strong support of Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Members should feel free to interrupt my remarks with their applause at any time. I will be conservative in my remarks as long as they are liberal in their applause.

However, unfortunately, the current Liberal government has been too liberal with our money. Government spending has grown at a rate of about seven per cent a year, even though economic growth has only been around two and a half per cent. The combined rate of inflation and population growth has been less than three per cent. In other words, we are growing the government more than twice as fast as we need and twice as fast as we can afford.

Last year and in the years before, this Prime Minister inherited great fortune. That was nothing new to him. He inherited a multi-million-dollar trust fund and he has never had to worry about money. Luckily for him, more good fortune fell from the sky in the year 2017. In that year, the U.S. economy and the world economy were roaring. Commodity prices were up, housing markets boomed in Vancouver and Toronto and elsewhere, and interest rates were near record lows. All of this good fortune, which is out of the government's control but to its benefit, generated a windfall of \$20 billion last year according to the government's own records.

Business of Supply

I am pleased to report that our Prime Minister did the responsible thing. He saved it all for a rainy day; he put it aside in the great Canadian tradition and prepared us for difficult times ahead. I am kidding.

In fact, he blew every single penny. When he was done blowing every penny of the windfall, the increased revenue he had enjoyed, he continued his spending splurge and borrowed \$20 billion more, meaning his deficit in that fiscal year was about twice what he promised it would be. This year, if we believe Finance Canada, the deficit will be three times what the Liberal platform promised. Next year, there was supposed to be no deficit at all.

Soon, in fact just two days from now, the finance minister will introduce his fall economic update. He will tell us, we hope, the size of the deficit and when this miraculous self-balancing budget will manifest itself. We have put forward a very non-partisan motion that anyone should be able to support, namely, that the government simply reveal the year that the budget will be balanced. We are not even contesting the extraordinary bonanza of spending and the massive debts and higher taxes the government has imposed on Canadians—we know that will be a central debate in the next election—but are putting all of that aside and simply asking for the government to give us the year when the budget will be balanced.

• (1205)

The fact that we even have to put this in a motion is rather startling, because past governments always projected the year in which budgets would be balanced. They projected many years out how big the surpluses would be and what the size the debt would be in given years down the road.

The current government has changed that practice. It has stopped concluding a medium- and long-term fiscal forecast in its budgets and fall updates. That means that Canadians are left guessing when it is that their government will stop adding debt in their name. If Finance Canada documents can be believed and the 25 years of deficits go ahead, that will add nearly half a trillion dollars of new debt to this country.

Now, it is always difficult to appreciate the urgency of tackling debt. Sometimes people think it is a theoretical problem, far away from home. In reality, it is quite simple. Deficits today mean massive tax hikes tomorrow, because the bankers and the bond holders who have lent us that money expect to have a rate of return. It would be completely unrealistic to expect that they would just donate that money out of the kindness of their hearts or park it with the Canadian government in the hope of getting it back at the same value. No, these bankers and bondholders want to collect increasing interest at increasing rates, and that is exactly what has happened.

According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, by the year 2023, the Government of Canada will be spending nearly \$40 billion on interest on the national debt. That \$40 billion is a two-thirds increase over last year. It means that we will be spending more on interest on our national debt than we currently spend on health care transfers to our provinces.

That is money that working-class taxpayers will have to fork over to wealthy bankers and bondholders, people with money, because only people with money can lend government money and earn the

resulting interest. These working-class families will contribute that tax money, and they will get nothing in return for it. They will simply have the comfort of knowing that some affluent lender, somewhere on Bay Street or Wall Street or in Hong Kong or some other world financial capital, is reaping a windfall because the government could not control its own spending.

That represents, by the way, a wealth transfer from the working class to the super rich, another example of the government's continual efforts to take from those with the least to give to those with the most, to take from the have-nots and give to the have-yachts.

There are three major consequences from these spiralling deficits. In the short run, deficits put upward pressure on inflation and interest rates. In other words, they raise the prices Canadians must pay for the goods and services they use, and because the government is competing with homeowners for borrowed money, the amount lenders can charge to lend that money actually goes up. Our homeowners have to pay higher interest rates in addition to higher costs, because the government is competing with them for credit.

The second consequence is that because higher debt today means higher taxes tomorrow, Canadians will feel the crunch of higher interest rates on their household debt at the same time they are experiencing it on their tax bills. As interest rates go up for the government, they will be going up for households that are facing record debt of their own. The government, on its current trajectory, will have to raise taxes on the very people who are struggling the most to make ends meet in order to pay interest on an out-of-control and unnecessarily large debt.

Third, increased debt and deficits render us vulnerable in the bad times. There will be bad times again. We know this, because history repeats itself. That is why, in the early Conservative government, we paid off about \$30 billion of debt, which helped prepare Canada to have a solid financial footing when the U.S. financial system came crashing down. In that once-in-a-generation, or maybe once-in-a-century, financial crisis, Canada was the last to go into deficit and a recession and the first to come out of both among all its G7 peers. During the good times, we prepared, we stored away and we built our foundation so that when the storm struck, we were able to resist its ravages.

• (1210)

However, the current Prime Minister has done precisely the opposite. He has blown all our good fortune in the good times. When everything was going in his favour, when all the luck was on his side, he squandered it, every last penny. Therefore, when the next crisis comes, unless we change course, the Prime Minister will lead us into it with an unprecedented degree of weakness and a lack of readiness. That is the third consequence of having unnecessarily large debts and deficits in the good times.

•(1215)

[*Translation*]

The Prime Minister said that the budget would balance itself. He said he could spend, spend, spend and that the money would magically appear in the budget. He promised that the budget would be balanced by 2019, which is in about 40 days. As the official opposition, we are here to ask the government exactly when it will balance the budget.

The minister will deliver his economic statement in two days. When a government delivers this kind of statement, it usually predicts when the budget will be balanced and tells Canadians how much they can expect to be added to the national debt in the meantime.

This is a non-partisan motion. We are not even debating the content of the government's policy. We are not saying that the government is bad or good. We are simply saying that the government should be transparent and give us a date. Without this information, we cannot debate. If the government has nothing to hide, it should have no problem sharing this information.

The existing deficit has three main consequences. First, government deficits increase inflation and interest rates for consumers. They also increase the cost of living for workers, families and suburbanites.

Second, we will have to pay more interest on our national debt. According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, in four years, we will have to pay \$40 billion. That is a two-thirds increase in the interest payable. That means more money for bankers and other wealthy individuals. On the other hand, it means that ordinary people will be paying more taxes without getting any programs or services in return. The higher interest rate and the increase in the debt represent a migration of wealth from middle-class workers to the wealthy. Our government should not transfer poor people's assets to the wealthy, but that is exactly what happens when a government is carrying too much debt.

Third, we will see more crises in the future. We do not know when, but we know that they are coming. That is why, in the past, responsible Liberal and Conservative governments decided to pay back the debt during good years in order to prepare for future difficulties.

The former Conservative government paid back \$30 billion before the 2008 crisis that started in the U.S. That is why we were the last G7 country to experience a recession and post a deficit, and the first to get back on our feet.

Today, our country has an enormous deficit despite the fact that there is currently no crisis, while the Prime Minister could have taken precautions by taking advantage of a favourable situation: lower interest rates, spectacular economic growth in the United States and around the world, very strong real estate markets in Vancouver and Toronto, and an increase in the price of Canada's various assets.

All of these factors are beyond the government's control, but the Prime Minister benefited from them. He will not, however, always have this undeserved good fortune. That is why his decision to

Business of Supply

launch us into a significant deficit during the good years was so irresponsible. That is why we are demanding that the government tell us when we will be returning to a balanced budget.

•(1220)

[*English*]

We on this side of the House stand for fiscal responsibility to prepare Canada for a rainy day, to stop the outrageous transfer of wealth from the working class and the poor to the super rich in the form of interest on debt, and to stop the government from raising the cost of living on everyday Canadians, who are already facing a cost-of-living crunch.

The first step, though, is for the government to tell the truth. To resolve any problem, one has to admit that there is a problem, and the first admission of that problem would be to tell us the day. Is it really going to be 2045 when the government returns to a balanced budget, a quarter of a century from now and half a trillion dollars later?

By the way, I should mention the bad news. That 25 years, that half trillion dollars, assumes that the government does not spend another penny in the fall update or in its pre-election budget. That would expect a degree of financial discipline the Prime Minister has not demonstrated once in his entire life, yet we have hope. We have hope that if he comes forward with the cold, hard truth that his budgetary plan is a mess and that he has broken his word to Canadians, he will awaken to the need to live within our means, just as ordinary Canadians who do not have multi-million dollar trust funds have had to do their whole lives.

We ask the Prime Minister to join, finally, for once in his life, in solidarity with those people, the people who pay the bills, and at least tell them what the situation is and when the budget will be balanced, and give us the truth so that we can restore the solid fiscal foundation upon which this country's economy has long been built and that he inherited.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it has been 1,126 sleeps since Prime Minister Stephen Harper was here and since we learned the reality of the situation: there was no fictitious surplus, as purported by the preceding government. The reality of the situation is that in Canada, the debt is relatively low compared to other western countries. Our debt-to-GDP ratio compared to other developed countries in the world is low, despite the fact that we have the fastest-growing economy among the G7 countries.

I will very happily stand up for the plan this government has put forward. I, on any day, would happily compare the record of this government to 10 years of Stephen Harper.

Business of Supply

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, the member opened by saying that there was no fictitious balanced budget left behind by the Conservatives, and he is absolutely right. There was no fictitious balanced budget, there was a real balanced budget. That balanced budget allowed us to, as I said, enter the recession and deficit after every other government and country in the G7 and re-emerge more quickly. That was a massive worldwide crisis, the likes of which we have not seen since the great global recession, a crisis that came to Canada from abroad, but one that we were successful at responding to here at home. We were the envy of the world, with Jim Flaherty even voted the best finance minister on earth at the time.

Now, the government has exactly the opposite situation. The world economy is roaring strong, commodity prices are up, interest rates are at record lows and booming housing markets in Vancouver and Toronto have poured money into government coffers. It has squandered every penny and much more. When will it stop? When will the budget finally balance itself?

• (1225)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, all Canadians remember well that in 2015 the Liberals campaigned and promised Canadians they would run three modest \$10-billion deficits and then balance the budget in their fourth year. That is only one of a growing litany of broken promises to Canadians. We know the Liberals also told Canadians that 2015 would be the last election under the first-past-the-post system. They also told Canadians they would run the Kinder Morgan pipeline through a brand new environmental assessment process. That is another promise that was broken.

Where in the litany, the pantheon of broken promises of the current Liberal government, would my hon. colleague rank the current issue before the House, which is the broken promise to do with running deficits and balancing the budget?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, for the member to give me such a long list to choose from in such a short period of time is really an unfair question, but I will forgive him that. What our grandchildren will not forgive us for, though, is piling massive debt on their shoulders, debt they never voted for but for which they will forever have to pay.

What working-class Canadians should never have to forgive is their own government putting upward pressure on inflation and interest rates, making the cost of living even less affordable than it already is. What our lowest-income Canadians will also not forgive, and should not have to, is paying higher taxes to transfer more and more wealth to the connected bondholders and bankers who will absorb and enjoy this \$40-billion a year windfall of interest on our national debt. We should never have to forgive any of those things.

Where does this broken promise rank? I will tell the member when we find out the government's answer to the question of when the budget will balance itself.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the flip side is the Conservatives' hidden agenda. To achieve a balanced budget, we would need to make cuts to indigenous infrastructure, as well as the Canada child benefit and affordable housing, which would affect Canadian families.

Doug Ford and Manitoba's Brian Pallister also have similar hack-and-slash agendas. That is the Conservatives' hidden agenda. We might even have to make cuts to official services in French, the language of Molière. French is important, not only here in Quebec and Ontario, but across the country. Perhaps a Conservative government would make cuts to every service of any importance of these communities across the country. The hon. member knows this all too well.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, if a balanced budget is so terrible, why did the hon. member and his leader promise one for 2019? It was their own election promise. Why would they promise something as awful as a balanced budget, if that is the case?

What is the Liberal Party's secret agenda? An increase in the national debt will oblige Canadians to pay more interest. How will they pay for that? Will they once again increase taxes on the middle class? Will the Liberals have to cut social programs in order to pay more interest on the national debt? That is the Liberal Party's hidden agenda. The Liberals should now reveal their real plan by telling us when we will return to a balanced budget.

[*English*]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, my thanks to the hon. member, who spoke with great emotion. Everybody agrees that we need to make sure that we do not leave future generations with a debt to pay. Of course, the debt is rising. However, there is another big question with respect to why the Liberals are putting off until the future high priorities, like getting first nations off safe drinking water boil advisories or giving them access to equivalent education and taking action on climate mitigation measures in municipalities, as the FCM calls for.

My question to the hon. member is this. What would his party do to balance the budget, how quickly would they do that, and what would he cut?

• (1230)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, we will start with the Asian infrastructure bank with at least a half billion dollars to build roads and pipelines in China. I am not sure about the member for Edmonton Strathcona but I think if she asked around her neighbourhood, her constituents would say that pipelines in Canada are probably better than pipelines in China. By the way, we could build them without tax dollars here if we got the government out of the way.

I think we should cancel some of the corporate welfare that has poured into the coffers of businesses that have used the money just to beef up the bonuses of their executives while laying people off, which is exactly what happened at Bombardier when the government gave money to the billionaire Bombardier-Beaudoin family.

Business of Supply

I think we could also start growing spending at an affordable rate. Instead of growing spending at 7%, what about growing it at 2% or 3%, which is roughly the rate of economic growth? That would allow us to maintain all the existing programs that we already have, without engaging in a massive spending bonanza that would have to be paid for by future generations.

Those are some practical examples of how we can bring ourselves back in balance.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was wondering if my colleague for Carleton could comment on this. A young person on the break week compared the Prime Minister to a friend of his who got a credit card and irresponsibly partied, using it for a couple of years. He had a great time and said that everything was going wonderfully, but then hit a point where he had to pay it back and everything went horribly. He was very pessimistic about his future.

Can my colleague comment on this credit card economy that the Liberals are really promoting and what effect is it going to have on our young people with regard to affordability and their ability to get ahead?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, I think that sounds like a very clever young person whom the hon. member spoke to. Maybe that young man or woman would be a better finance minister than the one we have right now. Probably he or she did not inherit a multi-million dollar trust fund and, therefore, knows what it is like to earn the money that they spend. It would be nice if the government had the same ethic.

That is the ethic that the Conservatives will employ when we are in government. We will govern on behalf of the hard-working people who pay the bills in this country. We will live within our means just like Canadians have to and we will all be better off as a result.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would first like to thank my colleague from Carleton for his excellent speech. I very much enjoyed his vision of history, although I still find it a bit creative, when he mentioned the financial crisis in 2008 and how well Canada did.

I must point out that, when former prime minister Stephen Harper was in the opposition, he was all worked up about deregulating Canada's financial sector. It was Paul Martin, a Liberal prime minister, who refused, which is the reason why the Canadian financial sector did so well in 2008 and why Canada as a whole did better than other countries.

While we are on the topic, I would say that the Conservatives reaped what Liberal governments sowed for 10 or even 12 years, which is sound management of public funds under Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin.

I am willing to concede that they got through the financial crisis of 2008, but since they were in power for 10 years, overall, they had the poorest growth of the previous 69 years. They had the lowest job creation numbers since 1946 and the smallest increase in exports since World War II, at 0.3%. I think that we need to take the opposition's economic statements not with a grain but a block of salt,

because they were clearly unable to do the job for Canada, either when they were in the opposition, with Stephen Harper's suggestions around financial regulations, or when they were in power for 10 years.

That brings me to my speech today. In 2015, Canadians had to choose between the Conservatives' austerity measures and budget cuts, some of which were made to the cultural sector. We saw major cuts to the CBC, as well as veterans services, with the closure of nine offices. While the Conservatives were in power, several hundred employees who provided direct services to veterans were terminated. Similarly, payroll specialist jobs were cut, all to achieve an artificial surplus just in time for the general election. That is about as cynical as you can get. We are still paying for these ill-advised cuts, which did not stimulate growth or provide Canadians with the services to which they are entitled.

We took a different approach when we came to power. We determined that we should invest in our communities when interest rates are low.

I am pointing this out, because you cannot talk about the motion put forward by the hon. member for Carleton without talking about the progress we have made since 2015. Since November 2015, more than half a million full-time jobs have been created in Canada. Unemployment is now at its lowest rate in 40 years. Salaries are on the rise and, if the trend continues, they may rise more quickly in 2018 than they have in almost 10 years. In 2017, Canada's growth outstripped that of every one of the other G7 countries, and we are still growing. Economists expect that Canada will have one of the largest economic growth rates among G7 countries in 2018 and 2019.

This is not the result of good luck. It is the result of Canadians' hard work and our government's wise choices. In the past three years, we have invested in Canadians and in what is most important to them. We decided to focus on strengthening the middle class and not on austerity measures and budget cuts.

To truly understand the motion put forward by the hon. member across the aisle, we need to look at all of the investments the government has made in the past three years, and we are indeed talking about investments. The first measure implemented by our government was a tax cut for the middle class, which the Conservatives opposed. This tax cut means more money in the pockets of some nine million Canadians. This is money that makes it possible to save, invest and grow the economy.

Business of Supply

A fair tax system is the basis for a stronger middle class and a growing economy. Fairness inspires confidence and helps create possibilities for all Canadians. The tax cut for the middle class contributed significantly to the Canadian economy, but we did not stop there. To help families cover the costs of raising children, our government implemented the Canada child benefit, and began indexing it two years earlier than announced. The Canada child benefit is simpler, more generous and better targeted than the former system of federal child benefits which, if you remember, sent out cheques regardless of family income, some to millionaire families. Thanks to our Canada child benefit, nine out of 10 Canadian families with children receive more money every month than they did before. This benefit contributed to lifting 521,000 people, including almost 300,000 children, out of poverty.

● (1235)

[English]

Measures such as the middle-class tax cut and the Canada child benefit are making a real difference in the lives of Canadians. As a result, by this time next year a typical middle-class family of four will receive, on average, about \$2,000 more each year. This is real money to buy good things like healthy food, new winter boots or skating lessons for their children. This is real money that makes it easier for hard-working Canadians to make ends meet.

However, we did not stop there either. Our government understands that we as a country need the hard work and creativity of all Canadians because more people participating in the economy means a stronger economy. Making sure that every person has an equal chance to contribute to and share in the success of Canada is a no-brainer. We all benefit from this. For example, we all benefit from gender equality. Over the last 40 years, the increasing participation of women in the workforce has accounted for about one-third of Canada's per capita economic growth. Canadian women are among the most educated in the world, yet they still are facing barriers to achieving their full potential. They often earn less than men and are more likely to work part time. Our government would like to see a world where women's participation and earnings match those of men.

[Translation]

Our government is committed to helping women and girls overcome the barriers they face. Advancing gender equality promotes economic growth and increases incomes for Canadian families.

The good news is that progress has been made. Now more than ever in Canada, more women are employed and are contributing to our shared economic success.

The percentage of Canadian women who have jobs has risen steadily since 2015, after years of relatively weak growth. However, more work needs to be done.

Wage gains for Canadian women are still 31% lower on average than men's gains. The government has already shared its plan to adopt pay equity legislation, which will help bridge that gap. The legislation would require federally regulated employers with 10 or more employees to establish and maintain a proactive pay equity program.

Pay equity means equal pay for work of equal value. This measure will apply to 1.2 million people, including federal public servants, employees at Crown corporations and employees at federally regulated private sector businesses. This will include banks, airlines, cable companies and radio broadcasters.

The government will also create a pay equity commissioner position to ensure that the law is obeyed. The commissioner will provide annual reports to Parliament to ensure that our goals are being met.

● (1240)

[English]

That being said, equal pay is not always sufficient to achieve equal opportunity. For example, child care duties still fall disproportionately to women. To further promote gender equality, the government announced in this year's budget that a new employment insurance parental sharing benefit, a use it or lose it top-up to parental benefits, would be available starting in 2019. It will provide parents with access to an additional five weeks of parental benefits if they agree to share parental leave, or an additional eight weeks if they choose the extended option. The intent is to encourage all parents, including fathers, to take some leave when welcoming a new child and to share more equally in the work of raising their children. This policy will be available to same-sex couples and adoptive parents as well. It is a policy that has worked very well in Québec and in many countries in Europe. I am very proud that our government has made this a federal policy.

Growing our workforce is key to growing our economy and another of the government's initiatives, the Canada workers benefit, or CWB, will play a major role to achieve this. This will not only raise around 7,000 Canadians out of poverty, but it will also encourage more people to join the workforce, further strengthening the Canadian economy. In addition, the government is making it easier for people to access the benefit they have earned by making changes that will allow the Canada Revenue Agency to calculate the CWB for any tax filer who has not claimed it. That means everyone who can benefit from the CWB will receive it when they file their taxes.

Business of Supply

The government is also committed to helping today's seniors and those who will be seniors one day, which means everyone. Therefore, these past two years the government has worked to ensure that Canadians can have the secure retirement they deserve, free of financial worries. We increased the guaranteed income supplement payments by up to \$947 per year for single recipients, helping nearly 900,000 vulnerable low-income seniors. We restored the eligibility age for old age security and the guaranteed income supplement benefits to 65, which will greatly benefit tomorrow's seniors. We also reached a historic agreement with provinces to enhance the Canada pension plan, meaning more money for Canadians when they retire and less worry about their savings.

[*Translation*]

Thanks to Quebec's similar measure to enhance the Quebec pension plan, workers across Canada can expect a safer and more secure retirement. All Canadians are entitled to reach retirement age with peace of mind.

That is not all. We also adopted the very first national housing strategy in Canada, since nothing is more important than a home. The national strategy is a 10-year, \$40-billion plan that will meet the housing needs of 530,000 households and reduce chronic homelessness by 50%.

I mentioned the investments our government made for families, but we should not forget those made for Canadian businesses, which contribute to Canada's vitality and economic prosperity, which we on this side of the House want to be inclusive. For example, the government took important steps to support the competitiveness of Canadian businesses. In January of this year, the tax rate for small businesses decreased from 10.5% to 10%, the lowest rate in any of the G7 countries. We intend to do better still. As of January 2019, in just a few weeks, the rate will drop again, this time to 9%. For businesses, this tax cut represents up to \$7,500 in federal tax savings a year. That is money that can be reinvested in new equipment, business growth and the creation of more jobs for Canadians.

The government also reached new free trade agreements with our neighbours to the south, the United States and Mexico, with our partners across the Atlantic, the European Union, and Asia, with whom we share access to the Pacific Ocean. Today, Canada is the only G7 nation to have trade agreements with all the other G7 nations. That is a considerable advantage. In all, we have 14 free trade agreements with 51 countries, representing privileged access for Canadian businesses to 1.5 billion consumers worldwide.

Our government has also invested in the next generation of Canadian researchers. On this side of the House, we believe in science. The 2018 budget is an example of our commitment. It includes unprecedented investments of more than \$4 billion to support scientists and their research and to purchase the equipment Canadian researchers need. That means that they will be able to continue to innovate and develop new technologies, for example, technologies that will allow us to diagnose diseases more quickly or to develop new drugs for treating patients.

Let us also not forget our historic investments in infrastructure. For example, we allotted new money for public transit to shorten commuting time and give families more time together. Thanks to the federal government's ambitious plan, my region, Quebec City, has a

visionary project. I think that Quebec City has a lot of potential, and the project would not have been possible without such involvement from the federal government, without the desire to invest massively in public transit. For us, protecting the environment is an obvious necessity, but not everyone in the House shares this view.

• (1245)

[*English*]

Our government also made important investments to advance reconciliation between Canada and indigenous peoples. We invested in priority areas identified by first nations, Inuit and Métis nation partners. This is helping to close the gap between the living conditions of indigenous peoples and non-indigenous peoples, facilitating self-determination and advancing recognition of rights.

I could go on and on. Together with Canadians we have made a lot of progress. The government knows there is more work to be done, and I will leave this topic to the Minister of Finance as he tables the fall economic statement in the House later this week.

In the meantime, there is one thing of which I would like to remind the member for Carleton. Our government made the investments I mentioned and then some while keeping its fiscal house in order. The federal debt-to-GDP ratio remains firmly on a downward track and could soon reach its lowest level in over 40 years. Canada's total government net debt-to-GDP ratio is the lowest among the G7 countries. In fact, the deficit-to-GDP ratio is projected to reach a low of 0.5% in 2022-23.

What we need to balance first and foremost is the need to make smart investments to support economic growth and the need to preserve Canada's strong fiscal situation for current and future generations.

[*Translation*]

In a few days, the government will unveil the next step in its plan to strengthen the middle class, ensure economic growth and give more people a real and equal opportunity to succeed.

I must admit that I very much look forward to the finance minister's economic update on Wednesday. I am pleased to see that the member for Carleton shares my eagerness and enthusiasm. For sure, the economy is in better shape than it was three years ago. Job creation is strong and the unemployment rate has reached a 40-year low.

More and more Canadians benefit from the strength of the Canadian economy. I can assure all hon. members that the government will keep stepping up its efforts to make Canada a more egalitarian, competitive, sustainable and equitable country.

*Business of Supply**[English]*

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I heard the hon. parliamentary secretary talk a lot about his and the government's view of the economy and fiscal issues. However, one thing I did not hear was the year in which the budget will be balanced. He, along with the Prime Minister, ran on an election platform that the budget would be balanced in the year 2019. As the Prime Minister might have put it, "The budget will balance itself." They have stopped talking about that promise and we are only about 42 sleeps until 2019 arrives. We are holding them to their promise that the budget will balance itself in 2019.

I think anybody would agree that in a fall economic statement the year that a budget will be balanced would be a basic piece of information to share. Will he indicate now that on Wednesday the finance minister will tell us the date on which the budget will be balanced, yes or no?

• (1250)

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Carleton for asking his question, for raising this issue and for his enthusiasm about the fall economic statement. I am also excited about that.

It is important to remember that Canada's fiscal position is the best among G7 countries, that our debt is the lowest in relation to the size of our economy and that the debt-to-GDP ratio is steadily declining. Growth resumed in Canada after our government was elected in 2015.

That year, we were debating whether Canada was in recession or about to be, as Conservatives desperately kept implementing policies which in my view undermine Canada's growth potential. At the beginning of my speech, I mentioned the appalling figures of the Harper government, which my colleague from Carleton was a part of. He was on the cabinet which presided over the worst growth statistics of the past 69 years.

Export growth was at its lowest since World War II. It then picked up again in 2015 and has continued to rise in the three following years. Last year, it was the strongest growth of all G7 countries. Half a million jobs were created while our fiscal position remained enviable.

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Louis-Hébert. I often say that I believe him to be a politician with great intentions. However, the question the Conservatives are asking today is quite legitimate. I expect to get a frank and honest answer to the many questions that will be asked.

I have a simple question for my colleague. It is easy to draw parallels between the country's budget and that of the average family in Canada. Unfortunately, statistics can lead us astray. It seems that roughly half of all families in Canada are living paycheque to paycheque. The level of debt is quite high and clearly the government is leading the way on that.

Does my colleague not find it shameful on the government's part to not know when the budget will be balanced again? It is a problem.

Maybe they do not want to say because there is an election coming up in a year. Is that not pathetic?

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert for his kind words. I feel the same about him. He is a politician with great intentions.

In response to his question about household debt, I want to say that, from the beginning, our government's policies have been designed to make our tax system fairer and give families more breathing room.

In one year, Canadian families will have \$2,000 more, on average, than they did under the former government. We have lowered taxes on the middle class, and the Canada child benefit is making a difference for hundreds of thousands of families across the country.

These are not just talking points. This is the truth. I can see it in my riding, and I am sure that the member sees it in his own riding. This was our government's plan, while the previous government was sending cheques to millionaire families.

The member for Carleton loved sending cheques so much that he would pose for pictures just before the election in his nice Conservative blue polo while his government was printing cheques that were poorly distributed and were not progressive enough. We took a vastly different approach, which is helping the maximum number of Canadian families make ends meet, through much more progressive measures, like the Canada child benefit, the working income tax benefit and so on.

[English]

Mr. Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): Madam Speaker, in 2015, my team and I knocked on 25,000 doors in Edmonton Griesbach. Obviously it worked because they liked the Conservative message about balanced budgets, etc.

Oftentimes we would run into somebody who would say that we should get off the doorstep because he or she did not trust any politicians because they would say one thing before they would get elected and as soon as they were elected, they do whatever they wanted, making promises and not keeping them.

We know the Liberals promised small deficits and a balanced budget by 2019. What does my Liberal colleague across the way say to his constituents who say they are cynical about politicians who do not keep their promises?

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Madam Speaker, we were clearly elected on a commitment to make smart investments, not to follow the path set by the Conservatives, and agreed to by the NDP, of austerity and cuts. Nine offices for veterans were closed under the Conservative government. Close to 1,000 employees who were offering services to veterans were laid off. There were cuts to culture and to the CBC. That was the path in which the Conservatives engaged. There were cuts to pay specialists that led to the Phoenix situation we are facing, 700 pay specialists. GM shares were sold, at a loss, right before the election to pretend the government had a surplus. This is the kind of attitude and policies that fuel cynicism in the country.

Business of Supply

We have taken a different approach, which is to make smart investments in infrastructure and to have a more progressive Canada child benefit, lifting hundreds of thousands of kids out of poverty. The approach we have taken is clearly working. We had the fastest growth in the G7 last year. Our debt-to-GDP ratio is steadily declining, because we have growth.

• (1255)

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I held a budget event recently with Kevin Page, the former parliamentary budget officer. He certainly held the previous government to account.

I put this question to him about the budget practices of the Liberal government. He pointed to the anemic growth in 2015 and the importance of spending. We know the stimulative impact of the Canada child benefit as one example. We also know important promises are being kept with respect to our indigenous communities and our veterans. That takes significant billions of dollars.

I wonder if my colleague could speak to the current Parliamentary Budget Officer's job as a watchdog on federal spending and what he has to say about the current government's trajectory of spending and whether it is sustainable or not.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Beaches—East York for his question.

In 2015, when interest rates were low and growth was anemic, the Parliamentary Budget Officer and a number of international experts, including the managing director of the International Monetary Fund, Christine Lagarde, recommended that the Government of Canada and governments in other countries make wise investments. That anemic growth was due in large part to the former government's policies.

We know that Canada's small, medium-sized and large communities have urgent infrastructure needs. Various groups, such as veterans and indigenous peoples, also have social needs, as my colleague noted. Investing on those fronts was crucial. Our government promised to make those investments and kept its promises. Thanks to those investments, our economy and our society are fairer and more equitable, and our growth is more inclusive.

[*English*]

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is interesting that in 2015 a great promise was made. The member talked about the complexity. I am assuming the complexity is that the promises made in 2015 are no different than the promises made now.

The former Conservative government paid down \$37 billion in debt.

When the economy is good and there is no money to pay down the debt, how is the government going to pay it down when a crisis comes? Could you give us a date for when you will balance the budget?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will not be able to answer that question for the member. I would ask him to address his questions and comments to the Chair.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has a minute to answer.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Madam Speaker, as I said, investing was the smart thing for our government to do, and that was a very clear promise we made to Canadians.

The Conservatives gave Canadians 10 years of austerity and budget cuts at the expense of veterans, first nations and culture, yet they still managed to add \$150 billion to the national debt.

Earlier, the member for Carleton said that Canada recovered relatively easily from the 2008 financial crisis, but that was no thanks to him or Stephen Harper. It was thanks to Paul Martin, who refused to deregulate our financial sector in spite of the frenzied insistence of Stephen Harper and his colleagues that we follow in the Americans' footsteps. That is why Canada recovered so quickly.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with one of my colleagues. I would like to respond to what the parliamentary secretary said in his speech about what Paul Martin did.

Paul Martin did work to limit banking deregulation. He also balanced the budget in the 1990s. However, we must not forget that he did so mainly on the backs of the provinces by making major cuts to health, post-secondary education and social assistance transfers. It is important to point that out for any Canadians who might be watching at home.

The major issue that we should be focusing on right now is whether the Liberals will keep their promise and eliminate their so-called small deficits by 2019. Of course, the Conservatives are opposed to deficits and they are particularly upset about the fact that the deficits in question are bigger than expected. Meanwhile, the Liberals are saying that they ran those deficits as an investment. Both parties are wrong. Here is why.

The Liberals did indeed promise to run small deficits of \$3 billion per year. There is no question about that. They also said that they would pay off those deficits by 2019, but they will not be able to do so. The Conservatives are right about that. Where the Conservatives are mistaken is in saying that balancing the budget is the fundamental issue on which Canada's economy completely depends.

I spoke about the work the Liberals did to balance the budget in the 1990s. It came at a great cost, but the price was paid and the budget was balanced. Then, the Conservatives took office and accumulated deficits for seven or eight years before finally eliminating them prior to the 2015 election, so I do not think that the Conservatives are in any position to lecture the Liberals about balancing the budget. When they are in opposition, the Conservatives say that deficits are the worst thing a government can do, but then when they are in office, they say it is completely acceptable to run a deficit as long as there is a good reason for doing so.

Business of Supply

•(1300)

[English]

This is very similar to what is happening in the U.S. Let us go back to the 1990s when the Democrats were in power under Bill Clinton. What happened? They balanced the budget in a way that made vulnerable people suffer more, which we can debate at length. However, the result was achieved; they balanced the budget.

What happened after that? George Bush was elected. The Republicans dominated the executive in the House for eight years and budget deficits ballooned. At that point, I remember Dick Cheney, who was vice-president, being asked a question about the importance of deficits, and he said that it was not important at all.

Therefore, on both sides of the border, when the Conservatives are in government, they do not care about deficits. They will find any justification to go into deficit. However, when they are in opposition, they blame the government for having deficits. It makes no sense or it makes sense in the political game.

Deficits can be a good thing for the economy if we are able to ensure that we get a good rate of return for these deficits, the same way as a business will contract a loan to invest and grow. That is acceptable.

[Translation]

We wonder what the Liberal government is doing with these deficits. Taking a Keynesian perspective, as governments often do, deficits are accumulated to grow the economy, but only to the extent that the government can eventually balance the budget. We believe that a government should be able to balance the budget over an economic cycle. In other words, if the economy is doing well, the government takes the opportunity to reduce public debt somewhat. If the economy is not doing well, the government will have leeway to invest.

The problem is that that is not what the government is doing. It is accumulating deficits of \$10 billion, \$15 billion and \$20 billion at a time when the economy is doing well. The economy is doing well, but not because of the deficits that have been incurred or investments that have been made. My constituents tell me that they are seeing \$15-billion deficits, but no investments for the middle class. Most importantly, they are not seeing investments in infrastructure, because there is not much more being invested than there was five, six or seven years ago.

[English]

People can see the difference. The money is going to places that are not that productive.

We can see through what the Liberals are doing. Instead of investing directly in infrastructure the way they used to do, they decided to create the infrastructure bank, where they put some cash and some guarantees and then asked the private sector to invest, which is fine. I like the private sector to invest and I like the government to invest as well.

We were told that the government placed \$35 billion in the infrastructure bank, about \$15 billion of which are actually money and the rest are guarantees. We have asked the private sector to

invest \$185 billion. We can be sure that the private sector will want a return on its investment. We can also be sure that the private sector will be calling the shots, not the government.

The Liberal solution is to invest in infrastructure, but we have seen very little of it. Since the bank was developed, since people were put in place, since a bureaucracy was put in place to make those investments, the only thing the government has been able to do so far is to provide a loan to Caisse de dépôt et placement for the light train project in Montreal. That is all.

•(1305)

[Translation]

I would like to get back to the matter at hand and whether the House should demand that the Liberal government tell us when the budget will be balanced. It would be interesting to know what the Liberals have in mind, because they are refusing to answer the question. I have to say I am concerned about that. It would also be nice if the Liberals explained how their investments are growing the Canadian economy. How can they justify investing more while things are going well economically, when they should be taking advantage of this opportunity to prepare for an economic downturn when things will be harder? That would probably be more productive and show greater foresight.

My Conservative friends are demanding that the government say when it will balance the budget. I would like to know how they can justify saying one thing when they are the opposition and the exact opposite when they are the government. For eight years, they kept telling us that having a deficit was fine, that the government had to save the auto industry, that it had to invest to save jobs. Now the Liberals are saying the same thing, but that is not sitting well with the Conservatives.

The issue we are debating today is more political than economic. It is a political issue because we have two sides playing a political game. From an economic standpoint, I think it would be interesting that Conservatives understand the need for deficits, which are not evil as such if the money is well invested.

In a similar way, income tax reductions are not the panacea which will cure everything, including the common cold. It is more a matter of common sense than dogma. That is what we are asking for on this side of the House. When Conservatives are in government, they immediately cut taxes, no matter what the financial situation is.

In fact, a large part of the accumulated deficit even before the recession came from the GST and corporate income tax cuts. We went from a balanced budget to a deficit, which was already quite large before the financial crisis and which was amplified by it. Do these tax cuts really create jobs? Do they really increase productivity? While corporations benefited from a massive reduction in income tax, their assets grew substantially. Their dead money in the bank increased exponentially, at about the same rate as the money was coming in thanks to these tax cuts.

Business of Supply

I totally agree that we must debate the economy in this House. I want to have a debate on the economy here, but let us do it in a way that really addresses the concerns of the population. People increasingly have a hard time making ends meet each month. They have a hard time seeing any point to the government or to the programs it is implementing. We must address these concerns before debating zero deficit as if it was a fundamental goal to be reached no matter what, before any other goal.

On that note, I will be happy to answer questions from my colleagues.

[English]

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member from the NDP for so wonderfully pointing out our Conservative track record when it came to the use of deficit budgets.

We started our term in government with a small surplus. We used deficit budgeting strategically when the world was experiencing a global recession, which insulated us from feeling the effects that the rest of the world and our G7 partners experienced during that recession. We worked towards a balanced budget and left a small surplus to this Liberal government when it came to power. It has since squandered it, and my NDP colleague has so rightly pointed out that they have been spending money in all the wrong places.

Can the member tell us where the Liberals should be spending the money and when they will balance the budget?

● (1310)

Mr. Guy Caron: Madam Speaker, I cannot answer that last question and tell the member when the Liberals will balance the budget, but I will respond to the first part of his comments.

Yes, the Conservative government actually invested at a time when there was a significant economic downturn. My beef is not about that, as I will be the first to admit from this side of the House that we made that request of them. My beef is with the way the Conservatives acted when they sought to return to a balanced budget, when they did so at all costs before the last election. That led to things like selling the shares of GM at a loss to ensure that the government had justification to claim there was a balanced budget. We saw massive cuts in accessibility to EI, massive cuts to other social programs that people relied on, and attempts to modify a series of programs in a way that affected the middle class and working people. Therefore, the problem was not the investment, but the forced return to a balanced budget that was actually hurtful to Canadian families.

Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, at times I felt the member was agreeing with us on a couple of points, and certainly with respect to his difficulty with the way that Bill Clinton may or may not have balanced the budget in the United States. He said that was done on the backs of people at the lower end of the economic spectrum. However, our programs here are designed to help raise children out of poverty, to focus on a national housing strategy, and to enrich EI benefits and to do a number of other things to help those worst off. Therefore, it sounds like in a way that he is endorsing the way we are engaging in some modest deficit spending in this case.

However, my question concerns the infrastructure bank. On the one hand, the member mentioned that corporations would have too much power because they are investing more than us, but on the other hand he was saying that we were putting too much into it. I was hoping he could clarify the NDP position on that point.

Mr. Guy Caron: Madam Speaker, I thought I was very clear on that. It is not a matter of investing too much in the infrastructure bank. It is that the government announced during the election that it would have deficits to allow for infrastructure investments, which is, by the way, what we were also saying in our platform back in 2015. However, the fact is that the Liberals are not investing that much more in infrastructure. They have decided to create this bank, which they never announced during the election, 80% to 90% of which will be funded by the private sector. They will want to claim that it is the government investing in infrastructure when it is not.

It is one thing for the government to actually invest in infrastructure that it will keep control of afterwards, and another thing to have an independent, arm's-length body investing on the condition of giving a rate of return to those private companies from that public infrastructure, such as when building a bridge. If it were a road, it would be a toll road, and that money would go back to pay these companies their rate of return. That is very different from the government, which is funded by Canadians, building infrastructure that will remain in Canadians' hands. There is a massive difference between government investing in infrastructure and the government allowing the private sector to invest in infrastructure with a rate of return and where that sector would be calling the shots.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, representing Nanaimo—Ladysmith, I am proud to stand with my colleagues from the NDP, to speak to the question of both Conservative and Liberal priorities. I am proud that the New Democrats' fiscal record on deficit spending is the best of all political parties that have formed a provincial or federal government in Canada for the past 30 years. While we have been responsible financial managers, I am also proud that we have invested in what Canadians care about, what actually changes the lives of Canadians on the ground. We have pushed for more because we are determined to make lives better.

Growing up in Canada my whole life, I have watched the bounce between Conservative and Liberal fiscal leadership or ideology federally. It has bounced between spending on the wrong priorities, I would argue, and then rolling back and slashing and burning social programs and front-line social services in an extremely aggressive and destructive way. We saw terrible cuts to the public service in the 1990s, with venerated institutions like the CBC being cut, resulting in true loss of service delivery to people in remote communities. We have seen our environmental safety net eroded. We have seen our social safety net eroded and, at a minimum, not keeping up with the cost of living. Vulnerable people in vulnerable environments have felt the brunt of this pendulum swing of over-spending and then slashing and burning.

Business of Supply

The Liberals' cuts in the 1990s were extreme. The Conservatives built deficits way back up. Somehow, they kept the reputation of being conservative fiscal managers, but it was just not true. Now, in criticizing the Liberals, this really does feel like a political game, and it Canada's most vulnerable people who pay the price of this game.

My biggest concern is that we have a government now in place that got a mandate from the people to invest in the people. The Liberals got a huge majority in the House. They had a tremendous amount of goodwill. However, they are not delivering the money to the people who need it the most, who really had hopes that deep investments would be made in social services again. Instead, we have seen strange and unpromised things happen, which I would argue are the opposite of promises made, like the government finding \$4.5 billion to buy a leaky old pipeline, the Trans Mountain pipeline. Whoever would have thought they were voting for that kind of fiscal investment and that kind of good, conservative management, when they checked the box beside the Liberals? I personally thought, as a member of Parliament, the way to beat the Kinder Morgan pipeline and the oil tanker traffic risks posed to the riding I serve was to beat the Harper Conservatives. Who knew that it would be the Liberals who would deepen their investment despite their promise that they would redo the Kinder Morgan pipeline review, which they have not done?

As for the infrastructure bank, we certainly want and need investments in infrastructure. Local governments have been taking the brunt of this for decades. They have the biggest responsibility. They have been subject to tremendous downloads. In British Columbia, we have seen those downloads from the B.C. Liberals, and we have also seen them from the Liberals and Conservatives federally. Local governments do not have the taxation power, but depend on federal government partnership to deliver the federal infrastructure funding to be able to get their water treatment plants, their affordable housing projects, their bike paths and everything else built. The Liberals campaigned that they were going to invest in this way, but just did not get those investments out the door. They are still spending infrastructure money that the Conservatives promised. That is a long time ago now. Unfortunately, a lot of the infrastructure funding is delayed until after the next election.

There have been some good news pieces. I absolutely take those, and I am glad to see them, but we really thought it would be more, faster and deeper. There is only another year for the current government to show that it will deepen its partnership and invest and make up the lost ground that we felt under the former Conservative government.

The infrastructure bank again is a disappointment. As my colleague, the member of Parliament for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, pointed out, there is \$35 billion in federal funding but much more, over \$100 billion, called for from the corporate side. Therefore, with the corporate power at play in this case and the need for corporations to invest in the infrastructure bank, obviously there is a big profit motive that shareholders require to be met. Again, there has not been the expected delivery on the promises made, but lots of delays. We just have not seen enough on the ground so far.

●(1315)

We have seen the corporate tax cuts in the States. The concern we have with cutting corporate tax rates is that it pools money into what we call “dead money”, unproductive money that is not invested in our local economies and not getting the benefit it could. Selling our GM shares at a loss was again a wrong priority of the Conservative government, and we are now paying the cost of that here. At our constituency offices, people still talk about the cuts the Conservative government made to EI and the damage those did.

As well, there is the failure of the Liberal government over the last three years to truly reform EI. Only six out of 10 workers get access to EI. Women especially, who are more likely to work part-time and to be a precarious part of the workforce, are not getting access to the social safety net that employment insurance offers. If someone is a cashier, a full-time job in that business does not qualify them for EI. No wonder there are women who work their whole lives but just cannot get ahead. If they have a serious illness, get divorced or have something calamitous happen in their lives, it leaves them further behind and they tend to retire in poverty. They also live longer than men. In a country as wealthy as ours, it is just not fair that we are not investing in that area.

An area I have been particularly focused on is domestic violence. It is reported that it costs Canada \$12 billion a year not to deal with the domestic violence epidemic, and of course the personal cost is tremendous. In the nineties, the Liberal government cut operational funding and many forms of funding for the front-line workers who were providing shelter, counselling and support for women transitioning out of abusive relationships. There were terrible cuts at that time, and then the dark decade of the Conservatives compounded those terribly.

Now we have a feminist government in the Liberals, a government willing to spend, and yet we are still not having support go to the brave and dedicated women working on the front lines of the epidemic of gender-based violence. With the rise of the #MeToo movement, which we welcome, the taboo is being lifted from calling out violence and reporting it, and people have more faith now that the justice system will treat women well if they come forward. These front-line organizations are now getting an avalanche of calls for help. Imagine the bravery of a woman saying that she is going to take her children and leave her violent relationship only to be turned away at the shelter, as hundreds of women are every night. When she then says that she would like access to counselling, she gets put on a waiting list for six months. Will that woman return to an abusive relationship? Yes, she will.

Business of Supply

As the New Democratic B.C. housing minister Selina Robinson said at the housing conference just yesterday, the number one thing that keeps women in danger in violent relationships is lack of access to affordable housing. Just on Friday, I launched a new campaign calling on the government to fund core operations of feminist organizations doing this front-line work. Applying for one grant at a time is speculative. It wastes the time of staff, competes with other organizations and is not a sustainable funding model. I know that the Minister of Status of Women understands this, but her funding solutions so far are not getting to those in need.

The government has failed to fund affordable pharmacare, failed to spend fully on the affordable housing we desperately need, failed to close the stock option loopholes and failed to go after the big corporate offshore tax cheats. Instead, in my own riding of Nanaimo, we have had front-page headlines about the CRA going after MGM Restaurant in a mean-spirited way. Even when the restaurant won its appeal after 10 years, the government is appealing that decision and going after these small business people. We also hear of people who fell ill, went on EI, were accidentally overpaid \$200 and CRA went after them, the most vulnerable people.

These are the wrong priorities and the wrong spending by the current government. We really want to see it live up to the promise it made to the people.

● (1320)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have heard repeatedly from the party opposite that they have some belief, that I cannot find in fact, that the housing money that this government has invested has not hit the ground and is not building real housing for real people and providing real subsidies right now.

Victoria is getting to functional zero within two years on homelessness precisely because of the federal housing investments made in our first budget, our second budget, our third budget, and now for the next 10 years following that.

Additionally, we have modular housing being opened in Vancouver. There have been four projects in Vancouver, all with federal dollars, opened in the last six months. Even in the riding that the member comes from, Nanaimo, I was there personally to open 26 units of really innovative passive housing put forth by the friendship centre in her riding.

The dollars are real. The dollars were tripled to the provinces in the first budget. The homelessness dollars doubled in our first budget and are now locked in for the next 10 years.

The party opposite promised to only increase homelessness spending by \$10 million. If we take a look at its platform for the last three years of its housing budget on rental housing, it promised zero, zero and zero, and only zero if it got to a balanced budget. Could the party opposite explain how spending zero dollars on housing was going to solve the housing crisis that the member speaks of so eloquently?

● (1325)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Madam Speaker, the truth is, from both Liberal and Conservative decades of underspending, the appetite to spend and the need to fill the gap on affordable housing is tremendous. We are still only just getting through the federal funding that was promised by the Conservatives. The passive housing design with federal and provincial money was built well before this money started to roll out. It is the first multifamily housing that has been built in Nanaimo since the early nineties. That says that both the Conservative and Liberal governments have not been partnering. We are just starting to catch up, but it is three years into a four-year term. The spending that has hit the ground is just not visible in our communities, not in the way that we need, not in the way that was expected. We know that if the money was spent now, not after the next election, employers would be better off and people would have more disposable income to spend in their own communities. It would be the right thing to do socially and morally, as well as good for the economy.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I must say I was a bit surprised by the Conservative motion. I am hoping that my NDP colleague will provide some of her party's insight on what has been a very interesting weekend, that is, with Premier Ford's government slashing back francophone services in an attempt to balance its budget, which is having a fairly profound impact on who we are as Canadians, as a bilingual nation. Many individuals in and outside of the province of Quebec are very much concerned. Now we have the leader of the official opposition who one day is the biggest fan of Premier Ford and another day is the biggest fan of Stephen Harper, and goes back and forth between the two of them. We do not know what the position of the Conservatives is on this, so when they talk about saving money the concern is this. Will a Conservative national government look at making the same sort of cuts to the financing of Canada's heritage, that being our francophone community, our English-speaking community?

We are a bilingual nation. Does the member share the same concerns we have with respect to how someone like Premier Ford has made the decision to try to balance this? Does she believe that the current official opposition might have the same sort of agenda?

Business of Supply

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Madam Speaker, I would have thought that my Liberal colleagues across the way would share my dismay that the Ontario Liberals, instead of recognizing that they were going to lose this Ontario election, were just as alarmist about the spectre of a New Democrat government. Instead of a Doug Ford government, they could have had Andrea Horwath, who would have carried on much of the Kathleen Wynne legacy, and would certainly not be slashing and burning social programs. The Ontario francophone program, the sex education curriculum and pay equity are all completely on the Ontario Liberals who chose to scare voters, just as if Andrea Horwath and Doug Ford were equivalently scary to them. That is their legacy. It is damage that was done by their party.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Saskatoon—Grasswood. I am sure he is also looking forward to hearing the government's response to the question raised in the motion moved by my colleague from Carleton that the House call on the government to tell Canadians in what year the budget will be balanced, and to do so in this week's fall economic statement.

It is a very simple and non-partisan motion that does not pass judgment on how this government has been spending Canadians' money. It makes no mention of any of the promises this government made, which I will talk about in my speech. Many promises were made around balancing the budget, but the motion makes absolutely no mention of that. It just asks one simple question to which all Canadians deserve an answer: when will the budget be balanced? What is so scary about answering that question?

One of my colleagues across the aisle delivered a long 20-minute speech, but he did not once address the matter before us today: when does the Liberal government plan to return to a balanced budget? Why is it so afraid of giving us a date for returning to a balanced budget? It is as though the government thinks that balancing the budget is something to be ashamed of.

With Wednesday's economic statement, Canadians are going to learn how this government has been spending taxpayers' money without any real plan to return to a balanced budget. It is no secret that the Liberals are spending money on the backs of future generations of Canadians.

The Department of Finance is not afraid to set a date, and it says the budget will not be balanced until 2045. By then, our national debt will have increased by nearly half a trillion dollars. That is an extra \$450 billion that will be added to our debt if nothing is done now. I will be 79 before Canada returns to a balanced budget. Imagine that. Many Canadians who are not even born yet will be 20, 22 or 23. They will not learn at school how important it is to balance their budget, because their country will not be able to achieve a balanced budget. They will hear that throughout their entire education.

Let us not forget what the Liberals promised in 2015, during the last election campaign. They promised to run small deficits for three years and then return to a balanced budget in 2019. They wanted to reassure Canadians by telling them that they would run small deficits because the economy was doing well and interest rates were low and that they would return to a balanced budget at the end of their term.

They said that they would use that money to invest in infrastructure, which would create jobs for Canadians.

First, the money promised for infrastructure did not come, and second, the small deficits that were promised have ballooned massively. I am not tall enough to demonstrate how big the deficits have gotten.

We are in an excellent economic situation globally, and that generates revenues for the government that should have been more than enough for making investments. However, this government has decided to invest money it does not have, money from future generations, to keep itself going and fulfill its promises. In fact, there are a number of promises it has not kept, but I will come back to that.

Canadian families deserve a government that looks out for them and manages their finances more carefully. This year the deficit is close to \$20 billion, three times more than what the Prime Minister had said, and the debt has gone up by \$60 billion since 2015. Failing to fulfill their promises has now become the Liberals' trademark as they betray Canadians' trust yet again.

● (1330)

We knew that the Prime Minister had had training as an actor, but it seems he also thought he could be a fortune teller. When he announced small deficits, he made an astonishing statement about budgets balancing themselves. The budget would balance on its own. We can see that the Prime Minister does not really have much talent as a fortune teller. Not only will the budget not balance itself, but the deficit will be three times higher than what he had predicted. That is shameful.

The Prime Minister has no talent for fortune telling or for accounting, because he has never really had to worry about balancing his personal finances in his life. Our Prime Minister was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, as the saying goes. He never had to balance a personal budget. He never had to worry about having enough money left at the end of the month, about transferring the balance of one credit card to another so that he could put food on the table. He never had to do that. The Prime Minister was born into wealth, and he thinks that he can manage Canada the way he manages his own personal finances, by letting banks and others take care of Canadians' money. That is not the reality of Canadians. Canadians are increasingly worried. They are more and more concerned about the Liberal government's successive, never-ending deficits. A survey published in the *Globe and Mail* in October said that nearly 60% of Canadians think that balancing the budget should be the government's priority.

We are asking the Liberals to give us a date. When will the budget be balanced? When?

Not only are they incapable of balancing a budget, but they are also incapable of telling us when they will return to a balanced budget, even though this was an election promise.

Business of Supply

Not too long ago, in 2015, the Conservatives managed to get our fiscal house in order. The Prime Minister and his Minister of Finance were lucky enough to inherit a balanced budget, at a time when global economic growth was on its way up.

This was after one of the worst global economic crises ever. I remind members that the Conservative government was the first G7 government to get its fiscal house in order and to even post a surplus in the wake of this great recession.

It is sometimes ironic to look back at what journalists were saying a year before the election campaign. I have here an article written by journalist Emmanuelle Latraverse, who wrote, on January 19, 2014, that one of the 2015 campaign issues would be the debate over how to spend the money accumulated by the Harper government. A responsible government would have used this money to pay down the debt, but instead, the Liberals chose to increase the debt and waste every single dollar.

It was not enough for them, so they had to borrow more. What will the 2019 campaign issue be? It will not be about what to do with the surplus, but when the government will balance the books.

Several articles have touched on this issue. In November, Jean-François Cliche wrote in *Le Soleil*:

When the economy is doing well, the government should seize the opportunity to get back in the black. In fact, injecting money into an economy that is doing well—whether by reducing interest rates or by running up deficits—may even be counterproductive and result in a sluggish economy that leads to a crisis.

When the most recent budget was presented, Sylvain Gilbert, a partner at Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton, stated, “It is very dangerous to run deficits when the economy is doing well.” He added, “[The Minister of Finance] has got himself in a bind, and it will be very difficult for him to get out of it if the economy starts going sideways.”

The problem is that they do not even know what they are doing. They cannot give us a date. We just want a date. When will they balance the budget?

By 2023, the Liberals will be spending more on servicing the debt than we currently spend on health care transfers. That is unacceptable.

I will conclude by once again asking my colleagues opposite a simple question: when will the Liberal government balance the budget? We are asking for a date, just a simple date.

● (1335)

[*English*]

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague opposite mentioned that the Prime Minister has a talent for acting and that he uses it here in the House. However, I did not hear him mention the talent that has been out in the media lately by some members on the other side. Would he like to comment on that talent?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, we are talking about balancing the budget, but Liberals cannot even answer the question. They use various kinds of pretexts because they really do not want to broach the dangerous topic of budgetary balance, so they try to

change the channel. That is the last thing they want to talk about. I am sure that my colleague hears about the deficit in his riding. When will they balance the budget? It seems to me that we have borrowed enough money. This is a topic which must constantly surface in meetings with his constituents. He had the perfect opportunity to tell us when the government expects to return to zero deficit, but he failed to seize it.

● (1340)

[*English*]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, traditional Keynesian economics would suggest that when the economy is struggling, governments can borrow money in order to prime the pump and make the investments that are necessary to get the economy moving. However, that must be balanced off when times are good, the economy is going well and the government runs a surplus, it should pay down the debt that was accumulated during the deficit times.

In 2008, the Conservatives with all-party support borrowed a lot of money and went into significant deficit in order to deal with the crisis at that time, but they ran deficits in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014, and arguably in 2015 as well, but that is a matter of debate. At the same time they stood in the House and bragged that Canada had the strongest economy of the G7. However, while they were saying that Canada had the strongest economy in the G7 and things were going well, they were not running surpluses and they were not paying down the debt. This is similar to the Liberal government today which is running massive deficits at the same time as saying our economy is doing really well, defying all Keynesian logic.

I am wondering if my hon. colleague has any comment on that. When should the government pay down debt and run surpluses if not when the economy is running well? Perhaps he could explain why the previous Conservative government did not do that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, before the 2008 economic crisis, the previous Conservative government had paid back \$30 billion on the national debt. If we were the last country hit by the economic crisis in 2008, it is in fact due to our good management of public funds. If Canada was the first G7 country to emerge from the crisis, it is due to the good government we had, which had Canadians' interests at heart and who had more in mind than the interest payments it would have to make by borrowing more, like the Liberal government is doing now.

The question remains: when will the Liberal government tell us at what date the budget will be balanced?

[*English*]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I remind the House that the previous Conservative government inherited a \$32-billion structural surplus, which the Conservatives turned into a deficit well before the recession.

An hon. member: No they didn't.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: They did, in their first budget.

Business of Supply

In the recession, they refused to engage in stimulus spending until the NDP and the Liberals forced them to prorogue Parliament and that is when, in a moment of absolute panic, they bought into the economic theory the member opposite just talked about. Following that, the Conservatives failed to balance the budget until the very last year they were in office. When they did that, they did not structurally correct the deficit. What they did was they sold stocks at a loss to cover the bill. In other words, they sold the furniture to pay the rent.

With the fiscal insanity of the previous government, why did the member opposite not resign?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, he admitted that we left the fiscal house in order. He admitted that we managed to return to a balanced budget. I think Paul Martin, former Liberal prime minister, must really be having some concerns. He worked really hard to bring the country back to a balanced budget. I wonder what he thinks today of the Liberal government being unable to envision a return to a balanced budget and not even giving us a date. When will the country return to a balanced budget?

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members if they have questions and comments, they should wait until I ask for questions and comments and then they can rise. Otherwise, I would ask them to be quiet until such time as that comes up.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Saskatoon—Grasswood.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak in favour of the motion that has been brought forward by the official opposition. It demands that the Liberal government answer a very simple question. It is a question that has been asked repeatedly by Canadians for the last three years now. The question is this: In what year will the budget be balanced? It is as simple as that.

We call upon the Liberal government to finally be up front with Canadians and tell us in this week's fall economic statement in what year the budget will be balanced. This motion is reasonable. It is fair and it is certainly straightforward. The Liberal government should have no trouble telling Canadians from coast to coast to coast when it will balance the budget.

The Liberals clearly had no trouble telling Canadians during the 2015 election that they would balance the budget by 2019. That is just a year away, I should add. Why is it that as soon as they get into government, after piling on billions and billions of debt through reckless spending they suddenly seem to struggle with this simple question? Why is it that the Liberal government's most extensive track record is its ever-growing list of broken promises?

When the Liberals fail to tell Canadians time and time again when the budget will be balanced, they are not only failing to be accountable to the current generation of Canadians, they are failing to be accountable to future generations as well. The Liberal debt of today will become the higher taxes of tomorrow. These are the taxes which are heaped onto the shoulders of our children and our grandchildren. They did not ask to be overburdened with this Liberal

debt. They did not ask to be the ones who will be stuck with the terrible task of paying for the deficits of today.

Does the Liberal government have any plans at all to lessen the burden which it continues to create for these future generations? Has it at least committed to reduce the rate at which it adds to the federal debt? Unfortunately for our children and our grandchildren, the answer is no. In fact, the Liberal government has just made the situation worse by increasing its reckless spending with each passing year.

The one thing that the Liberal government really excels at is its ability to keep digging itself into a hole which keeps getting deeper, deeper and deeper. The unfortunate thing is that the current generation and future generations of Canadians will be the ones who will bear the consequences of the future and the failure.

The irresponsibility of the Liberal government has significant costs for all Canadians. The size of the deficit in this year alone is nearly \$20 billion, a figure which is three times larger than what the Liberals promised it would be. The Liberal government has added a remarkable \$60 billion in debt. This is not what the Liberals promised to Canadians.

Last year alone the Liberal government spent \$23 billion just to service the national debt, \$23 billion. This is not what the Liberals promised to Canadians. Interest on the national debt now is expected to grow by two-thirds to \$37 billion a year, which is almost as much as we spend on the entire health care transfers to provinces and territories. This is not what the Liberals promised to Canadians.

How can the Liberal government claim it stands for sunny ways, that it believes in supporting the middle class and that it supports the development of economic opportunity for all Canadians when it actively pursues a policy of fiscal mismanagement which will see more and more Canadian tax dollars going towards interest payments on the national debt? Compare it to the amount which is actually spent on health care transfers.

Canadians expect that their hard-earned tax dollars will go toward funding programs and services that benefit all Canadians. Unfortunately, reckless Liberal spending will make sure that increasingly large portions of those tax dollars simply go into the pockets of bankers and bond holders who own the interest on this ever-growing Liberal debt.

● (1345)

Perhaps what is most shocking about the debt of the Liberal government is it was completely avoidable. When we look back at 2015, the Liberals did not face a dire economic situation when they came into government just three years ago. In fact, the Liberals inherited a great fortune, which any government would dream of.

Business of Supply

The Prime Minister inherited a balanced budget, which was left behind by our former Conservative government. He had the benefit of thriving U.S. and global economies, which had recovered from the worst of the 2008 recession. He could take advantage of booming housing markets in Toronto and Vancouver. He had the benefit of record low interest rates, never seen before in our lifetime. All of these added factors gave the Prime Minister a windfall of \$20 billion in additional revenue alone last year. However, despite all this great fortune, the Prime Minister still somehow managed to spend it all in a matter of mere months, leaving all Canadians with almost absolutely nothing to show for it.

Instead of sunny ways and real change, the Prime Minister has left Canadians with a growing mountain of billions of dollars of debt, which is not going to be erased for many years to come. Instead of a budget which balances itself, like the Prime Minister actually promised in 2015, Finance Canada tells us that Canadians will now face at least 25 more years of deficit at the rate that the Liberal government engages in reckless spending.

Canadians are already facing the costs of higher interest, record household debt, and instead of helping to ease the burden faced by Canadians, the Liberal government is hurting Canadians by saddling them with the prospect of more massive tax increases just to fund the Prime Minister's reckless and inefficient spending habits.

Canadians deserve a government that actually works for them rather than against them. Sadly, the Liberal government only continues to disrespect hard-working taxpayers by making life more expensive for Canadians across this great country.

Because the Prime Minister never had to worry about money, he does not think or even worry much about Canadians when he carelessly spends it. We have seen that. He did not worry when he spent over \$1.66 million on that failed trip to India, which only led to an international diplomatic debacle. He did not worry when he spent over \$8 million, just a year ago, on a temporary ice hockey rink on the lawn of Parliament Hill. He certainly did not worry when he paid \$4.5 billion of taxpayers' money to Kinder Morgan as a result of his failure to get the Trans Mountain expansion pipeline built.

How will the Liberals' newly purchased pipeline factor into this year's budget? We still do not know. It cost \$4.5 billion. What is the Liberals' plan to sell the Trans Mountain pipeline? The Liberals still have absolutely no meaningful plans whatsoever to get this pipeline built.

This past May I spoke to the Liberal government's budget implementation bill. I asked the Liberal government whether it was fair to members of future generations of Canadians, like my granddaughter, Avery Thornhill, when we tell them that in 2018, the government has no hope at all of balancing the budget. The Liberals have repeatedly failed to give Canadians an answer to this question. That is why Conservatives are calling on the government today to announce in its fall economic update two days from now in what year the budget will finally be balanced.

Canadians deserve respect, and they deserve to know when the budget will be balanced by the current government.

● (1350)

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have been hearing speeches from members of the opposition who pretend to stand up for working-class Canadians and those most vulnerable in our society.

I look to the Conservatives' friends at Queen's Park, and we have seen the hon. Leader of the Opposition there to take orders and staff the premier on a number of occasions. However, what we have seen in terms of their approach has been first things first to cut education, and next to cut mental health spending, and most recently to cut the children's advocate and to cut funding for Francophone services and a Francophone university.

Does the Conservative Party approve of this path? Is this the Conservatives' plan for the Canadian people in 2019?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind some of the members on the opposition side that I am sure their colleague will be able to answer the question.

The hon. member for Saskatoon—Grasswood.

● (1355)

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Speaker, this is ironic. Kathleen Wynne built up the biggest deficit in the history of Ontario. Let us not forget what Premier Doug Ford was left with: absolutely nothing. There was reckless spending by the Ontario Liberals.

What else is disturbing is that Liberal staffers at Queen's Park in Toronto have now moved to Ottawa to help the federal government. We should all be very worried about the staffers who left Ontario with a massive deficit and who are now sitting in Gerald Butts's office strategizing, taking money out of every Canadian's pocket each and every day.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was a little surprised that the Conservatives decided to talk about deficits today. Those following the debate really have to appreciate the Conservatives. We have been around for 131 years. The Liberals have governed for the vast majority of that time, yet it is the Conservatives, with a minority of years, that have accrued the largest portion of Canada's deficit. Stephen Harper actually inherited a multi-billion dollar surplus, and even before the recession began, he turned that multi-billion dollar surplus into a multi-billion dollar deficit. Year after year, it was deficit, deficit, deficit, and the Conservatives want the Liberals to take advice from them, whose record was so abysmal?

Does my friend not recognize that when it comes to the deficit, the worst party in the House to go to would, in fact, be the Conservative Party?

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Speaker, the question is when the government is going to balance the debt. When? We just want to know a date.

When I was a young parent with two kids, each Christmas our kids got money in their piggy banks. However, this Christmas, because of the Liberal government, parents are going to be given hammers. Why? It is because piggy banks in this country are not safe under the Liberal government as it continues its reckless spending.

Statements by Members

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let us go back to the previous question, because the member did not actually answer it.

Is the member supportive of what the current Ontario provincial government is doing with its massive cuts to very important social programs, such as protecting French as a second language in Ontario and social services and education? By all measures, the Leader of the Opposition appears to take his marching orders from Doug Ford. Are the member and the Conservative Party supportive of what is going on?

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Speaker, I would ask the hon. member if he would apologize on behalf of his father. His father was part of the major deficit the province is incurring today. Will the member stand in the House today and apologize on his father's behalf for putting Ontario residents into a massive deficit that they probably will never get out of because of—

The Speaker: Statements by members.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES IN ONTARIO

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last Thursday was a sad day for Franco-Ontarians and all francophones.

By cutting the French Language Services Commissioner position in Ontario and cancelling the proposed French-language university, Doug Ford's Conservatives are sending a clear message: francophones are second-class citizens. That is clear when we compare the situation of anglophones in Quebec to that of Franco-Ontarians. The truth is that English Canada tolerates the rights of francophones provided they keep their mouths shut and do not make any demands.

If they think Franco-Ontarians are going to put up with this, they have another thing coming. Franco-Ontarians won when none other than the Conservatives wanted to take away the Montfort, the only francophone hospital outside Quebec in Canada. They will win again if all francophones come together and stand up to this anglocentric government in Ontario.

That is why, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois and thousands of Quebeckers, I say to Franco-Ontarians—

• (1400)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Mississauga—Lakeshore.

* * *

[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, around 1.7 million Canadian families do not have a home they can afford that meets their basic needs.

The 10-year, \$40-billion investment our government is making, through the national housing strategy, will encourage the construction of affordable rental housing by providing low-cost loans

through the rental construction financing initiative, giving more Canadians a place to call home.

I would like to recognize the invaluable role housing co-operatives play in the lives of the residents of Mississauga—Lakeshore and communities across our great nation. In our community, Brooks Co-op, Erin Court Co-op, Indwell, Springfield Co-op, the Peel-Halton Co-operative Housing Federation and the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada are working hard on this front. I thank them for their leadership, and I look forward to continuing to champion their efforts.

Housing co-operatives are about much more than affordable housing. They are about building communities where neighbours look out for one another. They are about allowing members to reach their full potential. They are about building homes for Canadians.

* * *

CANADA BORDER SERVICES AGENCY

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago, the Liberal government announced that many border crossings across the country would be reducing their hours of operation, including three ports in my riding of Provencher. The earlier closing times will have a profound, negative economic and social impact on rural communities and the residents who call them home. It will limit their ability to access employment, health care and recreation.

Public meetings were held after the decision was already made, and many of those meetings pointed to the fact that the government is spending hundreds of millions of taxpayers' dollars on providing services for people who have illegally crossed into Canada, have not lived here and have never contributed to Canada. The government has even built them a pathway and welcome centre at our border port to make it easier for them to cross, all of this while it is reducing services for Canadians who simply want to cross their own border.

The Prime Minister needs to explain to Canadians why he is prioritizing illegal crossings while cutting services to Canadians who, all their lives, have worked hard, played by the rules, and paid their taxes.

* * *

KERBY CENTRE

Hon. Kent Hehr (Calgary Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, located in the fabulous constituency of Calgary Centre, the Kerby Centre is an outstanding organization that has provided support to Calgary seniors for nearly half a century. Members are joining us here in Ottawa today.

The Kerby Centre runs multiple invaluable services for seniors, from housing to counselling to social enterprises, like the second-hand clothing store. I also have lunch there on many a Wednesday.

I am proud that our Liberal federal government supports this dedicated group through programs like Canada summer jobs, the enabling accessibility fund, and new horizons for seniors. All of these programs help the Kerby Centre support seniors in my community.

Statements by Members

I thank the Kerby Centre for its commitment to bettering the lives of Calgary seniors, and I look forward to it providing services for many more years to come.

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MICHELLE PRINCE

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I celebrate the remarkable and inspiring life of Michelle Prince, who passed away yesterday after five very public years of cancer during which she chose to live life to the fullest. Michelle did this despite three major surgeries and 80 cycles of chemo administered every other week, all while remaining a champion of spirit and showing her smile. In fact, she raised money for a hospital, created a new program for cancer patients and produced videos to help coach others.

She celebrated positives and in doing so inspired many to do the same, always fighting, never surrendering to the disease. Michelle is a heroine, and her story will remain on guard for those who need light in times of darkness.

Windsor thanks the Prince and Francis families for sharing Michelle with all of us. Their generous gift of time was precious.

To her husband Eddie and her children Sienna and Phoenix, I want to offer condolences and solidarity in celebrating Michelle's life. Please know that our community feels this great loss. We will honour her request by living each and every day in the moment. As Eddie shared, "Michelle has joined her friends, and they are dancing."

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WORLD PREMATURETY DAY

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was World Prematurity Day. My little girl Molly was born three months ahead of schedule, at 27 weeks plus a day, to be precise, and weighed in at just a little more than two pounds when she was born. Being born this early can come with serious health risks, and I will never forget the feeling of helplessness I experienced when I got that call to come to the hospital or while I watched the nurses and doctors perform a miracle to save her life.

I am very happy to share that Molly persevered and today is a beautiful walking, talking, two and a half year-old who loves Disney soundtracks and farm animals. Getting to this point was not easy, though, and I would be remiss if I did not mention the incredible effort my wife Sarah put in to help Molly become the little girl she is today.

I am also very grateful to those who helped our family along the way. In particular, I want to thank my colleagues, from all sides of the aisle in this chamber, who sent messages of support during a time of immense difficulty. I would also like to thank the talented nurses and doctors at the Ottawa General NIC unit and the special care nursery at the Ottawa Civic Hospital.

To every other family who has a preemie at home, I hope they enjoyed yesterday and will hug them a little closer today. To my little girl Molly, "Daddy loves you".

●(1405)

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Alberta energy industry has been suffering under the Liberal government. It has cancelled pipelines and implemented policies that make it hard for the future development of our energy industry.

Despite producing some of the most clean and ethical energy in the world, our oil continues to sell at a discounted rate. Cenovus Energy says it produces up to 300,000 barrels every day above what can be exported out of the province. That overproduction leads to a great price differential when compared with American oil, which can be exported to foreign markets. Our oil price discount has cost the country \$50 million a day, or \$13 billion a year.

At an event last week, the Minister for Natural Resources said that we need more pipelines. Well, I am glad he has finally figured it out. Perhaps now the Prime Minister will cancel the tanker ban, cancel Bill C-69, and of course, cancel his push for a carbon tax. It is time for a government that will fight for Albertans and fight for our energy sector.

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NORTH YORK GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Geng Tan (Don Valley North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 1960, North York residents came together to build a local hospital, supported by Friends of North York General Hospital, the IODE, Missionary Health Institute and volunteer services. Three thousand volunteers raised over \$3 million dollars.

On March 15, 1968, an \$8.6 million, 70-bed community hospital opened at the corner of Leslie and Sheppard. Fifty years later, North York General Hospital remains one of Canada's leading community academic hospitals. Its emergency department had over 100,000 visits in 2016-17.

I congratulate the North York General Hospital community for having made a world of difference since 1968.

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POINTE-CLAIRE OLDTIMERS

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last month I had the pleasure of attending an inspiring evening that combined our national love of hockey with another signature Canadian value, helping one another.

The Pointe-Claire Oldtimers' cheque distribution evening is a mainstay of the community calendar. It is when proceeds from the league's annual hockey tournament are distributed to an array of local West Island non-profit groups.

[Translation]

For years, this annual event has been bringing together hockey fans of all ages and representatives of organizations that ensure our community's well-being.

*Statements by Members**[English]*

This year, 53 groups received a total \$100,000. I thank and congratulate the league president, Jamie Wolak; Vito Pelosi, the emcee for the evening, who, as usual, did a terrific job; the members of the donation committee, including Lorne Pearson and Jack Beaumont; and all the players who make the Pointe-Claire Oldtimers a great hockey franchise.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every single month, Canadians spend \$300 million to fund a regime that abuses human rights and murders journalists. Why is that? It is because Canada buys oil from Saudi Arabia.

It is shameful that we buy Saudi oil when we produce our own ethical oil right here in Canada. Not only do we buy unethical oil, we also lose millions in revenue, because Alberta's oil sands are landlocked. Western Canadian select was recently selling for as little as \$12, but on that same day, Dubai crude oil was selling for \$63 a barrel. No wonder the United States wants to keep Alberta's oil landlocked. What a discount it gets.

The price differential means millions in lost revenue that could provide clean drinking water for first nations and build long-term care facilities for our seniors. Canada gives away a school a day and a hospital a week in lost revenue.

Canadians do not support human rights abuses and murder. We need to build pipelines and buy Canadian. It is time to stand up for ethical oil.

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*[Translation]***METROPOLITAN MONTREAL DEAF COMMUNITY CENTRE**

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of meeting the 250 members of the deaf community who attended the gala dinner to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Metropolitan Montreal Deaf Community Centre, an event that took place in my riding, Vimy, on Saturday, October 27.

The organization is dedicated to making the world a better place for the deaf and hearing impaired community. Those individuals, most of whom are illiterate, live off income security and EI benefits, are often victims of various forms of abuse and live very isolated lives.

I was delighted to celebrate the only organization that offers so many services to the deaf community of greater Montreal.

Once again, I want to congratulate Gilles Read, the executive director, and the centre's board of directors on their achievements over the past 40 years and the important work they do to raise awareness about deafness.

● (1410)

*[English]***PUBLIC SAFETY**

Mr. Jati Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and the Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction for the \$86 million in funding to combat gun violence. I know in my riding this money will be appreciated as rising concern about gun violence has been a major issue for quite some time, which I discussed with the Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction when he visited in my riding.

Like many ridings in our country, Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon is in close proximity to the U.S. border. The funding will be crucial to stopping illegal firearms from entering our country and into the hands of gangs. My riding is no stranger to the perils of gun violence, and I am committed to ensuring that my constituents and all Canadians can live without fear of gun violence.

I am thankful to represent a government that is committed to addressing gun violence with real, tangible action.

* * *

*[Translation]***IMMIGRATION**

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the silence from the Prime Minister and his friends on the problem of illegal migrants crossing our border has been deafening. We have asked hundreds of questions to try to inform Canadians on this topic, but the Prime Minister continues to hide behind empty rhetoric and refuses to take real action.

In the meantime, the provinces are stuck paying hundreds of millions of dollars to accommodate foreigners who entered Canada illegally. We know nothing about these illegal migrants' backgrounds, but the Prime Minister seems to think that this chaos at the border represents no threat to the safety of Canadians. On top of that, just a small fraction of these people have been deported.

If people want to settle in our country and the first thing they do is break our laws, I think we ought to question their commitment to our values.

Canadians realize that the Prime Minister's twisted compassion for illegal migrants has serious consequences for real refugees in UN camps. I guess Canadians will have to wait until a Conservative government is elected in 2019 to fix this situation.

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*[English]***HEALTH**

Mr. Gagan Sikand (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, alongside WaterAid Canada and RESULTS Canada, I would like to recognize World Toilet Day.

Globally, 2.3 billion people lack access to adequate sanitation and one in eight are forced to defecate in the open. Lack of access to toilets and proper handwashing facilities is linked to ill health, malnutrition and even gender-based violence. Each year, diarrhoeal disease, a leading cause of child death, will take 289,000 lives. Furthermore, infections during childbirth caused by poor sanitation will lead to 11% of all maternal deaths. Poor or no access to toilets also puts women and girls at a greater risk of assault or violence and increases their days missed at school.

Along with vaccines, access to toilets and handwashing with soap and water are two of the most cost-effective health and nutrition interventions out there. It is a rush to flush. Please join me in recognizing World Toilet Day.

* * *

HARRY ST. DENIS

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the community of Wolf Lake, the Anishinaabe Nation and the whole of Abitibi—Témiscamingue mourn the sudden passing of one of its first nations leaders, Chief Harry St. Denis.

Harry St. Denis had been the chief of the Wolf Lake First Nation since 1986 and was a tireless advocate for his people's rights. He was one of the Anishinaabe Nation's most assertive and outspoken leaders when it came to the need for the government to recognize and respect aboriginal title and rights. Above all, Harry St. Denis was a respected leader, a cordial man and a beloved husband, father, grandfather and warrior. He will be missed.

Please join me in honouring his memory and offering our heartfelt condolences to his wife Sheila, his sons Bruce and Tyson, his daughter Toni, his grandchildren, his family and his friends.

Keiabatc kitchi meegwetch Ogima Harry.

* * *

• (1415)

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to express my unequivocal support and that of my Conservative colleagues for official language minority communities across Canada.

Like many Quebecers and Canadians, I am very concerned by recent announcements concerning Ontario's francophones. Our Conservative Party has always stood with francophone and anglophone communities. That is why the former Conservative government provided an additional \$300 million in support for official language communities.

Canada's bilingualism is a strength and an asset that we must cherish and protect. We also respect provincial jurisdictions. It is unfortunate that the Liberal government is playing politics with such an important and sensitive issue, as we are currently seeing in the House. We must all rise, no matter our political affiliation, and reiterate our support for official language communities across Canada, and also ensure that we stand up for them in the best possible way.

Oral Questions

The Speaker: Honourable members, including the member for Brossard—Saint-Lambert, should refrain from heckling.

The hon. member for Saint Boniface—Saint Vital.

* * *

LOUIS RIEL

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on November 16, I joined Manitoba's Métis community in commemorating the death of Louis Riel. It is important that all of us, Métis and non-Métis, remember and come together on this important day.

[English]

On November 16, 1885, Louis Riel was hanged. Riel fought the government of the newly-formed Canada from taking their Red River lands without consultation. His many sacrifices have secured him an enduring place in our shared history as a leader of the Métis Nation, a founder of Manitoba and a key contributor to Canadian confederation.

[Translation]

His legacy is clear. In Manitoba, a school division, a college, a bridge and an economic development corporation all bear his name.

[English]

Across Canada, monuments to Louis Riel are a testament to his lasting legacy. I am a proud member of the Métis Nation.

[Translation]

As a proud Métis, it is a privilege for me to rise today and pay tribute to Louis Riel.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

FINANCE

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on August 27, 2015, during the election campaign, the Prime Minister promised to run a modest deficit and then balance the budget in 2019.

Here is what the situation looks like today. The Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed that, instead of balancing the budget as promised, the Liberals have accumulated a massive deficit of over \$20 billion for this year alone and a deficit of over \$21 billion for next year.

My question for the Prime Minister is this: when will we return to a balanced budget?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the question the member should be asking is: where are we now?

We are in a situation where the unemployment rate is the lowest it has been in 40 years. More people are working now than ever before in the history of Canada. That is an excellent situation for Canadian families and middle-class families.

Oral Questions

We will continue to invest to grow our economy for the future.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no matter what the Minister of Finance says, the forecast speaks for itself.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer says there is just a 10% chance of balancing the budget in 2021-22 and a 30% chance of balancing it six years from now in 2023-24.

The next election is just one year away and the Liberal government promised to balance the budget by the end of the current term.

Once again, my question for the Prime Minister is this: when will we return to a balanced budget?

• (1420)

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand exactly what the Conservatives want to do. They want to cut all kinds of things, including services to francophones. We are well aware of that.

We will continue to invest. Our approach is working. Our economy is growing. That is very important to us, and it is certainly the most important thing to families across the country. Our rate of growth is good, our unemployment rate is very low, and our future is full of opportunities.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister inherited a balanced budget in 2015.

Today, Canada's budget is being crushed under the weight of deficits that our children and grandchildren will have to pay. It is unacceptable. It has gotten to the point where my daughter, who turned 17 yesterday, will be 45 by the time the budget is balanced.

If Canadians managed their finances the way the Liberal government does, we would all be bankrupt.

I will repeat my question for the Prime Minister for the third time: when will we return to a balanced budget?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the facts are somewhat different.

The Harper government left us \$150 billion in debt. That was a problem from the start, not to mention having to deal with the lowest growth rate since 1981, or in nearly 40 years.

We are now in a very different situation thanks to our investments and the fact that we have one of the highest growth rates in the G7. It is a good situation for Canada's middle class.

[*English*]

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister breaking his word and failing Canadians is nothing new. He does it all the time. However, the fact that he is using our kids and our grandkids' money to pay for his out-of-control spending is shameful.

It is irresponsible for a government to run massive deficits with no plan and no time frame for when it will return to balance.

If the Liberals truly care about our youth and future generations, which are going to have to pay for today's spending and deficit, will they answer this simple question. When will the budget be balanced?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand well the Conservative approach. Their idea was to make cuts. What would have happened is we would have put our economy into recession. Our idea was to make investments. What happened? People had more disposable income, our economy started growing.

Right now, we have the lowest levels of unemployment we have seen in 40 years. However, more important, we have more people working among working age Canadians than in the history of Canada. Therefore, we are doing very well economically. We will continue to make investments, while the people opposite will think about where they can make cuts, cuts across the country.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, actually it is not just Conservatives who are sounding the alarm, looking for more fiscal responsibility from these Liberals. Small businesses are asking the Liberals to commit to getting back to balanced budgets, and recently the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy said that the current fiscal policy of the government is “without a rudder and an anchor”, and that “now is the time to rein in budgetary deficits”.

Maybe the minister, who appears to be the minister of no rudder and no anchor, could tell us when the budget will be balanced.

The Speaker: I am afraid I have to encourage the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre not to speak when someone else has the floor.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just to think about where we are right now from a small business standpoint, as of January 2019, we will have a combined federal-provincial tax rate of 12.2%, the lowest among G7 countries. It is a very strong position so those businesses can make investments. We have been able to do that while keeping to a very fiscally responsible approach.

Canada has the lowest level of debt to GDP among G7 countries. It is on a downward trajectory. That is fiscal responsibility, and we are able to do it while investing in Canadians.

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are hearing some rather concerning rumours about the economic and fiscal update.

The Minister of Finance seems to be under pressure from Bay Street to lower corporate taxes, on the grounds that he should keep step with the United States. The problem is that the tax cuts in the U. S. did not create jobs. They largely served to boost senior executives' salaries. Furthermore, the United States is on track to post a \$1-trillion deficit.

Will the Minister of Finance confirm right here that he will not be announcing corporate tax cuts?

•(1425)

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is a good question, and balance is always necessary. We need to consider how we can remain competitive while still ensuring that our tax system is fair. Our goal is to achieve balance in a system that works for the country. We will be able to do both at the same time. That will be our approach.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the Minister of Finance thought it was a good question, but I would have liked an answer.

The federal tax rate for large corporations has fallen from 28% to 15% since 2000. The amount of dead money, meaning assets and cash held by those corporations, increased dramatically beginning in 2000. On the whole, corporate tax cuts have not helped create jobs, and that money has not been invested. It has been channelled into financial speculation and massive corporate executive paycheques.

Here, again, is my question for the Minister of Finance. Will he refrain from cutting corporate taxes in his Wednesday update?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we can say is that it is very important to have a certain level of investment in our country. We need to make sure our system is competitive but fair. That balance is very important. That is our goal, but we know that when things are going as well as they are now, when our economy is growing and our unemployment rate is very low, it is time to secure our future. That is our goal for Wednesday's update.

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in a country as rich as Canada, too many families are living paycheque to paycheque or are living in poverty. While Liberals continue to claim that the economy is doing well, they fail to acknowledge that families in Canada are dealing with record levels of debt. Time and time again, Liberals show they are more interested in giving tax breaks to wealthy corporations, while telling Canadians they have to wait.

Jagmeet Singh and the NDP have sent our plan to the finance minister. Will he listen, stop with the corporate giveaways and invest in Canadians?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will continue to invest in Canadians. In fact, what we know is that approach has absolutely worked over the last three years. We have brought hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty through the Canada child benefit. We have helped innumerable seniors through the guaranteed income supplement increase.

We are going to continue to focus on our core goal of assuring that families across the country are doing well, and that those who are challenged have a great opportunity. We will do that by making sure not only that they are doing well, but that we are investing in our future.

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PHARMACARE

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadian families are dealing with record levels of debt. The Liberals now have our plan, so they have no excuse not to make

Oral Questions

the right choices. Canadians expect investments this week that will lessen the financial burden on Canadian families and help businesses thrive. The time for eternal discussions on universal, single-payer pharmacare has long passed. Canadians and businesses continue to spend billions of dollars on medication for themselves and their employees. Would the Liberals make the right decision and implement universal pharmacare now?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that Canadians are proud of their publicly funded health care system, one that is based on their needs and not on their ability to pay. However, we also recognize that we can do better and that is why I was pleased in March of this year that we announced the implementation of the Advisory Council on the Implementation of National Pharmacare program. I truly look forward to receiving the recommendations of Dr. Hoskins that will be brought forward in the spring of 2019.

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[Translation]

FINANCE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians were misled three years ago, because on page 76 of the Liberal Party election platform, the Liberals said they would run modest deficits for three years and then return to a balanced budget in 2019. The modest deficits became huge deficits, and balancing the budget in 2019 is sheer fantasy.

With this Wednesday's economic update, will the Minister of Finance, who broke his election promise, at least have the honour and decency to tell Canadians when we will return to a balanced budget?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know it is very important that we continue with our approach, which is improving the lives of Canadians across the country. This approach is working for people who now have good jobs. We will have the opportunity to continue with our approach and make sure that we are investing for the future, not only in the business world, but also to make things better for families.

•(1430)

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the update will be presented on Wednesday. Any accountant in any company will make sure the numbers balance when giving an economic update. However, it is certain that the numbers will not balance on Wednesday. There will be a deficit.

If the Minister of Finance cannot keep the promise he made to balance the budget in 2019, could he at least give Canadians an update and tell them when he will balance the budget?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously, it is very important to find an approach that works. Unfortunately, the previous Conservative government had an approach that created lots of deficit but not a lot of growth.

Our approach is very different. We are investing in Canadian families. We have one of the highest levels of growth in the G7 and the lowest unemployment rate in 40 years. We are going to continue with our approach because it is working.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are very proud to have ensured that Canada was the first G7 country to emerge from the worst economic crisis the world had ever seen.

However, our country is governed by a man who came up with the unbelievable economic theory that, and I quote, “the budget will balance itself”.

In real life, budgets do not balance themselves, so could the Minister of Finance finally tell us when he will balance the budget?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will continue with our approach, which is to ensure that we have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio of all G7 countries. That is very important. At the same time, we will continue investing in the future. Our investments are really working. We need only consider the unemployment rate or Canada's economic growth, which was the highest in the G7 last year.

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the trust fund twins, the Prime Minister and finance minister, inherited great fortune: a balanced budget, booming world and U.S. economies, rising commodity prices, record low interest rates, and roaring housing markets in Vancouver and Toronto. That was a \$20-billion windfall for the Liberals and they blew every single penny. The Prime Minister keeps telling us that the budget will balance itself. If so, when?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us consider what we actually inherited. We inherited \$150 billion of additional debt generated by the previous government. We inherited an unemployment rate of 7.1%. We inherited a growth rate that was among the lowest since the Great Depression. Where did we get to? We turned that around with one of the highest rates of growth in the G7 and the lowest rates of unemployment. I will take the Liberal economic record over Conservative economic rhetoric every day of the week.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when Jim Flaherty became finance minister, he made the responsible decision to pay off \$30 billion in debt, which prepared Canada for the great global recession, the greatest financial crisis in world history since the Depression. That is why we were the last to go in and the first to come out of that crisis. By contrast, the current Liberal government has a booming world and U.S. economy, with record low interest rates, multiple factors with which it had nothing whatsoever to do, and it has squandered all of it. When will the budget be balanced?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, actually we had a whole lot to do with what is going on for Canadian families across the country. We had a lot to do with lowering the

middle-class tax rate from \$45,000 to \$90,000 by 7%. We had a lot to do with—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. Order. I am hearing an awful lot of noise. Members have to remember that each side will get their turn, and when it is their turn, not when it is not their turn, is the time to speak.

Order. The hon. member for Newmarket—Aurora will come to order.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

● (1435)

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, we had a lot to do with the introduction of the Canada child benefit, which made a huge difference across the country. What we had the most to do with is the fact that the average family with two children in 2019 will have \$2,000 more in their pocket than in 2015. Canadians are better off. Those are the facts. Those are the facts that matter for Canadians across this country.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, even if we take into consideration the \$800 tax increase on every middle-class family in this country, the tax increase targeted at moms and dads who take their kids to sports or students who buy textbooks or pay tuition or the tax increases on small businesses, even if we take into consideration the \$20 billion of extra revenue that poured into the government's coffers last year, it has blown every single nickel. The question is this. When will the budget be balanced?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I guess it is important to deal with the facts one by one by one. Let us think about what was just said. What was just said was that people's taxes went up. Wrong. People's taxes went down. What was said is people are worse off. Wrong. What we have is a Canada child benefit, making the vast majority of families better off. Most importantly, what we find is that for small businesses there were lower tax rates in 2018, and lower tax rates in 2019.

The facts are just wrong. The good news is the economy is growing. We have the lowest unemployment rates we have seen in a generation. We have much more confidence for the future.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the forced sterilization of women is still happening in other parts of the world, and believe it or not, it is also still happening here in Canada to indigenous women.

Article 22.2 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples requires that all states take measures to ensure that indigenous women enjoy full protection against all forms of violence and discrimination.

Will the Liberals launch an inquiry to put an end to this situation and make restitution for the harm done to the victims and their families?

[English]

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the coerced sterilization of any woman is a clear violation of her reproductive rights. We know that, unfortunately, indigenous women and other vulnerable women have faced coerced sterilization. We absolutely abhor this practice and we are working with partners, including the provinces, health care providers and medical professionals, to make sure that it is very clear that this should not go on. We are working with the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to ensure that indigenous peoples have access to culturally appropriate and safe health care.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, can members imagine being told they cannot see their newborn child until they agree to a procedure that will mean they will never have another child in their life or being sterilized with no knowledge or consent? This is the reality for at least 60 indigenous women in this country of Canada, with some cases as recent as 2017. This is more than just a gross violation of human rights and a product of systemic racism, this is enough, enough apologies, enough talking points. How will the current government make sure that it never happens again?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has been very clear. We know that the coerced sterilization of women is indeed a gross violation of human rights. It is a violation of women's reproductive rights. We are actively working with partners in provinces. We are working with faculties of medical education and health professionals to ensure that culturally safe care is available across the country. This is not something that any one order of government can address alone. All Canadians have a responsibility to ensure that these practices never happen again.

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NEWS MEDIA INDUSTRY

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have learned through media reports that the Liberals are considering a bailout package for Canada's struggling news industry in this week's fall economic statement. We hope this is merely a trial balloon because a healthy democracy relies on a free and independent press. It would be unacceptable for the Liberals to even appear to be trying to influence favour with the media.

Will the minister confirm that the Liberals will not attempt to buy off the media in an election year?

• (1440)

[Translation]

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, journalism plays a fundamental role. It is one of the cornerstones of our democracy. That is why we invested \$50 million in journalism in the last budget. We

invested \$14 million in minority communities. We helped strengthen CBC/Radio-Canada. I am currently touring the country and talking to the media and journalists. We are looking at other ways in which we can work together and collaborate. We will have more to say about this in the future.

[English]

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Jerry Dias, the head of the union representing thousands of Canadian journalists, confirmed in a tweet last week that his union will campaign aggressively to help the Liberals in the next election. The very same day, he was quoted in the Toronto Star asking the Liberals for more money. Now Canadians learn the Liberals plan to cave in to this demand with a major cash infusion for media outlets.

Does the minister not see that this bailout could be easily perceived as an attempt to buy off the media in an election year?

[Translation]

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will let my colleague have some fun with his conspiracy theories. Practically speaking, we all know that professional journalism—high-quality, independent news—is one of the pillars of democracy. On this side of the House, we respect journalistic independence. That is why, in the last budget, we invested \$50 million, including \$14 million for minority communities and CBC/Radio-Canada. They do not like that. One thing is clear: journalism is important. We will respect journalistic independence and we will be there.

* * *

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, business leaders say that the Liberals' anti-energy policies are “borderline treasonous”. Brett Wilson said that Bill C-69 is “lunacy”. NuVista's CEO said it “needs to be completely killed or radically changed”. Susan Johns, a British fund manager, said that Canadian oil and gas is “being strangled by regulation, carbon taxes and the inability of producers to get their product to world markets”.

Clearly the Liberals' anti-energy agenda is the problem, not the solution. When will the Liberals stop killing Canadian jobs and withdraw their “no more pipelines” Bill C-69?

Oral Questions

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand the struggles in the energy sector and the price differential the industry is facing. We are working very diligently with provinces and are moving forward on expanding our global market to make sure that Alberta's oil sector resources are able to get to non-U.S. markets.

What we are seeing today is the result of a decade of failure and inaction on behalf of the former Harper government.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, four new pipelines were built under the Conservatives.

Darren Peers from Capital Group, a big investor in Canadian oil, points out the reality that “no major pipeline project is yet assured” under these Liberals, and that energy investors are “questioning the merits of investing” because of them.

What is certain is the Liberals are driving billions of dollars and hundreds of thousands of jobs out of Canada. Cenovus warns that Canada “ignores these red flags at its peril”. Provinces are against Bill C-69, too.

Will the minister cancel his job-killing, “no more pipelines” Bill C-69 before it is too late?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we saw one of the largest private sector investments in the history of our country, a \$40-billion investment in the oil and gas sector.

When the Harper government came into office in 2006, 99% of Alberta's oil was sold to the U.S. When the Conservatives left office in 2015, 99% of Alberta's oil was still sold to the U.S. That is the failed record of the Harper government.

We are expanding our non-U.S. markets. We are working hard to make sure it happens.

* * *

[*Translation*]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, francophones and francophiles across the country are outraged by the Ontario government's unwarranted decision to eliminate the French Language Services Commissioner and scrap plans for a university in Toronto.

That lack of vision is a direct attack on the Franco-Ontarian community and official languages. The Prime Minister needs to go to the mat to convince Mr. Ford to reconsider his decision and stand up for official languages and francophones.

What are the Liberals going to do to protect minority francophone communities across the country?

•(1445)

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for that excellent question. The Ontario Conservatives' decision is a direct attack on Franco-Ontarians, and I will be happy to work with him to protect them.

The fact is, one party is not standing up to protect Franco-Ontarians, and that is the Conservative Party. We fully expect the Conservative leader to speak out against this situation and talk to Mr. Ford in the interest of protecting francophones in Ontario and across the country. We, as a government, will stand up for francophones.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Doug Ford's decision to attack the language rights of Franco-Ontarians is unacceptable. Creating a French-language university is critical to the Franco-Ontarian community.

The Conservative Party needs to understand that we are no longer in the 1950s. Francophones are going to stand up for their rights.

What specific action does the government plan to take to protect official languages in Ontario?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his excellent question.

Millions of francophones and francophiles are going to fight alongside our government and all parties who want to stand up for Franco-Ontarians. I would ask the Conservative leader to talk to his boss, Doug Ford, in Ontario and get the Conservative government to back down on that decision, which is—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, more than ever, I wear this pin with pride in Ontario. All citizens, including the 600,000 Franco-Ontarians, are concerned and shocked by the Ontario government's decision. It will have a devastating impact on the rights of the Franco-Ontarian community.

Canadians recognize the importance of protecting our rights and our official languages, and the government has a role to play in the matter.

Can the Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie inform the House—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie.

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell for his question. He is a strong advocate for official languages and an excellent representative of his Franco-Ontarian community.

We have invested \$2.7 billion in official languages, including \$500 million in new money. We are here to support the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario and the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne. We support organizations that are working across the country to oppose the Conservative government's decision. We stand with them.

Oral Questions

● (1450)

PRIVACY

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the federal Liberals are in power, and look what is happening in Ontario. They did nothing to protect Franco-Ontarians.

The centralist Liberal government wants to control law-abiding citizens. It wants to meddle in bank accounts. Our purchases, withdrawals, payments and financial commitments are our business. Did the Liberals invent Big Brother?

Will the government govern for once, give clear instructions and cancel the plan to have Statistics Canada collect banking information?

When will the government stop—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development.

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government takes Canadians' privacy very seriously and understands their concerns. The head of Statistics Canada has clearly said that the pilot project is still in the design stage. He said that the project would move forward only once Canadians' concerns have been addressed. The Privacy Commissioner did his job. No information was shared or collected by Statistics Canada as part of this pilot project.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when Statistics Canada asks more than 500,000 households for information on their bank accounts, their investments, their mortgages, and their credit card statements, that starts to be a bit much. One million Canadians feel compelled to allow the government to intrude into their financial affairs. It is completely unacceptable.

When will the Liberal government cancel this project that is much too intrusive into Canadians' private lives?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about the facts.

Personal information will be removed. Canadians can rest assured that their banking information remains protected and private. Statistics Canada can absolutely not share this information with anyone, not with any agency or government, and not with the Prime Minister. Canadians' privacy will be protected.

[English]

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians continue to express their absolute rejection of the Liberal plan to secretly force banks and other financial institutions to release their personal financial information of their clients without their consent. The Liberals justify this intrusion claiming it will help make better decisions.

If the Liberals believe that this surveillance is justifiable, will they explain why they refuse to at least ask Canadians for their consent?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, privacy and data protection are absolutely essential. The member opposite knows full well from the testimony given by the chief statistician before

committee members in the Senate and in the House that he will only proceed once issues around privacy and data protection are dealt with. With respect to personal information, that will be removed. More importantly, this is a pilot project. No information has been obtained and no information has been provided.

Let us stick with the facts and not the over-the-top rhetoric by the members opposite.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only fact that the minister is overlooking is that the Liberals promised to be transparent, and they have been non-transparent on this particular file. It was only through media reports that we found out about this.

The type of information Liberals want to collect is highly personal. This information is also highly valued by large multinationals that want to sell more of their products. We know that Statistics Canada already sells access to some of its data, 115 million dollars' worth last year.

Will the government confirm today whether or not the results of this new scheme to harvest Canadians' most personal financial data will also be put on sale to the private sector?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite continues to mislead Canadians. This is not a partisan initiative. It is Statistics Canada. It is an independent agency that has the respect and admiration of Canadians. It has put forward a pilot project to deal with this issue and it has made it very clear that it wants to deal with issues around privacy and data protection.

According to subsection 17(1) of the Statistics Act, no government, no opposition member and no prime minister can compel Statistics Canada for this personal information. It never has and never will compromise on personal information.

* * *

● (1455)

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while Canada Post refuses to acknowledge the needs of those who deliver the mail, CUPW is literally fighting for workers' lives. Postal transformation is taking its toll on workers' bodies, mental health and families. Despite the Harper Conservatives' imposed legislation in 2011 being deemed unconstitutional, this Prime Minister is threatening to do the same, all in the interest of greasing the wheels of commerce.

Well, the cost is too high. Why are Black Friday profits more important than workers' lives?

Oral Questions

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has clearly taken a different approach to labour relations from the previous government. We strongly believe in and respect the collective bargaining process. We know that a deal is the strongest when both parties can work out that deal together. For nearly a year, we have been supporting the parties with services and support to reach a negotiated agreement. We also know that Canadians and businesses rely on Canada Post and its workers during the holiday season. This ongoing work stoppage has had negative impacts on Canadians, our economy, international commerce and, of course, Canada Post and its workers. We strongly encourage both parties to work hard and get a deal.

* * *

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brousseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I marched with my NDP colleagues and more than 5,000 people in Montreal in support of local food and to speak out against the fact that agriculture is being used as a bargaining chip in trade agreements. Farmers have been clear: the lack of reciprocity in standards and the concessions that have been made in trade agreements are a direct attack on our food sovereignty.

Can the government tell us today what it intends to do to stop abusing our food producers in Quebec?

[English]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is well aware that the American government indicated quite clearly that it was going to destroy the supply-management system. We made sure as a government that it would not happen, and it did not happen. We do understand there is an impact on our farmers, and we are committed to fully and fairly helping them to continue to succeed. We have and will continue to support our agriculture sector in this country.

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[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that the current government cannot provide our military with the equipment it needs, as demonstrated by the fact that the government is going to buy used F-18s from Australia.

According to defence experts, this interim procurement strategy is risky, expensive and, above all, pointless. A capability gap is cited as the reason for this procurement, but there is no documentation to back that up.

Why has the Minister of National Defence misled Canadians about the capability gap?

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is committed to providing the Royal Canadian Air Force with the critical equipment it needs to be fully operational, now and in the future. Our

government believes it is unacceptable to take risks with respect to Canada's ability to simultaneously meet its commitments to NORAD and NATO.

We are convinced that the Australian aircraft can meet interim needs while the CF-18 permanent replacement is being carried out.

[English]

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals actually have a credibility gap problem. The defence minister has misled Canadians. For months he has justified buying old, used Australian fighter jets that were destined for the scrap heap by claiming there was a capability gap in our current fleet. Now detailed government documents reveal that the minister's statements were patently false. The Liberals manufactured a fake capability gap to give political cover for the Prime Minister's naive election campaign promise.

Why are the Liberals betraying our air force and misleading Canadians?

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has been clear that a modern fighter jet fleet is essential to defending Canada and Canadian sovereignty. That is why we are acquiring 88 fighter jets to replace the aging CF-18 fleet. We welcome the Auditor General's advice in this matter, and look forward to his report. When? Tomorrow.

The Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. members for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman and Edmonton West to not speak when it is not their turn.

* * *

[Translation]

FINANCE

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government promised small deficits of \$10 billion for the first two years and a balanced budget in 2019. However, we have since found out that we will end up with a deficit of close to \$80 billion over a four-year period, thanks to this government.

My question for the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance is very simple: how can they promise a return to a balanced budget when it will not actually happen until 2045? When will the budget be balanced? This is a very simple question.

● (1500)

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that in 2015, we were in a very difficult situation. The growth rate was very low. The unemployment rate was 7.1%. Things were very difficult for middle-class families across the country.

We made investments. Now, the situation is very different. We have one of the highest growth rates in the G7, and our unemployment rate is at its lowest in 40 years. That is great. We are going to continue investing so we can have a future full of opportunities.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the ebola epidemic in the Democratic Republic of Congo is especially troubling because this is the largest outbreak since the virus was discovered in that country in 1976.

[English]

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development update the House on what the government is doing to address this issue?

Ms. Kamal Khara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from London North Centre for his commitment to international issues.

Controlling outbreaks of emerging infectious diseases, such as ebola, is extremely important to ensure the health and safety of Canadians and citizens around the world. This year we provided \$2.5 million in humanitarian assistance for tackling the recent ebola outbreaks in the Democratic Republic of Congo. We just approved an additional allocation of \$750,000 to support infection prevention and provide emergency assistance.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there has been no shortage of promises, lip service and fake news stories, but Canada's biggest shipyard, the Davie shipyard, has gotten nothing but peanuts. The shipbuilding strategy is not working. There have been cost overruns, and ships are not being delivered. The Davie shipyard is ready.

What is stopping the government from ordering the *Obelix* now? This is a national security issue. What are the Liberals afraid of? Who are they protecting?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence has determined that we do not need a second *Asterix* or *Obelix* while we construct the joint support ships from Seaspan. We appreciate Davie's excellent work on the *Asterix*, but we do not need a second ship.

* * *

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, despite concerted opposition from economic and political stakeholders in Abitibi—Témiscamingue, protests from air carriers, and the devastating impact it will have on economic development and tourism in the region, Nav Canada continues to defend its recommendations to shut down overnight services provided by the

Oral Questions

Rouyn-Noranda flight service station. Even Nav Canada admits that this closure is penny-wise and pound foolish.

Does the Minister of Transport plan to act on Nav Canada's recommendations, despite the unanimous opposition?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the request of Transport Canada, Nav Canada is taking a second look at the specific situation in Rouyn-Noranda. That study is currently under way, and we will have the results soon.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, constituents in my riding of Brampton North have identified gun and gang violence as a significant public safety issue that must be addressed. However, it apparently is not an issue of concern for the Leader of the Opposition, who has not yet proposed a practical solution to deal with the increase in these violent acts. He recently visited my city of Brampton and, unfortunately, proposed redundant, unconstitutional and, ultimately, ineffective measures.

Can the Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction—

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Brampton North for her strong advocacy on this issue.

Protecting the safety of Canadians is a top priority for our government, and that is why we were proud to announce \$86 million for front-line law enforcement to keep our communities safe. What the Conservatives have proposed is not a real plan. Experts have noted that they demonstrate either little knowledge of the criminal justice system or they are deliberately trying to mislead Canadians. The Conservative plan typically offers no new supports for law enforcement and it is hard to imagine how they are going to deal with guns and gangs when they appear afraid to utter the word "guns".

* * *

● (1505)

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, about 5,000 people gathered in Montreal yesterday. I was there along with dairy, chicken, beef, pork, poultry and organic farmers, who all came together to showcase our local produce. There were 5,000 people there, but not one representative of the Liberal government. Not one of the 40 Liberal MPs from Quebec was there to stand up for our local produce. Why are they hiding? Because they know they have to save face for the minister, who did a bad job of negotiating the USMCA.

How can the Prime Minister justify this lack of respect for Quebec's farmers?

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, everybody on the government side supports the supply-management system. It is unfortunate that not all among the Conservative opposition do.

We understand what took place. The U.S. government indicated quite clearly that it wanted to dismantle the supply-management system. We made sure as a government that it did not happen.

We also understand that our farmers are impacted by the new deal and we will fully and fairly make sure that they are—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Rivière-du-Nord.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health has decided go after Quebec's health care system. The threat is clear: either Quebec bans private clinics or Ottawa will cut transfers.

Can the minister explain the twisted logic that led her to believe that cutting transfers would be a good way to meet the needs of Quebecers who need health care right now?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to offer condolences to my friend for his recent loss.

We believe that a health card, not a credit card, is the only card a Canadian should need to receive health care. Our health care system is a source of pride across the country because it allows everyone to receive treatment, regardless of whether they have money. We will continue to work with Quebec and the other provinces and territories to ensure that our health care system is a good one.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, cutting transfers is not the way to work with the Quebec government.

The same thing is happening this year. Health care costs keep going up, and the government is heartlessly cutting the health transfer escalator. Now, it wants to put more pressure on the public system by prohibiting access to private clinics, which everyone knows will affect wait times at public institutions.

When will the government let Quebec manage its own health system and stop going after people who use Quebec's health care network?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we believe that it is not acceptable for some people to access care more quickly just because they have more money. I have been working closely with my colleagues, with all provinces and territories, for some time to resolve this situation, which, when it comes down to it, is unfair. We will continue to work together to protect our health system, better serve patients and protect patients in Quebec and across the country.

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, CCF): Mr. Speaker, with the lack of pipeline capacity, the price of western Canadian heavy oil has fallen to a record low, undercutting employment and public revenues.

The Alberta government and industry are considering temporarily cutting output to improve prices, but are concerned about federal competition rules.

Can the government assure Alberta and Saskatchewan that the federal Competition Bureau will not interfere if they coordinate a production cut?

● (1510)

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand the struggles that the industry and both Alberta and Saskatchewan are facing relating to the price differential. We need to make sure that we expand our pipeline capacity so that our non-U.S. market is expanded. The challenge we are facing is that 99% of our natural resources in Canada are being sold to only one country, the United States.

We need to reduce that dependency, and that is exactly what we are working on.

The Speaker: This will conclude question period for today.

There are a number of points of order and I will take them in the order they were received. The hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier.

[Translation]

Mrs. Mona Fortier: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent for the following motion: that this House recognizes the importance of the Franco-Ontarian community within the Canadian Francophonie, and denounces, unequivocally, the decision of the Government of Ontario to terminate the Office of the French Language Services Commissioner, and the Francophone Ontario University project.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska on a point of order.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Mr. Speaker, it is clear how important and sensitive this topic is. Unfortunately, we saw how the people across the way behaved during question period.

On our side, we hope that we can all work together in the interest of all francophones or anglophones in minority situations in Canada.

Despite everything I am hearing and the partisanship that the Liberals continue to display, I would like to seek unanimous consent for the following motion: that the House express its support for Franco-Ontarians and other official language minority communities across Canada; that it reiterate its support for Canada's official bilingualism as a strength and asset that should be cherished and protected; that it recognize and respect the rights and responsibilities of the provincial and territorial governments to legislate in their areas of jurisdiction; and that it urge the Prime Minister to present a plan outlining the measures that the Government of Canada will take in its areas of jurisdiction to ensure that all services to official language minority communities are protected, and to present this plan within 30 days of adoption of this motion.

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

Some hon. members: Yes.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Carleton on a point of order. [English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: That the government indicate by the end of the week the year in which the budget will be balanced.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1515)

[English]

Hon. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, I heard you call tabling of documents. I am looking forward, as we continue in routine proceedings, to get on to orders of the day and our opposition day motion.

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GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 30 petitions.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social

Routine Proceedings

Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities in relation to Bill C-81, an act to ensure a barrier-free Canada. The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

I want to thank all those associated with the bill. Many accommodations were made to bring the witnesses forward. We worked very well together with the vice-chair. I want to thank all the committee members. This is a good bill.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 53rd report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts entitled, "Report 1—Building and Implementing the Phoenix Pay System", of the 2018 spring reports of the Auditor General of Canada.

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

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PETITIONS

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a petition in support of Bill S-240, a bill that would finally address the scourge of forced organ harvesting. This bill or bills like it have been before the House at different points for the last 10 years.

The petitioners and I are very hopeful that we will be able to have the co-operation of all parties to move this vital legislative initiative forward before the next election.

VISION CARE

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present two petitions from citizens from Edmonton, Sherwood Park, Beaumont, Fort McMurray, Beaver County, Bonnyville, Frog Lake, Oyen, Hanna, Cereal, Provost, Camrose, Chinook, Consort, Veteran, Cold Lake and Acadia Valley, all calling on the government to introduce and bring forward a national framework for action to promote eye health and vision care. In the next 20 years, it is expected that vision loss will double, particularly for indigenous, seniors and children.

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to present five petitions on the theme of built heritage in Canada.

The petition begins in its introductory piece by talking about the importance of history to the telling of our collective story. It notes that heritage and reinvestment in heritage adds to our economic growth. It can also help with climate change as we invest in buildings.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners call upon the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to demonstrate federal leadership for historic places by working with the Minister of Finance to create a multi-million dollar fund in budget in 2019 to support the efforts of indigenous peoples, charities and not-for-profits to save our historic places.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand today on behalf of these petitioners who call on the Parliament to impede the trafficking of human organs obtained without consent or as a result of a financial transaction by supporting Bill C-240. We know there is a great deal of angst about this.

The petitioners call on Parliament to work together, all parties across the floor, and make this happen as quickly as possible.

GUARANTEED INCOME SUPPLEMENT

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of constituents in Cowichan—Malahat—Langford who recognize that the federal government recently announced the launch of an automatic enrolment process for seniors to the guaranteed income supplement, but that it would not be applied to every eligible person. They also recognize that this is an important federal program. It allows seniors who collect old age security and who have low income to count on additional income.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the government to extend the automatic enrolment of the guaranteed income supplement to all seniors.

FIBROMYALGIA

Mr. Gagan Sikand (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present this petition with regard to fibromyalgia. The petitioner, Diana Khbeis, is from Mississauga.

According to the March 2017 health report from Statistics Canada, an estimated 2% of Canadian adults have fibromyalgia. In 2014, these sufferers saw their family doctors three times more than non-sufferers, were referred to specialists twice as much and, concernedly, approximately 40% of them did not have a job.

The petition being presented today requests that the government study the classification of fibromyalgia as a disease of the nervous system and not that of the musculoskeletal system in the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems. If classified as a neurological disease, there is potential to unburden the health care system with unnecessary specialist referrals and reduced prescription of painkillers. This is a potential opportunity to relieve the health care system and not contribute to the opioid epidemic.

• (1520)

SENIORS

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present two petitions.

The first petition highlights that one in six Canadians is a senior and that within 13 years, it will be one in four. In some portions of Canada that has already happened and it is one in four.

The petitioners ask for a national seniors strategy and are glad that the government, finally, after three years, has appointed a Minister of Seniors.

PENSIONS

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is with respect to pensions. The petitioners indicate that the Prime Minister promised in writing that defined benefit plans, which had already been paid for by employees and pensioners, should not be retroactively changed into targeted benefit plans. They also say that Bill C-27, tabled by the Minister of Finance, precisely permits this change that the government promised would not happen.

The petitioners call for the Government of Canada to withdraw Bill C-27.

CANADA POST

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions today.

The first petition is in support of postal banking. As the petitioners point out, nearly two million Canadians desperately need an alternative to lenders whose crippling lending rates affect the poor, marginalized, rural and indigenous communities most. We have 3,800 Canada Post outlets already existing in rural areas where there are few or no banks at all and Canada Post has the infrastructure to make a rapid transition to include postal banking.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to enact Motion No. 166 and create a committee to study and propose a plan for postal banking under the Canada Post Corporation.

PENSIONS

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is in regard to the reality facing spouses who marry military personnel, members of Parliament, Royal Canadian Mounted Police members or civil servants after the age of 60. These spouses are denied a pension. They are also the caregivers who bear the burden of caregiving, yet they fail to receive a pension when their partners pass away.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to support my bill, Bill C-397, which would eliminate all legislation that denies surviving spouses pensions with respect to military members, members of Parliament, judges, Crown employees, Royal Canadian Mounted Police if the retiree entered into that spouse's relationship after age 60.

The Speaker: I would remind members that presenting petitioners is time to have a brief summary of what petitioners are asking for.

The hon. member for Thornhill.

Routine Proceedings

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of constituents in Thornhill and beyond who petition the government, urging Parliament to move quickly on the proposed legislation to amend the Criminal Code and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to prohibit Canadians from travelling abroad to acquire human organs removed without consent.

[Translation]

TAXATION

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to present a petition signed by residents of my riding, Hochelaga, who wish to draw the Government of Canada's attention to the following issues.

The abusive use of tax havens is costing Canadians between \$5 billion and \$8 billion per year. Canada trails the rest of the G8 countries in cracking down on tax havens. Millions of Canadians work hard and pay their taxes like they are supposed to, but the government allows the ultra-rich to avoid paying their fair share of taxes.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to take serious measures against tax havens, tighten rules for shell companies and end penalty-free amnesty deals for tax cheats.

[English]

ANIMAL CRUELTY

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to present e-petition 1580, which speaks to the issue of the kinds of criminal actions of people who will abuse animals. The facts are that people who are guilty of violent crimes are often found to have had a history that started with animal abuse.

The petitioners ask the Government of Canada and the House of Commons to legislate so that people who are convicted of an animal abuse felonies have their names registered, just as we would with those who abuse children or sex offenders, on a permanent animal abuse registry so their furtherance in criminal activities of violence and cruelty can be arrested.

• (1525)

VISION CARE

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I too, like my colleague from Edmonton Strathcona, am tabling a petition on the national framework for action to promote health and vision care.

The petitioners are from Ajax, Pickering, Whitby, Oshawa and North York. They also indicate that 1% of the total expenditures on vision loss is invested in post-vision loss rehabilitation therapy. They are concerned about that. They also indicate that the emerging crisis in eye health and vision care affects not only certain people in Canada, but all segments of the Canadian population, with those who are most vulnerable being children, seniors and indigenous people.

The petitioners ask for a national framework to action to promote eye health and vision care, which will benefit everyone.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Questions Nos. 1934, 1935, 1944, 1949, 1950, 1953, 1954, 1956, 1965 and 1966.

[Text]

Question No. 1934—**Mr. Dane Lloyd:**

With regard to the logo for the government's campaign for a seat on the UN Security Council in 2021-22: (a) what are the total expenditures related to the development, design, or promotion of the logo; and (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by individual expenditure?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the logo for Canada's bid for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the 2021-22 term was developed and designed in-house by Global Affairs Canada, using existing departmental resources. The logo was promoted on Twitter—also with existing departmental resources.

Question No. 1935—**Mr. Pat Kelly:**

With regard to the delay in the Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion construction: (a) what is the amount the government (i) has paid or, (ii) is expected or projected to pay contractors or sub-contractors in penalties as a result of the delay; and (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by vendor?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on August 30, 2018, the Federal Court of Appeal quashed the Trans Mountain expansion project's federal certificate. The Government of Canada is committed to moving the project forward in the right way. In this regard, on September 20, 2018, the government directed the National Energy Board to reconsider its recommendation on the project in relation to environmental effects of project-related marine shipping.

On October 3, 2018, the government announced its intent to resume consultation with indigenous peoples on the project. Once those steps are complete, the government will consider all of the evidence, including new analysis by the National Energy Board and new information collected through indigenous consultation, and make a new decision on the project. Trans Mountain Corporation has not formally updated the planned construction schedule and costs estimate for the project since the court decision. Because of the status of the project and the lack of an updated project construction cost estimate, no estimate of the financial impact of the court's decision is available at this time.

Question No. 1944—**Mr. Pat Kelly:**

With regard to the government's current bid to win a seat on the UN Security Council: (a) what amount is budgeted for gifts to foreign dignitaries; (b) to date, how much has been spent on gifts; and (c) to date, what are the details of every gift provided, including for each (i) country of representative, (ii) title, (iii) description of item, (iv) value, (v) quantity?

*Routine Proceedings***Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):**

Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), there is no set budget for gifts to foreign dignitaries for Canada's bid for a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, UNSC.

With regard to (b), gift bags, with letter openers, were purchased for 15 foreign dignitaries at the cost \$735.00 in the context of a regional meeting. Our government firmly believes in promoting Canadian businesses and products, including Indigenous products. These products were made in Canada by Wolf Den, based in Parry Sound, Ontario.

The permanent mission of Canada to the United Nations in New York has been maintaining a small gift inventory as per customary practice in the conduct of diplomatic affairs for several years, pre-dating Canada's UNSC campaign. Gifts range from key chains, \$14, to wild sockeye smoked salmon, \$51.90.

With regard to (c), details on the recipients of each gift are not provided as per section 15 of the Access to Information Act.

Question No. 1949—Mr. Colin Carrie:

With regard to the "Serving You Better" consultations announced by the Minister of National Revenue on September 26, 2018: why are there no consultation sessions for small and medium businesses being held in (i) Ontario, (ii) Quebec, (iii) Manitoba, (iv) Newfoundland and Labrador, (v) Prince Edward Island?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the above noted question, what follows is the response from the Canada Revenue Agency, CRA.

"Serving You Better" is a key component of the CRA's commitment to improve services offered to Canadians and to recognize small and medium-sized businesses as valued clients of the CRA. When small and medium-sized businesses give their feedback to the CRA, they are sharing valuable insights that the CRA can use to make its programs and services more streamlined and client-focused.

For fall 2018, the CRA is seeking input from two important audiences: small and medium-sized businesses and their service providers. Since the consultations were launched in September 2018, additional sessions have been added. Information can be found at the following link: <https://canada-preview.adobecqms.net/en/revenue-agency/corporate/about-canada-revenue-agency-cra/small-medium-businesses-canada-revenue-agency-committed-serving-you-better/register-serving-better-consultations-smbs.html>

Please note that within the context of taxation, the term "service provider" refers primarily to bookkeepers and accountants who deal directly with tax issues on behalf of their small and medium-sized business clients.

With regard to parts (i) to (v), consultation sessions have been planned for service providers, as defined above, in Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Manitoba, as well as in Yukon, Northwest Territories, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia.

Consultation sessions have been planned for small and medium-sized businesses in the Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

As in 2016, the CRA's approach in 2018 was to ensure coverage of all Canadian provinces and territories, irrespective of audience. In 2016, SMEs and accountants were consulted in Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

The CRA is committed to undertaking outreach and consultations in a variety of ways. The CRA is doing its utmost to adapt its consultation processes to best meet the needs of small businesses and service providers?. In cases where participants are unable to attend a face-to-face session and want to provide feedback, they may do so online at www.cra-engage-arc.ca/en. In this way, the CRA can ensure that there is an opportunity for people in all regions of Canada to have their voices heard.

Question No. 1950—Mr. Charlie Angus:

With regard to the financial obligations of the Catholic Entities party to the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement (IRSSA): (a) what payments were made by Catholic Entities towards fulfillment of the financial obligations detailed in the IRSSA, broken down by (i) date, (ii) name of payee, (iii) name of Catholic Entity, (iv) amount paid; (b) for each Catholic Entity, what were its total obligations and what were the total amounts of financial and in-kind contributions given in accordance with the terms of the IRSSA; and (c) in cases where the amount given by a Catholic Entity, with both in-kind and financial contributions detailed separately, was less than its total obligation, what was the reason for this, for each such Catholic Entity?

Mr. Marc Miller (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, insofar as Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, CIR-NAC, is concerned, the response is as follows.

With regard to (a), for reasons of confidentiality, we cannot provide the (i) date, (ii) name of payee, (iii) name of Catholic entity and (iv) amount paid.

However, the following can be answered. As numerous individual Catholic entities were listed as parties in the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, the Corporation of Catholic Entities Party to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement, CCEPIRSS, was established to fulfill the obligations of the Catholic entities and manage the funding of those Catholic entities who were signatories to the settlement agreement.

Under Schedule O-3 of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, the Settlement Agreement, the Catholic Entities had three financial obligations: \$29 million in cash; \$25 million of in-kind services; and \$25 million to be raised through a seven-year national fund-raising campaign.

Routine Proceedings

The CCEPIRSS was to collect \$29 million from the Catholic entities, less compensation for Indian residential school claims paid by the entities prior to the implementation of the Settlement Agreement, which would be paid evenly over the course of five years to the corporation and then to healing and reconciliation programs approved by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

The Catholic entities had paid \$8,344,575.63 in settlement monies prior to the September 19, 2007, implementation of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement.

The court decision of July 15, 2015, released the Catholic entities of their financial obligations under the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement.

With regard to (b), it is our understanding that the Catholic entities have provided more than the \$25 million in in-kind services ordered under section 3.5 of Schedule O-3 of the Settlement Agreement: "Each Catholic Entity and the Episcopal Corporation of Saskatoon shall provide In-Kind Services as set forth in a confidential list ("the In-Kind Services List"), such list to be provided by the Corporation to the Deputy Minister, Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada (IRSRC).

With regard to (c), the Settlement Agreement required that the Catholic signatories make "best efforts" to raise \$25 million and that they conduct a professional campaign comparable to similar fundraising efforts.

The Catholic entities raised approximately \$3.7 million of the \$25 million fundraising commitment.

The "Moving Forward" Catholic fundraising campaign, established by CCEPIRSS, was not funded by the Government of Canada; therefore, the government has no authority to audit its results.

Question No. 1953—**Mr. David Anderson:**

With regard to inmates at the Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge: how many inmates have been unlawfully at large since 2008?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there were no escapes from Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge between the dates of January 1, 2008 and September 27, 2018.

The Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge does not accommodate conditionally released offenders. It only houses incarcerated offenders, as this is a CSC-operated facility, not a section 81 healing lodge. The status of "unlawfully at large offenders" is related only to offenders on conditional release. If an offender leaves the property, this constitute an escape from custody.

Question No. 1954—**Mr. Dan Albas:**

With regard to complaints that the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) was targeting single parents who claim the Canada child benefits: (a) how many single parents were sent letters by the CRA since January 1, 2016, letting them know their eligibility for benefits is being reviewed; (b) how many single parents had their benefits suspended as a result of the reviews in (a); and (c) of the single parents in (b), how many have since had their benefits restored?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the noted question, what follows is the response for the Canada Revenue Agency, CRA, for

the period of January 1, 2016, to October 1, 2018, the date of the question.

The CRA cannot provide numbers indicating how many benefit recipients with a single status were reviewed as the CRA does not track information in the manner requested. Marital status is but one piece of information that may be reviewed to ensure benefits are paid correctly. Other eligibility criteria that may be reviewed during a benefits validation review include residency and primary care of children.

Question No. 1956—**Mr. Ben Lobb:**

With regard to the decision by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to extend paying for hotel rooms for asylum seekers in the Greater Toronto Area past September 30, 2018: (a) how many hotel rooms is the government paying for past September 30, 2018; (b) how long does the government expect to continue paying for the hotel rooms in the Greater Toronto Area; and (c) how much does the government expect to pay for hotel rooms in the Greater Toronto Area for asylum seekers (i) to September 30, 2018, (ii) after September 30, 2018?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Youth) and to the Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, due to the pressures the City of Toronto is facing with the shortage of temporary accommodations in their shelter system, IRCC has booked hotel rooms to assist in accommodating the asylum seekers who were staying in two college dormitories during the summer of 2018. This temporary accommodation allows City of Toronto officials time to help asylum seekers to find housing solutions, as they normally do for all individuals who use municipal shelters.

The City of Toronto continues to be responsible for transportation, logistics and all social services for asylum seekers.

With regard to (a), IRCC extended reservations for 64 hotel rooms in the greater Toronto area until October 15, 2018, and 37 rooms until October 29, 2018. IRCC is currently in the process of securing hotel rooms to accommodate the remaining asylum seekers until January 4, 2019.

With regard to (b), IRCC will cover the costs of the hotel rooms secured until October 29, 2018. IRCC is working on establishing a new contract to secure hotel rooms until January 4, 2019. A request for proposal was posted and IRCC is currently reviewing options for awarding the contracts.

With regard to (c)(i), the contract amount for the hotel rooms in the greater Toronto area for asylum seekers from August 1, 2018 to September 30, 2018, was \$2,070,817.03, including taxes.

With regard to (c)(ii), the total cost to extend the contract past September 30, 2018, and until October 29, 2018 is estimated to be up to approximately \$203,329.58, including taxes. The cost to secure the hotel rooms until January 4, 2018 is currently being finalized.

*Routine Proceedings*Question No. 1965—**Mr. Ron Liepert:**

With regard to the Canadian Surface Combatant project, since July 1, 2016: (a) how many amendments have been made to the request for proposals; (b) how much has been spent on legal fees for amendments to the request for proposals; (c) how many companies made bids on the first iteration of the request for proposals; (d) how many companies have made bids on the current iteration of the request for proposals; (e) of the companies in (c) how many qualify as small businesses; and (f) of the companies in (d) how many qualify as small businesses?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the Canadian surface combatant project, since July 1, 2016, the Canadian surface combatant project is following a "design then build" approach.

The prime contractor for the Canadian surface combatant project is Irving Shipbuilding Incorporated of Halifax, Nova Scotia.

In its capacity as prime contractor, Irving Shipbuilding released the request for proposals, RFP, on October 27, 2016, to 12 successfully pre-qualified bidders. The objective of the RFP is to select an existing warship design and design team to be under subcontract to Irving Shipbuilding for the purpose of modifying the design to meet Canada's requirements and to incorporate Canadian systems and equipment. On October 19, 2018, the government and Irving Shipbuilding announced Lockheed Martin Canada Inc. as the preferred bidder for the Canadian surface combatant project. This decision was entirely based on its demonstration of compliance with the mandatory requirements and on the final scores of each bid according to the pre-established evaluation criteria.

With regard to part (a), a total of 88 amendments were issued by Irving Shipbuilding between November 1, 2016, and August 13, 2018. These amendments were developed and issued to address enquiries from the 12 pre-qualified bidders, and to incorporate process improvements to the competitive RFP so as to maximize the opportunities for bidders to demonstrate the value of their solutions to Canada.

With regard to part (b), the Government of Canada spent a total of \$11.8 million on the project's legal fees during the period of time that the RFP was being amended. The detailed information to allow a further breakdown on the amount that was spent on only the amendments is not available.

Because Irving Shipbuilding released the RFP, it would also have incurred legal fees.

With regard to part (c), only one RFP was released, with firms submitting their bids in two parts. Submissions for the technical and value proposition portions closed on November 30, 2017, and submissions for the financial portion closed on July 20, 2018.

Three companies submitted bids in response to the RFP.

With regard to part (d), as noted in the response to part (c) above, only one RFP was released; three firms submitted bids.

With regard to parts (e) and (f), as noted above, only one RFP was released. None of the three bidders would qualify as a small business.

Question No. 1966—**Mr. Ron Liepert:**

With regard to the Minister of the Environment's YouTube channel, since November 4, 2015: (a) how many full-time equivalents manage the channel; (b) what are the titles and corresponding pay scales of the full-time equivalents who manage the channel; (c) how much has been spent on overtime pay for the full-time equivalents who manage the channel; (d) how much has been spent on developing content for the channel, and how much is earmarked to be spent for the remainder of the 2018-19 fiscal year; (e) how much has been spent on promoting content for the channel, and how much is earmarked to be spent for the remainder of the 2018-19 fiscal year; (f) is there a cross-platform promotion plan to share content from the channel to other digital media platforms; (g) are the costs associated with (f) included in the YouTube budget, or do they fall within the budget of the other platforms; (h) what are the digital media platforms used to promote or share the Minister's YouTube content; (i) what is the monthly expenditure on the channel, broken down by month; and (j) what is the annual expenditure on the channel, broken down by year?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Environment does not have a YouTube channel.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the government's responses to Questions Nos. 1933, 1936 to 1943, 1945 to 1948, 1951, 1952, 1955, 1957 to 1964 and 1967 to 1974 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 1933—**Mr. Phil McColeman:**

With regard to the Veterans Affairs Canada service standard of 16 weeks in regards to decisions for disability benefit applicants for the 2017-18 fiscal year, or the last year in which statistics are available: how many and what percentage of applications received a decision within (i) the 16-week standard, (ii) between 16 and 26 weeks, (iii) greater than 26 weeks (6 months), (iv) greater than a year?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 1936—Mrs. Salma Zahid:**

With regard to the National Joint Council's Relocation Directive, which reimburses federal employees when relocating for work, for the calendar years 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015: (a) how many employees, agents, or contractors of the federal government made claims for relocation funding each year, broken down by government department or agency; (b) how many employees, agents, or contractors of the federal government were provided with reimbursement for relocation each year, broken down by government department or agency; (c) in the instances where relocation funding was provided, how many instances arose from employer-requested relocation in each year; (d) in the instances where relocation funding was provided, how many instances arose from employee-requested relocation in each year; (e) what was the annual aggregate amount in Canadian dollars spent by each government agency or department in remitting relocation funding, broken down by the benefit categories outlined in appendix B of the National Joint Council's Relocation Directive; (f) which employees, agents, or contractors of the federal government received relocation funding in each year, itemized to include their agency or department, their job title, the amount of relocation funding remitted, broken down by the benefit categories outlined in appendix B of the National Joint Council's Relocation Directive, and where the individual was relocated from and to; (g) what is the aggregate amount of funding, across all government departments and agencies, remitted in each year under the Relocation Directive's benefit categories that pertain to real estate commission and realtor fees; (h) what is the aggregate amount of funding, across all government departments and agencies, remitted in each year under the Relocation Directive's benefit categories that pertain to home equity loss; and (i) what is the aggregate amount of funding, across all government departments and agencies, remitted in each year under the Relocation Directive's benefit categories that pertain to mortgages, mortgage default insurance, and mortgage paydown penalties?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1937—Mr. Bob Saroya:

With regard to the online application system run by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada: (a) how many hours has the online system been down in total since January 1, 2017; and (b) what is the number of hours the online system has been down, broken down by week, since January 1, 2017?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1938—Mr. Blaine Calkins:

With regard to the comments made by the Prime Minister on September 25, 2018, in relation to the 2015 election that Canada did not have "much direct interference" by Russia: in what specific ways did Russia interfere in the 2015 election?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1939—Mr. Arnold Viersen:

With regard to the Churchill Rail Line: (a) what are the details of all correspondence, including electronic, that the government has sent or received, since November 4, 2015, including (i) sender, (ii) recipient, (iii) date, (iv) title and subject matter, (v) description or summary of contents, (vi) file number; and (b) what are the details of all memorandums about the Churchill Rail Line, including (i) date, (ii) sender, (iii) recipient, (iv) title and subject matter, (v) file number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1940—Mr. Kelly McCauley:

With regard to the Joint Support Ship (JSS) project: (a) how many extensions have occurred since the project's inception; (b) what are the costs associated with the extensions to date; (c) how many amendments have occurred since the project's inception; (d) what are the costs associated with the amendments to date; (e) how many full-time equivalents work on the project; (f) are there any anticipated lay-offs occurring from project extensions and amendments and, if so, how many; and (g) what are the rationales for each instance of an extension and amendment to date?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1941—Mr. Kelly McCauley:

With regard to the Public Service Pay Centre in Miramichi, since December 1, 2015, broken down by year: (a) how much has been spent on employee overtime for

those working at the Centre; and (b) of the employees in (a), how many hours have been logged, broken down by amount paid out per person and job title?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1942—Mr. Kelly McCauley:

With regard to the air travellers security surcharge since January 1, 2016: (a) how much is collected from passengers, broken down into averages for (i) day, (ii) month, (iii) year; (b) how much is used to pay for security services; (c) what other programs or services are funded with the security surcharge; and (d) of the programs in (c), how much funding did each program receive?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1943—Mr. Kelly McCauley:

With regard to the Senate Advisory Board within the Privy Council Office, since January 1, 2018: (a) what are the full job descriptions as they are written for each job posting within the secretariat to the Senate Advisory Board; (b) what is the pay scale and occupational group and level of the positions being filled in the secretariat to the Senate Advisory Board; (c) what is the budget for the occupational group assigned to the secretariat to the Senate Advisory Board; (d) how much has been spent by the secretariat to the Senate Advisory Board, broken down by (i) accommodation, (ii) travel, (iii) per diems, (iv) incidentals, (v) office renovation, (vi) office set-up; (e) how much has been budgeted for the support group to the Senate selection group; (f) how many openings were posted in this time period, broken down by province; (g) how many resumes were received for each opening; and (h) how many interviews were facilitated for each opening?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1945—Mr. Pat Kelly:

With regard to the requirement for dissolving corporations to apply for and receive tax clearance certificates from the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) before disbursing remaining capital to investors: (a) how many applications for tax clearance certificates are in process at the CRA at this time; (b) what is the CRA's target for processing tax clearance certificate applications; (c) for each year between 2014 and 2018, what percentage of applications for tax clearance certificates did the CRA process within its target timeline; (d) for each year in (c), what was the average processing time for tax clearance certificate applications; (e) for each year in (c), what was the average value of capital awaiting disbursement while a tax clearance certificate application was in process; (f) for each year in (c), what was the aggregate value of capital awaiting disbursement further to processed tax clearance certificates; (g) what is the aggregate value of capital awaiting disbursement further to applications for tax clearance certificates at this time; and (h) what is the average value of capital awaiting disbursement further to applications for tax clearance certificates at this time?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1946—Mr. Gord Johns:

With regard to the Department of Veterans Affairs, what was the total allotments, expenditures and amount and percentage of all "lapsed spending" for the 2017-18 fiscal year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1947—Mr. David Anderson:

With regard to the Prime Minister's trip to the United Nations in September 2018: (a) what is the complete list of world leaders with whom the Prime Minister had official meetings; (b) what topics were discussed at each of the meetings in (a); (c) what was the government's objective or reason for each meeting in (a); and (d) what was the date of each meeting in (a)?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 1948—Mr. David Anderson:**

With regard to the Prime Minister's comments on September 26, 2018, that "Conversations I've had with Cuban leadership over the course of my tenure have always included human rights and a push for better respect for democracy": (a) what are the details of all such conversations, including (i) date, (ii) with whom the conversation was held, (iii) specific topics raised; and (b) what are the details of any specific commitments which the Prime Minister received from the Cuban leadership related to human rights or democracy, including (i) date of commitment, (ii) who gave the commitment, (iii) summary or contents of commitment?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1951—Mr. Charlie Angus:

With regard to the Elementary and Secondary Education and the High-Cost Special Education Programs: (a) how much money has been granted, awarded or transferred to Grassy Narrows First Nation and their education authority under the Elementary and Secondary Education Program's special education services each year for the last ten years, with direct and indirect support reported separately; and (b) how much money has been granted, awarded or transferred to Grassy Narrows First Nation and their education authority under the High-Cost Special Education Program each year for the last ten years?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1952—Mr. Charlie Angus:

With regard to the Department of Indigenous Services and the Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs: (a) do the departments collect data about incidence and impacts (health, social, etc.) of mold in on-reserve housing; (b) if the answer to (a) is affirmative, (i) which First Nations communities, listed by region, reported incidents of mold in housing, (ii) how many such incidents did they report, (iii) what were the reported or assessed impacts; and (c) if the answer to (a) is negative, why do the departments not collect this information and do they plan to do so in the future?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1955—Mr. David Anderson:

With regard to Correctional Service Canada: (a) how many individuals convicted of first-degree murder are in a minimum-security institution; (b) how many individuals convicted of second-degree murder are in a minimum-security institution; (c) how many individuals convicted of manslaughter are in a minimum-security institution; (d) of those individuals referred to in (a) through (c), how many of these convictions involved a child as a victim; (e) of those individuals referred to in (a) through (c), how many individuals are located in an Aboriginal healing lodge; (f) how many individuals are currently serving time in Aboriginal healing lodges; and (g) of the individuals in (f) how many are non-Aboriginal?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1957—Mrs. Shannon Stubbs:

With regard to crude oil transportation by rail cars in Canada since November 2015: what are the government's statistics or estimates on how much oil has been transported by rail each month?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1958—Mr. Glen Motz:

With regard to inmates in facilities operated by Correctional Service Canada who have escaped custody or have been unlawfully at large: (a) how many individuals were unlawfully at large in (i) 2016, (ii) 2017, (iii) 2018 to date; (b) how many individuals are currently at large, as of the date of this question; and (c) what is the breakdown of (a) by correctional facility and by security classification?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1959—Mr. James Bezan:

With regard to Operation IMPACT, the Canadian Armed Forces' (CAF) support to the Global Coalition to degrade and defeat Daesh in Iraq and Syria: (a) for what length of time will Operation IMPACT be extended beyond March of 2019; (b) will the total number of soldiers, sailors, airmen, airwomen, and highly-skilled CAF

members deployed on Operation IMPACT increase, decrease, or remain the same between September 2018 and March 31, 2019; (c) what are the projected total expenditures related to an extension of Operation IMPACT, broken down by type of expenditure; (d) what amount of funding has been allocated to date in relation to the projected expenditures under (c); and (e) what are the reasons for the shift in nature of Operation IMPACT, announced on June 7, 2018, by the Chief of Defence Staff?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1960—Mr. James Bezan:

With regard to the potential adoption of a new standard camouflage pattern for the Canadian Armed Forces, and the subsequent replacement of the Canadian Disruptive Pattern (CADPAT) military equipment: (a) what is the deficiency being addressed by acquiring the MultiCam camouflage pattern over CADPAT; (b) does Defence Research and Development Canada endorse the deficiency used to justify buying a foreign camouflage pattern; (c) what consultations were done prior to adopting this policy; (d) what evidence is there that the transition to MultiCam over CADPAT will or will not increase survivability for Canadian Armed Forces members; (e) are there environments identified in which this camouflage is believed to be more effective or less effective in terms of concealment and survivability; (f) have there been concerns expressed about Canadian military personnel appearing very similar in the field to Russian, U.S. or other foreign militaries due to this camouflage transition; (g) has the benefit of replacing this perceived deficiency been weighed against the cost of Canadian factories losing business, or going out of business entirely; (h) have factories and manufacturers expressed to the Department of National Defence that they will be forced to go out of business if CADPAT is cancelled; (i) has the potential effects of adopting a U.S. camouflage pattern been considered in terms of effects to national identity and esprit de corps; and (j) has the fact that "1947 LLC" manufactures fabrics for military use in China been considered?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1961—Mr. James Bezan:

With regard to the Canadian weapons originally intended for distribution to the Kurdish Peshmerga: (a) what plans are currently in place or being considered regarding the future of weapons originally intended for the Kurdish Peshmerga; (b) in which locations and storage facilities are these weapons currently being stored, either domestic and international; and (c) what are the specific types, quantities, and commercial values of these weapons?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1962—Ms. Marilyn Gladu:

With regard to reports that Health Canada is considering shutting down or cutting funding to certain organizations, and that a gag order has been issued to the affected organizations not to discuss the matter, namely Mental Health Commission of Canada, Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction, Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health, Canadian Institute for Health Information, Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement, Canada Health Infoway, Canadian Patient Safety Institute, Canadian Partnership Against Cancer: (a) why is the government reviewing the funding that these organizations receive; (b) why have each of the organizations been given a gag order; (c) was the Minister of Health's office made aware of the gag order and, if so, on what date; (d) was the Office of the Prime Minister informed that a gag order was being issued and if so, on what date; (e) what is the complete list of organizations which were subject to the External Review of the Federally Funded Pan-Canadian Health Organizations; (f) has anyone from Health Canada, the Minister of Health's office, or Deloitte instructed or advised any of the organizations subject to the review not to publicly discuss the review; (g) if the answer to (f) is affirmative, what are the details of any such non-disclosure clause or gag order including (i) who issued the order, (ii) date of the order, (iii) scope of the gag order; (h) have any of the organizations in (e) been told that they will lose their funding, in whole or in part, and if so, which organizations have been notified of this decision; and (i) for each organization whose funding is being eliminated or reduced, what is the rationale being used by the Minister of Health for the funding reduction?

(Return tabled)

*Standing Order 52***Question No. 1963—Mr. Dave MacKenzie:**

With regard to the transfer of Terri-Lynne McClintic from the Grand Valley Institution for Women to the Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge: (a) on what date did the transfer occur; (b) on what date did the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness become aware of the transfer; (c) did the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness approve the transfer; (d) on what date did the Office of the Prime Minister become aware of the transfer; and (e) did the Prime Minister or anyone in his office approve the transfer?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1964—Mr. Ron Liepert:

With regard to the Asian Infrastructure Bank, since January 1, 2016: (a) how many Canadian businesses are investing in projects in the Asian Infrastructure Bank broken down by year; (b) how much Canadian money is spent on projects in the Asian Infrastructure Bank broken down by year; and (c) of the projects listed in (a), how many of these businesses are operating through, either directly or indirectly, the Canadian Government?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1967—Ms. Candice Bergen:

With regard to government procedures in relation to accusations of harassment or misconduct: (a) what is the procedure when there is an accusation against the Prime Minister, including (i) who decides if a complaint has merit and warrants an investigation, (ii) who conducts the investigation, (iii) does the individual conducting the investigation have the ability to recommend sanctions, (iv) are the recommended sanctions binding, (v) what is the policy regarding whether or not the reports and findings are released to the public, (vi) what mechanism, if any, exists for the temporary suspension of certain duties of the Prime Minister pending the outcome of an investigation; and (b) does the procedure in (a) apply to incidents which occurred prior to the individual becoming Prime Minister?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1968—Ms. Candice Bergen:

With regard to government procedures in relation to accusations of harassment or misconduct: (a) what is the procedure when there is an accusation against a cabinet minister, including (i) who decides if a complaint has merit and warrants an investigation, (ii) who conducts the investigation, (iii) does the individual conducting the investigation have the ability to recommend sanctions, (iv) are the recommended sanctions binding, (v) what is the policy regarding whether or not the reports and findings are released to the public, (vi) what is the criteria for deciding if a Member is to be removed from Cabinet pending the outcome of an investigation; and (b) does the procedure in (a) apply to incidents which occurred prior to the individual becoming a cabinet minister?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1969—Mr. Kerry Diotte:

With regard to International Mobility Program work permit holders under the Canada-International Agreements section, and broken down by each of the four rows (NAFTA, FTA, GATS and non-trade): for each of the past ten years, what is the number of permit holders for each row who came from (i) the United States, (ii) Mexico?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1970—Mrs. Rosemarie Falk:

With regard to all government contracts awarded for public relations services, since November 4, 2015, and broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity: what are the details of these contracts including (i) date of contract, (ii) value of contract, (iii) vendor name, (iv) file number, (v) description of services provided, (vi) title of public relations campaign related to contract (vii) start and end dates of services provided?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1971—Mrs. Rosemarie Falk:

With regard to the new round of consultations announced on October 3, 2018, in relation to the Trans Mountain Pipeline by the government: what is the complete list of individuals, First Nations and organizations which the government is planning on consulting?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1972—Mrs. Rosemarie Falk:

With regard to all expenditures on hospitality since June 11, 2018, broken down by department or agency: what are the details of all expenditures, including (i) vendor, (ii) amount, (iii) date of expenditure, (iv) start and end date of contract, (v) description of goods or services provided, (vi) file number, (vii) number of government employees in attendance, (viii) number of other attendees, (ix) location?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1973—Mr. Matt Jeneroux:

With regard to the Champlain Bridge project: (a) what are the details of all expenditures since November 4, 2015, related to the project, including (i) vendor, (ii) date, (iii) amount, (iv) description of goods or services; (b) what is the total of all expenditures in (a); (c) what is the total projected cost of the project, including a breakdown by type of expense; and (d) what are the details of any projected costs not yet incurred, broken down by type of expense?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1974—Mr. Dan Albas:

With regard to the bike and walking trail that connects Tofino and Ucluelet in the Pacific Rim National Park: (a) what was the original projected cost of completing the trail; (b) what is the current estimated cost of completing the trail; (c) how was the current route chosen and what was the rationale for choosing the route; (d) what are the details of any environmental impact studies completed related to the construction of the trail, including (i) findings, (ii) who conducted the studies, (iii) date the studies were completed, (iv) website address where the findings can be found, if applicable; (e) what are the details of all consultations conducted in relation to the trail with (i) local governments, (ii) local residents, (iii) other organizations or individuals; and (f) what are the details of all work completed to date, including how much of the trail is currently completed?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[Translation]

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES IN ONTARIO

The Speaker: I have received a request for an emergency debate from the hon. member for Drummond.

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to request an emergency debate. During question period, the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay and I asked the government what it plans to do about the horrible situation currently going on in Ontario, which is a direct attack on language rights across Canada. Our Canadian identity is at the heart of this issue. One of the pillars of our identity is having two official languages. That is what brings us together across the country. It is what unites us. It is what makes us who we are.

Business of Supply

Last Thursday, a draconian cut was made to the Office of the French Language Services Commissioner, an institution that has been around for 30 years. It was going to celebrate its 30th anniversary next year. The French Language Services Commissioner is the watchdog for French-language services for all of Ontario. This is extremely important.

What is more, the plan to build Ontario's first francophone university in Toronto has been cancelled, after more than a decade of work and investment. The board was already named, and the programs were being developed. It was all coming together. The university was set to open in 2020.

What is the federal government's role? Why do we need to have an emergency debate this evening? The reason is simple. The Prime Minister's role in the House and for the country is to defend official language communities across Canada.

This is extremely important because we are talking about the Canadian Constitution, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and federal responsibilities. Section 16(1) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms states, and I quote:

English and French are the official languages of Canada and have equality of status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in all institutions of the Parliament and government of Canada.

A little later on, section 16(3) reads, and I quote:

Nothing in this Charter limits the authority of Parliament or a legislature to advance the equality of status or use of English and French.

The entire responsibility for defending official language communities basically rests on the shoulders of our Prime Minister and the current government. That is why this is so important.

There is also the Official Languages Act, which applies to all Canadians across the country. It will soon be the 50th anniversary of the Official Languages Act, which is so important that it has quasi-constitutional status. That is why I am requesting an emergency debate, so that the current government can tell us what it is going to do to stand up for official language communities and francophones across the country and how it is also going to ensure that anglophones in Quebec can continue to thrive.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I am asking you to consider this request for an emergency debate.

• (1530)

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for his remarks. Unfortunately, I cannot find that this request meets the Standing Orders' stringent requirements.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it appears that the hon. member for Carleton is as excited as we are to read the fall economic statement. He will get the chance to do so, just as all Canadians will, on November 21.

As the member knows very well, the fall economic statement is under wraps until then, which begs the question as to why we are here today talking about something that we are not allowed to talk about. However, I welcome all opportunities to remind the House, the residents of Vaughan—Woodbridge and all Canadians of the work we are doing, because we are very proud of it. We are building a stronger Canada and a better Canada. That means communities across this great country are benefiting from our government's fiscal plan. Our fiscal plan is sustainable, as it meets our fiscal anchors and continues to reduce the federal debt-to-GDP ratio.

Nevertheless, the gloom-and-doom rhetoric of balancing budgets was the cornerstone of the former government, which tried to convince Canadians that austerity measures were the only way to economic growth. It simply is not so, and frankly, that plan and that rhetoric failed Canadians.

In fact, the work our government is doing is attracting praise from around the world. An Ipsos MORI poll of 18,000 residents from 25 countries released in July of last year found that Canada has the most positive influence globally. The IMF has hailed Canada as an economic model for the world, with IMF's managing director, Christine Lagarde, saying that the world needs more Canada. This year, an A.T. Kearney study came out saying that Canada was the second most attractive place to invest in this beautiful world we live in. That is because a strong economy is about people and inclusive growth, where economic growth and prosperity is shared by all people, and in our country by all Canadians.

From the beginning, this government has put people at the heart of its plan for economic growth. In fact, this week, while many of us were out in our constituencies, I had the chance to sit down with the CEO of leading auto parts company Martinrea. It is the third largest auto parts company in Canada and employs 511 folks at a wonderful facility in my riding. The CEO commented about how great our economic plan was working. He gave us praise on the recent end to negotiations on the new USMCA. Those are the types of conversations we have with folks and business leaders across this country regarding where our economy is going and how we are growing the economy, how we are strengthening the middle class and how we are ensuring that all Canadians have the skills to succeed.

• (1535)

[Translation]

We arrived committed to helping Canadians who work hard to reap the benefits of a strong, fast-growing economy, and that is exactly what we did.

That is why the government's first action was to ask Canadians who are part of the top 1% to pay a little bit more in order to reduce the tax burden on the middle class.

Thanks to this tax cut for the middle class, more than nine million Canadians can save more, make investments or buy what they need.

Business of Supply

Furthermore, to help parents raise their children, the government introduced the Canada child benefit, a more generous non-taxable benefit targeted at the families who need it the most.

Thanks to the Canada child benefit, nine out of 10 families receive more money than under the previous system.

[English]

The system the Conservatives had in place was not fair and sent cheques to millionaires instead of helping the families who really needed it most.

[Translation]

This benefit lifted hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty. Thanks to the tax reduction and to measures such as the Canada child benefit, a typical family of four from the middle class now has about \$2,000 more each year to raise their children, save for the future and contribute to economic growth, which benefits everyone. This money is changing the lives of these families by helping them, for example, provide healthy food to their children and buy them new winter boots.

Moreover, last year, at about the same time, the government introduced measures to help low-income workers, which led to the Canada workers benefit being introduced in budget 2018. This is a new and improved version, more generous and more accessible, of the working income tax benefit.

Starting in January 2019, the CWB will put more money in the pockets of low-income workers. It will also encourage more people to find jobs and keep them, while providing real assistance to more than 2 million Canadians who are working hard to join the middle class.

We are also taking important steps to help seniors. Retirement is meant to be the reward for a life of hard work, but for many Canadian seniors, especially women, it simply means financial hardship. We think this is unacceptable, which is why we are improving the guaranteed income supplement for low-income seniors, providing financial security and peace of mind for the most vulnerable seniors.

We also improved the Canada pension plan, or CPP, a historic measure if ever there was one. The improvements to the CPP, which will be phased in as of January 2019, will give Canadians more money in retirement, allowing them to worry less about their savings and spend more time with their families.

Because our government is working with the provinces and territories to improve the Canada pension plan and because we restored the old age security program eligibility to 65 years instead of 67, more Canadians will have better conditions in retirement and will be able to live these years in dignity.

Thanks to the 300,000 or so infrastructure projects approved since 2016, we are also building strong, resilient communities. Most of those infrastructure projects are already under way, creating more good, well-paid jobs for the middle class.

In addition, thanks to many of these economically beneficial measures, consumer confidence is virtually at an all-time high. With more money in their pockets, Canadian consumers have every

reason to feel more confident about their financial situation. That is true for Canadians and for the businesses they run. Canadian companies' after-tax profits have almost doubled since 2015, which means that businesses and the Canadians running them have more resources available to invest and stimulate economic growth.

We recognize that small businesses are key drivers of the economy. Some 60% of all private sector jobs are in small businesses. That is why we lowered taxes for small businesses last year. Our government lowered the small business tax rate to 10% in January, and we will lower it again to 9% in January 2019. The combined federal, provincial and territorial average tax rate on small businesses will be 12.2%, by far the lowest rate in the G7.

The results of these measures speak for themselves. The Canadian economy is obviously strong and growing. In 2017, with a growth rate of 3%, Canada had the strongest economic growth in the G7, and we are on track to continue to have the highest growth rate this year and next.

On top of that, there are more good, well-paying jobs for Canadians. Over the past three years, Canadians have created over half a million full-time jobs, resulting in the lowest unemployment rate in the past 40 years. Canadians' salaries have increased. For the average worker in Canada, salaries have been rising faster than inflation. If current trends continue, 2018 could see the highest wage increases in nearly a decade.

● (1540)

Consumer confidence is high, and corporate profits are on the rise, which is paving the way for other investments that could lead to further job creation and more rewarding, well-paying jobs for Canadians.

[English]

We know that we cannot take Canada's economic strength for granted. This past year was a challenging one, especially with regard to the recent tax changes in the United States and concerns about what ongoing global trade disputes might mean for Canadian businesses.

As we all know, our government has worked hard with our global partners. We finalized the CETA agreement, which is working extremely well for Canada and for Europe. We have finalized and ratified the CPTPP, which will come into force at the end of the year. It is another thing that will benefit many Canadian businesses and enterprises, including farmers, from coast to coast to coast.

Unlike some folks, we actually came to a good agreement with the United States on a new, revised free trade agreement between us, the United States, and Mexico. The new USMCA will provide certainty to businesses across this country. As I sat down with the president and CEO of Martinrea, Rob Wildeboer, this week, in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge, his comments only reaffirmed that our actions are the right actions for the right agreement when it comes to the USMCA.

Business of Supply

I also sat down with Unico, one of the largest agri-food processors in this country. Again, the feedback I received from its owners and management was that our government's economic path is the right one. It was great to hear that these businesses will continue to invest here in Canada and in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge.

Last summer the government heard from a number of business owners and business leaders that there was a strong interest in making investments, the kind that can position businesses for long-term growth and that can create good, well-paying jobs for Canadian workers.

We heard from many businesses that expressed relief when we announced our new trade deal with the United States and Mexico, because securing that deal really does help when it comes to being able to confidently invest for the future. We have removed uncertainty, and we know that for businesses, removing uncertainty is key to their success.

[*Translation*]

There is nothing new about Canada-U.S. co-operation. We have a longstanding and fruitful relationship that is the envy of the world. The links between our peoples, governments and economies have produced positive results for both countries for more than 150 years. We know that by working together and ensuring that all regions are truly open for business we can continue to get real results for people in the coming years. The agreement we recently reached with the United States and Mexico reaffirms the importance of our trade relationship with our North American neighbours.

• (1545)

[*English*]

We welcome this new modernized trade agreement, because we know it will help support good, well-paying middle-class jobs across this country. We know, as we have heard repeatedly in this House, and as I hear from Canadians and residents in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge, that people are working in this country. People are working, and they are working hard. The jobs are there.

The CFIB and others have estimated that there are over 500,000 job vacancies in this country. It goes to show that our government's record on the economy is a good record. It is a record we can be proud of. It is a record that will continue to ensure, very simply, that all Canadians understand that they have a government that is on their side and that they have a future that they and their families can be proud of and confident in.

We welcome this new, modernized trade agreement, because we know it will help support good, well-paying middle-class jobs right across this country. I wanted to say that again to reaffirm our commitment to good middle-class jobs across this country.

At the same time, we know that we need to do more to protect and maintain Canada's competitive advantage. One area where this has been made clear is in relation to gender equality. Canadian women are among the most educated in the world, yet they are less likely to participate in the labour market and are more likely to work part time.

This under-representation continues in positions of leadership, and businesses in Canada are overwhelmingly owned by men. It reflects

a number of factors, including the fact that Canadian women often have greater demands in unpaid work, preventing them from pursuing opportunities to reach their full potential.

Our economy is not working to capacity when women who wish to participate cannot do so. I will say that the labour force participation rate for women in Canada is now at its highest level, and it has been climbing incrementally under our government. In successive actions we have undertaken, we have seen a real boost and real encouragement for women to enter the labour force. Frankly, we can be proud of that. We know that Canada does not succeed until all Canadians succeed, and that includes on the basis of gender equality.

I am proud to say that I have two daughters at home, two precocious young girls. I know that the things we are doing today will benefit them in the years to come. Frankly, I am proud to be part of a government that is putting gender equality at the forefront.

The evidence is clear. RBC Economics estimates that adding more women to the workforce could boost Canada's GDP by as much as 4%. Our economy is strengthened when women and girls have opportunities to contribute to and benefit equally from economic growth. The time is now to ensure that all Canadians, in particular women, are provided with an opportunity to succeed and lead. That is why our latest budget legislation is taking several actions to move Canada toward gender equity. This legislation provides help for new parents to care for their children during those critical early months through the new employment insurance parental sharing benefit, which provides an extra five weeks of benefits to encourage more equal sharing of child care responsibilities within the home and to allow more flexibility, especially for mothers, to go back to work earlier, if that is their choice, feeling reassured that their family has the support it needs.

We are also taking steps to address the gender gap in federally regulated workplaces by requiring equal pay for work of equal value. This is just common sense. It is very simple. People should be paid equal pay for equal work, if that is the term we wish to use, and we are on the right trajectory. We know that currently, women earn about 88.5 cents for every dollar a man earns, when we are looking at jobs that encompass the same duties. We need to close that gap, and we will through the legislation that is contained in the BIA that we on the finance committee are presently looking at. About 1.2 million employed Canadians will fall under the scope of this legislation.

My riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge is a very entrepreneurial riding. People are very successful. I know the issue that is important to them is the economy. In my humble opinion, as someone who worked in global financial services for 20 years, our government is doing the right things with respect to the economy. We are investing in Canadians. We are investing in Canada. We are making sure that Canadians have the skills they need to succeed in today's world and tomorrow's world. We are ensuring that our kids take advantage of STEM and have the literacy skills and the financial literacy skills to succeed.

We maintain that a strong economy is a result of a strong middle class, and our politics and results reflect that. Over the past three years, the government has invested in Canadians and the things that matter most to Canadians. These investments reflect a choice to reject the austerity policies of the past and to instead invest wisely in the middle class, growing the economy and, yes, helping those who wish to join the middle class. That is what we have done.

The investments our government is making are balanced by sound fiscal management. If we look at the fiscal reference tables and the OECD reports, Canada's fiscal position is in the top tier and will continue to improve, anchored by a commitment to a low and consistently declining net debt-to-GDP ratio that is the lowest in the G7.

Some of the measures we have introduced since coming to office have been nothing less than life-changing for hundreds of thousands of Canadian families. We will have more to come in the fall economic update on Wednesday.

I will say this. I chatted with a number of business leaders in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge last week, including those who oversee \$4-billion or \$5-billion companies, and we are on the right path. Our government has taken a number of actions to help grow the economy, but more so, we are allowing businesses to invest with confidence in the economy today and for the future. We are lowering the small business tax rate. We are doing a number of things to support businesses in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge and across this beautiful country. Our trade deals are strengthening the middle class, creating good jobs, and improving our relations with our European, North American and Asian trading partners.

• (1550)

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoulu, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I must be mistaken, or maybe I went outside to the lobby, but I must have missed the part of the hon. member's speech when he was talking about when the government will balance the budget. I have never seen a budget speech that did not include a date, or anything like a date, confirming when the budget would be balanced. Therefore, I would like the member to rectify the situation. I must have been somewhere else or not listening. I am very sorry. When will the government balance the budget?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, over the weekend, I was looking at the fiscal reference tables produced by the Department of Finance, and I also read over the OECD reports looking at Canada's fiscal position versus those of our peers. I will say that thanks to sound fiscal management a few years ago under the Martin-Chrétien government, we reduced our deficits, brought in surpluses and reduced taxes. Now we are making up for the last 10 years under the

Business of Supply

Conservative government. It left us a huge infrastructure deficit in Canada and a huge skills deficit in Canada.

We are making the right investments today for my kids, for Canadians, and it is producing results. Job growth is very strong. The unemployment rate is at a 40-year low, and business taxes are coming down. There was a tax cut for nine million Canadians and an increase in the guaranteed income supplement for two million Canadian seniors. We are doing the right things to grow our economy today and for tomorrow. At the same time, we have a AAA credit rating, and our debt-to-GDP ratio continues to decline. That is the right path for our economy and for Canadians.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy these debates where the Liberals and Conservatives take a lot of time to attack each other's fiscal performance and argue about who has done the worst job.

However, if members asked constituents in my riding about deficits, here is what they would say. They are still looking for affordable housing, and both of these parties ran deficits, and there is no affordable housing available in my riding. They are looking for child care, and both of these parties ran deficits, and there is no affordable child care available in my riding. When we look at veterans, there are veterans in my riding still waiting for the benefits they earned, but neither of these parties delivered those benefits, yet they both ran deficits.

In my mind, there are a lot of things we can do before we run deficits. Sometimes we might have to. We can make corporations pay their fair share of taxes. We can close down the tax loopholes.

My question to the member, who never really talked about what the Liberals are actually spending money on, is about big items. Why would the government run a huge deficit by buying a \$5-billion leaky pipeline, and why did it contribute \$35 billion to an infrastructure bank that in its first year made just one loan?

• (1555)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, first, our government supports Alberta's energy workers and energy workers across Canada. We will do what we need to do to strengthen that industry. We have a very large discount on our resources currently in Canada, and we need to reduce that discount. We need to make sure that we are getting the full price for our oil. Frankly, I support Canada's energy workers. These are good middle-class jobs and good union folks, and we will make sure that we stand with them every day.

Business of Supply

In terms of what our government is investing in, I would be happy to send a number of pages to the hon. member. On a national housing strategy, there is \$40 billion over 10 years, which is an unprecedented investment in housing. We have reached an affordable child care agreement with each of the provinces. We have done a lot to help Canadians and to invest in their future. It shows in Canadians' confidence and it shows in business confidence.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I very much enjoyed my hon. colleague's speech. I note that he is one of the few people in this chamber with actual experience in finance. Therefore, I would ask him to go way back and reflect on the initial decisions of the previous government and the surplus it inherited. I am talking about pre-recession. What is the track record of the previous government in terms of deficit performance, when it inherited a surplus?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, the previous government, frankly, refused to admit that there was an actual global financial recession going on and had to run very quickly to undertake a number of measures to combat it.

As I said, the Conservatives inherited a surplus from a Liberal government, which is not surprising. We are good stewards of Canada's fiscal situation, and we will continue to be. However, they squandered that. The Conservatives did not prepare right, and they did not make the right investments in infrastructure, in skills training and in the things that matter most to the residents of my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge. They did not make those investments.

The Conservatives left us a very large deficit, an infrastructure deficit and a deficit in terms of investing in Canadians and their future. We are having to make up for that. We are making tough choices, the right choices, to maintain a strong fiscal position and to reduce our debt-to-GDP ratio. We are making the investments in Canada and in Canadians that they deserve and that will prepare us for the future.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, what we are debating in the House is this issue that the House call on the government to tell Canadians in what year the budget will be balanced, and to do so in this week's fall economic statement. It is not really a difficult question, but it seems every Liberal here is avoiding answering the question.

I was really disappointed today with the Minister of Finance, who basically was the guy who promised that they would balance it in 2019. Now, if it is such a bad idea, like the Liberals are saying now, why did they promise it to Canadians? We have an issue with our competitiveness. Business is looking for the government to do something and signal that it will get back to a balanced budget. Again my question to my colleague is, what year will the budget balance itself?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, stay tuned for Wednesday, November 21, for the fall economic statement. Our government's fiscal position, and the importance of having a strong fiscal position, cannot be re-emphasized. A declining debt-to-GDP ratio, which we have emphasized, is something we need to look at, as well as balance that with key investments in our economy and in certain sectors. We have the supercluster program that we have announced. Again, we have rave reviews for businesses.

On the U.S. tax legislation that passed earlier, remember, it is running a trillion-dollar deficit. Now, I am not sure if the Conservatives want to start running those types of deficits, but we surely do not. We need to be prudent, we need to be measured and we need to undertake measures that address any sort of competitiveness issues. However, the fact remains Canadian businesses are confident and are investing. They are doing it in my riding and all ridings across this country. That is why they have created over 500,000 or 600,000 full-time jobs over the last three years. The results speak for themselves, but we will have to wait for Wednesday for specific measures in the fall economic update.

• (1600)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Vaughan—Woodbridge for his speech. He mentioned having children.

I wonder how we can really have such a debate where, once again, the parties blame one another for accumulating the most debt. I was chuckling and wondering who was telling the truth, the Liberals or the Conservatives? However, that is not really the issue. The real issue, as the Conservatives have so clearly articulated, is when we will return to a balanced budget.

I would like to know how my colleague can justify his point of view to his constituents and to his child. They asked you a simple question, so why are you not answering? It is so simple.

I have never heard an informed response on managing public finances or international borrowing rates that justifies the fact that the Liberals cannot give us a specific date. We are not even given an articulate reply.

Would you mind telling me what you would say to a constituent who asks you how many millions of dollars a week you spend to say nothing?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I would remind the member that he must direct his question through the Chair.

The member for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

[*English*]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, frankly, looking at the future of my kids, my two daughters who are at home right now, their future looks great. It looks great not only because of our government's action, but because they are blessed to live in this country called Canada. We will find out measures in the fall economic update on Wednesday. I encourage the member to stay tuned. I encourage him to be here, take notes and be attentive to the great things happening in this country. As a government, we are listening, and we will always continue to listen to businesses and consumers. At the end of the day, we will always maintain that certainty for businesses and consumers and the confidence to invest in and grow our economy and create those middle-class jobs Canadians want to look forward to in their futures.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as usual, I am very pleased to rise today.

Without further delay, I would like to inform the House that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil.

As always, I extend my warmest greetings to the many people in Beauport—Limoilou who are watching us today.

Today's debate is very interesting. An opposition motion was moved in the House by the Conservative Party, of which I am of course a member. It reads as follows, and I quote:

That the House call on the government to tell Canadians in what year the budget will be balanced, and to do so in this week's Fall Economic Statement.

Canadians may be wondering what is happening and how it is possible that we still do not know when the government will balance the budget. That has always been a basic concept for me, even before I got into politics.

It seems to me that any reasonable, responsible government, whether it be Liberal or Conservative—and I was going to add NDP, but that has not happened yet at the federal level—with nothing to hide should indicate in its policy statement, budget, and everyday political messaging a date on which it will balance the budget, or at least a concrete timeframe for doing so.

There are two rather surprising things about the Liberals' refusal to give us a timeframe for returning to a balanced budget. There are two historic elements with regard to the practice that they are currently using.

As the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent keeps saying, we have never seen a government run a deficit outside wartime or outside an economic crisis.

According to Keynesian economics, it is normal to run deficits. Keynes made some mistakes in several of his analyses, but there is one analysis he did that several governments have been adhering to for 60 years now. According to his analysis, when an international economic crisis is having an impact on every industrialized country in the world, it is not a bad idea for the government to invest heavily in its community, in its largest industries, in every industrial region of the country, to ensure that jobs are maintained and that there is some economic vitality despite the crisis.

For example, we Conservatives ran a few deficits in 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011 because the country was going through the worst economic crisis ever, the greatest recession since the 1930s.

Our reaction was responsible. Why? First, because there was a major global recession. Second, because even though we were a Conservative government, we embraced Keynesianism because we felt it made good economic sense. Through our strategic reinvestment plan, we managed to maintain 200,000 jobs. Not only did we maintain jobs across Canada, but we also repaired infrastructure, bridges and overpasses.

Two years ago, when I was a member of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, I read a report that noted this was the first time an economic recovery and stimulus plan had been implemented so quickly. In three or four years, we invested

\$80 billion in infrastructure to help Canada weather some rough economic times.

The first surprise from the Liberals was that they ran up massive deficits of \$20 billion this year, \$20 billion last year, and \$30 billion in 2015-16, even though there is no major crisis or war going on.

There is a second surprising thing. Let us go back to the time when lords were waging wars against the king of England, which is in the 13th century. In 1215, the *Magna Carta* resulted from several confrontations between the lords, the capitalist bourgeoisie and the aristocracy, all pleading for their interests with the king. The idea was to create an assembly where they could present their admonitions and complaints to the king and could limit the outrageous sums the king wanted to spend on the holy crusades. That is when our parliamentary system was born.

When I was first elected to the House of Commons, I learned Parliament's primary function. My university professors knew I liked philosophy, but they said I would soon come to realize that, in the House of Commons, discussions are about money, the economy, the country's economic situation and public finances. I learned that, in the House of Commons, debates are almost entirely about public finances.

• (1605)

That is as it should be, since the philosophical and political foundations of the British parliamentary system are accountability and the principle of responsible government allowing citizens to know what their money is used for. In those days, it was the capitalist bourgeoisie who wanted to know, whereas nowadays all citizens expect it. Nevertheless, the process and the principle remain the same. We want to know what happens with our money. Why are there deficits, if any, and most importantly when is the government going to balance the budget? Deficits involve our money, and it is commendable and reasonable to know when the budget will be balanced.

My colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert was just saying how absurd this is. What would a government MP do if an ordinary Canadian asked him to simply tell him when his party would balance the budget? For three years, members of Parliament have not really been allowed to answer such a question, yet it is quite a normal question. They have to come up with foolish answers, think about something else or say that everything is fine because they have been cutting taxes, when in fact each citizen in Beauport—Limoilou pays \$800 more every year in income tax.

That amounts to almost \$2,000 per family, not to mention the tax credits they axed, the oil that is not being shipped out of the country, all the cuts in exports to the U.S., all the U.S. investment in Canada that has been lost while Canadian investment in the U.S. has increased, not to mention the fact that household debt is at an all-time high. The OECD remarked on this recently. In short, I could go on for a long time without even talking about the USMCA.

Business of Supply

Nonetheless, there are some surprising things. What is incredible, and I repeat this every time I give a speech about Canada's economy, is that, in 2015, the Liberals were smart enough and had enough honour to explain why they were running a deficit even though we were not at war or in an economic crisis. At the time, the member for Papineau, under a gigantic crane in Toronto—I remember watching on television from my campaign office in Beauport—Limoilou and that it was partly cloudy and it rained a little—announced to Canadians that the Liberals would run a deficit of \$10 billion in the first two years and then a deficit of \$6 billion in the third year. He promised a deficit. Everyone was surprised that he was promising a deficit. It was a first.

He added that the Liberals would run a deficit in order to invest in infrastructure, which, he said, had been abandoned, and to invest more in infrastructure in general across the country. At least he was consistent in his comments once he was elected. He announced that they were creating a historic infrastructure plan—everything is always historic with them—worth \$187 billion, which is not bad either. That was a continuation of what we had done. We had invested \$80 billion over the course of the six previous years. It is only natural to continue to invest in infrastructure in Canada. Some even claim that Canada exists thanks to the railroad. Infrastructure has always been foundational here in Canada.

However, the Parliamentary Budget Officer—which, I repeat every time, as we must not forget, is an institution created by Mr. Harper, a great democrat who wanted there to be an independent body in Parliament to constantly hold the government to account— informed us in a report that, of the \$187 billion invested in infrastructure, only \$9 billion has actually been spent over the past three years. If I am not mistaken, \$9 billion divided by three is \$3 billion. The Liberals have invested \$3 billion a year in infrastructure, and yet, they ran a \$30-billion deficit in the first year.

Let us not forget that the \$10-billion deficit was supposed to be for infrastructure. However, in their first year in office, the Liberals ran a \$30-billion deficit and only \$3 billion of that went to infrastructure. The second year, they ran a \$20-billion deficit with only \$3 billion for infrastructure, and they did the same again this year. Obviously, we have never seen a government put so much energy into spending so much money in such a reckless and dishonourable way while achieving so little for the economic well-being of the country and Canadians at home.

In closing, setting a deadline for paying off debt is something that Canadian families do at home all the time, for example when paying off their mortgages or their car loans. When people borrow money for a car, the dealer does not just say, “Have a good day, sir. See you around.” He tells them that they need to take out a bank loan and that they have four years to pay it back. There is a deadline for all sorts of things like that.

When will a balanced budget be achieved?

• (1610)

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. He was kind of all over the place, and even though I always appreciate the historical information he shares with us, today he was back in the 13th century, and I was trying to understand the connection to the budget.

I would like my colleague to explain something to me. The Conservative Party does not seem to understand the difference between spending and investing. There is a huge difference.

My colleague said that investments are only made in times of crisis or war. If Canadian businesses followed that rule, they would all go bankrupt. They do not invest because of a crisis. They invest because they have a vision; they have plans. They invest to create conditions conducive to generating more revenue.

That is exactly what our government is doing. We are investing in several different ways. The unemployment rate has dropped from 7.1% to 5.7%, and 700,000 jobs have been created. We also reduced corporate taxes. We have created the right conditions for generating revenue and reducing deficits. These are investments, not deficits.

• (1615)

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member completely misconstrued what I said. I was not talking about investments. These are deficits.

SMEs at the heart of job creation in my riding, Beauport—Limoilou, do not borrow money to invest in their projects, they use their profits for that. It is important to reinvest budgetary surpluses. In 2015, we left \$3 billion to the Liberals when they came to power and they spent it all in just a few months.

If investment is truly what the government is after, then why did the Liberals say that they would run a \$10-billion infrastructure deficit? Why are the deficits not being used to invest in infrastructure, as the Liberals claimed they wanted to do in 2015? It is because the Liberals' deficits are not being used to improve infrastructure or Canadians' lives. They are being used to please the lobby groups that have always supported the Liberals.

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague. I think that the debate is enriched when members make historic references in their speeches. He is always saying hello to his constituents, which I find very amusing, but he is right. I also want to say hello to the people of Longueuil—Saint-Hubert. We are here in Parliament to represent them, to debate and to talk about various topics, and people can watch us on TV. I thank my colleague for making meaningful speeches and reminding us why we are here and why we have these conversations.

Sure, I understand when my Liberal colleague says that these deficits are being used to make investments. I agree, but an investment involves a loan, a payment and a term.

Business of Supply

Does my Conservative colleague think that if we were two or three years out from an election, instead of one year out, the Liberals would be more forthcoming about the date? Is it not precisely because an election is coming up that the Liberals are willing to say just about anything in order to make Canadians more cynical?

The Liberals carry a heavy burden because they created very high expectations. There have been many disappointments, and they cannot even tell us when the budget will be balanced.

Does my colleague think that, if we were not one year out from the election, the government would be more transparent about when it expects to return to a balanced budget?

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I wish I could say the government could be more transparent, but that would surprise me. There is a lot of back and forth between the Liberals and the Office of the Ethics Commissioner. Transparency is not this government's strong suit.

My colleague talked about investments, but why is the army underfunded? According to another recently released report, the Canadian Forces had a \$2-billion shortfall last year alone.

Also, why is the government not doing anything to reduce delays associated with the national shipbuilding strategy? The price tag for the 15 Iroquois-class frigates that are scheduled to be built in Halifax has gone up from \$30 billion to \$60 billion.

When will the Liberals give us the date the budget will be balanced? That is a simple question, and it boils down to being accountable to Parliament.

[English]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, never has a government spent so much to achieve so little.

It is unfortunate that I rise today to speak to the recklessness of the Liberal government, the spending, the wasting and the deceit. We are looking to end that today.

Canadians have been waiting for the government to tell us when it will balance the budget. I will echo what my colleagues said in saying that in 42 days, if the Liberals are telling the truth, or were to tell the truth, we will be in a balanced budget in this country.

Canada's Conservatives have been asking very clearly when the budget will be balanced. We have asked that question not just today, but over 400 times throughout the course of successive committees throughout the House of Commons and during question period.

It is not the most difficult question in the world. It is a simple one. For the sake of Canadians, for the sake of seniors, for the sake of young people in this country, when exactly will the budget be balanced? The government for some reason seems to feel that answering these types of questions is like climbing Mount Everest.

We have heard from Finance Canada that it could take up to 2045 to see the budget balanced again and that the debt servicing cost will be \$40 billion by 2023. Think about that: \$40 billion just in debt servicing costs alone. Who makes that money? Bondholders, debt holders, those people with money who lend money to the government make that money.

This is the scariest aspect of not answering this question: my 14-year-old son will be 40 years old by the time the budget is balanced according to Finance Canada. Imagine the burden that will be placed on him and every other single young person in this country. Twenty-five years of deficits will be on him, his family and his grandchildren. How difficult will that make it for him to buy a family home, to buy a new car, to save for retirement or even put a few dollars away for his child's education? It is alarming.

All we want to know is whether Finance Canada is wrong. Will the budget be balanced by 2045?

I would like to think that the Liberals will stand up and do the right thing and balance the budget but it is hard when the finance minister cannot even say the words "balanced budget". Is it because he does not want to be backed into a corner? Are those words not in his talking points? Or is it because he is riddled with guilt over what he and his government are doing to this country and to my children and tomorrow's Canadians? I would be willing to say that it is very likely all of the above.

We also see billions of Canadians' hard-earned tax dollars being given overseas. A November 8 article in *The Globe and Mail* said that "aid money [in Afghanistan] has gone to build medical clinics without electricity or water, schools without children and buildings that literally melted away in the rain. Also, corrupt local officials who were in charge of paying workers with some of the funds created what the audits called 'ghost workers,' civilian bureaucrats, police and soldiers who did not exist, then kept or diverted money recorded as being paid to them." Where is the accountability in that? That is hard-earned taxpayer dollars.

Another example of our money setting sail overseas is the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. By bringing Canada into the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Liberals plan to send hundreds of millions of Canadian taxpayers' dollars to foreign billionaires with no control over how that money will be spent or whether Canadian companies will benefit at all.

When will the budget be balanced?

When the previous Conservative government could not ensure that this money would be spent in the right way, or that the bank would follow environmental, social and human rights standards, we joined the U.S. and Japan and said no. The previous government was not willing to gamble the hard-earned money of Canadians in Asia in this way. Maybe the Prime Minister should take Kenny Rogers' advice and that is to know when to hold them and know when to fold them in this case.

We can also look at the proposed Canada infrastructure bank. Who pays when a project goes south? It is not going to be the investors who are taking the risk. Hard-working Canadians are going to act as a backstop to anything that may go south.

Business of Supply

I have received many letters from businesses around my riding of Barrie-Innisfil and one thing was clear: small businesses in my riding are feeling taken by the Liberal government. The government sees small business simply as a tax grab to pay for three years of out-of-control spending.

• (1620)

The government has spoken about all of the programs that it has instituted, structural deficit programs. Over the course of the last week, when I was back in my riding, I spoke to seniors, families and students who are feeling none of the positive impacts that the government says those structurally deficit programs are supposed to do.

These businesses have been hit. Many businesses have been hit and will be hit with the Liberal job-killing carbon tax, increased CPP and EI premiums, increased personal income tax rates for entrepreneurs, and changes to the small business tax rate that will disqualify thousands of local businesses.

Can the House see what I am getting at? For three years, the government has squandered, entered into bad deals and just plain messed up managing Canadians' money. It has failed at every aspect of that. Now, the Liberals have to go after entrepreneurs to make up the lost fiscal ground. How shameful is that?

Most of my hon. colleagues would agree that as parliamentarians, we must be honest. We must be accountable with Canadian taxpayers. With all that the government has done wrong and all of the cover-ups, it should at least do one thing right, not tell us where, what, why or how, we will worry about that later, but when.

When will the budget be balanced? I am sure that the hon. Minister of Finance will be more than happy to answer this question, so that we get off his back about it and he can get back to the work of balancing the budget in just 42 days. I take us back to that time that the Prime Minister, again, during the last campaign, said that the budget would be balanced by 2019.

Now we are hearing that it will not happen until 2045. Why? When will the budget be balanced?

As I stand here today, and I urge all members on all sides to stand with us and the almost 37 million Canadians and demand that the government say when it plans to balance the budget. As many of my hon. colleagues have said, only so much can be charged on a credit card before the limit is hit and it has to be paid back. Let us not hit that limit. Let us stop here, before our grandchildren are hit with the interest and over-limit fees.

For those of us who have lived in Ontario, we have seen the impact and the effect of structural deficits over the course of the last 15 years of the Wynne-McGuinty government. In fact, the third-highest department, if it was to be measured as a department, would be the amount of debt that Ontario residents have to pay in order to serve the debt, the largest sub-sovereign national indebted nation in the world.

Today's debt and deficits equal tomorrow's tax increases or service cuts. We cannot do that to our children. Yes, we can make investments, but those investments have to be measured and they have to be calculated against at the cost to our children and to future

generations. That is why, today, we are spending the day asking a simple question, a question that has been asked hundreds of times. When will the budget be balanced?

As we head into Wednesday's economic statement, I do not think it is unfair of Canadians, through their parliamentarians, to be asking the government to ask the finance minister that very simple question. As I will remind everyone, when the Prime Minister campaigned in 2015, he campaigned on small deficits, he admitted that, and he also said that we would return to a balanced budget in 2019.

We are asking the government to tell Canadians, to be honest with them, to be forthright with them. We are asking the finance minister and the Prime Minister: when will the budget be balanced? It is a simple question that we expect an answer to.

• (1625)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Barrie—Innisfil wants to talk about facts. Let us talk about facts.

The fact is that over the last 150 years, the Conservative Party has been governing Canada for 38% of the time, yet it has racked up 73% of the budget. This is a fact. It has nothing to do with circumstances, as Conservatives would like us to believe, but everything to do with Conservative Party policy.

Talking about the last 19 budgets that the Conservative Party introduced, 16 of them were deficits, and the three remaining ones where Conservatives actually ran a surplus, two of them came right after Martin left them with a \$13-billion surplus, and the other one came in 2015. We have already talked at length about what they had to do in order to get that, just three years ago.

Based on the facts that I have put before the member right now, and the fact that the Conservative Party has absolutely no credibility in balancing budgets, where do the Conservative Party and this member get off trying to lecture this side of the House on balancing budgets?

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, it sounds very much like a question he should be asking himself, quite frankly.

Let us look at the history of deficits in this country and the fact that we came out of a recession. I will remind Canadians that it was during a minority government when a lot of demands were placed on it by the Liberal Party and the NDP to spend that money, but the one thing that was clear was the fact that finance minister Flaherty at the time had a plan to return to a balanced budget, and he did that in 2015.

Why is it that every time the Liberals make a mess, it is the Conservatives who have to clean it up?

• (1630)

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would echo the comments of my colleague from Kingston and the Islands. However, my question for the hon. member would be a little more specific.

Business of Supply

Conservatives stand up, gallivant around and talk about balanced budgets. The member for Kingston and the Islands outlined the lamentable record of the Conservative Party throughout history and in the recent past, racking up a considerable portion of our national debt during the Harper era. I guess they were going to get to balance during the fourth Harper mandate. Since they are calling for a balanced budget, I would ask the hon. member, since I know he has looked at this, to be very specific and detail precisely what things he and his party would have us cut in the near term. I would ask him to be very specific and tell us where the cuts should be made.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, I will again remind the hon. member that it is his government that is recklessly spending money on programs and services. I mentioned a couple of them in my speech. I mentioned the Asian infrastructure bank. Time dictated that I could not mention other things to cut, but there are lots of things the Liberal government is spending money on that I would not characterize as the priorities of Canadians. There is a lot of money going outside this country when Canadians are saying today that we need to take care of ourselves. Our seniors and our veterans are suffering. There are others more vulnerable in our society who are suffering as a result of what should be Canadian priorities but now are not the priorities of the Prime Minister or the Liberal government. These priorities are not their pet projects. Let us start looking after Canadians. They are the ones we need to start looking after and start prioritizing where money is going to be spent.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): 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 Nanaimo—Ladysmith, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship; the hon. member for Essex, International Trade.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Northumberland—Peterborough South.

Ms. Kim Rudd (Northumberland—Peterborough South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to participate in a discussion with hon. members about the government's fiscal management. I cannot blame the hon. members opposite for wanting to talk about how the government is strengthening the middle class and growing the economy by investing in people and communities.

Three years ago, Canadians made it clear that they did not want the budget balanced on the backs of hard-working Canadians, or at the expense of the poor and vulnerable. They have seen time and again all around the world, from country to country, what austerity brings. It brings poverty. It causes economies to shrink and collapse. It drives people to desperation and leads countries toward nationalism and upheaval. Canadians have seen this with their own eyes, and they do not want it. They chose a government that will invest to grow the middle class and to create new opportunities for Canadians to succeed, while keeping the deficit on a downward track. They want decisions based on facts and science. They want solutions that work, with a proven record of delivering positive results.

Our government has strengthened the middle class. We have provided real help for those who need it, and we have grown the economy with more good, well-paying jobs for Canadians. By investing in people and their communities we have created both hope

and opportunities for success. Hard-working Canadians are seizing these opportunities, building better lives for themselves and their families.

These results are not built on ideology. They are built on facts, and the facts are clear. Over the course of the past three years, Canadians have created over half a million full-time jobs. The unemployment rate is at a historic 40-year low and the share of working-age Canadians with jobs is at a historic, all-time high.

Our economy grew at the fastest pace among our G7 peers in 2017, and we are expected to remain among the leaders in growth this year and next year. Most importantly, the benefits of this economic growth are being widely shared among Canadians. Groups that have been under-represented in the labour force, such as young Canadians, new Canadians, women and indigenous people, are seizing the new opportunities we are creating, joining the workforce or improving their position in it, and contributing to a stronger, growing middle class.

We came into office determined to help hard-working Canadians have more opportunities to share in the benefits that come from a strong and growing economy, and that is exactly what we have done. We have taken decisive and effective action based on the shared values that define us as a country, and to make Canadian priorities a reality. We asked the wealthiest 1% of Canadians to pay a little more so that we could cut taxes for the middle class. This middle-class tax cut is benefiting over nine million Canadians.

We created the Canada child benefit, the CCB. Compared with the previous system of child benefits, the CCB is simpler, more generous, entirely tax free and better targeted to those families who need it most. With the CCB, nine out of 10 Canadian families are getting more in benefits than they did under the previous system, and Canadian children are better off as a result. The CCB has helped lift hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty. The extra support it gives makes a big difference to those working hard to make ends meet, including, for example, single working parents. This additional support from the CCB helps pay for things that can make a real difference in a child's future, like nutritious food, sports activities or piano lessons.

Thanks to the middle-class tax cut and the Canada child benefit, by this time next year a typical middle-class family of four will receive on average about \$2,000 more each year to help with the cost of raising their children, save for their future and help grow the economy for the benefit of everyone. For a single parent of two children, earning the average wage, or for families with two children where only one parent works at the average wage, the benefits are even more significant. According to the OECD, when the CCB and other benefits are added to family income, those families effectively pay personal tax rates of just 1.8% and 1.2% respectively. This means they keep more than 98% of what they earn. In this respect, I am proud to be able to say that Canada truly is a global outlier.

Business of Supply

● (1635)

We have gone even further, to ensure that the benefits of economic growth are widely shared. In our 2018 budget, we introduced the Canada workers benefit, or the CWB. The CWB will put more money in the pockets of low-income earners, encouraging more people to join and stay in the workforce and offering real help to more than two million Canadians who are working hard to join the middle class. The CWB will replace the working income tax benefit beginning in 2019, providing a benefit that is more generous and more accessible. To give a sense of what this will mean for Canadians, a low-income worker making \$15,000 a year could receive up to \$500 more from the Canada workers benefit in 2019 than he or she would have received under the old working income tax benefit in 2018. That money will be used to support their priorities to get ahead, making a real difference for Canadians who are working very hard to join the middle class.

With these investments in Canadians and a growing economy, we are proving what Canadians already know, that a country cannot cut its way to prosperity. A different approach, one that includes smart investments and fair choices, is what keeps us strong, united and, indeed, growing together.

That is especially the case when it comes to Canada's most vulnerable, including many who worked hard to build this country. Rather than balance the books on the backs of the vulnerable, we are supporting our most vulnerable, while bringing the books back toward balance. For Canada's most vulnerable seniors, we have increased the guaranteed income supplement top-up, providing greater income security for close to 900,000 seniors, 70% of whom are women, while helping to lift 57,000 vulnerable seniors out of poverty.

We have also introduced Canada's first-ever national housing strategy. This 10-year, \$40 billion plan will give more Canadians a safe and affordable place to call home, lifting 530,000 households out of housing need and reducing chronic homelessness by 50%.

Investments in infrastructure, including public transit, roads and bridges and ports that support trade, water and waste-water facilities, cultural and recreational infrastructure and affordable housing, are helping to improve the quality of life of people across our country while setting the stage for sustained economic growth over the long term.

In addition, support for Canadian scientists, researchers and innovators; and new trade agreements, including the United States-Mexico-Canada agreement, the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement with the European Union, and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership will mean even greater economic opportunities for Canadians in the years ahead.

Canadians deserve to feel confident that their hard work harnessing these opportunities will be rewarded with a fair chance at success. That is why we are improving the tax system to deliver on this promise. Our government has taken action to support hard-working small business owners by reducing the small business tax rate to 10%, effective January 1, 2018; and to 9%, effective January 1, 2019. Starting next year, the combined federal-provincial-territorial average income tax on small business will be 12.2%, the

lowest in the G7 and the fourth-lowest among members of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD. For small businesses, our actions mean up to \$7,500 in federal tax savings per year. For the average small business, this means an additional \$1,600 per year to reinvest in new equipment, growth and job creation.

Small business is a key driver of Canada's economy, accounting for 70% of all private sector jobs. The small business tax reductions introduced by our government will support jobs and growth in small businesses and create new opportunities in communities right across this country. We are taking action to ensure that all Canadians benefit from the opportunities we are creating and continue to benefit from our actions in their retirement years.

● (1640)

We have worked in collaboration with our provincial and territorial partners to enhance the Canada pension plan so Canadians can enjoy a secure and dignified retirement.

The CPP enhancement will be phased in starting January 2019. It means more money for Canadians when they retire so they can worry less about their savings and focus more on enjoying their time with their families. Over time, this enhancement will raise the maximum CPP retirement benefit by up to 50%. This translates into an increase in the current maximum retirement benefit of more than \$7,000, from just over \$13,600 to nearly \$21,000 in today's dollar terms.

With the action taken by Quebec to enhance the Quebec pension plan along similar lines, all Canadian workers can now look forward to a safer and more secure retirement.

We have accomplished all of this, creating jobs and economic growth, investing in new opportunities and the future and supporting our most vulnerable, while carefully managing deficits. We are being fully responsible in safeguarding the advantages that Canada enjoys as a result of this approach to financial management.

Canada's strong fiscal position has allowed our government to respond to international developments while keeping the debt-to-GDP ratio on a downward track and protecting the long-term fiscal sustainability of Canada's economy.

As hon members will know, in just two days' time, the government will present comprehensive and up-to-date details on the federal fiscal outlook in the fall economic statement. As we head into Wednesday's update, I would like to thank the hon. member for the opportunity to remind the House of the government's accomplishments and the importance of fiscal management and an economy that works for all Canadians.

● (1645)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her remarks.

Business of Supply

I certainly understand her wanting to share an update about her and her government's vision for the Canadian economy and the management of public funds, but the facts are the facts. A little over three years ago, the governing party promised Canadians it would run small deficits of \$10 billion, \$10 billion and \$6 billion before balancing the budget in 2019. Now 2019 is just 40 days away, and it is painfully obvious there will be no balanced budget.

I have one very simple question for my colleague. How can she possibly stand before her constituents after breaking her election promise?

[*English*]

Ms. Kim Rudd: Mr. Speaker, as I rose in the House today to deliver this speech, I was thinking back to last week in my constituency of Northumberland—Peterborough South. As I did my four Santa Claus parades and participated in remembrance activities, as I am sure many of us did, I was able to talk to people about what was important to them.

What is important to them is a just society. What is important to them is a growing economy. What is important to them is ensuring that Canada is a leader on the world stage in the global economy. In my speech, I talked about the trade agreements that we negotiated and that were being implemented. We are the only country in the G7 that has trade agreements with every country in the G7. That is quite a feat.

One of the things Canadians want us to do is to ensure we have a complete and clear focus on ensuring that Canadians have every opportunity to succeed, that they are able to provide all of those opportunities for children and seniors, such as health care, income and all of those aspects of life. We want to see every Canadian able to access those.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over the years, the Conservatives lowered taxes for large corporations from 22% to 15%, which cost the government \$12 billion.

I would like the member to tell me whether we can expect more corporate tax cuts in Wednesday's economic update. I have some news for the Liberals. That is not the way to balance the budget, if that is their goal.

[*English*]

Ms. Kim Rudd: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague mentioned tax cuts. As an MP who gets to talk to folks in my riding all the time, whether it is municipal or business leaders, and being a small business owner myself, I know no one wants a race to the bottom.

I come from the province of Ontario and lived through a former Conservative premier by the name of Mike Harris, who did all sorts of things with tax cuts. He did them on the backs of the most vulnerable, on the backs of teachers, health care workers and child care workers. I see a lot of those same elements in the current Conservative provincial government in Ontario, which seem to be echoed by the members across the way. It is certainly not something I want to see.

I look forward to hearing more on Wednesday, about what is in the economic update, knowing that all the work we are doing is to

benefit all Canadians and to ensure everyone has an opportunity to succeed.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I listened to my friend talk about the economy, it really made me think about the conversations I have had with people in my community about what is important to them and also what their concerns were going into 2015 when I decided to run and take my seat in this place.

We are talking about tax cuts. In fact, there have been tax cuts for families and the middle class across our country. Perhaps the member could talk about what she has seen in her community as far as advantages. How are families doing now with the investments our government has made in order to help build our communities and create supportive communities that are inclusive?

• (1650)

Ms. Kim Rudd: Mr. Speaker, we talked about tax cuts. As I mentioned, we asked the wealthiest 1% to pay a little more so we could provide a tax cut for the middle class.

One of the other things I talked about was the Canada child benefit. As an example, my riding of Northumberland—Peterborough South brings in \$5 million a month to help families. That money is being spent in the riding, so it is helping grow the economy as well. It is giving parents more opportunities to sometimes live in better housing, or buy new snowsuits for their children, or maybe even get them skating lessons or playing a sport. It is life-changing for so many families in my riding.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke about a just society. To me, this cuts to the heart of the question about budgeting. It is the issue of intergenerational justice.

The member talks at great lengths about the things the Liberals are spending on today. My five-year-old daughter is here with me on the Hill today. I do not think it is right for me to tell her that she, in her working life, has to work harder and pay more taxes so I can enjoy the things I enjoy today. That is a question of intergenerational justice, of fundamental fairness to the next generation.

Does the member agree that a just society is one that does not leave the next generation to pay for the overspending of the present generation or does she think it is just to do as her government is doing, which is passing that credit card bill along to my daughter?

Ms. Kim Rudd: Mr. Speaker, I guess it is the glass half full, glass half empty. The increase coming to the Canada pension plan will give the member's daughter 50% more in Canada pension when she is ready to retire. That is the legacy going forward and that is intergenerational. As well, it is about taking care of the seniors we have by providing things like the increase in the guaranteed income supplement to help the most vulnerable seniors while planning for the future. They are both my children and my grandchildren.

Business of Supply

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, whenever a government talks about how well the economy is doing on average, it reminds me of that saying that when Jeff Bezos walks into a bar, everybody is a millionaire on average.

The truth is that if we go into communities across the country, working people, seniors, single-parent families and children are living in poverty and struggling to get by. While the government tends to boast about how well the economy is doing, quite honestly it is only a very small percentage of Canadians at the top who are doing well. In fact, the majority of Canadians are struggling, including those in the working class and lower middle class who are living paycheque to paycheque and are carrying untenable amounts of debt.

What does my hon. colleague have to say to those Canadians who cannot afford to buy a house, or are struggling with astronomical rent or living paycheque to paycheque? What can her government offer them? How is the government's economic performance really translating into their lives?

Ms. Kim Rudd: Mr. Speaker, we have taken a number of measures that respond to that question.

I will go back to the Canada child benefit. Again, that is providing \$2,000 approximately to every family eligible to receive it.

It is also about the Canada workers benefit for those workers making low wages, assisting them with moving forward and giving them a little extra to help them.

As well, there is the guaranteed income supplement for seniors. It really is about helping vulnerable seniors, 70% of whom are women and are single seniors. It will help them have a better quality of life in their retirement.

• (1655)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I begin my speech, I would like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with my excellent colleague from Souris—Moose Mountain. It is interesting that his riding name contains both French and English. I think that this is a very important debate. As a member of the Association parlementaire de la Francophonie, the French fact is very important to me and to the Conservatives.

Today's opposition motion is very simple. There is nothing complicated about it. We simply want to know what is really going on. We want to know where we are going. I think that any self-respecting government needs to know where it is going. The motion is simple, but I want to make sure that it is clear for all parliamentarians, so I am going to read it. It says, and I quote:

That the House call on the government to tell Canadians in what year the budget will be balanced, and to do so in this week's Fall Economic Statement.

I have been told that the government will likely present its fall economic statement on Wednesday of this week. I hope that the Minister of Finance is ready. I hope that he has worked hard to answer this question, which is vital for a good manager. I hope that he was professional when he was in the private sector and that he will continue to be professional in his role as finance minister.

The Prime Minister inherited a balanced budget. Say what you want, but that is not fake news. It is a reality. Every expert confirms it. It is not partisanship. It is a fact. In 2015, there was an election and when the Conservative Party left the government, it left some money on the books. The U.S. economy and the global economy were growing and the real estate market was booming. Those are facts. I said so at the time: the real estate market was booming in Toronto and Vancouver and interest rates were very low, a record low. Last year, there was a \$20-billion deficit. In 2017-18 alone, the government ran a \$20-billion deficit. We do not get the impression that the current government has any fiscal restraint. It has decisions to make, plans to make, programs to implement, inputs and outputs to manage, revenues and expenditures to manage, but we get no sense that the government has any fiscal restraint. The Liberals have no plan.

There was an extraordinary increase in revenues due to the economic situation: we had a surplus of \$20 billion last year. Instead of paying down the debt, the Liberals spent that money, but we do not know on what. The Liberals prefer to waste money. As the member for Papineau has never had to worry about money, he is not really concerned about Canadians' money. I would like to inform the government and its leader, the Prime Minister, that Canadian workers' money does not belong to them. They have a responsibility.

Before he was elected in 2015, the member for Papineau, who is our Prime Minister today, said that budgets balance themselves. Wow. That really says a lot about what the future holds for the manager of public funds. In the 2015 campaign, he promised a slight deficit, which happens from time to time. It has happened in the past. In certain circumstances, there may be temporary deficits. The Prime Minister and the Liberals campaigned across Canada in 2015 and said that they would run small deficits and then balance the budget by 2019. The reason for today's motion is that there is every indication that this will happen after 2035. Some even say that it will not happen until 2045. That is really reassuring. Is that responsible? I think not.

As I mentioned, Canada has a deficit of nearly \$20 billion this year, three times what the Prime Minister had promised during the campaign. The debt has increased by \$60 billion in three years. We will not engage in partisan politics. The Department of Finance Canada is not Conservative, Liberal or affiliated with any party of the House. I hope we can trust our public servants.

• (1700)

The Department of Finance Canada is predicting another 25 years of deficits if the Liberal Party of Canada, the party that currently forms government, is left in charge.

If we, as a good father, good mother or a family's financial manager, acted that way, it would not take 25 years to have to declare bankruptcy.

It is important to be responsible, which is why we, the Conservatives, are asking when Canada will return to a balanced budget.

Business of Supply

Under the Liberals, the future will bring a higher cost of living and tax increases for all Canadians. It is simple math. If the government continues to spend and spend, it will eventually have to meet with specialists and have a recovery plan. In a recovery process, either drastic cuts or increased revenues are needed.

How does the government increase revenues? Quite simply, it raises taxes and income tax. It is not complicated. I am not inventing anything and I make no claims of being any kind of tax expert. This is just common sense.

My personal and family budgets are balanced, and there have been surpluses for many years. For over 30 years, I have been waking up every morning to go to work. I am very proud of that, and I am trying to instill that work ethic in my children. I think that we need to lead by example. I am not sure that the Prime Minister is currently leading by example. At any rate, the example he is setting is not a very good. Normalizing the use of marijuana is not setting a good example either, but that is another issue.

The Liberals are going to spend more paying down interest on the debt than we are currently spending on health transfers. Is that reasonable? The answer is no.

According to the Department of Finance, the budget will not be balanced until 2045. The debt has gone up by \$450 billion. More debt today means more taxes tomorrow. That is how it works. Last year, Canada's debt hit a record high. This government will go down in history for racking up the highest debt in Canada at \$670 billion. That is the equivalent of \$47,612 per family.

I do not have much time, but this is the first time that I have had so much material for a speech. I have a giant pile of material. I will try to cover as much of it as I can.

I would like to get back to the government's broken promises. It promised \$25 million for Telefilm Canada and the National Film Board. It promised to run a short-term deficit of \$10 billion, balance the budget in 2019, and provide costing analysis for every bill. It said that cutting taxes for the middle class and creating a new 33% tax bracket in 2016 would have no fiscal impact. It promised to reduce the debt-to-GDP ratio to 31% in 2015-16, 30% in 2016-17 and 29% in 2017-18. Other things it promised to do right away were to invest \$3 billion over four years to improve home care, eliminate the \$1,000 labour market impact assessment fee to make it easier and more affordable to hire live-in caregivers, and set a cap on how much can be claimed through the stock option deduction on annual stock option gains higher than \$100,000. I hope that is clear.

It promised a 12-month break on EI premiums to encourage businesses to hire young people by waiving employer EI premiums for all those between the ages of 18 and 24 who were hired into permanent positions in 2016, 2017 and 2018. It promised to invest an additional \$100 million each year in the industrial research assistance program and an additional \$6 billion in infrastructure, as well as an additional \$775 million per year in worker training.

It promised to remove the GST on new capital investments in affordable rental housing, invest \$300 million more in the youth employment strategy in order to create 40,000 jobs, including 5,000 green jobs, each year for three years, and invest \$40 million each year to help employers create new opportunities.

It promised to phase out subsidies for the fossil fuel industry, re-evaluate the expansion of Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline project—it did not say it would invest \$4.5 billion—review the previous government's repeal of the Navigable Waters Protection Act, and require all parliamentarians to disclose their expenses in a common manner each quarter.

I am out of time, so I would be happy to answer any questions my colleagues may have.

● (1705)

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his passionate speech. We are definitely going to need a history lesson to set the record straight.

My colleague said that the Conservatives left us a balanced budget, but that is not at all the case. It was an artificially balanced budget because they sold GM shares just before the election to inflate revenues. It is important to mention that. They also fired thousands of employees who had been working on the Phoenix system, which caused and continues to cause enormous problems. They also cut veterans services, mainly by closing offices.

The important thing here is the difference between investing and spending money. Our government is investing. We are not spending money, we are investing in Canadians.

The unemployment rate has dropped from 7.2% to 5.7%. That is a big difference. There are also 700,000 more jobs in Canada than there were when the Conservatives were in power. That is because of our investments, which generate profits and revenues. That is what we are doing.

I really appreciate my colleague's argument about an artificially balanced budget.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, but I did not understand the question.

I will simply tell him that we took draconian measures in a draconian global economic context. There was an economic crisis in 2008, and we were the first G7 country to emerge from it. We made tough choices. Indeed, we did not govern the country to get ourselves re-elected. We governed the country responsibly, and we got results.

Today, the Liberals are living with the consequences of the tough, dramatic decisions that Canadians experienced under our government. Making those decisions was the right thing to do. I am proud of that. However, I will not give the party across the way any credit because they were not the ones who put job-creating measures in place.

Business of Supply

I would simply say to my dear hon. colleague that if I had a budget to manage, I would not trust his colleagues at the Department of Finance or the Prime Minister of Canada with my money.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if he had a budget to manage, I wonder if my colleague would even want to achieve a balanced budget. If so, would he follow in the former Conservative government's footsteps and cut essential services for veterans?

The Conservatives and Liberals allocated money for veterans, but not only did they both make cuts to veterans' budgets, they did not spend the money that was allocated.

Is that what a Conservative government would do to balance a budget? That is what we are seeing now.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Hochelaga.

It would be irresponsible of me to answer her question, since we are not in government. We made tough decisions because of the fiscal climate at the time. Now, the money is flowing and our economic situation is quite comfortable, but the government just spends, spends, spends. It even claimed that now was the time to borrow because interest rates are low. The government forgot to mention that although interest rates are low, they eventually rise. Trends indicate that this will likely happen soon.

It would be irresponsible of me to answer my colleague's question, but if tough choices need to be made in the interests of Canadians, the Conservatives will make the right decisions.

• (1710)

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to speak to this important motion we are debating. This motion calls on the government to tell Canadians in what year the budget will be balanced and to do so in this week's fall economic statement. This is a question many Canadians would like an answer to, yet the Liberals have refused to provide this information time and time again.

During the campaign for the 2015 election, the Liberals made a lot of promises. One of the major promises was that they would run a deficit of \$10 billion per year for three years, assuring Canadians that the budget would be back to balance by 2019. However, this year's budget projection is that the deficit will be \$18.1 billion for 2018-19 alone.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has stated that the budget will not be balanced until 2045 the way we are going, and the Liberals still refuse to provide us with their projected date for when a balanced budget might occur.

To be frank, the fiscal mismanagement that has occurred under the government is astounding. Although we are here today to talk about a balanced budget, there are so many other areas of failure we could discuss, but that is for another day.

The Liberals can point a finger at whoever they like, but as my kids say, in doing so, three fingers will be pointing back at them. The fact of the matter is that they inherited a great fortune when they came into power. They came into a balanced budget, a booming U.S.

and global economy, outstanding housing markets in Toronto and Vancouver, and record low interest rates. They were set up to succeed, in large part due to the work of the previous government. Instead of taking this great inheritance and building upon it, the Liberals took the \$20-billion windfall of extra revenue and squandered every nickel.

I often wonder if perhaps the Prime Minister is so out of touch with the way regular Canadians live that he simply cannot see the issue. The majority of people in this country do not grow up in a wealthy, high-profile family that rarely needs to bat an eye when it comes to spending money. They understand the need to be fiscally responsible, and they work hard to ensure that they can pay their bills. They do not count on anyone else to pay their expenses. It seems that because the Prime Minister has never had to worry about money, he does not worry much about recklessly spending Canadians' money and about a plan to get back to balanced budgets. I believe it was Margaret Thatcher who said, "the problem with socialism is that eventually you run out of other people's money."

Instead of keeping their money for groceries, gas and other family essentials, Canadians will be paying more to bankers and bondholders to fund the growing interest on the Liberals' spiralling debt, with no light at the end of the tunnel. Interest on the national debt is expected to grow to \$37 billion per year, an increase of two-thirds from what it was. This money could fund the building of hospitals, schools and more around the country. It appears that yet again, the Liberals are foisting the cost of their irresponsible financial planning on the backs of all taxpayers. When will they realize that their job is to stand up for the little guy, not saddle him with ever-growing debt?

Interest rates are rising, and consumer debt, including mortgages, is climbing rapidly, reaching \$1.864 trillion, yes trillion, creating a growing concern about delinquency rates.

I know that my constituents simply do not buy that these Liberals will balance the budget. I was recently speaking to a friend of mine, Maureen, in my riding. Maureen has been working in the Canadian banking sector for over 30 years. She has seen governments come and go, and she knows the ins and outs of her industry. When speaking to her about the current deficit and the notion of when the budget will come back to balance, she said, "They will never do it in my lifetime."

The reality is that at this rate, not only will the budget not be balanced in Maureen's lifetime, her children and her grandchildren will still be paying it off long after this government has left office. That is the legacy the Prime Minister will leave: attempting to balance the budget on the backs of hard-working Canadians and spending recklessly while breaking promise after promise at the same time. If and when this budget gets balanced, it will be in spite of this government, not because of it.

Business of Supply

As I said, the people in my riding know that nearly all promises made by the government are a farce. They know that a Prime Minister who regularly says one thing and does another cannot be trusted. How can they, or any Canadian, believe that a government that spends taxpayer dollars so recklessly is actually able to balance a budget, especially since it has clearly gone back on the promise made in 2015?

• (1715)

The deficit this year is now closing in on \$20 billion, more than three times what was initially promised, yet there is very little to show for it in my constituency. In fact, the Liberals have made life significantly more expensive for the people of Souris—Moose Mountain. They attack farmers and other small business owners with their changes to tax rules that would have serious repercussions for businesses and their ability to succeed.

They failed to champion a pipeline that would have provided much-needed jobs in some of our communities. They are shutting down the coal industry with barely any consideration for the thousands of people, including workers, families and businesses, who will be affected by it.

The Liberals are also hurting my constituents with their job-killing carbon tax that is proving less and less effective by the day. After realizing that Canadians, namely those in Saskatchewan, Ontario, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, rejected the tax, the Liberals went back on their word and ended up giving allowances.

I have said it before and I will say it again: the role of government is to help its citizens, not hurt them. In health care, we say “do no harm”. Since the Liberals took office, the average Canadian middle-class family has paid over \$800 more in income tax. That figure does not include the Liberals' new payroll taxes, which affect both employees and employers, or the carbon tax, which will have serious effects in my constituency in particular.

That means that the worst is yet to come, and even more money will be taken out of the pockets of hard-working Canadians and put into government coffers. All of this, combined with the lack of an action plan for the future and uncertainty about getting the budget back to balance, does not foster a positive and trusting relationship between the government and the people who elected it. To make plans for the future, we need to know when exactly the budget will return to balance.

I understand that in some situations, running a deficit is necessary. In 2009, the GDP growth rate was negative 2.9%. There was a global recession, and running a deficit was a necessary tool to help stimulate the economy in a time of need. Due to good planning, that deficit was gone, and we were back to balance by 2015.

Last year, GDP grew by 3%, a huge contrast to the economic climate in 2009. We have growth, so why does the Prime Minister continue to pile on debt, with no action plan for the future? Furthermore, what will happen if there is another downturn in the global economy? With the government's spend, spend, spend mentality, these are important questions that deserve answers.

In the oil field, there is a saying: When times are good, we only buy toys with cash, not with credit, because when it goes bad, and it will go bad, being too deep in credit will come back to haunt us.

Furthermore, in 2017, Canada's national debt reached an all time high of \$670 billion, averaging out to almost \$48,000 per Canadian family. Last year the Liberals had to spend \$23 billion just to pay interest on that debt, a figure the Parliamentary Budget Officer says will rise to \$40 billion by 2021. That is almost a 60% increase. That again means that the Liberals will be spending more on debt interest than we currently spend on health transfers. That is absolutely absurd.

There are so many better and more productive things this money could be used for, but instead, it goes towards servicing an ever-growing national debt. This is just one of the consequences of the Prime Minister's failures. Something needs to be done, and it is the Liberals who have the power to do it. Unfortunately, their track record is clear. They make big promises and fail to deliver, yet they expect Canadians to trust them. They spend recklessly, yet they expect taxpayers to be okay with the fact that at this rate, we will now have 25 more years of deficit.

It seems so simple to say that Canadians have a right to know when their government will stop running a deficit and get to balance. I sincerely hope that there is a plan in place. That is why Conservatives are calling on the government to announce, this week, the year in which the budget will finally be balanced. The government needs to do the right thing, stop spending so recklessly, and acknowledge that no, budgets do not balance themselves.

• (1720)

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member talked about having a plan in place. I will reiterate what our plan is and what it has done over the years.

Our plan has created over 600,000 jobs. We have the lowest unemployment in over 40 years. We have access now to 1.5 billion customers through CETA, the TPP and the United States trade agreements.

The member mentioned in his speech that the GDP in 2008 was 3%. Does he not believe that this is a good number with respect to growth? We have opened up our markets to 1.5 billion people, and our exports have jumped 12.3%, the biggest quarterly gain since 2014.

Does the hon. member not see that this plan is working?

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Mr. Speaker, in the past, the Conservative government created more than 50 free trade agreements. It is great to have more. We need that trade. I come from an exporting riding. We export our wheat, pulse crops, potash and energy. However, we are exporting our children. During the last 10 years the Conservatives were in power, we brought our children back to our riding. My riding is losing constituents at this point in time. These jobs are not happening in my riding. In fact, the present government is going to shut down the oil and gas industry. The Prime Minister said he wants to shut that industry down. He is shutting down coal. That is going to have a huge impact on my riding.

Business of Supply

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was fortunate enough to be in this House from 2008 until now. I well remember the recession that occurred in late 2008, one the Conservative Party, during the 2008 election, called a fiction. It actually denied that there was a recession coming, and of course, it was a very great recession that happened.

My question is about the subsequent behaviour of the Conservative Party. I understand, and our party supported, extraordinary spending in 2009 to prime the pump and get the economy going. A lot of that was one-time spending. Instead, the Conservatives took a number of what I think were irresponsible fiscal measures, including reducing revenues at that time, which put us into a structural deficit.

I have a simple question for my friend. Once the recession was dealt with, by about 2010-11, his party claimed that Canada was performing extremely well economically. Can the member tell us how much of the federal debt the Conservative Party paid down from 2008 to 2015? I will give him a hint. It was not one penny.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Mr. Speaker, I cannot speak for the previous government, because I was not part of it. I am a rookie MP. Therefore, I will not speak on its behalf. However, I can say that Minister Flaherty did balance the budget. He campaigned on the fact that he would balance the budget, and he did come up with that balanced budget.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary for finance said that this was really complex, basically thinking that we did not understand the financial part. Was it in 2015 that the Prime Minister promised many hundreds of times that he would balance the budget in 2019? Is it more complex now than it was in 2015 when he made that promise?

It is interesting how well the economy is doing. Investments in Canada by the U.S. are down 62%. Canada's investments in the U.S. are up 52%. The economy should be doing well, because the global economy is doing well. However, what is happening is that the Liberals are draining the pot dry. I would ask my colleague if it is irresponsibility or incompetence when the Liberals will not talk to us about when they can balance the budget.

• (1725)

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Mr. Speaker, my constituents plan their lives based on a balanced budget. Every year they set a budget for themselves and work around it. Why? It is because they know that with hard work, they will manage that budget. The current government has not put confidence in the marketplace, and those dollars are leaving this country. That is a big concern for my constituents and should be a big concern for all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Ferguson (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to participate in this debate. Before I begin, I want to say that I will be sharing my time with the member for Winnipeg North.

During the last federal election, Canadians had a choice between the plans for austerity and cuts proposed by the Conservatives and, sadly, the NDP, and our plan to invest in the middle class to build an economy that works for Canadians.

After a decade of the Harper Conservatives adding to the national debt with little to show for it, Canadians can see first-hand that our plan works. More and more Canadians are working, wages are going up, and consumer and business confidence is high. The fact is that middle-class families are better off today than they were under the Harper Conservatives. Our government is making it easier for them to make ends meet.

I would point out to members that, before our government took office, the Canadian economy was in a slowdown. At the end of 2015 and the beginning of 2016, a concatenation of national and international economic factors threatened to push Canada into another recession. Canadians did not have the same confidence in the future that they do now.

The previous government's disastrous cuts had all kinds of effects, including on official language minority communities.

The Conservatives scrapped the court challenges program. They slashed CBC/Radio-Canada's budget, which had a major impact on regional coverage, including in francophone communities.

They got rid of the long-form census, which provided the kind of accurate information that is so important to official language minority communities. They never adjusted core funding for official language community organizations.

We, in contrast, are bringing back the court challenges program. We have invested in CBC/Radio-Canada. We are bringing back the long-form census, and we have increased core funding for official language community organizations by 20%. Those are just a few examples, but they illustrate why the government took immediate and decisive steps to address growth issues and Canadians' concerns by doing what had to be done: investing in Canada's middle class, in communities and in the future of Canada.

With our first budget in 2016, the government tackled the challenges facing Canadians and the Canadian economy head on. We focused our efforts on a few key principles meant to strengthen the middle class and the Canadian economy.

In addition, we took advantage of historically low interest rates to make responsible, targeted investments that would stimulate the economy in the long term. Those investments were meant to stimulate opportunities for long-term growth in Canada by emphasizing robust growth, job creation and widespread revenue increases.

At the same time, we recognized that our plan had to be financially responsible so as not to add to the burden of future generations.

• (1730)

Overall, the government knew that this was the right approach for producing the economic growth most likely to allay the concerns of Canadian middle-class families and restore confidence in our economy.

Business of Supply

Those investments, combined with the hard work of Canadians, have helped create half a million good, well-paying jobs, and they will continue to strengthen our economy in a sustainable way.

However, to maintain the momentum and remain competitive in a complex global economy, we know that Canada must continue to innovate. We need to be more open to the world of science, technology, engineering and math.

As we have seen many times, innovation waits for no one. If we are not on the cutting edge, then we will be left behind. The government knows that. Together, we need to lead by example.

Today, it is not about working harder individually to earn less but about working together more intelligently to get more than we ever thought possible.

That is why we developed our innovation and skills plan. Over the past 18 months, the innovation and skills plan has made it possible to launch the pan-Canadian artificial intelligence strategy to ensure that Canada remains a global leader in that field. As a Quebecker, I know that Montreal and the province of Quebec in general are leaders in that sector. The government also launched the global skills strategy so that companies can have more predictable access to top talent.

The government also heard the strong and united message from the research community on the need to make new investments in the future of Canadian science, one that supports young researchers and embraces the increasingly international, interdisciplinary, and fast-breaking nature of leading-edge research. That is a sector that I worked in for a long time before becoming an MP.

I would like to recognize the good work done by the expert panel on Canada's fundamental science review, who presented a report on the state of Canada's fundamental science ecosystem, a review the likes of which we had not seen for over 40 years.

Informed by this work, the government took action in budget 2018 to help make Canada a world-leading centre for research and innovation. We did this by making a historic investment in the next generation of researchers.

Research broadens our understanding of the world, sparks new ideas and helps develop a workforce that is better able to meet challenges with creativity and confidence.

This is why, early this year, the government announced \$1.2 billion for granting councils, an unprecedented investment of new money in fundamental research in Canada. This will lead to better opportunities for students and researchers, and some 21,000 top researchers, students and staff members will have access to more support and training opportunities across Canada.

Granting councils are responsible for developing new plans to diversify funding recipients, which would benefit a diverse group of researchers, including women, under-represented groups, such as racialized groups, and early-career researchers.

In conclusion, I remind members that the government's growth-generating investments, many of which I mentioned today, are offset by our government's sound fiscal management and commitment to maintaining a shrinking debt-to-GDP ratio. The federal ratio, which contrasts debt and the performance of the economy, is not only on a

downward trend, but it is also expected to reach its lowest level in nearly 40 years.

• (1735)

Contrary to what the member seems to think, Canada is in good financial shape.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy listening to my MP. In fact, he is my MP because I live in Gatineau when in the national capital region. I enjoy listening to him, even though he is unfortunately mistaken and, more importantly, has forgotten why he was elected three years and a few weeks ago.

Three years and a few weeks ago, he was elected because of his party's formal commitment, found on page 76 of his election platform, to have modest deficits for three years—\$10 billion in the first two years and \$6 billion in the third—and then to balance the budget in 2019. We are now 42 days away from 2019, and not only will there not be a zero deficit, but we have no idea of when the budget will be balanced.

I will repeat the question in the motion, which simply asks: when will we return to a balanced budget?

Mr. Greg Fergus: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his question and for choosing a fine place to live when he is in the national capital region. Hull—Aylmer is an exceptional place, and I encourage all my colleagues to move there in the next Parliament if they have not already done so.

My hon. colleague stated that I have forgotten why I was elected in Hull—Aylmer in 2015. However, he is the one who is mistaken. We were elected because Canadians wanted to replace the previous government, which unfortunately did not invest in the economy. Economic growth was anemic.

After we were elected, we created more than half a million full-time, quality jobs that helped the middle class and Canada's economy. That is why the people of Hull—Aylmer had confidence in me. I can say that my government colleagues and I have done a good job.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point or order.

I am seeking the unanimous consent of the House to table the Liberal Party election platform, which states that it must run small deficits and eliminate the deficit in 2019.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent have the unanimous consent of the House to table this document?

Some hon. members: No.

Business of Supply

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I and my colleagues in the New Democratic Party come from the tradition that elections matter, democracy is vital to our nation and in order for Canadians to make valid choices and express their democratic will, they need to rely on what is said by political parties. It is the quaint notion of parties having integrity at election time. We all know that sometimes facts change, but the Liberal Party made a very deliberate and definite pledge to Canadians in 2015. Liberals said that they would run three modest deficits of about \$10 billion each year and then balance the budget in the fourth year.

Incidentally, in 2015, we were not in recession. The economy was moving along between 1% and 2% growth and yet when Liberals got into office, they abandoned that completely. They are now running a deficit at about the \$19-billion to \$20-billion range and, as has been stated by my Conservative colleagues, with no plan whatsoever to bring the budget back to balance.

I have a clear question for my hon. colleague. Why did the Liberals abandon that clear pledge they made to Canadians in 2015 to lay out a fiscal plan and then as soon as they got into office, act in a completely opposite manner?

• (1740)

[Translation]

Mr. Greg Ferguson: Mr. Speaker, I am a bit disappointed to see that our NDP colleagues still have not learned their lesson. In 2015, they did not develop their own fiscal framework. Instead, they adopted the Conservatives' fiscal framework, which generated the weakest economic growth since the Great Depression of the 1930s, before the Second World War. That is incredible.

Canadians made the right choice. They decided to go with our plan, which was focused on the middle class and economic growth. What happened next? We had the strongest economic growth of the G7. More people found jobs. It is very encouraging.

It is said that Canadians are never wrong during elections, and I can say with certainty that they were definitely not wrong to vote for the Liberal Party.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise to address this beautiful chamber. I was somewhat interested by my colleague across the way wanting to table a very important document, the Liberal Party of Canada's platform, "Growing Canada's Middle Class". It is a very important document. It has been read by millions of Canadians. Canadians realized in the last national election that there was only one political party that was truly concerned and committed to growing Canada's middle class. That is one of the reasons Canadians in every region of our country supported our Prime Minister, the Liberal Party and the Liberal candidates. It was in good part because of the commitment to Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it. One would think the Conservatives learned something from that last federal election.

The last few days have been somewhat interesting, in seeing the leader of the Conservative Party being caught between one buddy

and another. We know that the Conservative leader has a deep admiration for and personal friendship with Stephen Harper and does a great deal of consulting and work with the former prime minister. Many would argue that the former Conservative prime minister gives the marching orders for the Conservative Party here in opposition. That is being challenged a little nowadays by the premier of Ontario, who seems to say "jump" and the Conservative leader asks, "How high?"

It was interesting watching question period today. It was a fairly good example of the degree to which the national Conservative Party here in Ottawa seems to want to buy into what Premier Ford is trying to sell Ontario. Canadians from coast to coast to coast should be somewhat concerned. We could talk about the many different aspects of the cuts that are being proposed, but today in question period there was one aspect that was really highlighted. That was the cuts to francophone educational services. These are some fairly significant cuts. We had political parties from all sides of the House, except the Conservatives, stand up and recognize how important—

• (1745)

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder if you could bring the member to order and return him to the motion at hand, which is about the date the government will inform the House it will reach a balanced budget, not what happened today in question period on an unrelated matter.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member. I assume the hon. member is getting at the relevance issue. All members know, of course, that they are asked to keep their remarks within the boundaries of relevance to the question in front of the House.

Does the hon. parliamentary secretary wish to respond, though?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, speaking to that point of order, it is important for us to recognize that what the member is talking about is the idea of a balanced budget and trying to get a date for that, the very same thing that Stephen Harper was calling for. This is something I pointed out in my speech, that when I listen to the opposition members, it is often like listening to Stephen Harper, and lately it is about listening to Doug Ford. I think it is absolutely—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I think we have resolved the point of order at this point. Certainly, drawing that comparison does work in terms of keeping relevance, but I would ask the parliamentary secretary if he could use the remainder of his 10 minutes to bring the points around to the question that is before the House, which I am sure he will do, as he is only about a third of the way into his 10 minutes.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I suspect that the time taken for that point of order will be added to my time so that I get the full 10-minutes.

Business of Supply

The point is that at the end of the day, when we look at what we have before us, we have a Conservative opposition trying to give advice to the government on an issue that, for all intents and purposes, they have no credibility on. Let us think about it. Canada is 151 years old. The Conservative Party has governed Canada for about 38% of the time. Doing the math on this means that for 38% of those 151 years, the Conservative ruled in Canada. Taking all of Canada's debt, what percentage of Canada's debt do members think the Conservative Party incurred when it ruled Canada for that 38% of the time?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Surely it would be small.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: One would think it would be small, but it is the vast majority, almost 75% of the debt.

If that is not enough to convince my Conservative friends across the way, let us think about when Stephen Harper became the Prime Minister of Canada. At that time, he inherited a multi-billion dollar surplus. Prior to the recession, and it is really important to recognize this because the Conservatives have said there was a recession, the Conservatives took that multi-billion dollar surplus of Paul Martin and converted it into a multi-billion dollar deficit.

Every year after that, the Conservatives had deficit after deficit, right through to the very end, as far as I am concerned. The Conservatives will say that in their last year they actually had a surplus, a balanced budget. I was here in that last year. I sat on the opposition benches when Conservatives sold wholesale the government's GM stocks in order to try to achieve that balanced budget. Independent offices said there was no balanced budget. I questioned that so-called balanced budget.

At the end of the day, if Stephen Harper demonstrated anything, it was not just that he could not keep Canada's budgets balanced in any way, but also that when it came to economic performance, he failed miserably. Let us think about it.

We have been in office for three years, working with Canadians and industries, taking on all sorts of economic activities, and we have seen over 500,000 full-time jobs generated, and many more, tens of thousands, part-time jobs. Let us compare that with the 10 years of Stephen Harper.

One colleague who used the phrase "Duh" said it quite well. Stephen Harper's stewardship of our economy was not that great. We would have to go back decades, through records that were set in the opposite direction, with Stephen Harper as Prime Minister.

We have seen so many actions by the government, and having only 10 minutes to talk about them just does not do them justice. We have talked about the most important thing that is happening as a result of our budgets, which is that we are reinforcing the importance of Canada's middle-class and those aspiring to be a part of it, while at the same time giving a helping hand in a very tangible way to our seniors who are living in poverty, in particular those receiving GIS, something the Conservatives and the NDP voted against.

● (1750)

We see the enhancement of the Canada child benefit program, and tax changes that would prevent millionaires from receiving it,

literally putting hundreds of millions of dollars back into the economy. They voted against that too.

About \$9 million a month goes into Winnipeg North alone from the Canada child benefit program. Think about what does for the collective disposable incomes of the residents of Winnipeg North and the impact that spending has on the economy. The rising disposable across the country is a direct result of Government of Canada initiatives under this Prime Minister, this cabinet and this caucus. That is helping to drive the economy. A healthy middle class ensures a healthier economy, because it is the middle class that drives the economy. If we invest in the middle class, we are investing in Canada.

On Wednesday we will be getting a fall economic update. I am looking forward to it, as all my caucus colleagues are, because we understand and appreciate the important role this government has played in our economy in the last three years.

Let us go back to the idea of the budget. I explained why people who are following this debate should get a better understanding of who is requesting the type of information being requested. It is the official opposition party that is requesting it, a party failed miserably to balance a budget, period, while it was in government. That was not just for a few years, but historically has been the case. Why should the current Government of Canada take advice from the Conservatives on this very important issue?

At the end of the day, the economic plans and programs we put into place are working. We have seen that in a very tangible way. I am thankful for the opportunity to share a few thoughts.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always *très divertissant*, very interesting, but in a funny way to listen to my very impressive colleague. He talked a lot about his famous program of 2015. Unfortunately, I cannot show it in the House. I asked for permission to table it in the House so that every Canadian could have access to it, but unfortunately those guys refused. We understand quite well. On page 84, or page 12 in the French version, it with written crystal clear that there would be a small deficit for three years in a row: \$10 billion, \$10 billion and \$6 billion. After that, it would be a zero deficit in 2019. That is not the reality today.

I will ask a clear and simple question of my hon. colleague. When will we get back to zero deficit?

● (1755)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I believe the government has recognized what is important to Canadians and is investing in those important policy initiatives. As I sat back and listened to the question posed by the member across the way, one of the thoughts crossing my mind was what exactly would the Conservative Party cut. We saw at the provincial level what they were prepared to cut, and there is a fairly severe negative reaction to the Conservative Doug Ford approach. I would challenge my Conservative friends opposite to start telling Canadians what they are prepared to see cut. My challenge to them is to give us some specifics.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to the speeches since we started the debate on this motion. I remember back in 2015 when I was campaigning, the Liberals were promising money for infrastructure and talking about making major investments. None of that money has showed up in my riding, Jonquière, so far though. That is why people are worried and why we have so many questions for the government.

Let me break it down with a straightforward analogy for people watching at home while we dig our heels in on all kinds of issues here in the House. Nearly all of us have a mortgage. I do, anyway, and in 25 years, if everything goes well, I will have paid it off and I will be able to rejig my budget around my other expenses. That is what a sound financial framework looks like, and that is what we are asking for.

Why are the Liberals not listening to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, and why are they not giving us proper financial footing or a timeline for balancing the budget so we can see where we are headed? I think that would be simpler. That is what regular people do in their everyday lives.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I remember the last election quite well when Thomas Mulcair, the then leader of the New Democratic Party, said that he was going to balance the budget at all costs. He might have received a lot of support from the Conservatives with that statement, but from my perspective, especially in the last couple of years, every time New Democratic Party members stand up, they are constantly saying to spend more. On the one hand the NDP members say to spend more and on the other hand the Conservatives say to spend less.

I am quite happy where we stand on this issue. I can tell my NDP friends who made the commitment to balance the budget at all costs that they are really selling short many of the investments this government has actually put in place, including everything from the Canada child benefit to investment in our veterans and our housing strategy. These are investments in Canadians, and are things we truly believe in, yet the NDP members say they would have balanced the budget at all costs, which I argue is highly irresponsible.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just want to remind my colleague that what we are debating here is a motion that the House call upon the government to tell Canadians in what year the budget will be balanced and to do so in this week's fall economic statement.

Every single Liberal MP I have heard talking today has avoided the question. Basically, this was the Liberals' promise. If it was such a bad idea to balance the budget, I just want the Liberal member to stand up and explain why he promised Canadians that they would balance the budget. The Prime Minister thinks the budget balances itself. Could the member at least let us know in what year he thinks that is going to happen?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I will go back to the Stephen Harper era. During that time, the former prime minister made it very clear that the Conservatives had absolutely no idea. They made soft commitments to balance budgets, but we know in

reality, as time proceeded, that Stephen Harper was unable to actually balance a budget.

Again, I would suggest to my colleagues across the way that when it comes to the issue of balancing budgets, the Conservatives are not in a good position to give recommendations or advice because, quite frankly, they failed so miserably in their years in government.

● (1800)

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague, the member for Calgary Rocky Ridge.

Mr. Speaker, \$2,066,210.05 is the amount of money every hour the Liberal government spends more than it collects. That means every day the Liberals are adding \$49.5 million to Canada's debt. No Canadian voted for this debt.

Not even the most partisan Liberals thought that their government was going to do this to the nation's finances. Across Canada, Liberal candidates said that their numbers were rock solid. They said that they had a fiscal plan and that voters could trust them. Nothing could have been further from reality.

I remember participating in a debate where I questioned the validity of these proposed Liberal deficits and I was told that the Liberals had financial gurus who worked on their election platform. They knew exactly what they were doing and that their short-term deficits were not only needed, but they were good for the nation. Now we know the exact consequences of their ill-thought-out fiscal plans: a lot of red ink and debt service charges that will continue to rise for the foreseeable future.

Back in 2015, the Liberals walked into a balanced budget, a growing economy and record low interest rates. Not only did the Liberals break the bank in their first couple of years in office, they also raised taxes and drove us deeper into debt while doing it. The amount of \$17,937 is the share of the national debt for every living, breathing Canadian, and that is just the federal debt. This does not include provincial, municipal, personal and household debt.

There is something fundamentally wrong when the Minister of Finance, the individual in charge of the nation's money, is unable to tell the House of Commons when he plans on balancing the budget. Some could argue that he does not know. Some could say that he is refusing to say. Some could even say that he is holding us in great suspense and is planning the grand reveal in the days ahead. Regardless of the endless speculation, I would argue that he does not care. His actions reveal that he may actually believe that the budget will balance itself.

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. There has been little evidence to suggest that the Liberal government has any intention of ever getting the nation's finances under control. From what has been reported, the Liberals' cabinet committee in charge of finding efficiencies has come up empty. The Liberals have almost nothing to show for their efforts. They have no plan to return to a balanced budget.

Business of Supply

There has been no meaningful debate from the Liberal government, which leads us to our Conservative opposition day motion. We are arguing its merits at this very moment. It is telling that we even have to put forward a motion such as this one. Surely to goodness the first thing the Minister of Finance should be concerned about is balancing the budget. The mere fact that every single day the Liberal government is borrowing millions of dollars with zero plan to ever pay it back should be a signal that it is time for a new government.

The government's own survey found that Canadians believe it is wrong to continue to rack up massive deficits and add billions to the debt. In that same survey, which the government commissioned, it said that over 60% of Canadians want to make reducing the deficit a priority. I can assure the Minister of Finance that those numbers are accurate. I would even go so far as to argue that in my constituency of Brandon—Souris those numbers would even be higher.

Across this country, everyday taxpayers are fed up with governments everywhere that do not live within their means. They know that when interest rates rise, and they will, it will be a serious blow to their pocketbooks. The Minister of Finance has had ample opportunity to inform Canadians of his plan to stop adding billions of dollars of debt, but at every turn, he has twisted himself into a pretzel. The minister is a very accomplished, educated, successful individual, so I know full well that he understands the question. In many respects, I have a bit of sympathy for him. He must feel absurd as he bobs and weaves while evading this question.

● (1805)

The word “balance” truly seems to be the hardest word. I know my colleagues across the way are a little leery of the whole conversation as it reminds the entire nation that the budget is supposed to be balanced next year. In the last election there was no ambiguity in the Liberals' election platform about the numbers. It said that in 2019 they “will balance the budget”. It did not say that the Liberals will try to balance the budget. It did not say that they will strive to balance the budget. It said that they will balance budget. Not only did they break that promise to Canadians, but they have failed to provide a plan to stop adding billions of dollars to our debt.

What makes this all so somewhat comical if it were not so serious a topic, is that right under the promise of balancing the budget the Liberals' platform said that they “will raise the bar on fiscal transparency”. All those following this debate will know that the Minister of Finance is anything but transparent when it comes to his handling of the nation's finances. We only need to go on YouTube to see the countless times the minister has sidestepped questions about his deficit numbers. If we were to keep scrolling past the videos of him calling Canadians tax cheats or the videos about his ethics investigations, we would find countless exchanges of the minister doing his best to avoid saying anything decipherable.

That is what brings us to this debate today. On Wednesday, in the Liberals' fall economic statement, I implore the Minister of Finance to reveal to Canadians his plans to balance the budget. The Liberals were not given a blank cheque. They were not given the mandate to run massive deficits as far as the eye can see. Future generations should not be on the hook for the Liberals' reckless spending. Everyone knows that today's deficits are tomorrow's taxes.

Canadians know it is wrong to leave their kids with an unpaid credit card bill, but that is exactly what the Liberal government is doing. It is nothing short of intergenerational theft.

The deficit is now almost \$20 billion, more than three times what he promised. Instead of balancing the budget next year as the Prime Minister said he would, Finance Canada says we will now have 25 more years of deficits at this rate. Interest on the national debt is expected to grow by two-thirds, to \$37 billion a year. That is just the interest. That is almost as much as we spend on health care transfers. Instead of keeping their money for gas, groceries and other family essentials, Canadians will pay more to bankers and bond holders to fund the growing interest on the Liberals' spiralling debt.

That is why Conservatives are calling on the government to announce in its fall economic update the year in which the budget will finally be balanced. While every family or business out there has to balance their budget, it is mind-blowing that the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister think they have no obligation to do so. The only thing I know for sure is that it will not be by next year as promised.

There has to be at least some Liberal MPs who see the lunacy of the actions of the finance minister when it comes to avoiding the question of a “balanced budget”. They must agree that their own government has fallen short in terms of financial transparency. People's patience is wearing thin and this charade must come to an end.

That is exactly why we are forcing a vote of the House of Commons on this issue. I want every Liberal MP to have a chance to join us. It is never too late to ask for a little common sense from the government. I want them to join us in stopping the raid on future generations. I want them to join us in eliminating out of control deficits and get Canada's fiscal house back in order. At the very minimum, I would ask them to support this motion.

Canadians deserve answers. Liberal parliamentarians deserve answers. At the end of the day, if we can at least agree that having a plan to balance the budget is needed, it is a meaningful step in the right direction. I urge all Liberal MPs to support this motion and demand better from their own finance minister.

● (1810)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed being on the parliamentary committee for Arctic parliamentarians with the member opposite. We worked great together. However, I have a question for him, as this debate is almost over.

The member's concern was that parliamentarians are often asked which years will be in deficit or surplus. The Conservative member said this question has been asked hundreds of times and is the key to this debate. Each parliamentarian should know when there is going to be a deficit or a surplus.

Business of Supply

Therefore, I would like to ask the member this. When did the Conservatives announce in their 10 years of government they were going to have nine deficits and one surplus at the end? When did they let Parliament know, if Parliamentarians are supposed to know this?

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague and loved working with him on Arctic affairs. I also know that he was part of the government at the time before he came back in 2015. However, had he been listening, he would have been able to answer his own question.

It is very true that when the Conservatives came to power in 2006, for two years they reduced debts in Canada by about \$30 billion. That is what my colleague for Winnipeg North forgot to say in his answer today.

There was a debt reduction in the first two years of the Conservative government of \$30 billion. Then we had the world's worst recession since the thirties and the government planned to spend \$150 billion by investing it in the economy. There were deficits in those years, along with a plan to balance the budget within seven years. The government announced its fiscal accountability and did balance the budget in its sixth year, just as the 2015 election came.

There was a \$1.9 billion surplus left to the Liberal government. However, that government has completely failed Canadians in its budgetary analysis and everything it has done since 2016.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Brandon—Souris for his speech. I really liked how he presented the subject, in a very rational, common sense way. That is done all too rarely in this place.

Earlier a Liberal member said that business owners were happy that the economy has recovered. Of course my local business owner is going to be very happy with me if I max out my credit card to invest in his or her business.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks of the message being sent to Canadians, since everyone knows that Canada's debt is huge. I read recently that nearly half of all households are living paycheque to paycheque and do not have substantial savings.

Would my colleague agree that this is not only a broken promise—and certainly not the first—but also a bad message to be sending on financial management?

[English]

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, there was one thing I wanted to say in my speech, but did not. I do not think I mentioned that the share of the national debt for every living and breathing Canadian is \$17,937. That is just the federal debt, as I was explaining. It is a very disconcerting number, considering that the Liberals continue to add \$49,500,000 a day to that. We could almost say that for every living Canadian, the government is spending a dollar and a half a day more than it said it would and more than what collects in revenue. The amount they actually spend is way more than that.

● (1815)

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

[English]

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the vote be deferred until tomorrow, Tuesday, November 20, at the end of the time provided for Oral Questions.

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly, the recorded division stands deferred until tomorrow, Tuesday, November 20, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

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CRIMINAL CODE

BILL C-75—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that I share that an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Orders 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the report stage and third reading stage of Bill C-75, an act to amend the Criminal Code, the Youth Criminal Justice Act and other acts and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at those stages.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I suspect if you were to canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent to see the clock as 6:30 p.m.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the consideration of Motion No. 189 under Private Members' Business.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

The House resumed from September 27 consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: When the House last took up debate on the motion before the House, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons had taken about seven minutes for his remarks.

The Chair therefore recognizes the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would recognize an amazing effort by the member for Thérèse-De Blainville, who came up with a wonderful idea. I want to applaud him personally on his actions in bringing such an important national issue to the floor of the House of Commons.

Suffice to say, it is important to recognize that it is not just Ottawa alone. There are many stakeholders, in particular, the provinces and territories, that can do so much more by working together to heighten the sense of public awareness on the issue of organ donation. I will leave my comments at that.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise and speak in support of Motion No. 189. It is a rare opportunity for me to say I agree with the member for Winnipeg North but this is a wonderful opportunity to do that.

Often we in the House find ourselves debating different issues that have great symbolic importance, financial importance or importance in regards to the safety of Canadians. However, when we talk about organ donation and its importance, this is literally a matter of life and death.

Over the past 12 years, I have been proud to support several motions, bills and studies that encourage Canadians to become organ donors. Specifically, during this Parliament, I think of Bill C-223, introduced by my hon. colleague from Edmonton Manning and Bill C-316, introduced by my hon. colleague from Calgary Confederation.

This is not, or at least it should not be, a partisan issue. However, I was dismayed to see the Liberal Party vote against Bill C-223, that I just referenced. This legislation would have established a Canadian organ donor registry and coordinated and promoted organ donation throughout Canada. I believe it was a good piece of legislation that unfortunately failed. At the very least, Bill C-223 should have been referred to the Standing Committee on Health for further study in order to receive input from expert witnesses.

Bill C-316, currently being studied by the Standing Committee on Health, was introduced by my colleague from Calgary Confederation. It would give Canadians the opportunity to sign up as organ donors on their annual income tax return. I hope that my colleagues on all sides of the House and in the other chamber will continue to support this common-sense measure that would give Canadians

Private Members' Business

more opportunities to register as an organ donor and in the process save the lives of thousands of Canadians who are on a waiting list. Because time is of the essence, I hope that the Standing Committee on Health and the Senate will quickly move this legislation forward so it is actually in law before the end of this parliamentary term.

The motion today is as follows:

That the House: (a) reiterate its commitment to facilitate collaboration on an organ and tissue donation and transplantation system that gives Canadians timely and effective access to care, since every year more than 250 people, out of the 4,500 on waiting lists, die without receiving a transplant; and (b) urge the government to support national efforts with provincial and territorial authorities and stakeholders to increase organ and tissue donation rates in Canada through public education and awareness campaigns, ongoing communication and the exchange of information, including best practices.

It is a sad truth that while 90% of Canadians support organ donation, only 20% are registered. I am proud to say that the towns of New Hamburg and Baden in my riding of Kitchener-Conestoga have reached a level of 52% registration. They are tied for fifth place out of 170 communities, while New Dundee and Petersburg, also in my riding, are tied for eighth at 49%. Congratulations and many thanks to these four very engaged communities.

We need to do more as members of Parliament to encourage our constituents and all Canadians to register to become organ donors.

I am thankful that the Standing Committee on Health has recently completed a study on organ donation in Canada. I am proud of my Conservative colleagues on that committee who initiated this study. Members of our caucus are awaiting its final report.

In addition to registering as a donor, it is important for individuals to discuss their decision to register with their families. They should let their families know about their decision and then register at beadonor.ca because in the final analysis, families of the deceased are not obligated to follow through but are much more likely to follow through if the discussion occurred beforehand. This decision could very well save a life and offer hope to someone waiting for an organ transplant.

Thousands of adults and children are counting on us and our fellow Canadians to give the gift of life. It is time that we as a nation close the gap between the need for life-saving and life-enhancing organs and the supply of organs that are available. Why not take steps now to make a difference? It will be someone's son, someone's daughter, someone's granddaughter who will be the recipient of someone's good decision to register to donate his or her organs.

We would all like to think we will live to be 80 or 100, but the reality is many of us will die long before that for a variety of reasons.

I came face to face with that reality seven and a half years ago, when my wife of nearly 40 years experienced a sudden intracranial hemorrhage on election night, May 2, 2011. Suddenly unconscious, rushed for medical treatment, surgery and life support, it became apparent that the bleeding could not be stopped, brain activity had totally ceased and death was imminent.

Private Members' Business

• (1820)

Conferring with my children, knowing Betty's wishes, that she had signed her licence to confirm her intentions to donate her organs, the decision, while not easy, was the right one, as we know that five people have had their lives extended and many more have benefited from the tissues donated.

Seven years ago, I stood in the chamber during a take-note debate about organ donation, just seven months following Betty's death, and I said these words:

I will return for a moment to that hospital. It was clear that Betty's physical life was over. Brain activity had stopped completely. We knew instinctively that the Betty we had come to know and love was no longer there. Her spirit was still very much alive but her body was only breathing with mechanical help. What to do?

Again, our faith has its foundation in the Christian scriptures, which uses many different metaphors for the physical body. It is referred to as a tent, a house, a temple, or even as clothing for the spirit within. So if the person who lived in that temple or... [who] occupied that house or camped in that tent was no longer here to need any of those things, why would we not share them with someone in need?

Why not help out one of those thousands of people who are currently on waiting lists for a specific organ? Many of those waiting are still in the prime of life. An organ donation can make the difference between life and death. Our decision, while not easy, was made lighter by knowing that someone else would possibly receive the gift of life even as we journeyed into our own grief and loss.

Was there a downside to...organ donation? Yes, there was. We had to prolong the inevitable by agreeing to multiple tests in order to determine if in fact the organs were healthy and suitable for transplant. There were detailed personal history questions in order to mitigate any risks to potential recipients.

Let me assure members of this House [of Commons]...that they can rely on the safety of organ transplants in this country. This is because of Canada's strong organ transplant community and Health Canada's work in establishing rigorous safety requirements through the implementation of the safety of human cells, tissue and organs for transplantation regulations.

Many times since Betty's death on May 4, 2011, two days following her intracranial hemorrhage, I have reflected on the reasons that I am able to move ahead in spite of my deep loss. I can say that two things come to mind: first, my total confidence in Christ's victory over death and in the power of the Resurrection and that I will see her again; and, second, my knowledge that five others have been given the gift of life through Betty's death.

There is a third reason. Two years following Betty's death, the amazing gift of my marriage to Darlene has given me renewed joy in my journey, and I am indeed grateful and blessed to have walked this journey.

As I said earlier, thousands of Canadians are on the waiting list for a life-saving transplant. I urge all Canadians to step up and register at beadonor.ca. We can do better than the 20% registration rate. I think we can even do better than the 52% rate that I referred to from my communities in Kitchener—Conestoga. Why not aim for at least a 75% registration rate? It will almost certainly save a life.

By supporting Bill C-316 and this motion, Motion No. 189, and, most important, people taking the time to register themselves, every one of us can make a positive difference.

• (1825)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Motion No. 189 on organ and tissue donation. This motion calls upon the House to:

(a) reiterate its commitment to facilitate collaboration on an organ and tissue donation and transplantation system that gives Canadians timely and effective access

to care, since every year more than 250 people, out of the 4,500 on waiting lists, die without receiving a transplant; and (b) urge the government to support national efforts with provincial and territorial authorities and stakeholders to increase organ and tissue donation rates in Canada through public education and awareness campaigns, ongoing communication and the exchange of information, including best practices.

Canada's New Democrats will be supporting this motion, because our party believes fervently that we must make every possible effort to ensure that every Canadian who needs an organ or tissue transplant receives it.

I would like to thank my colleague, the hon. member for Thérèse-De Blainville, for introducing this motion and for his passionate advocacy for organ and tissue in donation in Canada. It is also a pleasure to work with him on the health committee.

Canadians need urgent action to improve organ donation rates. At 20.9 donors per million people, our current donation rate puts us at the back of the pack among comparable countries. There are also significant variations in donor rates and programs across Canada. While some provinces, such as British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec, are considered centres of excellence in organ donation, others vary significantly in terms of the types of programs available. That's why, for over a decade, New Democrats have been working to create a pan-Canadian organ donor registry to better coordinate and promote organ donation throughout Canada. Legislation to create such a registry has been introduced by New Democrat MPs on five occasions: in 2002, 2003, 2008, 2009 and 2013.

In February 2016, the Conservative member for Edmonton Manning, whose own son has been the recipient of three donated livers, introduced private member's legislation, Bill C-223, with the unanimous support of the New Democratic Party. Unfortunately, the Liberal government voted to block that effort. The Liberal health minister at the time attempted to defend her government's decision, saying, "This is a matter that is under provincial jurisdiction, and it is for that reason that the bill was unsupportable."

Canada's New Democrats were profoundly disappointed to see the Liberals rush to that determination without even sending the bill to committee for review. Indeed, when the health committee subsequently agreed to study Canada's organ and tissue donation system, in March 2016, it was made abundantly clear that organ donation and transplantation is a shared responsibility between federal, provincial and territorial governments. In particular, the federal government has a responsibility to facilitate national coordination to ensure that every Canadian who needs a transplant receives it.

As part of that study, the committee heard from a range of witnesses, including representatives from Canadian Blood Services, provincial organ donation and procurement organizations, researchers, health care providers and health charities. New Democrats hope that the committee's report, tabled earlier this fall, will place a renewed focus on the need for immediate federal action to improve Canada's organ and tissue donation system, as this motion calls for.

Private Members' Business

The report calls on the federal government to act in a number of specific ways. First, it should enhance Canadian Blood Services' role as a national coordinating agency for organ donation and transplantation. Second, it should improve public education and awareness. Third, it should create new opportunities for Canadians to register to become donors through access points for federal programs and services. My hon. colleague from Calgary has introduced an excellent bill that would allow our tax returns to be used for that purpose.

Fourth, it should share best practices in organ donation and transplantation. Fifth, it should provide funding for organ donation and transplantation research. Sixth, it should develop a national data collection system to monitor outcomes in organ donation. Finally, as the New Democrats have suggested, it should explore the feasibility of a presumed consent system for organ donation.

Canada's New Democrats were particularly pleased to see that the report endorsed our recommendation calling for a study of presumed consent, or an opt-out system, for organ donation, an idea our party knows will make a huge difference in the number of organs available to save lives.

● (1830)

Unlike Canada's current opt-in system, an opt-out approach would automatically register all citizens for organ donation unless they chose to indicate otherwise. The most important success of this system has been that it has led to organ donation being routinely considered when a patient dies, regardless of the circumstances of death. It is vital to note that an opt-out organ donation system would not limit any Canadian's freedom to choose not to donate. In an opt-out system, consent can be withdrawn at any time and families are still responsible for making the final decision with respect to donations.

However, the facts are clear. Countries with opt-out laws have organ donation rates 25% to 30% higher than those in countries requiring explicit consent. Indeed, this approach has helped to make Spain a world leader in organ donation over the last 25 years. In 2016, Spain recorded an organ donor rate of 43.9 per million people, compared to 20.9 per million people in Canada. That is twice as many. In Austria, the donor rate quadrupled after instituting opt-out legislation. Similar regulations in Belgium doubled kidney transplants.

By adopting a presumed consent system in Canada, we could increase donation rates, save lives, improve patient outcomes and ultimately realize significant savings in our public health care system. For example, only 16% of the 22,000 Canadians whose kidneys have failed are currently on the transplant wait-list. Without an organ transplant, the only other treatment available to people with kidney failure is dialysis, which has a lower five-year survival rate than organ transplantation, 45% versus 82%, and offers a lower quality of life to patients.

This is not only a moral concern; it is economically imperative. The total annual cost of dialysis ranges from \$56,000 to \$107,000 per patient, whereas the cost of a transplant is about \$66,000 in the first year and about \$23,000 in subsequent years. Therefore, the health care system could save up to \$84,000 per patient transplanted annually. Of course the main benefit is in the patient's health.

The urgent need for federal action on this file was recently reinforced for me when I spoke with Todd Hauptman, an international public relations consultant based in Vancouver. Todd was diagnosed with Alport syndrome when he was four years old, which meant he would someday need a new kidney. At the age of 16, his condition worsened, forcing him to take medication and change his diet. Then at the age of 20, he started kidney dialysis every night for nine hours a night. A challenging three years on dialysis led to an ever-declining level of health for Todd. His condition got increasingly worse until he had three massive seizures one night in late November 2009. He was in a medically-induced coma for five days and in hospital for 10. The doctors told his family that he may not survive and if he did, a kidney transplant may not be possible. Todd could have died at the age of 23, but he survived thanks to the efforts of exceptional medical staff and a life-saving kidney donation from his friend of 10 years, Tanya Tait.

It is heartbreaking to realize that some patients will never receive the gift of life when they could. As today's motion reminds us, hundreds of Canadians die every year waiting for an organ that never comes, but could.

For this reason, I wish to conclude my remarks by strongly encouraging all Canadians to register as organ donors and discuss their wishes with their loved ones. One donor can save up to eight lives through organ donation and enhance the lives of up to 74 more through the gift of tissue. There is always potential to be a donor, so no Canadian should let anything stop him or her from registering.

I wish to reiterate the NDP's support for the motion before us today and call upon the Liberal government to turn these words into urgent action to ensure that every Canadian who needs an organ or tissue transplant receives it. No one should ever die because that call did not come in time. The New Democrats will work to help make that a reality.

● (1835)

Mr. John Oliver (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Motion No. 189, which calls on the government to reiterate its commitment to facilitate collaboration and support for a Canadian organ and tissue donation and transplantation system.

[*Translation*]

I would like to thank my colleague, the member for Thérèse-De Blainville, for raising this issue in the House and for the excellent and diligent work he does on the Standing Committee on Health. The government is proud to support this motion.

Private Members' Business

●(1840)

[English]

The government is pleased to support this motion. This is an important issue for the health of Canadians. The need for organs is great. There are many diseases and health conditions that damage one or more vital organs or impair their function. An organ transplant is often the best and sometimes the only way to treat the condition or to improve the quality of life for an individual.

While many types of organs can now be successfully transplanted, such as hearts, lungs, pancreas, livers, intestines, kidneys are by far the most needed in Canada. Often kidney disease is associated with other medical conditions, such as diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease. To help Canadians reduce the risk of chronic diseases and conditions like these, our government is contributing to efforts that promote healthy living.

There are many different kidney diseases and disorders. Some kidney diseases are detected at birth and others develop as we grow older. In 2015, over 35,000 Canadians were living with end-stage kidney disease. The best option for many is to receive a kidney transplant, and they must wait until a suitable organ becomes available for them. Meanwhile they often need regular dialysis to maintain their health.

Where do these organs come from? Though many may be somewhat familiar with the idea of organ donation and have discussed their wishes with their families, I would like to explain what is involved so members can fully appreciate the needs and challenges in making the system work.

As humans have two kidneys, sometimes it is possible for someone to donate a kidney while someone is still alive. It is also possible to donate part of a liver, lung, intestine, or pancreas. These are called living donations. I would like to take a moment to honour all those who have made a living donation. Approximately 500 Canadians a year step forward to do so. It is an incredibly valued, selfless and altruistic act.

I would also like to recognize and remember all those individuals who have died but were able to donate after death. I will repeat the words of H el ene Campbell, a double-lung transplant recipient, who says the following on her website:

To my donor, and to their family; no words can express how grateful I am for the precious gift you gave me. Thank you for allowing me to have a second chance and for giving me this 'second wind'.

Indeed, it is family members who, in those most difficult of moments, may be asked if they know their deceased loved one's wishes regarding organ donation. That is why it is important that each of us has those discussions with our own families now so that should the time come, they will know the answer. It is also important for an individual to register his or her wishes in the system used by his or her province, where available.

Canadians may not realize that only a small proportion of people will die in circumstances that make them eligible for organ donation, for example, in the case of a massive stroke that causes brain death. The rarity of these events makes every donation opportunity more precious and makes it all the more important for more people to make their wishes known before death. One deceased donor can save

up to eight lives. Organ donors touch many families and leave a lasting legacy.

The act of donating an organ, or receiving one as a transplant patient, is a momentous event forever linking two people. In Canada, this miracle occurs approximately eight times every day; in 2017 almost 3,000 organs were transplanted. However, that is not enough. There were still over 4,000 patients on organ wait-lists and last year, 242 patients died while waiting for a transplant. How long should a patient wait? Statistics from Quebec indicate that the average wait time for a kidney in that province in 2017 was 493 days, or one year and four months. The wait-lists do not even include all people who might benefit from a transplant.

What is the problem? Why are there not enough organs to meet the needs of these patients? Many elements have to fall into place, and be in place, for the right organ to be available for the right patient at the right time. Sometimes donors and patients are in different jurisdictions, so interprovincial systems are needed to bring it all together.

While provinces and territories each manage the delivery of health care in their jurisdictions, including organ donation and transplant surgeries, a more pan-Canadian approach is needed to fill the gaps that provinces and territories cannot achieve on their own, and our government has been playing a part in filling those gaps.

As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, I want to take a moment to highlight the contributions that the health portfolio has made to develop and improve the organ and tissue donation and transplantation system.

Our government has an important role to play in protecting the health and safety of Canadian transplant recipients through regulation. The safety of human cells, tissues and organs for transplantation regulations contain safety requirements related to the assessment of donors, the retrieval and handling of organs, and labelling for transport of organs.

In addition, our government contributes to the pan-Canadian organ and tissue donation and transplantation system. Together with the provinces and territories, we have invested over \$70 million in support of efforts by Canadian Blood Services to improve the organ and tissue donation and transplantation system over the last 10 years. The Government of Quebec contributes approximately \$845,000 to Canadian Blood Services annually for interprovincial services. Transplant Quebec coordinates organ donation and transplantation activities in that province.

In addition, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research have invested over \$100 million in transplantation research between 2012 and 2017, and scientists are researching how to improve access to transplants and how to improve the long-term survival and quality of life of transplant recipients. Important advancements are being made. For example, research is illuminating new ways to manage blood group compatibility to expand ways to match a patient with a broader range of organ donors.

Private Members' Business

On October 18, I had the privilege of announcing a further investment of \$3.3 million in the Canadian donation and transplant research program to advance research on many facets of organ and tissue donation and transplantation in Canada. This funding is a joint investment by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Astellas Pharma Canada Inc., the Canadian Liver Foundation, Cystic Fibrosis Canada, the Fonds de recherche du Québec, and the Kidney Foundation of Canada. Through such collaborations, we can increase the availability of transplants for Canadians and transform clinical outcomes for transplant patients from coast to coast.

Beyond these established roles, I am pleased to inform the House that the Minister of Health is actively pursuing her mandate to work with provinces and territories to facilitate collaboration on an organ and tissue donation and transplantation system that would give Canadians timely and effective access to care. Health Canada officials are leading a collaborative initiative, in partnership with the provinces, territories and Canadian Blood Services, to engage stakeholders in determining how to improve the system so that Canadians can count on having access to the care they need when they need it. A wide range of patient groups, transplant specialists, organ donation organizations, and other key stakeholders across the country have been interviewed to help identify how to improve and optimize the results for Canadians. We will keep the House informed of the outcomes of that work.

Again, the government is very pleased to support this motion.

• (1845)

[Translation]

In closing, I want to thank the member for moving this motion. I look forward to working with all members of the House and continuing the discussion on this important issue for the health of Canadians.

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise today to discuss another initiative dealing with the issue of human organs and organ transplantation. By my count, there are five initiatives that have been or are before us that deal in some sense with the issue of organ transplantation. There were private members' bills put forward by my colleagues from Edmonton Manning and Calgary Confederation; we have the motion before us tonight; and we also have a number of legislative initiatives, one of which I have sponsored and which deals with the issue of illicit organ harvesting. That is, organs taken without consent, which is obviously a very different issue but is one that might be worth reflecting on in the context of some of the discussion that is happening tonight.

What we are debating tonight is Motion No. 189, which says:

That the House: (a) reiterate its commitment to facilitate collaboration on an organ and tissue donation and transplantation system that gives Canadians timely and effective access to care, since every year more than 250 people, out of the 4,500 on waiting lists, die without receiving a transplant; and (b) urge the government to support national efforts with provincial and territorial authorities and stakeholders to increase organ and tissue donation rates in Canada through public education and awareness campaigns, ongoing communication and the exchange of information, including best practices.

It is important to underline that when we debate a motion, it is essentially the House of Commons participating in a communica-

tions exercise. That is, we are all together, expressing a sentiment through endorsing an idea. In plenty of cases and in this case, it is a thing worth doing, given the motion is before us. I am going to be voting in favour of this motion.

However, I will also challenge members that the primary objective that we should pursue, as legislators, is not just to look for opportunities to put forward communication pieces on vital issues like this, but to actually look for opportunities to change the law in ways that actively increase the rate of organ donation and also that compel the government to take specific action to move these things forward. If a motion is a way of starting a conversation, that can be very worthwhile, but if a motion is a substitute for legislative action then it is perhaps not desirable. What we need to be doing is looking for opportunities, as legislators, to legislate to take the vital steps that need to be taken now to move this issue forward. I certainly commend the mover of this. I am, again, pleased to support this motion. However, there is such an urgency when it comes to moving forward and addressing, as the motion says, the number of people on waiting lists who die without transplants, that legislative changes are urgently required.

I was pleased to speak in favour of and support a bill by my colleague, a concrete legislative initiative by the member for Edmonton Manning, that would have created a national organ donation registry. Unfortunately, this bill was voted down. It was one of the first private members' bills that was put forward in this Parliament and it was defeated. A national system of national collaboration, which is indirectly hinted at by this motion, would have made the concrete difference. It would have taken far more steps in the right direction than this motion does tonight. It is with regret that I note the defeat of that bill because, had it passed, it would be saving lives today as we speak.

We had another bill put forward, by my colleague from Calgary Confederation, and this added the very helpful step of saying that when persons fill out their income tax forms they should be able to indicate on there whether they wish to be an organ donor, so it would be another opportunity for people to give information and hopefully this would increase the number of people who are saying they would like to be an organ donor. Again, it is a legislative initiative concretely moving things forward, compelling the government to action instead of simply participating in a communications exercise.

These were both good bills. I was pleased to see Bill C-316 pass.

In light of where we are in the electoral cycle and that we are likely less than a year until the next election, members should be seized with the urgency of moving forward good private members' bills that are currently before committee.

• (1850)

Bill C-316 passed the House at second reading. From what I understand of the process, it will need to complete the committee study, complete third reading and make its way through the Senate. There is an urgency to moving that bill forward. If all we do in this Parliament is pass this motion but not pass legislative action, that will have been a failure, a missed opportunity. I hope we will all be able to work together on that legislative initiative.

Private Members' Business

I would note the mindset and strategy behind Bill C-316. I am reading a fairly well-known book called *Nudge* by two behavioural economists, Thaler and Sunstein. It talks about this idea of something called libertarian paternalism, which is that governments, businesses, institutions that are shaping the architecture within which people can make choices can preserve complete liberty for the individual while still aligning the circumstances of that choice to try and bring about a socially desirable outcome.

In the case of organ donation, many people likely do not sign their donor cards not because they are choosing not to be an organ donor, but because it is simply that they are not confronted with a situation where they have to make a choice either way. They might be willing to be an organ donor, but they are just not thinking of it, and then something happens to them and they have never gotten around to signing their donor card. The idea of thinking about the choice architecture is to create the conditions in which people still have complete liberty to decide where their organs are going, but the circumstances increase the chances that they will make a choice that is in a broader sense socially desirable.

In the case of Bill C-316, it is about putting people in situations where regularly they are seeing the choice option in front of them, a way of nudging people toward making the choice one way or the other. If someone does not want to be an organ donor, absolutely the individual should have that freedom. However, it is useful for the person to be given that choice in as many contexts as possible so he or she at least is given the greatest opportunity to say yes or no. Hopefully, the individual would say yes so that again we do not have people who are not organ donors even if they thought about it they would be willing to be an organ donor, but they just never got around to signing the card or having that question in front of them.

In the context of discussion about organ donation, I want to talk briefly about Bill C-350 and Bill S-240. Tomorrow night we are going to be debating Bill S-240, which is from the Senate. It would make it a criminal offence for someone to go abroad to receive an organ for which there has not been consent. This is such an important and obvious bill. There are countries, one country in particular, where organs are taken from people without consent, often because the people are seen as politically undesirable by the government.

Anecdotally, Canadians have a sense that some people in other countries will travel to receive an organ that was taken without consent. That should be a criminal offence because being complicit in this terrible practice of organ harvesting is wrong and Canada should do everything it can to try to stop that practice. We should note in that context as well that people who are in that situation face a level of desperation because they know they need an organ and they are on a wait-list. One thing we can do is address that act specifically and address the fact that some people might go abroad to receive an organ that was harvested without someone's consent. At the same time, we can work to increase the level of organ donation here in Canada so that people no longer find themselves in that desperate situation. We can and we should do both.

By passing legislation like Bill C-316, we can ensure that people do not have to be in the desperate situation where they are on a wait-list and even where they may make a choice that they would not make under other circumstances that ends up harming someone

else's life in another part of the world. With that in mind, I am very hopeful that we will be able to move forward quickly on the legislative initiative in Bill C-316 as well as Bill S-240 which we will be debating tomorrow.

I am pleased to support this motion, but the House must do more to make the vision behind this issue a reality.

● (1855)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to participate in the debate on Motion No. 189 and to support my colleague from Thérèse-De Blainville in his effort to promote awareness of organ donation and facilitate the sharing of best practices among the provinces to help build a system that will work across Canada.

It was heartening to listen to the stories shared during the first hour of debate on September 27. It is important to share these success stories and to look at what works in other provinces, territories and countries as we improve our own system. Unfortunately, it often takes a tragedy to provoke action. The numbers do not lie. Two hundred and fifty Canadians still die waiting for a transplant.

In other cases, like the one my colleague from Guelph mentioned, a successful organ donation can promote awareness and encourage more donors. This shows that personal stories, communication and community play an essential role in promoting awareness of organ donation. We must use our local and provincial resources to increase the number of donors, understand what works and develop a national system that is accessible to all Canadians.

Since 1986, Quebecers just have to sign the back of their health card to officially become an organ donor.

In Ontario, Service Ontario has created the BeADonor.ca website, where people can quickly and easily register in three steps that take less than two minutes. They only need to register once.

A similar process has been in place in British Columbia since 1997. By visiting transplant.bc.ca, anyone can add their name to the registry in minutes.

These systems are found in different provinces. They are easy to access and quick and easy to use. However, in other provinces, resources are limited, which penalizes Canadians who do not have access to them.

Motion No. 189 will allow us to study, share and focus these methods on a common goal, which is to establish a fair nationwide organ and tissue donation system that will ensure we have effective services.

I would like to acknowledge the exceptional work done by the Canadian Organ and Tissue Donors Association, which has been raising awareness since 1983 and providing emergency transport since 1987. From 1987 to December 2017, CODA transported just over 15,000 organs. Of that number, since 2014, 103 transports have been carried out in my city, Laval, by roughly 20 volunteers from the Laval police force.

Private Members' Business

The success of organ donation does not lie in the generosity of Canadians alone, but also in collaboration between various services, from medical professionals to the countless volunteers who transport these organs and tissues to their final destination. It is our duty to work with the provincial and municipal governments to support and equip our emergency services so that they can do their job effectively. The work that the doctors and nurses do is vital to the success of organ and tissue donations. Let us ensure that they are supported and that the methods that we put in place are beneficial to them as well.

As the hon. member for Thérèse-De Blainville mentioned, we must not forget the human side of this debate. The consent given by the deceased person is sometimes rescinded by their family. This may be due to a lack of communication or a reaction to the loss of a loved one.

● (1900)

People should not have to grapple with decisions like that when they are grieving. The moments following death should be a time to mourn together without having to debate such a sensitive issue.

That is where a plan to increase awareness can help people avoid situations like that. The process should be the same regardless of where a Canadian citizen lives. It is also our duty to communicate information properly, encourage communication with loved ones and break down taboos around organ donation.

We need to remind Canadians that they can register as donors no matter their age. We also have to make sure they know that they can be living donors. That idea might scare some people, which is why awareness campaigns are important.

I feel that the Standing Committee on Health's report on organ donation in Canada is a good starting point with respect to the steps we need to take to act on the recommendations in Motion No. 189.

In closing, I can personally attest to the value of organ donation for those in need. My uncle passed away a few years ago, and because his family donated his eyes, two people were able to see again. In many cases, those involved cannot see the difference they make for themselves, but my cousin had the opportunity to meet those two individuals and to see first-hand the positive impact of organ donation on their lives.

Canada's first face transplant was carried out two months ago in Montreal. What an extraordinary medical feat. It was a total transplant, not just the skin, but the entire face: the nose, its cartilage, the jawbone, teeth and mouth. Only a few patients around the world have undergone a total face transplant.

This encourages us to donate our organs and tissues, especially when we know that one tissue donor can save up to 20 people. Obviously, a lot of work remains to be done to make organ donation a widespread practice in Canada. However, we have valuable tools at our disposal and the will to improve the situation.

I believe that with Motion No. 189, a system can be created that works for everyone, regardless of where the person who needs an organ donation lives. Canadians are very generous. I am confident that we will find the best methods for standardizing organ donation

across Canada and encouraging Canadians to get involved and help promote this cause.

I have signed my organ donation card. What about the rest of my colleagues?

● (1905)

Mr. Ramez Ayoub (Thérèse-De Blainville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to thank my colleagues for the quality of the debate we just had and particularly for their personal testimonies.

Organ donation is one of the greatest possible gestures of human solidarity. Despite current efforts, 4,500 people are suffering while waiting for a transplant in Canada and approximately 250 of those on the waiting list die every year.

Motion No.189 calls on the government to reiterate its commitment to facilitate collaboration on an organ and tissue donation and transplantation system that gives Canadians timely and effective access to care.

Our current system is not good enough. I sincerely believe that we need to do better to save those whose only hope is an organ donation.

Recently, I had the honour of meeting organ recipients and families of organ donors from my riding of Thérèse-De Blainville.

At that meeting, Carole Du Paul, whose husband died and donated his lungs and liver, gave a very touching testimony, as did Joseph El Hajj, who was the recipient of a heart in 2009, Johanne Michaud, whose children were able to know their grandfather thanks to an organ donation that extended his life and gave him the opportunity to see his grandchildren grow up, and Yves LeBlanc, who has a new lease on life thanks to a tissue transplant.

Their stories show how important it is for all Canadians to have access to an effective organ donation and transplantation system.

I want to emphasize the word "all" here because our current system is unfair.

Organ donation varies greatly from one province to another because of a lack of resources in that area.

Motion No. 189 seeks to encourage organ and tissue donation across Canada by supporting national efforts with provincial and territorial authorities and stakeholders.

It is unfortunate and completely unacceptable that the probability of receiving an organ donation is dependent upon the patient's place of residence in Canada. Motion No. 189 will change this situation and improve the exchange of information between provinces, as well as encourage organ donation through public education and awareness campaigns.

Adjournment Proceedings

As I mentioned earlier, one of the limitations of our organ donation system is consent. Only 20% of Canadians are registered donors even though 90% believe in organ donation. Education is key to obtaining consent, raising awareness and obtaining the right information. This awareness will let donors understand the importance of being a donor in order to save lives. Not only must donors sign the back of their driver's licence or health insurance card, they must talk about it with their loved ones.

I would like to congratulate Chaîne de vie, whose mission is to raise awareness and inform high school students about organ and tissue donation as part of the second language instruction program. Lucie Dumont, the president and founder of this organization, has done great work on this program, which is recognized in Quebec and internationally.

I also want to thank every person, organization, and stakeholder with whom I discussed this motion: Louis Beaulieu from Transplant Québec, Ronnie Gavsie from the Trillium Gift of Life Network, Leanne Appleton from BC Transplant, and Dr. Pierre Marsolais, to name a few.

In closing, I want to reiterate that Motion No. 189 transcends political partisanship and is non-binding. It is a motion that will allow for dialogue between the provinces while urging the government to take action.

I want to thank the members who have already expressed their support. I hope to have managed to raise awareness on this important issue so that Motion No. 189 gets the unanimous support of the House.

• (1910)

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, November 21, 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.

[English]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, back in June, I was able to ask the Prime Minister directly in the House, given his stated commitment to families and family reunification, why someone's parents or grandparents coming to Canada was based on the luck of the draw. This was in the face of media reports that said that in fact the lottery system was worked off an Excel spreadsheet and subject to rigging. Thankfully, since asking that question in question period four months ago or so, communities across Canada came together to denounce the idea of family reunification being determined by the luck of the draw and the government had no choice but to abandon the parent/grandparent lottery system. It was an honour to bring those concerns to the House and I am grateful to the people back home in Nanaimo—Ladysmith, who let me know what impact this was having on their families.

However, the New Democrats remain concerned that the government has decided to go back to a first-come, first-served race to get an application in before the application cap is hit. This is almost identical to the system prior to the lottery, and just like family reunification should not be a matter of chance, it should not be a race either.

I am proud my colleague, the member for Vancouver East, said, "I will continue to advocate for a parent/grandparent system that reflects what Canadians want, the elimination of the annual application cap, increasing the annual levels plan space to accommodate the desire of Canadians to be reunited with their loved ones, instituting a standard processing time of 12 months for these applications, as this is the standard already in place for spousal sponsorship applications."

I want to flag how hard it is for families to navigate these systems. I have a constituent named Fatima. She and her two daughters were accepted to Canada as refugees from Eritrea. The personal story of this family is tragic. It was a huge effort for them to get here. They are sponsored by the Neighbourhood Church in Nanaimo, which is doing a fantastic job of working hand in hand with refugee families, supporting them, embedding them in our communities. However, what Fatima has said is that she cannot settle into our community fully knowing that the husband, who she thought had died in the civil war, in fact had survived, but that it was beyond the period where she was able to sponsor him because of the one-year limit. They are now caught in this bureaucratic mess. Her little daughters are saying that they do not believe that their father is still alive because it has been years that they have been waiting for our system, for the Canadian government, to say when it is that his processing will be complete. It is a huge heartache for this family.

Adjournment Proceedings

I am hearing again and again that the government has chosen not to restore the public service and the front-line people who are meant to be serving Canadians. To have people kicked off phone lines, left on hold indefinitely or for them to have to call 20 times even to have the honour of being put on hold, that says to me that everyone is challenged by a broken system. Therefore, my question to the government is this. Why is it making people wait so long? When will it truly deepen the investment that allows immigration and family reunification to happen as it should?

● (1915)

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, reuniting Canadian citizens and permanent residents with their parents and grandparents contributes to strengthening Canada's social and cultural fabric.

I am pleased to speak to this issue today, as it gives me the opportunity to tell the hon. member about the changes that have been made to the parent and grandparent program since the member initially asked her question in June.

In August, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada announced that it would be increasing the cap on the number of parents and grandparents sponsorship applications accepted for processing from 10,000 to 17,000 in 2018, and to 20,000 in 2019. The department also announced that the application intake system would be changing in 2019, something that addresses the root concerns of the hon. member.

[Translation]

In 2019, as was the case in recent years, the interest-to-sponsor form will be put online at the beginning of the year to allow potential eligible sponsors to tell us that they wish to sponsor their parents or grandparents. Instead of randomly choosing potential sponsors to submit applications, as was the case before, we will invite potential sponsors to submit their sponsorship applications based on the order in which the interest-to-sponsor forms were submitted. The process will continue until the number of potential sponsors invited to submit applications reaches the annual cap of 20,000 applications.

[English]

This new first-in system is different, as it is based on interest-to-sponsor submissions sent electronically, and not on complete applications mailed to IRCC's offices, which was the process before 2017.

This is an improvement from the system used before 2017, because potential sponsors will be required to complete an application only if they are invited to submit one. Using this intake process will give the government more flexibility in the application process, ensuring that we receive as many applications as possible to meet the cap.

[Translation]

The Government of Canada welcomes comments on its programs and services, and the changes made to the application process for the parents and grandparents program aim to make things fair and give all interested sponsors equal access to the application process.

[English]

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Mr. Speaker, replacing the lottery with a cap that is all a first-come, first-served system is not remedying the problem.

As members of Parliament, people come to us when the system is not working for them. We try to help guide them. Here is an example of what a constituent told me by email last month: "You are the first person who answered us about my immigration issue in the past ten years. We have hired a lawyer for 3 times to request information. We tried any way we can to make contact with the immigration office, but nothing has happened so far."

All we did was use the back-door number that members of Parliament have to ask Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to check the status of her permanent residency application. It was not a big effort.

Again, and we just cannot state this enough, if we could restore our front-line public services and allow people to get clear answers on why their applications are being held up, it would not leave them waiting interminably. It is heartbreaking for these families. Simply changing the style of the program has not made the change we need.

● (1920)

[Translation]

Hon. Andrew Leslie: Mr. Speaker, the government is working on improving the application process even more, to make it easier to access the parents and grandparents program and to improve the experience for our clients. We are making sure that our updates to the application process are appropriate, and we took the time to listen to stakeholders and applicants before deciding how to proceed.

[English]

I also would like to note that consistently high admissions levels for parents and grandparents over the last few years have allowed the government to greatly reduce the application backlog. The application inventory has dropped from a peak of 167,000 people in 2011 to just under 26,000 people in June 2018.

Do we have more work to do? Absolutely, but we are well on track.

[Translation]

Family reunification is one of the Government of Canada's top immigration priorities.

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when I rose months ago, my question for the Prime Minister was about the devastating impact the steel and aluminum tariffs would have on working people in Canada. Unfortunately, we are living through the fallout of the Liberals' failure to have a plan that would actually help working people. It is no surprise though. The Liberals continue to profess their love for workers and the middle class at the same time as we see jobs bleeding out of our country because of steel and aluminum tariffs.

Adjournment Proceedings

No one believes we are dealing with a logical approach and when it comes to President Trump, no one believes it is an easy task. However, the Liberal line of tariffs being completely separate is complete and utter nonsense. No one believes that. If we were to ask anyone in the states or ask the president himself if these tariffs were separate from the renegotiation of NAFTA, the response would be a resounding no. They believe these tariffs are directly tied. In fact, in the new USMCA, we see the tariffs being tied to the auto sector and mention of section 232 throughout the agreement.

This is a very hot topic in my riding of Essex, where we have the manufacturing sector. We also have a wonderful steel manufacturer. This steel manufacturer, a local business owner who provides excellent jobs in one of the communities I represent, said that the tariff situation was like the Liberals standing in a burning house, with people saying that the fire department should be called, that they need help and the Liberals telling them that they should not worry, that they should stay in the house, that it will be all right. However, we all see that the house is burning down as they sit, not helping businesses and workers who are in a desperate situation.

When I asked that question, the government told us it was ready for the worst case scenario. We now know that is about as far away from the truth as a Donald Trump tweet. What is happening on the ground is workers are being laid off. There are down weeks happening in our country. In fact, in Ottawa this month, a business that had operated since the 1970s closed its doors. This is just the cusp of where we are going. Ford Motor Company has reported it has lost \$1 billion due to these tariffs. People will be laid off as a result. No large manufacturing corporation that has a footprint in Canada can continue with billion dollar losses over less than a year.

The Liberals like to point to the auto gains in the USMCA, but they seem to be conveniently forgetting that cars are made of steel and aluminum. This is the underpinning of this sector. As long as these tariffs are in place, our entire manufacturing sector is under direct threat. We are in an emergency situation. Business after business has come before the trade committee, under our NDP-led tariff study, and told us of the many issues with the supposed relief package. That money, instead of being kept separately and being able to support businesses and people on the ground, is just going into the general coffers. In fact a month ago, there was a report of \$11,000 being paid out of the \$375 million collected. Where is this money going? This money is not making its way to shops on the ground or to people on the ground who need this help.

My call tonight is this. Will the Liberals join the NDP call, and in fact all sides of the House, because the Conservative deputy leader has also agreed, to not sign us on to the USMCA until these tariffs are removed?

• (1925)

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's steel and aluminum industries are a critical part of our economy and many people's livelihoods. Canadians in communities across the country depend on the good jobs that are supported by these industries, both upstream and downstream from the actual point of origin of the steel or aluminum, and that is why we have taken such strong action to defend them. Shortly after the unfair and illegal tariffs were

unilaterally announced by the United States, we announced our own reciprocal tariffs on \$16.6 billion worth of U.S. goods.

I have said this before, but it bears repeating. This is the strongest and largest trade action Canada has taken since the Second World War. This is how much we value our steel and aluminum workers and how much we want to protect their livelihoods and communities.

Since before the tariffs were imposed, we have been meeting with steel and aluminum industry leadership and workers to ensure that their voices inform our actions. Recently, for example, the Minister of Foreign Affairs has been visiting dozens of facilities across Canada, meeting with steel and aluminum companies and associations, the workers on the shop floors and union representatives. I myself have met with many dozens of union associations, factory management, suppliers, workers and the upstream and downstream industries that are impacted. The message is clear that we must defend our industries and workers, and that is exactly what we are doing.

For example, in October, we introduced provisional safeguard measures on seven steel products to ensure that our industries are not being harmed by the diversion of steel into Canada from other international steel suppliers. Such measures are being welcomed by the industry. Just last week, for example, Stelco, which employs 2,200 men and women at Hamilton Harbour and on Lake Erie, said that these safeguards are providing market stability. They agree with what we are doing.

In fact, Stelco's CEO also said, "With these measures in place, we expect growth in our business related to our recent investments, including the installation of annealing furnaces, and the recent work on the hot strip mill, that have enhanced our product capabilities." It has received funds to help it and its workers get through the process we are going through with the section 232 tariffs.

Our measures are allowing companies to continue to invest in themselves, their facilities and their workers. I would remind us all that there is \$2 billion available to defend and protect the interests of Canadian workers and businesses in the steel and aluminum manufacturing industries.

We are working hard to make sure that these tariffs are eliminated. We are in constant dialogue with the United States. Removing U.S. tariffs on steel and aluminum is a priority for our government and, indeed, for the nation. We continue to raise this at every opportunity with American officials at the very highest level.

Adjournment Proceedings

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: Mr. Speaker, what the Liberals are doing is not working, and the response tells me that they are not listening and that, in fact, they are willing to let the house burn down to the ground around them and leave the ashes, with no plan going forward. Talking points are not going to cut it. We are in an emergency situation in this country, and it is not surprising that the response we get tonight from the parliamentary secretary is not actually an answer to the question I asked, the question that is on the minds of many Canadians and the question that others in this House believe is where we need to go.

Small businesses cannot navigate the system and cannot access the money. They do not have the resources to dedicate staff to understanding these programs. They do not want loans from BDC and EDC. They can get loans down the street at their own local lenders. They want the government to negotiate an end to the steel and aluminum tariffs.

Canadians do not want the government to sign on to the USMCA and lose our greatest piece of leverage in a shot to get rid of these tariffs. If we do not get rid of these tariffs, we will see the decimation of our manufacturing sector. The Liberals are asleep at the wheel.

Once again, will they stand with us and not sign the agreement until the tariffs are removed?

Hon. Andrew Leslie: Mr. Speaker, our government will always stand up for Canadian workers and businesses. The steel and aluminum industries provide good, middle-class jobs to Canadians across our country. We have put in place reciprocal tariffs, safeguards on imported steel, programs to help companies diversify and relief programs for industry. We have allocated over \$2 billion to assist those who need it most. Our actions have been driven by the best interests of Canadian workers and industries, and I can assure the member opposite that they will continue to be based on the best outcomes for Canadians.

• (1930)

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

(The House adjourned at 7:30 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Monday, November 19, 2018

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Motion	23537
Mr. Gerretsen	23537
Mr. Carrie	23538
Ms. Trudel	23539
Mr. Oliphant	23540
Ms. Sansoucy	23542
Ms. Sgro	23543
Mr. Iacono	23544
Mr. Fonseca	23544
(Motion agreed to)	23545

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Business of Supply

Opposition Motion—Finance

Mr. Poilievre	23545
Motion	23545
Mr. Gerretsen	23547
Mr. Davies	23548
Mr. Ouellette	23548
Ms. Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	23548
Mr. Carrie	23549
Mr. Lightbound	23549
Mr. Poilievre	23552
Mr. Nantel	23552
Mr. Diotte	23552
Mr. Erskine-Smith	23553
Mr. Shipley	23553
Mr. Caron	23553
Mr. Falk (Provencher)	23555
Mr. Whalen	23555
Ms. Malcolmson	23555
Mr. Vaughan	23557
Mr. Lamoureux	23557
Mr. Berthold	23558
Mr. McDonald	23559
Mr. Davies	23559
Mr. Vaughan	23559
Mr. Waugh	23560
Mr. Bittle	23561
Mr. Lamoureux	23561
Mr. Gerretsen	23562

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

French Language Services in Ontario

Mr. Beaulieu	23562
--------------------	-------

Housing

Mr. Spengemann	23562
----------------------	-------

Canada Border Services Agency

Mr. Falk (Provencher)	23562
-----------------------------	-------

Kerby Centre

Mr. Hehr	23562
----------------	-------

Michelle Prince

Mr. Masse (Windsor West)	23563
--------------------------------	-------

World Prematurity Day

Mr. Fraser (Central Nova)	23563
---------------------------------	-------

Natural Resources

Mr. Jeneroux	23563
--------------------	-------

North York General Hospital

Mr. Tan	23563
---------------	-------

Pointe-Claire Oldtimers

Mr. Scarpaleggia	23563
------------------------	-------

Natural Resources

Mr. Viersen	23564
-------------------	-------

Metropolitan Montreal Deaf Community Centre

Mrs. Nassif	23564
-------------------	-------

Public Safety

Mr. Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	23564
---	-------

Immigration

Mr. Paul-Hus	23564
--------------------	-------

Health

Mr. Sikand	23564
------------------	-------

Harry St. Denis

Ms. Moore	23565
-----------------	-------

Official Languages

Mr. Rayes	23565
-----------------	-------

Louis Riel

Mr. Vandal	23565
------------------	-------

ORAL QUESTIONS

Finance

Mr. Rayes	23565
Mr. Morneau	23565
Mr. Rayes	23566
Mr. Morneau	23566
Mr. Rayes	23566
Mr. Morneau	23566
Ms. Bergen	23566
Mr. Morneau	23566
Ms. Bergen	23566
Mr. Morneau	23566

The Economy

Mr. Caron	23566
Mr. Morneau	23567
Mr. Caron	23567

Mr. Morneau	23567
Mr. Julian	23567
Mr. Morneau	23567
Pharmacare	
Mr. Julian	23567
Ms. Petitpas Taylor	23567
Finance	
Mr. Deltell	23567
Mr. Morneau	23567
Mr. Deltell	23567
Mr. Morneau	23568
Mr. Deltell	23568
Mr. Morneau	23568
Mr. Poilievre	23568
Mr. Morneau	23568
Mr. Poilievre	23568
Mr. Morneau	23568
Mr. Poilievre	23568
Mr. Morneau	23568
Indigenous Affairs	
Mr. Saganash	23568
Mrs. Philpott	23569
Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	23569
Mrs. Philpott	23569
News Media Industry	
Mr. Kent	23569
Mr. Rodriguez	23569
Mr. Kent	23569
Mr. Rodriguez	23569
Natural Resources	
Mrs. Stubbs	23569
Mr. Sohi	23570
Mrs. Stubbs	23570
Mr. Sohi	23570
Official Languages	
Mr. Choquette	23570
Ms. Joly	23570
Mr. Angus	23570
Ms. Joly	23570
Mr. Drouin	23570
Ms. Joly	23570
Privacy	
Mr. Godin	23571
Mr. Bains	23571
Mr. Gourde	23571
Mr. Bains	23571
Mr. Albas	23571
Mr. Bains	23571
Mr. Albas	23571
Mr. Bains	23571
Canada Post Corporation	
Ms. Mathysen	23571
Ms. Hajdu	23572

Agriculture and Agri-food	
Ms. Brosseau	23572
Mr. MacAulay	23572
National Defence	
Mr. Martel	23572
Mr. Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	23572
Mr. Bezan	23572
Mr. Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	23572
Finance	
Mr. G�n�reux	23572
Mr. Morneau	23572
International Development	
Mr. Fragiskatos	23573
Ms. Khera	23573
Public Services and Procurement	
Mr. Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—L�vis)	23573
Ms. Qualtrough	23573
Air Transportation	
Ms. Moore	23573
Mr. Garneau	23573
Public Safety	
Ms. Sahota	23573
Mr. Blair	23573
Agriculture and Agri-food	
Mr. Berthold	23573
Mr. MacAulay	23574
Health	
Mr. Fortin	23574
Ms. Petitpas Taylor	23574
Mr. Fortin	23574
Ms. Petitpas Taylor	23574
Natural Resources	
Mr. Weir	23574
Mr. Sohi	23574

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Government Response to Petitions	
Mr. Lamoureux	23575
Committees of the House	
Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities	
Mr. May (Cambridge)	23575
Public Accounts	
Mr. Sorenson	23575
Petitions	
Human Organ Trafficking	
Mr. Genuis	23575
Vision Care	
Ms. Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	23575
Canadian Heritage	
Mr. Aldag	23575
Human Organ Trafficking	
Mrs. Waganall	23576

Guaranteed Income Supplement	
Mr. MacGregor.....	23576
Fibromyalgia	
Mr. Sikand.....	23576
Seniors	
Mr. Warawa.....	23576
Pensions	
Mr. Warawa.....	23576
Canada Post	
Ms. Mathyssen.....	23576
Pensions	
Ms. Mathyssen.....	23576
Human Organ Trafficking	
Mr. Kent.....	23577
Taxation	
Ms. Boutin-Sweet.....	23577
Animal Cruelty	
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands).....	23577
Vision Care	
Mrs. Hughes.....	23577
Questions on the Order Paper	
Mr. Lamoureux.....	23577
Questions Passed as Orders for Returns	
Mr. Lamoureux.....	23580
Request for Emergency Debate	
French-language Services in Ontario	
Mr. Choquette.....	23583
Speaker's Ruling	
The Speaker.....	23584

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Business of Supply	
Opposition Motion—Finance	
Motion.....	23584
Mr. Sorbara.....	23584
Mr. Clarke.....	23587
Mr. Garrison.....	23587
Mr. MacKinnon.....	23588
Mr. Carrie.....	23588
Mr. Nantel.....	23588
Mr. Clarke.....	23589
Mr. Samson.....	23590
Mr. Nantel.....	23590
Mr. Brassard.....	23591
Mr. Gerretsen.....	23592
Mr. MacKinnon.....	23592
Ms. Rudd.....	23593

Mr. Deltell.....	23594
Ms. Boutin-Sweet.....	23595
Ms. Dabrusin.....	23595
Mr. Genuis.....	23595
Mr. Davies.....	23596
Mr. Godin.....	23596
Mr. Samson.....	23597
Ms. Boutin-Sweet.....	23598
Mr. Kitchen.....	23598
Mr. Tabbara.....	23599
Mr. Davies.....	23600
Mr. Shipley.....	23600
Mr. Fergus.....	23600
Mr. Deltell.....	23601
Mr. Davies.....	23602
Mr. Lamoureux.....	23602
Mr. Kelly.....	23602
Mr. Deltell.....	23603
Ms. Trudel.....	23604
Mr. Carrie.....	23604
Mr. Maguire.....	23604
Mr. Bagnell.....	23605
Mr. Nantel.....	23606
Division on motion deferred.....	23606
Criminal Code	
Bill C-75—Notice of time allocation motion	
Ms. Chagger.....	23606

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Organ and Tissue Donation	
Motion.....	23607
Mr. Lamoureux.....	23607
Mr. Albrecht.....	23607
Mr. Davies.....	23608
Mr. Oliver.....	23609
Mr. Genuis.....	23611
Mrs. Nassif.....	23612
Mr. Ayoub.....	23613
Division on motion deferred.....	23614

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship	
Ms. Malcolmson.....	23614
Mr. Leslie.....	23615
International Trade	
Ms. Ramsey.....	23615
Mr. Leslie.....	23616

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