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(HANSARD)

Tuesday, December 8, 2015

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, December 8, 2015

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed from December 7 consideration of the motion for an address to His Excellency the Governor General in reply to his speech at the opening of the session, and of the amendment and the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to continue the speech I started yesterday evening.

I will also make sure that community and social clubs and organizations get the support they need so they can keep making a positive contribution to our communities.

I want local organizations in my riding, such as the Daughters of Isabella, the Knights of Columbus, Afeas, women farmers, Scouts, and sports, cultural, and community organizations, to know that I will always be available to help and support them. Quality of life in our communities depends on local people working hard to create active, united and welcoming places to live.

I will also ensure that the government addresses agricultural issues, such as problems with managing milk protein coming into Canada. On this as on matters facing rural municipalities, the throne speech was silent. It made no mention of agriculture even though the problem is urgent and agriculture is both a key economic sector and vital to our national food security.

I will work tirelessly to hold the government to account for all the decisions it makes, because if there is one thing I learned during my time as mayor, it is that people want to be represented by officials who keep their promises, while also remaining within budget. They want a government that respects taxpayers' ability to pay, a government that has the tools and means to keep its citizens safe, and a government that works hard to create conditions favourable to the development of our communities.

That said, I have to admit that I am skeptical about the government's plan, if there is one, and I fear that in order to keep its promises, which seem a little unrealistic to me, it is going to have to increase the tax burden on Canadians, make cuts to essential services, or increase the debt, forcing us into recurring deficits. However, since I am a good sport, I will give the government a chance. It will be judged on the results it achieves.

A few weeks ago, I was honoured and privileged to be given the trust of my party's leader and to be appointed deputy critic in support of my colleague the hon. member for Durham, the critic for public safety and emergency preparedness. Again, there are a number of concerns in this area.

First, the fight against ISIS is currently one of the world's biggest security issues. However, while all of our allies are mobilizing, the government seems to be trivializing the situation, as evidenced the day after the election, when the Prime Minister announced the immediate withdrawal of our fighter jets from the coalition fight. I will continually ask the government to be accountable and to assure us that there are no flaws in its plan and that its soft military approach will not jeopardize our national security.

The same goes for welcoming Syrian refugees. The hon. member for Durham and I have already begun to scrutinize this file to ensure that the refugees are integrated properly and that security measures are not overlooked in order to allow the government to meet its deadline.

In the coming months and years, I will be continually working on this file because it will take several months and even years, not just the next few weeks as the government is suggesting, to integrate these refugees.

In terms of public safety, I really want to know how the government is going to go about keeping its promise to legalize and regulate marijuana, which I vigorously oppose. As the father of three wonderful teenagers and the former principal of one of the largest secondary schools in Quebec, I am truly convinced that the legalization of marijuana is not in any way a positive move for our country.

At a time when we are trying to cut health care costs by promoting healthy lifestyle choices, downplaying the effects of drugs and proposing they be legalized is not the solution. It would be a first for a G7 country to go down that road. I hope that when the Prime Minister says that "Canada is back", he is not using this type of initiative to supposedly enhance Canada's image.

Address

When will the government explain how it intends to proceed on this file? Canadians will have many questions for the government.

● (1010)

In closing, I would like to remind the government that Canadians want a government that is doing something about the economy, a government that will not offload deficits onto future generations, a government that manages the public purse responsibly and takes into account taxpayers' ability to pay, a government that is aware of environmental issues, and a government that keeps the public safe and works with our allies to eliminate the terrorist threat jeopardizing our safety.

This is a major challenge, and the opposition will be here, standing strong, over the next four years in order to ensure that the decisions that are made here are what is best for all Canadians.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from the member.

In concluding his speech, he talked about holding the government accountable for expenditures in regard to deficits. I am wondering what, in his opinion, has changed. When the Conservatives were in government, they had nothing but deficits, and that is the truth of the matter.

I wonder if he could explain why the Conservatives seem to have changed their attitude toward deficits. When they are in opposition, they seemed to be more concerned about deficits. Whereas when they were in government, they did not care about deficits because all they had were deficits.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes: Mr. Speaker, I think that my colleague opposite needs a crash course in economics.

When the Conservative government decided to create a deficit, there was a global economic crisis. Meanwhile, the government opposite is creating deficits when the economy is doing well.

The former Conservative government does not need any lessons in economics, and I hope that the government opposite acts responsibly and does not offload a deficit onto future generations when our economy is doing well and we have money in the bank.

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can certainly appreciate when members on the government side throw arrows at the previous government's record. Liberals do not seem to understand, and I think the member does, that eventually history repeats itself.

Liberal governments have spent profusely—deficit spending—which eventually caught up to them. Economic growth was put at risk because they cut provincial transfers to provinces.

The previous government took a different way. Right now, there is no recession. Economic growth is not as strong as we would like, but the government is proposing to spend a lot of money.

I would ask the member if he thinks, in view of the fact that the Liberals have said they will spend at least \$10 billion, possibly more, that is the right way for Canada to go.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes: Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, that is clearly not the right way to go.

I firmly believe that Canadians did not vote in the last election thinking that it would be a great idea to create deficits when the economy is doing well.

I still believe that we need to tighten our belts. We need to be careful about our spending. Canadians are the ones who know what is best for them. A bigger government is not good for our economy. It is in everyone's best interest to give as much money as we can back to taxpayers.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my Conservative colleague on his first speech in the House of Commons. Congratulations. It was an excellent speech.

I also want to take a moment to thank the people of Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for putting their trust in me a second time. It is a great honour.

This is just our second day back to work in the House after the Liberal government was elected, and the Minister of Finance is already having to backtrack on his promises.

They told us that the tax changes would not cost anything. They wanted to play Robin Hood. Now it is clear that they thought they could use magic. The tax cut that will benefit only the wealthiest among the middle class will end up costing \$1.2 billion, even though it was not supposed to cost a thing, and that is on top of their proposed \$10-billion deficit.

What does my colleague think about the Liberal government's backtracking on taxes?

● (1015)

Mr. Alain Rayes: Mr. Speaker, I want to salute my colleague, with whom I had a few squabbles during the election campaign. However, I am extremely proud of the question he is asking me.

I completely agree with him. I think that the party in power right now told some lies to the public during the election campaign. We are already hearing the same old tune: a party gets elected and things are not as they were originally promised.

The Liberals need to step up. They claim to want to be a non-partisan government that works for Canadians. I urge them to do their homework and stop suggesting all kinds of things to the public, to stop assuring them that public finances are healthy, and to avoid deficits. I think that even the \$2-billion figure is way out of date.

The government needs to maintain a zero deficit, so that Canadians do not end up passing this burden on to future generations.

Address

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as this is my first speech in the House, I would like to express my gratitude to the people of Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan for the trust they have placed in me.

I want to give particular thanks to my parents. Today, my father is celebrating his 60th birthday. “Happy birthday, Pop”.

Also, I especially thank my wife, Rebecca, and our children, Gianna and Judah, for their love and support. I think that practising speeches with my two-year-old heckling me about her desire for a snack is pretty good practice for speaking in the House. Judah was born less than two weeks before the campaign started and so it has been a busy time for our family. My wife, Rebecca, has already sacrificed far more than I have to make this possible.

I am very conscious as I stand here today of the sacrifices that were made by my parents and grandparents to give us the best they could in life. In that vein, I will start my speech by talking about the experience of my maternal grandmother, the greatest influence on my life outside of my parents, and someone whose experience is particularly relevant to one of the debates we are having.

My grandmother was a refugee. She was born in Germany in 1930, the daughter of a Jewish father and a gentile mother. Hitler came to power in 1933 when she was three years old. She and her mother left Germany for South America in 1948 when she was 18, after a childhood that, frankly, was not a childhood at all. She met my grandfather in Ecuador, a Canadian engineer who was working for Syncrude, which explains how they ended up in Alberta.

All members in the House from all parties are deeply moved by the plight of refugees, myself in particular because of my family's experience. Therefore, out of genuine concern for those affected by the unfolding tragedy in Syria and Iraq, and also out of concern for our own national well-being, we must ask the current government hard questions about its refugee policy.

How will the Liberals ensure that the most vulnerable refugees, members of religious and ethnic minority communities who often can't get access to refugee camps, are actually included?

How is the government going to ensure that it is only victims of violence and not perpetrators of violence who are coming to Canada? Profiling on the basis of gender and sexual orientation is not a reliable way to screen out extremists.

Most essentially, given the proportions of the current unfolding crisis, how is the government proposing to deal with the root cause, the ongoing civil war, and the emergence and growth of Daesh? People on the ground, members of diaspora communities, and all Canadians want to understand what the government is actually thinking here and why.

The Liberals say that sending fighter jets is not the best thing and that Canada can instead contribute in other ways. Really? Of course, Canada can contribute in other ways, but our bombing mission against Daesh has been extremely effective at reducing the amount of territory it controls. This sort of mission is, after all, the reason we have an air force, to protect ourselves and to project our values, and to use military force to protect innocent women, children, and men.

Now is a good time to re-ask a question that was asked and not answered in the lead-up to the election. If not now against Daesh, then what possible case is there in which the current government would ever authorize military action?

The Liberals say that they are withdrawing from the bombing mission because it was an election promise, but they have not been shy about breaking other election promises. They promised that 25,000 government-sponsored refugees would arrive before the end of the year. However, now they will only be admitting 10,000, and most of them will be privately sponsored. Their justification for breaking this promise was that they wanted to get it right. It is no small irony, in light of many of the comments made during the campaign, that getting it right meant abandoning their refugee targets and coming close to adopting ours.

However, if getting it right was the justification for shelving the government's refugee promise, we would humbly suggest that the Liberals also get it right in the fight against Daesh and stand behind an effective military mission that actually defends the defenceless.

• (1020)

We need to be welcoming refugees in a responsible and effective manner. What refugees in the region want, even more than to come to Canada, is to have a country that is livable again.

What is the real reason for the government's planned non-response to an unfolding problem of violence against the innocent? It has yet to give any explanation for its planned withdrawal other than the clearly very thin arguments already mentioned. I do not think its response would have satisfied my grandmother or any other refugee of past or present conflicts. I do not think it will satisfy the 25,000 we may eventually take, and it certainly will not satisfy the millions who will be left behind.

At the root of this practical question is a moral question, a question about the kind of people we are and about whose lives we think are worth fighting for. Neville Chamberlain, the arch defender of appeasement, said in 1938:

How horrible, fantastic, incredible it is, that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas-masks here, because of a quarrel in a faraway country between people of whom we know nothing...

“People faraway of whom we know nothing”. At the time, my grandmother was just eight years old.

Address

On this side of the House we believe that the lives of the people of Iraq and Syria matter. The lives of the 25,000 we may eventually take and of the millions who will be left behind matter. It is not important how far away they are, they share a common humanity with each of us. What is implicit and consistent across many different contexts in the statements of the appeasers, the non-interventionists, and of those mealy-mouthed “in-betweeners” who pursue the same policies without giving their reasons is the implication that those in the immediate path of an evil power do not matter enough for us to bother getting involved. Even if, to our shame, we wish to look away, the menace still spreads.

After World War II many people said of the Holocaust, “if only we had known, we would have done more”. When it comes to Daesh, we know. We have genocide in progress, live broadcast over the Internet. We would not be worthy of the name civilization if we chose to do nothing about it. No good person likes a fight but the lives and security of Yazidis, Christians, Kurds, Turkmen, Shia Muslims, and other groups in the path of Daesh, the 25,000 we may eventually take, and the millions left behind are worth fighting for.

It is a great honour to serve in the Parliament of such a great nation. I quoted Neville Chamberlain on his case for disengagement so I will balance that out with a quote from Winston Churchill who said, “The price of greatness is responsibility”. I urge the government to take that seriously. We are and we remain a great nation, a nation that need not come back because it never left. When it comes to doing its part, we are a nation that has never before turned away from responsibility.

• (1025)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we just went through a fairly lengthy campaign and during that campaign Canadians were told by the leader of the Liberal Party that if his party formed government it would pull the F-18s out of the situation overseas. There is a second progressive party inside the House of Commons and I understand that its approach to what was taking place was similar to the Liberal Party's approach. An overwhelming majority of Canadians see that Canada can and should play a role. Where they differ from the Conservative Party is that the Conservatives believe that the F-18 is and has to be a role for the Canadian Forces.

Would the member not agree that, if a promise is made during a national election campaign in which an individual is rewarded with a majority government, it is expected that the individual would fulfill that promise and that promise was to pull the F-18s out? Would the member not agree that the Prime Minister should fulfill the commitment he made to Canadians on October 19?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, it would seem that the member has different expectations of the Minister of Foreign Affairs than he does of the Minister of Finance or the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

We heard yesterday that the government is not planning on following through with its promise with respect to deficits and it is not planning on following through with its promise with respect to refugee numbers. The government was wrong on those things during the campaign and it is wrong now. I am happy to defend, on a principle basis, the arguments that I have made.

If the hon. member wants to govern based on the polls, he only needs to look at the public opinion polls on this issue, because a majority of Canadians on this particular issue definitely side with us.

With respect to the bomber mission, we need to fight Daesh. To stop it, we must fight it. It is great to be behind the lines providing training as that is an important part of it, but if we are not willing to step up and fight for what is right, then we are not taking the responsibility we should.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on being elected and on his first speech. That first speech is always a bit unnerving, as is answering questions afterward.

More people have been joining ISIS, or ISIL, in the past few years. The more bombs we drop, the more terrorists there are. Naturally, people get mad when bombs are dropped on them, so more and more of them join the terrorists.

A few years ago, the Conservative minister went to Iraq with my former colleague, Paul Dewar. Iraq was asking for humanitarian aid, not military assistance, but military assistance was what we provided.

The logic is hard to follow. People ask for humanitarian aid, but we give them military assistance, which helps to swell the terrorists' ranks.

Does my colleague follow that logic?

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me correct the record. The foreign minister for the Kurdish government was in Canada less than two weeks ago and was very clear about his belief that the bombing mission is very important, that the air support provided by western nations is important for helping protect Kurdish and other allied forces on the ground.

It is strange logic to say that, because ISIS has managed to recruit fighters at the same time as bombing has happened, we should stop bombing and then hopefully recruitment will stop. Let me be clear that the bombing mission has significantly reduced the amount of territory it controls.

The goal here is to defeat Daesh. That is what we are trying to do, and Canada needs to be part of taking responsibility for that. Once it is defeated, there will be no more recruits.

• (1030)

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Oakville North—Burlington.

Before I deliver my maiden speech for this parliamentary session, I would like to congratulate you on your recent appointment as Deputy Speaker of the House. I know that you will be a positive force for this chamber and for the work we do for our constituents across Canada. I am sure the constituents of Simcoe North are proud to see you in the chair.

I also want to thank the residents of Surrey—Newton for once again putting their trust and faith in me to represent them in the House of Commons as their member of Parliament. I proudly served as a member of Parliament from 2006 to 2011. I am honoured to be back and to be able to work hard on behalf of my constituents for the next four years.

I also want to pay tribute to my late father, Sardar Hardial Singh Dhaliwal, who passed away on September 28, three weeks prior to election night. I want to thank the health care professionals and support staff at Fraser Health for their compassionate care. My father, Hardial Singh Dhaliwal, and my mother, Amarjit Kaur Dhaliwal, are the reason I can stand here today as a proud Canadian serving as a member of Parliament in the name of public service. I say to my mom and dad, “I love you.”

The Speech from the Throne is a clear signal to Canada and the world that this government is taking a different approach to governance. The release of mandate letters for every minister was an early sign that this government is not afraid of public scrutiny. We believe we must earn the trust of Canadians. Never before have such detailed policy agendas been released for every Canadian to read. We have an ambitious road ahead, and we want Canadians to be able to hold us accountable.

The Speech from the Throne further demonstrates the trust this government puts in Canadians. This government's key message to the country is this: together, through open collaboration, Canada has no limits.

I want to highlight two key themes that demonstrate the Liberal government's new approach: democratic reform and collaborative governance.

Let me begin with democratic reform. Changing the culture of Ottawa means that we must do things differently to live up to the expectations of Canadians. The Speech from the Throne detailed a number of initiatives in support of this goal.

Senate reform will ensure that the red chamber is no longer a place that hosts patronage appointments. The Prime Minister will be advised by a new advisory board that will look for candidates based on merit. The Senate's sober second thought will once again be about the greater good, not partisan game playing.

This government will also proceed on electoral reform. The 2015 campaign will be the last conducted under the first-past-the-post electoral system, which is an exciting step toward modernizing future elections.

Last, but just as important, the way Ottawa functions will change dramatically. This Liberal government will end the use of taxpayer dollars for partisan advertising, and it will promote more open debate and free votes in the House of Commons, so that all members of Parliament can best represent their constituents.

Address

● (1035)

These are real changes that will help restore the public's faith in our political institutions, traditions, and most importantly, the representatives they send to Ottawa.

The second thing that sent a very loud message to Canadians was the path toward collaborative government. This was another change by our Prime Minister, to value other voices in the spirit of working together.

We will be governing on the belief that a strong and growing middle class is central to a healthy economy. Consideration for the lives of Canada's middle class, and those working hard to join it, guides our key priorities. Implementing middle-class tax cuts, introducing the new Canada child care benefits, investing heavily in public transit and green infrastructure, and strengthening employment insurance are all designed to ensure most Canadians have a fair and real chance to succeed.

We are also beginning a new era of working together with the provinces, the territorial governments, and the municipalities across the country. This means that we are going to be talking regularly with the premiers through first ministers meetings and frequently consulting with the municipal leaders on infrastructure investment. Our government is not going to operate as an island. We cannot do this alone.

We recognize that diversity is our strength and working together is our future. Our government is renewing a nation-to-nation relationship with indigenous people. It is launching a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, and it will be strengthening our first nations' education.

We will also be changing the immigration system to strengthen families and create economic opportunities for new Canadians and small businesses alike.

Our government recognizes that Canada's place in the world is founded upon engagement. When our Prime Minister states that Canada is back, we are taking real steps to demonstrate this internationally. Countries from across the globe are already taking notice, and they are happy that their partnerships with Canada will be fostered and strengthened by our government.

In conclusion, I would like to send a message to my constituents in Surrey—Newton. These two themes of openness and collaboration are also backed at the local level. This means that I always have, and will remain, highly accessible to the people of Surrey—Newton, and my staff is working hard every day to address key issues and concerns. Most importantly, I will always put my constituents' voices ahead of all other considerations. This has been the foundation of my history as an MP, and now it is strengthened by serving under our Prime Minister, who recognizes that working for our constituents as a number one priority is key to him and to all of us and to all Canadians, who have elected 338 of us to represent them.

Address

I am truly humbled to be back, representing the amazing riding of Surrey—Newton. I would like to again thank the people of Surrey—Newton for giving me this opportunity. I would also like to thank all the volunteers and the team that worked so hard for my election. I would also like to congratulate the other three candidates who put their names forward but were not able to make it to the House of Commons.

• (1040)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I just want to convey my condolences to the member for Surrey—Newton. We all draw strength from our parents, and I am sorry to hear about the passing of his father.

As a fellow British Columbian, I am very happy to ask this question. This gentleman actually wanted to run provincially a few years ago under Premier Christy Clark's Liberal government. Premier Clark has mentioned that one of the biggest priorities of British Columbia to enhance the wealth and prosperity of all British Columbians is to secure a new softwood lumber agreement. The member has said that he takes great pride in the fact that the government has made its mandate letters open. In none of the mandate letters is there any mention of a softwood lumber agreement. Either it is not on the government's radar or there was an omission.

I would simply ask the member this. Will he work with all members of Parliament, particularly from British Columbia where securing a softwood lumber agreement is vital to the interest of British Columbia, to make representations to the ministers of the crown, establishing that securing a new softwood lumber agreement is vital to the interests and prosperity of British Columbians?

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member from British Columbia for his will to work together with other members from British Columbia to ensure that British Columbia is represented well here in Ottawa.

I want to remind the member that when I was in the House of Commons in the last term I was a member of the international trade committee and had an opportunity to travel across the globe. The Liberal government believes in free trade and free trade agreements. I am certain that the Minister of International Trade will work hard to put British Columbians in a place they deserve, and I will work hard with other members of the British Columbia team to secure the best that British Columbia deserves.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his speech and thank him for it.

Throne speeches are always an interesting read because of all the things they include. They are also interesting because of the things they leave out. The new Liberal government's throne speech left a few things out, including three words, two concepts: "social housing" and "poverty". The only mention of poverty in the Liberal government's throne speech had to do with fighting poverty abroad, as though poor people here in Canada and Quebec had suddenly disappeared.

Can my colleague give us some specifics about the plan to help poor families in Quebec and British Columbia and across Canada?

[*English*]

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for his second day in the House and for putting this question forward.

I am certain that the member is very well aware that this government is going to put \$125 billion in infrastructure, green infrastructure, and that a certain amount of dollars is reserved for social housing.

When it comes to poverty, this government is going to help middle-class families and also bring in child care benefits for families that need these the most, which will help poverty disappear. I am as committed as the member on the other side to bringing everyone to prosperity.

• (1045)

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak today for the first time in the House of Commons. It is an honour and a privilege to be the very first member of Parliament for Oakville North—Burlington, and I thank my constituents for the trust they have placed in me.

I would like to thank the member for Milton for representing the Halton riding, which is now part of my riding. I would also like to recognize my colleague from Oakville, who has joined me here today.

I congratulate my colleagues on all sides of the House for their election, particularly those like me, who are here for the very first time. I look forward to working with them over the years.

I am hopeful that a new era of respect and civility will dawn in this Parliament and that the democratic reforms that will be coming forward will go a long way to making this a truly great Parliament. In my riding, residents share my desire for respect for all points of view.

I would like to thank my son, Fraser, without whom I would not be standing here, not only for all that he has done to work alongside me from when he was very young, but also because I have always looked to him as the future of my community and country. I have been inspired to take a longer vision of issues so that I can ensure that he has a clean environment and a healthy and vibrant community and country in which to raise his own children someday.

To the rest of my family, Taylor, Jill, Rob, Bayley, Betty, and Mitchell, and to my wonderful friends, I give thanks for their love and support. Those no longer here, my mom and especially my dad, and Max Khan, remain in my heart always.

This government was given a clear mandate to make real change happen, and happen in a way that includes Canadians, all levels of government, business, our indigenous people, and other stakeholders. Already, we are seeing collaboration in a way that is inspiring Canadians. This level of co-operation will be needed to tackle the complex issues that we will be dealing with over the coming years.

Address

I have always said that what is good for the environment is good for the economy and for our health. Taking action on climate change and our environment by investing in clean technology and working in partnership to reduce our carbon footprint will make Canada a leader in the world. Listening to the Governor General read the Speech from the Throne, I was delighted to hear him talk about how a clean environment and strong economy go hand in hand.

Examples in my community include the Burlington Chamber of Commerce, whose climate change adaptation strategy for Canada, which called on the federal government to develop and implement a national strategy on climate change adaptation, was adopted this year by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. Oakville Hydro jumped into renewable energy. Why? It did so because it is good for the bottom line. Leadership from the federal government will motivate other levels of government, businesses, and individual Canadians, who need to be partners in this journey, to tackle climate change.

Oakville North—Burlington is largely an urban riding, but it is blessed with abundant green space. It has extensive trails, Bronte Creek Provincial Park, and Glenorchy Conservation Area. The preservation of this green space and the growth of our urban tree canopy is of great importance to residents.

Many in my riding are young families, who will benefit the most from our tax cut for the middle class and the new Canada child benefit. I am a proud advocate for public transit and alternative means of transportation, both walking and, of course, cycling. Moving people away from single occupancy automobile use is good for everyone. Our investment in public transit will help to make the kind of behavioural change that we must make going forward. Many in my riding commute, and public transit will get people home faster and allow families in my riding to spend more time together.

I know only too well from my work on the Oakville Town Council that municipal governments need a federal partner on infrastructure projects. They need one that will work with them to invest in our communities, protect our assets, and grow our economy.

In 2012, I met two teenagers from my riding, Emma and Julia Mogus, who founded Books With No Bounds. Their dream was to send 500 books to their brothers and sisters in the north. Their passion for youth in the Nishnawbe Aski Nation inspired me to mentor them, and today they have sent close to 100,000 books, school supplies, and other necessities to first nations youth. As I heard the Governor General talk about working with first nations so that every first nations child receives a quality education, I knew that Emma and Julia shared my hope for the future of our friends in Fort Severn and all NAN communities.

● (1050)

I look forward to today's announcement by the minister on our missing and murdered indigenous women.

Our young people, like Emma, Julia, and so many more, are not just the leaders of tomorrow. They are leaders today. Moreover, our seniors built this country and bring a wealth of wisdom, and our veterans have served our great country so that I can stand here today to speak in this institution. We need to work side by side, each one of us, to move our country forward.

I represent a riding that is growing. We are proud of the diversity that growth brings. Youth, seniors, all cultures and religions, those with varying intellectual and physical abilities, those who are new to Canada, new to Oakville and Burlington, and those who grew up here all share one thing: our desire to be the best we can be, not just for ourselves, but for our children and grandchildren.

One in five young people suffers from mental health issues. We lack the resources to deal with this and we need to remove the stigma.

We have an epidemic of autism in our country, and we must recognize that doing nothing is not an option.

People living with devastating diseases, such as ALS, like my friend Tim Robertson, face not only emotional and physical challenges, but also financial hardship for them and their family, and these can be devastating.

There will be opportunities to look at ways to help these people. We must explore all options. Our work with our provincial partners to negotiate a new health accord will be critical, particularly with an aging population.

I am proud of the work of the Halton InterFaith Council, Terra Firma Halton, our Halton regional chair, the mayors of Oakville and Burlington and their respective councils, the Halton Multicultural Council, the Oakville Community Foundation, and too many others to name, which have shown leadership in welcoming Syrian refugees to our community.

As a former municipal councillor, our commitment to investments in public transit, green infrastructure, and social infrastructure is most welcome. I have seen first-hand the challenges that municipalities face on these issues. Oakville North—Burlington is a caring, compassionate community, one that values helping others. The need for affordable housing has never been greater. I look forward to working with Halton region and groups like Habitat for Humanity Halton, so that everyone in our community is able to have a safe and affordable place to live. With our investment in social infrastructure and by working with stakeholders and our provincial and municipal partners, we can work to end the cycle of poverty. We need to ensure that our young people can afford to stay in our communities and not be forced to move away.

I have had the pleasure of working with the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 793 and LIUNA. I applaud the important role they will play in training our young people and providing them with the skills they need to succeed in a changing workplace.

Address

We face a skills shortage in Canada. This is another area where we need to work in partnership with the provinces and stakeholders, such as the operating engineers and LIUNA.

Small and medium-sized businesses are the drivers of our Canadian economy, and the Burlington Oakville chambers of commerce are their voice in our communities. I have had the great pleasure of working with the Oakville chamber on a number of issues, and I look forward to growing my relationship with the Burlington chamber. Both the Burlington and Oakville chambers are leaders in mental health in the workplace, which is an issue they recognize as not only important for their employees, but also good for business and good for our community.

While physically located outside the boundaries of Oakville North—Burlington, Ford of Canada's assembly plant and head office in Oakville are of vital importance to Oakville, the surrounding area, and Ontario. Ford of Canada makes a significant investment in our community. Its employees, through Unifor Local 707, are one of the largest contributors to the United Way and, through the United Way, to groups like Big Brothers Big Sisters of Halton, and so many others that make a difference in the lives of Halton residents.

Our National Day of Mourning, organized by a Ford employee, Tim Batke, through the Oakville District Labour Council, ensures that our community not only remember those who died in the workplace, but also reminds everyone about the importance of workplace safety.

As I stand here today, I think of those who came before, in the House, including in particular, Jack Burghardt, the former member of Parliament for London West for whom I worked here in Ottawa and whose values and beliefs about respect, fairness, and public service guide me to this day.

I am proud to be part of this 42nd Parliament that will make a real change happen for Canadians, particularly those I represent. I will take Terry Fox's words to heart, as I always do: "anything's possible if you try; dreams are made possible if you try."

• (1055)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the new member for Oakville North—Burlington, for her speech. I was paying attention, and I want her to know that my riding has very similar concerns to her riding. Oshawa has a big automotive industry as part of our community, and it has been part of our history.

One of the concerns I have is that in the auto industry, as the member knows, we have to be competitive with northern U.S. states. There was absolutely nothing in the Speech from the Throne for manufacturing, and nothing for the auto sector.

Ontario has lost over 300,000 manufacturing jobs. Manufacturers would say that one of the reasons is the high energy rates, which the member's provincial partners have raised to the highest industrial rates for electricity in North America. The member's party wants to put in new payroll taxes and introduce a carbon tax that will make us less competitive.

When will the member's party be putting forth a strategy, an auto action plan, to offset some of these anti-competitive policies that are putting jobs at risk?

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Speaker, the member is absolutely right that the auto industry is as important to his riding as it is to our area.

I look forward to our government working in partnership with the auto manufacturers, the auto parts manufacturers, and others, to ensure that these industries can succeed. I am looking forward to working with my colleague from Oakville to ensure that Ford Canada remains viable. It is very important to me.

I look forward to hearing from the member, and working with him as well, to see how we can best make this happen.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very proud to be able to say "Madam Speaker" and I applaud your appointment to the position. I would like to take a moment to thank the voters of Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot for putting their trust in me. When you arrive in this honourable place, you realize what a privilege it is to be a member of the House of Commons and to represent them.

Speaking of the duty of representation, I want to thank my colleague for talking about the importance of the environment for our communities. Like my colleague, I also worked at the municipal level for six years. I was a city councillor in Saint-Hyacinthe and chair of the environmental advisory committee. My experience taught me that achieving positive environmental results requires a clear action plan.

I want to ask my colleague whether her government plans to set clear objectives to fight climate change.

[*English*]

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Speaker, I am sure the hon. member enjoyed her time on municipal council as much as I did.

I am very proud to be part of this government, which is recognizing the importance of dealing with climate change and the environment. It was one of the reasons that I put my name forward to run for federal politics.

I am proud of where I see our government going, and I look forward to working with the hon. member to deal with climate change to ensure that our environment is healthy and vibrant for future generations.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, congratulations on your recent appointment.

With respect to some of the commitments the member mentioned were in the throne speech, I look forward to seeing the government following through on them. Of course, there were some great commitments in the red book in 1993, and a government with 13 years that did not follow through on them.

For the benefit of Canadians, could the member explain how her government is going to be different from the Liberal government of the nineties and how it will keep its promises?

Address

● (1100)

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Speaker, I, too, will join in congratulating you. It is wonderful to see a woman sitting in the Speaker's chair.

I like to look forward; I do not like to look backwards, and I expect our government to be looking forward.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Cariboo—Prince George.

This is the first time that I have had the opportunity to stand for a speech in the 42nd Parliament, and I want to thank the constituents of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo for having the faith and trusting me to come back to represent them in Ottawa. I thank my constituents.

This was an 11-week campaign, and every person in the House could talk about someone who is 86-years-old who came in every day to help, or students who came in after classes and knocked on doors with us. Again, without those volunteers, we could never do what we do in terms of moving forward. It really speaks to the commitment and passion that these volunteers have for who they support.

Most of all, I have to thank my husband Gord. As he drives me throughout the riding, he tells everyone he is my volunteer driver. However, I want to say publicly for the record that he is so much more than that, and I thank him also.

We are speaking to the Speech from the Throne, and the speech has been noted for what it is missing. To be quite frank, there are so many things missing in the speech that are of critical importance to British Columbia that I do not see any way that we can possibly support it. Let me talk about what is important to the riding I represent, which has had no mention, no notice.

Agriculture does exist in Canada, and it is of critical importance. It has no mention. The only thing that is mentioned about natural resources is perhaps going to put more uncertainty into the process. We worked very hard to create certainty around time frames, around expectations, and, again, we have created a very uncertain circumstance. Softwood lumber is absolutely critical to British Columbia. We need to find a solution. We need to move forward on that file. It is not mentioned.

The Asia-Pacific gateway is critical for all of Canada, not just British Columbia. It is an important economic driver. There is no notice of that, and barely a word in terms of some of the most important trade agreements that this country is going to have the opportunity to participate in, both the trans-Pacific partnership and the European trade agreement.

There are some 60,000 jobs, direct and indirect, that have been lost in Alberta and our neighbour communities, and there is no recognition that we have some areas of our economy that are critically important. We need to have some focus on them.

The Liberals talked about and campaigned on a tax break. Apparently this tax break was going to be revenue neutral. We would tax the rich more and give it the middle class. We are not going to help the people who are the poorest, but we are going to help the

people who earn up to \$200,000. Then yesterday, it was, oops, we made a \$1.2 billion miscalculation. It is significant, important, and it speaks to the fiscal discipline that is being shown.

Not all in the speech is bad, and I do want to recognize a few areas that are important. Our leader has tasked me with the role of official critic for indigenous affairs. First of all, I want to congratulate the new minister and the parliamentary secretary. We have incredibly important work that we need to do on this file. The speech did have some important focus in that area, and we support and need to move forward in terms of the education system. Again, that was perhaps one of the positives in the speech, though the government is going to have to flesh out some of those concepts.

There were some concepts in the speech, and I want to speak directly to what some of them were. I am going to quote:

...the government will undertake to renew, nation-to-nation, the relationship between Canada and indigenous peoples — one based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation and partnership.

● (1105)

Certainly the concepts of respect, rights, co-operation, and partnership are important, but we are hearing language, the nation-to-nation language, and I think we need to flesh that out. I have talked to indigenous people in my riding and across the country, and I have spoken to many of them. Nation-to-nation has not been legally defined. I think we have a concept of what nation-to-nation means, but every person I talked to felt it meant something different. It will be incumbent upon the government to say what nation-to-nation means, but also what it does not mean.

The minister has to describe whether it means the royal commission. It talked about recognizing 50 nations. Is that what it means, or does it mean a nation-to-nation relationship with every band in the country? Some people think it means sovereignty; others think it means something different. It will be absolutely important to put meaning to the language. Language is very important in this Parliament, and we must describe what that will mean.

Today, I understand we will be hearing some very important news in terms of where we will go with the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls in Canada. Everyone in this House knows that situation is totally unacceptable. It is tragic. Our hearts break with every story that we hear.

I will acknowledge that in the past our position was that we need to move forward with action. There are programs and services that work and will make a real difference.

We accept that many across this country believe that an inquiry is required, and our leader has offered full support for this inquiry. However, the inquiry has to provide peace and resolution to the families. How the inquiry is structured and the impact of the inquiry in terms of what it accomplishes will be absolutely critical.

I asked the minister a question yesterday. When the initial report from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was tabled, within one hour the then leader of the third party, now the Prime Minister, committed to implementing every single one of the 94 recommendations. There was full commitment for implementation.

Address

I asked the minister what the cost would be because it is important for us to analyze every one of those recommendations. What does the recommendation actually do? What will the recommendation cost? The minister responded that it was important that we not cherry-pick and that there is merit to the 94 recommendations.

I think there were some excellent recommendations from that inquiry. I believe we will not agree with every one of the 94 recommendations, but if the government is to move ahead with them, each one needs to be costed and shared with Parliament.

Again, I congratulate the government on the focus. We do need to look at what we are doing, where we are going, how we are doing it, and committing to the new relationship. Many of the leaders in aboriginal communities are very optimistic, but rhetoric needs to lead to reality. We need to make sure that there is not disappointment again.

Canadians need to know the meaning of many of these definitions, and they need to know the cost. In conclusion, I cannot see that we will be able to support this because there are so many gaps, but there are elements that I think are important. However, we certainly need a lot more details around them as we move on.

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ramez Ayoub (Thérèse-De Blainville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague across the aisle for her speech.

Your party supports holding a public inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women. How long have you and your party supported such an inquiry?

We have been talking about it for the past 10 years, and you were formerly in power. Since when have you supported that inquiry?

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Madam Speaker, I sat on the special committee that looked into this issue for a year, and it saw 40-plus reports. Every one of those reports had important recommendations. The committee heard about prevention programs that were working in communities and from the families on what they wanted the criminal justice system to provide for them regarding answers and how they interacted with the criminal justice system.

Members of the committee absolutely believed that we needed to move forward in dealing with this critical issue. We felt action was appropriate. Clearly, Canadians from across the country believe there are some unanswered questions that an inquiry would answer, and the leader of my party has indicated she will give unconditional support to an inquiry.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo on her re-election. She has been a very strong advocate for her area and also for the Conservative Party, and I appreciate all of her hard work.

Speaking of hard work, I know my riding of Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola depends heavily on forestry. In Princeton, Merritt, and West Kelowna, forestry companies are the largest private employers, and they are concerned about two things.

Provincially, there is how the allocation of the timber supply will go. Our role here is somewhat different, but they are concerned about a softwood lumber agreement, or the lack thereof.

Could the member please describe the importance of having a softwood lumber agreement, not just to her riding but to the wealth and prosperity of British Columbians?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Madam Speaker, the premier of British Columbia indicated throughout the election campaign and after the election took place how critical this was for the economy of British Columbia and for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

I was first elected in 2008 and one of the first things the Conservative government did, after it was elected in 2006, was reach a conclusion in reaching an agreement with the Americans on this critical issue.

Again, I know in the past that the Liberals let this file slide for years. Conservatives got it done as soon as they were given the mandate. I would ask the Liberal government to please make it a priority. I was really disappointed to see it missing from the mandate letter of the minister. It is critical for British Columbia. Let us make it a priority.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, during the throne speech, the government mentioned that it wants to help students pursuing a post-secondary education.

Given that post-secondary education, and education in general, is a provincial jurisdiction, how does the federal government plan to do that without encroaching on Quebec's jurisdictions? Does it plan, for example, to transfer money directly to the Quebec government?

• (1115)

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Madam Speaker, that question would be more appropriately put to a government member.

Certainly, during the campaign, there were some commitments around supporting the education system in general. The Conservative government was always very respectful of provincial jurisdiction. Again, I would welcome hearing more from the government on that issue.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo for sharing her time with me today.

First, I would like to thank my constituents of Cariboo—Prince George for putting their trust in me.

I congratulate all of my hon. colleagues in the House. In addition, I congratulate you, Madam Speaker, on your nomination.

I would like to acknowledge the efforts of my team in all of our communities, because without them, I know I would not be here today.

Address

I would also like to take a moment to acknowledge my daughters Kaitlyn, Kassi, Jordan, and my son Joshua for their continued support. I would also like to take a moment to acknowledge my wife, Kelly.

I am incredibly proud to call the Cariboo—Prince George riding home. I proudly champion my region in pursuit of trade and tourism opportunities all over the world.

The Cariboo—Prince George riding encompasses almost 84,000 square kilometres, from Vanderhoof, the town that would not wait, to the home of the world-famous Williams Lake Stampede, to the mountains and valleys of the great Chilcotin where people look one in the eye and say hello. When they ask “How are you doing?”, they generally care.

We have the first mosque in northern British Columbia and the second-highest population of first nations. Our friends and families are true examples of the can-do, never-accept-no pioneer spirit, which means we get the job done no matter the adversity we face.

The year of 2015 has not only provided a new member of Parliament for the first time in 22 years, but also allowed us to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the city of Prince George. We showcased our region to the nation in hosting the 2015 Canada Winter Games, the largest multi-sport and cultural event for youth in Canada. We are celebrating the 25th anniversary of the university in the north and for the north, the University of Northern British Columbia, which is Canada's number one university for its size. We proudly proclaim that the very first Dominion Day ever celebrated was in the world heritage site and gold rush town of Barkerville.

We have both opportunities and challenges that have national importance. The Cariboo—Prince George riding is also home to names that most in this room will also be familiar with: northern gateway, Highway of Tears, New Prosperity, Mount Polley, and the Tsilhqot'in land claims decision.

Cariboo—Prince George is a riding chock-full of clean rivers, streams and thousands of lakes. Our region is known for world-class hunting and fishing. Yet again, not one mention of the tourism industry was mentioned in the Speech from the Throne.

As the economies of our small communities go, so does the economy of our nation. Our nation is dependent on resource development and our economy is predicated on the trade of the commodities we produce.

The Minister of International Trade last week announced that it was not her job to promote trade. Whose job is it?

Our region has been the economic engine of the province of British Columbia, just as western Canada has been the economic engine of our country. However, the Speech from the Throne has failed to mention any of the industries that are core drivers of our national economy.

Today we sit without a softwood lumber agreement, meaning more instability in an already uncertain industry. Forestry is critical to the riding of Cariboo—Prince George. Directly and indirectly, approximately 170,000 forest sector jobs exist in B.C. alone.

British Columbia is the world's largest exporter of softwood. Our nation and some of North America's largest forestry companies have been built on the backs of friends and families from my region. Yet despite our best efforts to diversify, the industries of forestry, farming and mining continue to be the lifeblood of our region's economy.

Investment in transit will not create jobs in my riding. This will not create the economic stability our region is looking for. The Speech from the Throne fails to recognize or even acknowledge the industries that support rural Canadians. In fact, by the sounds of it, our new Prime Minister is taking a page from the old Liberal playbook by shutting the door on economic development in the west entirely.

For generations my constituents have been dependent on these industries to put food on their table for their families. Let me put this into perspective. B.C.'s agriculture and agri-food sectors employ almost 60,000 people. It generates approximately \$11.6 billion in annual revenue.

• (1120)

The importance of agriculture and agri-food to our national interest cannot be overstated. Canada is one of the world's largest agricultural producers and exporters, yet the government has failed to recognize the agriculture industry.

My riding is adjacent to my colleague's riding of Skeena—Bulkley Valley, the region that has the port of Prince Rupert, the closest and fastest marine port to Asia. The port is one to two days closer to Asia than any other west coast port. This means products shipped to and from North America arrive at their destination quicker, with less fuel and less risk. We have the fastest and greenest road and rail networks into the U.S. Midwest markets running straight through my region. We have the Prince George airport that offers Canada's fourth longest commercial runway. All are key components in Canada's Pacific gateway program. These are just a few of Canada's competitive trade advantages. Surprisingly, they were not mentioned in the Speech from the Throne.

Even with these facts before it, the new Liberal government seems to have forgotten that the livelihood of rural Canadians is dependent on the very industries the government seems intent on ignoring. However, these are not my only concerns from the very first address.

The new Liberal government has caused further anxiety to our industries and investors with its promise to implement all of the 94 recommendations of the truth and reconciliation report. Of particular concern is recommendation 45, the adoption of the United Nations declaration of indigenous peoples.

Address

In 2015, north central B.C. hosted approximately 39 active mineral exploration projects. Investors and industry are primarily concerned with land access and our first nations' land claims process. Adoption of these recommendations require thorough examination, and long-term impacts should be well considered.

Additionally, an open and transparent government would and should encourage debate and allow for the widest range of public input to occur. We must do more and be better at what we do. I believe in authentic engagement, but I urge the government to consider the far-reaching economic and social impacts that reckless promises such as this would have.

While I stand across the floor from my colleagues and opposite to their views, I offer my support in finding solutions that benefit and ensure equality for all Canadians.

The Speech from the Throne spoke of diversity, shared experiences, and our differences that make us strong because of, not in spite of, them. We can and should always recognize and celebrate each of our communities and the diversity from within, but we should never forget we are one country and one nation, Canada.

The Speech from the Throne mentions briefly the government's intention to launch an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. I too, as our leader also mentioned, support this initiative. However, I offer that rather than asking the same questions previously answered in the dozens of reports, the government work with the families, the regional agencies, and the communities in developing sound safety, educational, and support programs that will help prevent yet another unnecessary loss of life. The monies invested in the process should help build relationships and trust within our communities among the RCMP, police forces, and our first nations. I ask that we collectively honour the victims and their families by leaving a legacy of action, not a legacy of books or reports on shelves.

I thank the leader opposite for providing me a mandate and a speech, which was a mere 15 minutes, I believe 1,700 words. However, Canadians expecting real change received a watered down, vague mirror of what we saw in the last Liberal term, which was big government, big debt, privilege, higher taxes, an ill-equipped military, and in the end, a nation that would welcome the return of a strong Conservative government.

I offer to my colleagues throughout this noble House that I will challenge and hold members opposite accountable to Canadians at all times, but also in times of need and personal need, I offer my hand in support.

● (1125)

[*Translation*]

I speak only a little French now, but I am working on improving my French.

[*English*]

I offer to my colleagues, friends, and family in this room, at home and in my riding, I may stumble along the way, but I will always work tirelessly in defending and championing proudly the Cariboo—Prince George riding. I will never forget who sent me to Ottawa.

Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.): Madam Speaker, congratulations on your new position. It is a beautiful riding that you have. I know you are from Manitoulin Island, which I do believe is the largest freshwater island in North America.

I want to also congratulate the member across the way from Prince George, with whom I share a lot of similarities despite the distance from one coast to the other. I am from central Newfoundland and he is from northern British Columbia; however, when it comes to rural policies, we certainly do share a lot.

In the member's speech, he talked about what was not in the Speech from the Throne and threw back to what was a former Liberal term. Glancing over a large interregnum of leadership, which was completely blue, from his party, I would like to remind the member that in some cases, when it comes to local rural issues, it was not handled well regarding employment insurance. He talks about the issue of tourism not being in the throne speech, but I would like to remind him that we finally have a minister of tourism in place, which we did not see in that interregnum of Conservative leadership.

I would like to point out for the member that what he plans to do for seasonal workers in his riding, which we—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order, please. The member for Cariboo—Prince George.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, the Canada-U.S. softwood lumber agreement, which has safeguarded jobs and provided stability to both Canadian and U.S. producers, expired on October 12, 2015. Yet there was no mention of this in the mandate letter of the Minister of International Trade or in the Speech from the Throne.

I am asking this today. Will the government, at minimum, immediately commit to negotiating an extension with our U.S. counterparts on the softwood lumber agreement?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Madam Speaker, congratulations on your appointment. We are very proud of you.

I also want to congratulate the hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George on his maiden speech. I thank him for using a few words of French. It is much appreciated.

The hon. member talked about agriculture. Of course, exporting agricultural products is very important for Canada. I live in a city. My riding is Hochelaga. In cities, urban farming is very important as well. There are many benefits to having food nearby. It is better for the environment and the quality of the food is better as well.

In addition to promoting agricultural exports, do the Conservatives also intend to help urban agriculture so that everyone can truly be treated equally?

Address

[*English*]

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for getting elected and thank her for her question.

We believe agriculture is important. It is vital to our Canadian economy. As we said earlier, Canada is one of the largest producers and exporters of agri-foods.

The Liberals have announced and moved forward with a tax cut for the middle class. Many of my constituents do not fall within the Liberals' middle class for this tax cut. I would ask that the member opposite explain in detail what the government intends to do for the Canadians who fall outside the Liberals' middle class plan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, congratulations to you and to the member.

It was great to hear the member discuss the importance of the Asia Pacific gateway. I think about the Asia Pacific gateway, about the energy sector in my riding, about forestry in Quebec, and mining in Ontario, which are so many important industries that are not mentioned or discussed in the Speech from the Throne. It seems that the government is trying to get to prosperity by tinkering with the tax system instead of understanding that it needs to emphasize economic growth in these vital sectors. Can the member comment more on what was missed in the throne speech, and on the importance of economic growth in getting us to growth?

• (1130)

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, I am a father of four, and I have been blessed with a beautiful wife and incredible family. Over my career, I have been fortunate to have had great roles in our community and in representing our region on the world stage. Yet, despite our success, I cannot run my family's finances off a credit card.

The government is making promises for which hard-working Canadians will have to pay. Will the Liberals please detail the full costing of its plans and how it intends to have Canadians pay for them?

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Davenport.

I would like to congratulate you, Madam Speaker, on your appointment to the position of Assistant Deputy Speaker.

As this is the first time I am speaking in the House, I wish to thank all 34,000 citizens of Nepean who voted for me to represent them in this august House. I pledge to work hard to serve all people of Nepean irrespective of their background and political viewpoints.

I would like to thank my friend, my partner, and my wife, Sangeetha, and our son, Siddanth, without whom I would not be here.

I would also like to thank the team of volunteers who committed so much time and energy to my campaign and who shared my vision for the great riding of Nepean.

I am also honoured to be one of only three Hindu Canadians who are members of the House. I am probably only the second person in the history of the Canadian Parliament to be sworn in by taking the oath on the Hindu holy book of Bhagavad Gita.

Canadians spoke loud and clear on October 19, echoing our call for real change. Of the several things Canadians voted for, I would like to highlight three issues. First, Canadians overwhelmingly voted against the politics of fear and division. Second, Canadians rejected the creation of second-class citizenship in Bill CC-24. Third, Canadians voted for economic development through massive investment in infrastructure.

As I said, Canadians rejected the politics of fear and division. As the right hon. Prime Minister has said:

Fear is a dangerous thing. Once it is sanctioned by the state, there is no telling where it might lead. It is always a short path to walk from being suspicious of our fellow citizens to taking actions to restrict their liberty.

Canadians also rejected the second-class citizenship that was created by Bill C-24. The previous government created two classes of citizenship, with the power to revoke citizenship resting with a politician. As has been said, a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian. We will repeal the unfair portions of Bill C-24.

Canadians also voted to stimulate the economy through massive investment in infrastructure to create long-term economic growth.

I have several objectives as a member of this esteemed institution. The first is to bring respect back for the public service and allow public service employees to deliver to the best of their ability. We will create policies based on scientific evidence, not ideological dogma. Prudence and pragmatism and not political ideology will influence decision-making. We will not legislate changes to service terms but work through the process of collective bargaining.

My next objective is to work on affordable housing. The wait time for affordable housing in my riding of Nepean is 15 years. There are more than 10,000 people on the wait list for affordable housing in the City of Ottawa. Research has shown that every dollar invested in affordable housing saves several dollars in long-term social costs.

My long-term objective is to work to develop a viable, alternative sector for the creation and sustainment of high-quality jobs in Nepean and Ottawa.

In Ottawa, the federal government is the largest employer, and the City of Ottawa is the second largest. Then we have the technology sector, which has seen the booms and busts of the wireless and telecom segments. Our children are moving out of Ottawa in search of jobs. There is a need to promote the development of a stable technology sector.

I served on the board of Invest Ottawa, with Mayor Jim Watson as the co-chair, and other leading business and institutional leaders as fellow directors. Invest Ottawa is doing great work in making the city the best place for companies across Canada and around the world to come and set up shop. There are about 1,700 knowledge-based companies in the city, a vast majority of which are small entities. Invest Ottawa is also helping these companies grow.

Address

● (1135)

One thing I realized during my stint there is that, for economic development to take place in the city of Ottawa, there is a need for all three levels of government, municipal, provincial, and federal, to work hand in hand.

The City of Ottawa and the provincial government have joined hands and have equally shared the costs of a \$30 million innovation centre that is currently being built. Currently, there is zero contribution from the federal government for this much-required institution.

During the last 10 years, the interaction among all three levels of government for the economic development of Ottawa has been quite minimal. I pledge to work hard to rectify this deficit.

There are 12 million working Canadians who do not have a workplace pension plan. Only 35% of Ontario workers have a workplace pension plan. In the private sector, the percentage of workers with a workplace pension plan is just 28%. It is possible that many of them will retire directly into poverty, thus increasing social costs. There is already an increasing number of working families who depend on the local food banks. There is a need for an enhanced pension plan. Our government has pledged to work with the provinces and territories to achieve this goal.

To conclude, I want to bring my experience, dedication, and passion for my country to Parliament. I will work hard for the families in Nepean and work with others to make our country and community stronger. I want to showcase to our children and grandchildren that politics is about public service and about giving back to society.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member on his election. I understand that he opposes Bill C-24. However, he did not say what it does. To be clear, this bill strips citizenship from convicted terrorists.

Our view on this side of the House is that, if individuals are flying around the world seeking to advance terrorist purposes, they should not be able to use Canadian passports to facilitate their agenda. Therefore, I would ask the hon. member why he wants to give Canadian passports back to convicted terrorists.

Mr. Chandra Arya: Madam Speaker, I would also like to congratulate the member opposite on his election.

Bill C-24 provides the right to revoke citizenship to the minister. The minister is a politician, who does not ally with the Canadian courts or Canadian judges. The provisions of Bill C-24 would allow a politician to revoke citizenship based on the charges faced by a Canadian citizen anywhere in the world. Under Bill C-24, it is possible that the citizenship of Greenpeace activists could be revoked if they were convicted in Russia on trumped-up terrorism charges. We have committed that a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian, and we will revoke the unfair provisions of Bill C-24.

● (1140)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his first speech in the House.

I would just like him to say a few words about the Liberal government's tax plan. The Liberals made some big promises, but unfortunately we have learned that 70% of Canadians will not benefit from the tax cuts promised by the Liberals. Those who earn \$45,000 or less will end up with absolutely nothing. I do not think the Canada child tax benefit counts in this case because those without children will not get the benefit.

What does the hon. member say to those in this country who earn less than \$45,000 and are being left out in the cold by the Liberal government?

[*English*]

Mr. Chandra Arya: Madam Speaker, ours was the only party to promise tax cuts to middle-class Canadians. Our child benefit plan will help nine out of ten families all across Canada, and we are proud of the commitment to implement it.

Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first of all, congratulations to the hon. member for his speech. I would like to talk about something that he talked about in his speech, which interested me greatly. Over the past five years, many international publications have stated that Canada is falling behind when it comes to investment and innovation. In the innovation industry itself, we have to punch way above our own weight, as the expression goes, and certainly when it comes to Canada, because it is an international market.

In his speech, the member pointed out this innovation centre that, to me, offers a glimmer of hope not just for his riding, but for the entire country in terms of how we can invest in that. Could he please expand on the innovation centre in his riding and what it means for this country?

Mr. Chandra Arya: Madam Speaker, over the last several years, I worked on the board of Invest Ottawa. As I mentioned in my speech, the two biggest employers in the city, the federal government and the City of Ottawa, are not going to increase jobs in a huge way. We are dependent on the technology sector which, in turn, is dependent on innovation.

At the city level, a lot of work is being done to promote innovation. The City of Ottawa and the provincial government joined hands and recognized the need to create one single place for the kind of interaction in industry that is involved in innovation between the service providers and all of the various government programs that are being managed. It would help innovation to be housed in a single place. That cost came to about \$30 million. The provincial government invested about \$15 million and the City of Ottawa put in another \$15 million in kind. The last federal government did not put in anything to promote this innovation centre. I hope that we will rectify this.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as this is my maiden speech in these hallowed chambers, I would like to begin by congratulating you on your appointment to your position, and to also extend sincere congratulations to all members present here this morning for winning their election.

Canadians wanted real change, and they got it by sending over 200 new faces to these chambers. I am privileged to be one of them. I am humbled and honoured to have earned the vote of the residents of Davenport, a riding I am proud to represent as its first female member of Parliament. I would like to say a heartfelt thanks to them for their confidence in me.

What is particularly amazing is that Davenport, a riding with the highest percentage of ethnic Portuguese, at almost 30%, voted for a woman with the last name of Dzerowicz. Indeed, my grandparents were immigrants. They were living in a displaced persons camp, which today would probably be called a refugee camp, after World War II in Germany, and were desperate to find a new country they could call home where they could rebuild their lives.

They came to Canada in the early 1950s with nothing. They were broken people in every way, financially, physically, and spiritually. They were sponsored by a Ukrainian family and started off life in Canada like most immigrants, taking any job that was available and beginning the long path to Canadian citizenship while learning a new language and a new culture and establishing a home for their family.

My mother came almost two decades later, born in Mexico. Her family was originally from northern Spain, from the Basque region. Her name is Maria Amparo Lizarraga Zatarain but one would never know that seeing my last name, which is Dzerowicz.

Canada represented, to my grandparents and parents, a country that stood for freedom, progress, opportunity, fairness, and compassion. I grew up in a working-class family that struggled to make ends meet in less than ideal living conditions. In spite of the daily struggle, my parents never missed an opportunity to remind me of the importance of education and hard work, and to never take for granted that I was lucky to live in Canada.

Indeed, one of the key reasons I became a member of Parliament is that I believe everyone should have the same opportunities I have had growing up, access to excellent affordable education, a healthy environment, great jobs and opportunities, and a social safety net to help just a little when times get tough. All these things are essential if each one of us is to achieve our full potential. I became an MP to protect and fight for them on behalf of all Canadians.

That is why I am honoured to speak to the measures in the Speech from the Throne today. They embody the values that are the foundation of this great country. They help create a Canada that will allow a person, a family to prosper, even if they come with nothing but a willingness to work hard and a desire to take advantage of the opportunities that are available. The Speech from the Throne sets the stage for a country that will be a strong global citizen, a leader in combatting climate change, a leader in promoting peace and fighting poverty, both nationally and internationally.

It should be no surprise that the measures in the Speech from the Throne positively benefit the residents of the Davenport riding, and I

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believe will do much to improve their lives, individually and for generations to come.

Davenport is a riding located in downtown west Toronto. It was largely a working-class riding until housing prices appreciated considerably over the last 10 to 15 years. The riding has now moved squarely into the middle-class category with an average household income of \$67,000 and a median household income of \$56,000.

Jobs and economy are the number one priority for the residents of Davenport. The costs of living keep increasing, wages have been largely flat for many years, and the growth of the economy has been slow for a large part of the last decade. The government's commitment to reducing taxes for the middle class means more money directly in the pockets of most of the residents of Davenport. Additional dollars will go a long way to help residents who are struggling to make ends meet on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis.

Davenport is a wonderfully ethnic riding that very much reflects the beautiful diversity of cultures, religions, and languages in Toronto. Over 50% of residents were born outside of Canada, and they have been part of the amazing immigrant community that has built this great country. However, for too many years immigration issues and how difficult it is to become a Canadian citizen have been top issues for so many residents, families, and organizations in my riding.

● (1145)

Like my grandparents and parents and all other immigrants who came before, potential Canadians are looking for a clear path to citizenship. Indeed, if we are to have a strong 21st-century economy, we have to get our immigration policy right. That is why this government's commitment to changing key aspects of Canada's immigration policy is so important, including doubling the new applications for parents and grandparents, accelerating current processing times, and providing immediate permanent residency to new spouses entering Canada.

Taken together, these changes signal to current and future Canadians that being an immigrant is not an imposition on existing Canadians. Indeed, it is we who are lucky to have people who want to apply, want to become Canadians, want to establish their family and start a new life here in Canada, and want to help build Canada into an even better country than it is today.

For almost 40 years, Davenport's very popular member of Parliament was Charles Caccia, or Carletto Caccia, as the Italians of my riding would say, who ahead of his time, was a passionate environmentalist and a great advocate for sustainability. This dedication to a green and sustainable environment is an ethos that continues to strongly permeate the Davenport riding and to influence me.

The residents of my riding have for many years been looking to Canada to step up to its responsibility to be a leader at both the national and international levels on the environment and to take meaningful action on climate change.

Address

In Davenport and in communities across Canada, people are pleased to see that the Liberal government is acting on our commitment to protect our environment while growing our economy. It is doing this by joining in the Paris climate change talks, in which Canada has been asked to facilitate the final negotiations which are currently under way; announcing an additional \$2.65 billion for a total of \$4 billion, to help developing countries combat climate change; and by committing to develop a clear plan to combat climate change with the provinces and territories within 90 days of the end of the climate change talks.

In just a few short weeks since being elected we have taken meaningful steps toward a real plan that will make a difference at both the national and international stages.

Words matter, actions matter, and leadership matters.

Over the last few weeks, this government has taken some very concrete actions to illustrate our shared values and our commitment to freedom, equality, opportunity, fairness, and compassion, the very values that brought my grandparents and parents to this country.

We have assembled a diverse cabinet, one that reflects the Canada that we want to live in and one that inspires Canadians of all cultures in Davenport and across this country that they can reach for the stars and become anyone they want to be.

For the first time in Canadian history, the Prime Minister leads a cabinet that is gender balanced, an equal number of men and women, proving that sometimes we do not need quotas or legislation, but true leadership to create real change.

Similarly, this Liberal government is acting daily and aggressively on our extraordinary commitment to bring in 25,000 Syrian refugees by the end of February 2016. This action reflects Canadian values at their best.

I know I speak on behalf of many in Davenport when I say these measures have brought Canadians together and have made us proud to be Canadian.

I will end with a statement that the Prime Minister made a couple of years ago that has always stayed with me because it is the heart of why I am an MP and why I will always fight to create an even better Canada. "If we do not give every Canadian a chance to succeed, we do not live up to the potential of Canada." This is what I think is at the very core of what the Speech from the Throne is about, creating the Canada that we want to live in, that we are proud to call our home, and that will allow each one of us to achieve our greatest potential.

• (1150)

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to rise in the House for the first time. I want to thank the thousands of voters in St. Albert—Edmonton for placing their trust and confidence in me.

There has been much deserved criticism about what was not said in the government's Speech from the Throne and what this says about the government's priorities. However, one thing that was mentioned in the Speech from the Throne was a job-killing payroll tax hike. I guess it did not take long for the new sunny ways of the government to be replaced by same old Liberal tax-and-spend ways.

Former prime minister Paul Martin once characterized payroll taxes as a cancer on the economy.

More than 35,000 Canadians are out of work in just the past month, so I was wondering if the hon. member for Davenport could explain to those more than 35,000 Canadians how a job-killing payroll tax hike will get them back to work any time soon.

• (1155)

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned, jobs and the economy is probably the number one issue in the Davenport riding. I can assure members that this government will do everything it can to create a strong economy, to create more jobs, to invest in infrastructure and education, thereby creating as many jobs as possible and ensuring that Canadians are financially better off moving forward than they are today.

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the people of Regina—Lewvan for electing me and also congratulate the member for Davenport on her election. I thank her for her speech.

The speech suggested that the government's so-called middle-class tax cut would benefit working and middle-class constituents in Davenport, but the member also mentioned that the median income per household in her riding is about \$56,000. I hate to break it to her, but the only way such a household would benefit from this tax cut would be if all of that income were earned by a single member of that household. For people in households earning anything up to \$45,000, there would be no benefit at all from the government's so-called middle-class tax cut.

I am wondering if the member for Davenport would acknowledge that her constituents would actually benefit more from the NDP's proposal to reduce the first tax bracket than from the government's proposal to reduce the tax bracket over \$45,000.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, my understanding is that the middle-class tax cut would actually benefit those who earn between \$45,000 and \$89,000. Most of the constituents of Davenport are within this tax bracket, so I believe that most of them would benefit from it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Davenport for her very eloquent speech.

Since her grandparents immigrated to Canada, I would like her to tell us more about immigration and how Canada will welcome refugees.

Is it more important for the people of Davenport to welcome Syrian refugees to Canada?

[*English*]

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, I would like to believe I have one of the most active ridings, made up of a lot of families, schools, groups, and communities who are stepping up to the plate and sponsoring Syrian refugees.

Address

There is a wonderful school, Dewson school, which has started what is called a thousand school challenge. It is challenging schools right across Toronto and the GTA to sponsor Syrian families, and I know that there have been hundreds and hundreds of responses.

I will be speaking more about this tomorrow, when a busload of kids arrives, who will be presenting welcome cards for Syrian families to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship. They are very active and very proud participants in this endeavour.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for South Shore—St. Margaret's.

I am extremely humbled and honoured to stand here as the first member for Scarborough—Rouge Park. I want to thank my constituents for entrusting me to represent them. I want to congratulate all of my colleagues for their election or re-election, and I wish to congratulate you, Madam Speaker, on your appointment as Assistant Deputy Speaker. I am committed to working collaboratively with all members in this room for the betterment of the country. I am proud to speak in support of the Speech from the Throne.

Scarborough—Rouge Park is one six ridings in the former city of Scarborough, now part of the city of Toronto. We have one of the most diverse communities in all of Canada.

Permit me to take hon. members through some of the priorities of my riding and the region. We are blessed with the best that nature has to offer, with the Rouge River, a new national park, the Toronto Zoo, Highland Creek, and the Scarborough waterfront, all offering some of the most beautiful landscapes in the GTA.

The Rouge Park is at the heart of my riding. It is a life's work for many individuals and groups. Our government is committed to bringing the full potential of the park to life. I am excited that the Prime Minister has, in his mandate letter to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, asked my colleague to work with the Ontario government to enhance the country's first urban national park, including improved legislation to protect the important ecosystem and to guide how the park will be managed.

I am very confident that we can all come together to build a national park in our region that will reflect the needs and aspirations of the community and leave a legacy for future generations.

Scarborough, like many suburban regions in our country, needs infrastructure. Starting next year, the co-op agreement for the 12 co-ops that exist in our riding will be expiring. We have over 900 families living in co-ops. We need to ensure that we work for the co-ops to have stable, predictable funding.

The previous government ignored the much-needed infrastructure of our community. We could not find a better time to invest in infrastructure. We have historically low interest rates. We need proper infrastructure to create much-needed jobs and to attract employers, and we have inherited an economy in need of a boost. This is why our government will invest to build much-needed infrastructure.

In Scarborough—Rouge Park, we need to upgrade our housing for veterans, and transportation to allow families to spend more time

with each other than on the road, and community centres for youth and seniors, and co-op housing for our seniors.

Youth are an integral part of the riding. I am proud to represent an area with a large youth population. The Malvern and Danzig communities are great, vibrant places where youth thrive when given the right opportunities. Our youth need the right support. They need to stay in school and have increased employment opportunities and feel like they are part of the community. Our youth employment strategy will be essential to ensure that youth are able to develop the right skills at the right age to prepare them for the jobs of the future.

We need to create jobs and opportunities in Scarborough—Rouge Park. To this end, I am excited that the Rotary Club of Scarborough has undertaken a new Scarborough revitalization project. As part of the project, the Scarborough Business Association was inaugurated earlier this year. It is my hope that this association will be the centre of business and industry development in Scarborough and will lead to much-needed job creation. I look forward to working with my colleagues to advance the issues in my riding.

I am deeply disturbed by the continuous stigmatization of refugees, both in the House and outside. We have, in recent times, defined refugees as terrorists, burdens, and undesirables. We demonize them. We fail to understand and empathize with human suffering and humanitarian crisis.

Today, as we gather in the House, refugees from Syria are preparing to come to Canada and call this their new home. The hopes and aspirations of these Canadians are no different from the generations of refugees that came before and, I suspect, will be similar to those who will come after.

Canada welcomes our newest refugees with open arms, the same way we welcomed the Afghans, the Kosovars, the Somalis, the Tamils, the Vietnamese, the Ismailis, and so on.

Some of us in the House were refugees ourselves at one point, and like all those who came before, are proud to give back to this country. Our Minister of Democratic Institutions, our Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, and a good friend representing the riding of York South—Weston are just such examples of this contribution.

● (1200)

I want to share with the House my story. I am a proud Tamil Canadian who came here as a refugee from Sri Lanka. The Tamil people are a persecuted nation. Over 100,000 Tamils have died in a bloody war. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has found that war crimes and crimes against humanity took place in Sri Lanka in the last phase of the war. Tamils are seeking justice, an international independent criminal investigation into war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide.

Address

Although the war ended in 2009, peace has evaded the island. There are reported cases of sexual violence; the military occupies land traditionally owned by Tamils; and Tamil political prisoners are lingering in jails, in some cases for decades. It is in this context that people fled, seeking a safe, secure place to raise their family.

In 2010, I had the opportunity to meet some of the Tamil refugees who came on the MV *Sun Sea*. I met countless men, women, and children. I will never forget the story of one of those women. In the last days of the war, she was hiding in a bunker with her husband and three children. She went to get water for her family. As she left the bunker, a shell hit and destroyed her life. Her three young children and her husband vanished in seconds. This mother had the courage to get on a ship with strangers, risking her life so that she could put her life back together. This is one refugee experience.

Canadians are doing the right thing to protect and give new life to 25,000 Syrians. We are focusing on getting the most vulnerable from the millions of prospective refugees currently in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. I wish to note on the record the work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, for working diligently to process and assist the millions of refugees. Canada's commitment to give an additional \$100 million to UNHCR is welcome as the agency deals with one of the largest migrations in recent history. We will need to do more.

Finally, Canada is a shining example to the world of tolerance, equality, justice, and human rights. We are leading by example by bringing in and integrating refugees from Syria. In fact, over the course of our history many different peoples have called Canada home. We have built a just society that in many ways is the envy of the world.

Yet, in this just society there is great injustice. We have collectively failed our indigenous, Inuit, and Métis peoples. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission report has many stories of survivors. I encourage members to look at some of those stories. Our government has accepted the recommendations of the TRC by Justice Murray Sinclair. The recommendations, if fully implemented, would set a new way forward.

One of the recommendations in the report calls for an inquiry into murdered and missing aboriginal women and girls. Imagine a major Canadian metropolis, be it Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal or Halifax. Now imagine if 1,200 people went missing from any one of those cities within a span of 40 years. Then imagine 1,200 cases were unresolved. Can members imagine the outrage in those cities? How do we as Canadians accept 1,200 murdered and missing aboriginal women and girls in 40 years? Where do we even start addressing this issue?

I am proud that our government has committed to beginning this process of obtaining justice for the families. Our Prime Minister has demonstrated much-needed leadership on this issue. I am proud that our government will outline the mandate for an inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls. The healing needs to start, but it cannot truly begin without a full understanding of the different parts that have led to this tragedy. This House, this Parliament, this time, we can reset the direction of our first peoples.

I wish to conclude by acknowledging that we are on the traditional lands of the Algonquin people and today, collectively in this House, we stand at the foot of history as we direct a new course, nation to nation, between Canada and its indigenous, Inuit, and Métis people.

• (1205)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the member a question about refugees, because he talked in his speech about helping the most vulnerable. However, we know that many members of religious and ethnic minorities are not even able to get access to refugee camps because of concerns about their security. A reliance on camp refugees and no specific attention to minority groups—Yazidis, Christians, Shia, Kurds, and others—means that the most vulnerable may well be left out of the government's plan.

Is the government aware of this problem, and are the Liberals committed to ensuring that the most vulnerable religious and ethnic minorities are actually included?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my friend on his election.

The issue of refugees is very important to Canadians. Our government has taken very responsible steps to ensure that those with the highest risk of vulnerability are permitted to come into Canada.

I am very confident of the work of the United Nations Human Rights for Refugees and I am confident that the people who are coming here are those with the highest level of vulnerability, as defined by the UN.

• (1210)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on his election and his speech.

Our communities are ready to welcome refugees. I represent the city of Saint-Hyacinthe, where the municipality, community welcome and employment organizations, and those in the health and education networks will welcome refugees. We know that the costs of accepting refugees will be much greater than what was announced.

Can my colleague guarantee stakeholders that these costs will be fully covered?

[*English*]

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, the cost of resettling the refugees and bringing them here has already been spelled out by our Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship. I am quite confident that the entire program has been costed out and we are doing it in a very responsible way.

What is important is that refugees are given the opportunity to succeed here because any cost that we may incur today will be repaid to our country over their lifetime.

Address

[*Translation*]

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I am pleased to congratulate you on your election. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the voters of Saint-Maurice—Champlain, a riding that is bigger than Belgium, for putting their trust in me.

I would like to congratulate my colleague on his maiden speech, which was a great speech. He spoke about youth, the middle class, job creation, and infrastructure. The announcement we made yesterday will reduce the tax burden of approximately nine million Canadians and will provide \$3.4 billion in tax relief. We will also roll out our Canada child tax benefit, which will help nine out of 10 families.

I would like my hon. colleague to explain what difference this will make to the people in his riding.

[*English*]

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my friend on his election.

The middle-class tax cut, as announced by the Minister of Finance yesterday, is a very important part of our platform. I am very confident that this will give direct benefit to thousands of families in the riding of Scarborough—Rouge Park and across the country. These are funds that people can use toward education, extracurricular activities, and a whole host of things that families feel are important to their children.

I am very proud of the initiative undertaken by our government and hope we will be able to get this through in time so people can start enjoying the benefits of our proposed tax-free benefit of this middle-class tax cut.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan (South Shore—St. Margarets, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is the greatest honour to rise in the chamber today as the new member of Parliament for South Shore—St. Margarets in reply to the Speech from the Throne. I wish to sincerely thank the voters of the riding who have put their faith in me and have given me the mandate and privilege of representing them in the House of Commons.

Becoming a member of Parliament has been a lifelong dream since my days as a young Liberal at St. FX University, and I know I will cherish this experience and never take it for granted. Like my new friend and colleague, the hon. member for Fundy Royal, I am especially proud to become the first woman member elected in South Shore—St. Margarets and only the second member of the Liberal Party to represent the constituency.

I would like to take a moment today to express my thanks to my predecessor, the former member of Parliament for South Shore—St. Margarets, Mr. Gerald Keddy, for his 17 years of service to the riding and his commitment to the people he represented in the House. I know many of my colleagues from all parties served with Mr. Keddy over the years and can attest to his genuine kindness, hard work and dedication to his role as a member of Parliament.

As every elected member of the House knows, in addition to the residents of our communities, there are a few people without whose tireless support, loyalty, and dedication we would not be here today.

I wish to extend the most heartfelt thanks to my family, my husband Dave and our three children, Isaac, Mason, and Rebecca, whose support and influence mean the world to me and made my election possible.

I would also like to commend my campaign team and those volunteers and supporters who gave up their time and worked many days and nights to elect all 338 members of the House. We all owe a great deal of gratitude to them.

On October 19, I was incredibly fortunate to be part of an historic change that Canadians asked for when they went to the polls. While I was inspired by the energy, enthusiasm, hope, and vision for a better Canada that would present incredible opportunities for our new government, it was the challenges that we faced in both my home community and right across the country that pushed me through the election campaign.

South Shore—St. Margarets is a vast and beautiful coastal region of Nova Scotia. It includes picturesque small towns, remote rural areas, and the suburbs of western Halifax. South Shore—St. Margarets is reflective of many ridings in our region and encompasses a significant variety of all of what life has to offer in Atlantic Canada. It also faces many of the common challenges. The out-migration of youth, chronic unemployment, industrial decline, and difficulty attracting newcomers are issues that I know many members face in their own communities. While we must overcome similar challenges, we also share many familiar possibilities for growth and prosperity.

For most of my life, I have been extremely fortunate to call this riding home. My passion for this area and the stellar examples of people making positive change in their communities was what inspired me to seek a seat in Parliament. I love my home and I want to see it grow and prosper, while maintaining its uniqueness.

Our government sees the potential of all Canadians, in all regions of the country, and believes that to grow our economy we have to give every Canadian a fair chance at success. To do so, we need to make the necessary investments to ensure that struggling communities and individuals can get ahead.

Throughout the campaign, I heard from those who had grown tired and cynical about government, believing no matter which party was elected their daily lives would remain the same and they would see no meaningful impact. I have great hope for this 42nd Parliament, that we can be the ones to start shifting this perception and we can support the kind of change families can see when they go to their grocery stores, their jobs, and when they care for and support loved ones.

That is why I am so proud to stand today as we prepare to introduce our plan for fairness, which was outlined in the Speech from the Throne. It is a plan for hard-working parents and individuals, families, and those who they support. It provides a helping hand to those who need it by asking a little more of those fortunate Canadians who have more to give.

Sustainable communities require a sustainable health care system. Through my role with the Health Services Foundation, I have seen first-hand how much changes at the federal level affect our local health systems.

Address

•(1215)

The current Canada health and social transfer formula will see Nova Scotia lose \$1 billion in health care funding over the next 10 years. That equates to \$100 million a year in a province struggling to grow its economy and serve its citizens. This is why our government is committed to not only a new health accord, but also to collaborating and co-operating with the provinces to ensure that these investments are working to improve health outcomes on the ground.

Our plan will also involve significant investments in addressing the social determinants of health, including improvements to affordable housing, first nation education, and supporting seniors. The Canada child benefits, which I am incredibly proud to be supporting, will also help achieve this end in giving thousands of children across Canada a better chance for success from day one.

The South Shore is an area where our survival is intimately connected with our natural environment. The beauty that surrounds us provides prosperity and wellness through the industries and lifestyles that make us who we are. From forestry to fisheries, tourism to farming, to rocks and minerals, we depend on nature to sustain our communities. This is why, and I cannot stress this enough, the environment and economy are deeply intertwined and not mutually exclusive.

We must listen to our scientists when they tell us about the impacts of industrial policy on our natural resources, species at risk, and, of course, on climate change, though it does not seem that I need to tell our new Minister of Environment and Climate Change this, as some exciting advances were made in Paris just this past week.

To this end, the government knows that we can grow our economy by making strategic infrastructure investments that will create thousands of jobs and opportunities for Canadians, while building the physical assets that we need to ensure our communities thrive, not just survive. This government will invest not only in roads and bridges, but in green infrastructure and technologies that will protect our environment, while promoting economic growth.

People in this riding also recognize that in the modern era we do not live in isolation from broader national and global pressures. This challenges us to think also in the best interests of all Canadians, not just those in our communities, and to also consider the struggles and issues facing our neighbours in the global community.

As an exporting nation and an exporting province, the demand for many of our products comes from partners in foreign markets who see great value and quality in the goods produced in the South Shore—St. Margarets area. Our seafood, lumber, agriculture, and manufactured products are among the best in the world. Therefore, we are highly connected to and interested in events around the globe.

We are also not immune to the tragedies we have seen emerge in other parts of the world. As Canadians, we must consider Canada's role on the world stage and our reputation for promoting and protecting peace, security, and human rights. We must continue to be a world leader in humanitarian aid, diplomatic influence, and provide a warm and welcoming environment for refugees fleeing terror and trauma in their home countries.

I am very proud of the efforts of the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship as well as the work done by the province of Nova Scotia to remind the world of who we are and what we stand for.

It is not just the efforts of governments; it is also the work of community groups across the country that are making these dreams a reality for those in search of a better future. A small community in my riding, Petite Riviere, will be welcoming a Syrian refugee family. I know how hard it is working to prepare for that arrival as early as January.

To address these complex issues in the long term, we must consider how these conflicts emerge in the first place and how other policies and practices lead to or prevent them from occurring in the future. We must always respond to these events in a Canadian way, with care, compassion and forethought, not only for our own but also for those around the world. These are the visions and values embraced by our government, and were evident in the Speech from the Throne.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the task and opportunity that we have at hand. We must show Canadians an unparalleled level of co-operation and unity of purpose with the provincial governments and municipalities, and encourage collaborative thinking. I trust this will happen under your leadership, Mr. Speaker.

•(1220)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member spoke about providing opportunity and the effect of the government's plan on that. I want to point out, though, that those who will benefit the most from the Liberals' proposed tax changes are those who are making over \$90,000 a year. Meanwhile, they are planning on cutting the tax-free savings account, which will significantly hurt many tax-free savings account holders, more than half of whom are making less than \$60,000 a year.

How will the government's plan to cut tax-free savings accounts affect those in the member's riding?

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question and congratulate him on his election.

We have made it very clear from the start that we are committed to helping grow the middle class. The tax cuts we make will help middle-income families put back into our economy, especially on the south shore, where we have a number of people that this will effect in a positive manner.

•(1225)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on getting elected and on her first speech.

Address

Unfortunately, I did not hear the whole speech, but I heard the part where she spoke about welcoming Syrian refugees. Many refugees are coming. I am the NDP housing critic, and I know that there is a serious shortage of social housing. We are in the process of losing a lot of units because a number of agreements are about to expire.

Given that many refugees are on their way to Canada, that there is already a shortage of social housing, and that we are losing even more units, does the Liberal government intend to create new, affordable social and co-op housing units?

[English]

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her comments and congratulate her on her re-election.

In the platform during the election, the Liberal Party spelled out infrastructure funding that will be used to help fund low-income housing. That was one of our platform promises, and it is in the mandate letters that were published on the Internet. Those are all things that we have committed to do for this mandate.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the previous two questions, the members talked about social programming. One of the things we need to highlight, which was part of the throne speech, a major part of the Liberal Party's platform, and something that the Prime Minister has taken a great deal of pride in—as we all should—is the increase to the Canada child benefit program. This program will lift literally tens of thousands of children out of poverty, among many other things. It will enhance the influence of Canada's middle class, giving them more money in their pockets. That will not only lift children out of poverty, but help our economy.

I wonder if the member might want to provide her thoughts on why she believes that the child benefit plan is in fact the right way to go.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Speaker, South Shore—St. Margarets is an area that will definitely benefit from this. We have many young families who need extra help. We have struggling industries. We have a high unemployment rate. This child benefit will definitely help the people in South Shore—St. Margarets, and it will also put money back into the economy. We appreciate all of the help that this will give to the people in our riding.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many members have referenced this middle-class tax shift that the Liberals are proposing as being a stimulative measure. Most people who are doing well, the middle class of Canada, will not take money from a tax cut and then put it into the economy. Most of them will save. When we are in more uncertain economic times, people will often not consume and will instead put their money toward their savings, which actually diminishes the role of a stimulus. Had there been a much stronger economy, people might put that money to work.

I would also question that the Liberals are removing the tax-free savings account at the same time. I ask the member whether she feels that the Liberals are helping the middle class and stimulating the economy by putting forth this measure.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, I do not agree with the member. The money going to the families who need it will definitely be put back into the economy.

The families are not able to make ends meet, therefore the money they receive in child benefits will go back into the economy. It will help them to provide for their families better, and that is critical at this time.

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the illustrious member for Langley—Aldergrove.

I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to the Liberal government's first Speech from the Throne. This is my first time rising in this new Parliament as the member for the newly configured riding of Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa. I am also the official opposition critic for wildlife conservation and Parks Canada.

First, I would like to thank the voters of Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa for placing their trust in me yet again, and to take a moment to congratulate my fellow members of Parliament, both new and re-elected, on their victories in the last federal election.

As the official opposition, Canadians expect us to hold the government to account and ensure that we present an alternative vision to the Liberals' agenda. That is why much of what I heard in Friday's throne speech concerned me greatly.

First, there was no mention about how to create a climate for investment and economic growth. I expected this, since the Liberals and their fellow travellers on the left, the NDP, focus on spending as much money as they can while never advancing or promoting policies that will actually create wealth.

I would remind them that a focus on creating wealth is a necessary prerequisite to spending. However, I hold little hope in this regard. Deficits will balloon under the government, while investment will wither on the vine as businesses and wealth creators are increasingly punished for creating jobs. The new payroll tax, in the guise of a changed CPP, is a perfect example.

Second, as a member of Parliament for a large agricultural and natural resources-based constituency, I was amazed and very disappointed by the complete lack of any reference in the throne speech to agriculture and rural Canada. Agriculture generates over \$100 billion for the Canadian economy, and Canada's natural resources industries, largely based in rural Canada, are the backbone of the Canadian economy. Well, that is until the Liberals finish off the natural resources sector with punitive taxation and a regulatory regime designed to endlessly delay any new natural resource development anywhere in Canada.

In fact, rural communities appear to have been largely forgotten. The Liberals have made specific promises regarding public transit, for example. Of course, public transit is important in large urban centres, but it is largely non-existent in my riding.

Address

How do the Liberals plan on compensating our communities? We do not have public transit where I live and where I represent, but we do have infrastructure needs. Will the Liberals match the investments in urban transit with rural infrastructure projects?

The Canadian natural resources sector is suffering, as are those natural resource-dependent communities in rural Canada. Crude oil is below \$40. With the proposed carbon tax and onerous regulatory regime layered on top of low prices, it is clear that the Liberals and their fellow travellers in the NDP have basically declared war on Canada's energy sector and our natural resources industries.

I find this appalling because when it comes right down to it, the energy business is basically a people business. Let me explain. Canada's natural resources sector employs over \$1.8 million Canadians, and the energy sector supports about 300,000 jobs alone. In the winter of 2009-10, like many of my constituents, I worked in the Alberta oil sands conducting environmental monitoring. In that capacity, I met Canadians from every province who were supporting themselves and their families by working in the oil sands. I met senior couples saving for a dignified retirement, young people saving for their first home, and moms and dads putting away money for their children's education.

Apart from the fact that Canada's oil sands operate under a strict regime of environmental compliance and real excellence, it is the people and employees, supported by the oil sands, who are the real driving force behind this vital industry. It is Canadians from all across Canada who will be affected by the Liberals deliberate strategy to shrink the oil sands.

How much of the expected \$570 billion that was earmarked for new investments will now not be spent? How many manufacturers in Ontario and Quebec will not get equipment orders? How many vehicles will not be purchased by energy workers? How many homes will stay unsold? How many people from high unemployment areas who formerly commuted to the oil sands will now be forced to stay home collecting employment insurance? How many vital public services will now be starved for funds?

I had the honour in the last Parliament to be a member of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, and the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. Both fit well with my experience as a fisheries biologist and my careers in natural resources and conservation. In those capacities, I have developed a singular focus on the delivery of real and measurable environmental results for every public dollar spent.

That was the policy of our government, and I am very proud of our record in delivering real and measurable environmental results from our programs.

• (1230)

Under our watch, most measurable environmental indicators showed marked improvements. Sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide emissions declined. On our watch, the UN, in 2010, declared that Canada ranked number two in terms of the quality of our water when compared with other industrialized nations.

Our government set aside an area for national parks that is twice the size of the province of New Brunswick. We cleaned up hundreds of contaminated sites, introduced major fisheries habitat conserva-

tion programs, improved wetland conservation, and initiated major work to improve water quality in Lake Winnipeg and the Great Lakes.

I would point out to the House that within their first month in office, the Liberals have made eight funding announcements, costing Canadians almost \$2.85 billion. None of that money is going to be spent in Canada, and none of those funds were approved by Parliament or even announced when Parliament was sitting. Most will be spent on international climate change projects.

The question I keep asking, both with this \$2.85 billion as well as with other points in my speech, is what do Canadians get for these funds? Government spending is all about priorities, and pressing environmental investments need to be made right here in Canada. For example, Lake Erie is being seriously affected by nutrient inputs, primarily from the United States. In fact, all of the Great Lakes, where 40% of Canadians live by the way, are experiencing eutrophication from an ever-increasing number of non-point sources.

These are the kinds of environmental issues that Canadians expect governments to work on, yet the Liberal government's priority is to send almost 400 delegates to Paris, more than the U.S., Britain, and Australia combined. Generating real and measurable environmental results is what Canadians expect but will certainly not get from the Liberal government.

By the way, it was truly astonishing that the first act by our new Minister of Environment and Climate Change was to allow Montreal to dump eight billion litres of raw sewage into the St. Lawrence, one of Canada's most iconic waterways. This was in direct violation of section 36 of the Fisheries Act. So much for the Liberals' vaunted concern for the environment.

In the throne speech, the Liberal government promised to introduce a carbon tax, thus increasing cost to industry, further depressing energy investments, and increasing direct energy costs to Canadians. There are two groups of Canadians who will be directly affected by this carbon tax, namely low-income and rural Canadians, the kind of people I represent. If it were not so serious, I would find it laughable that the Liberals claim to care so much about low-income Canadians. They are doing their best to put at risk the incomes of poor people and those who live in remote rural regions.

I would note that both low-income people and rural people spend a higher proportion of their incomes on energy than other Canadians. It is my expectation that any carbon pricing be revenue neutral and have a mechanism to offset the negative impacts of such a tax on low-income and rural people.

Furthermore, it is obvious that the federal Liberal government wants to take us down the same energy path as its friends in Ontario. How is that working out? Ontario's Auditor General, Bonnie Lysyk, recently valued the Ontario Liberal's vaunted green energy strategy. She noted that Ontario electricity ratepayers have had to pay billions for these decisions. Between 2006 and 2014, this cost consumers an additional \$37 billion in Ontario, and will cost ratepayers another \$133 billion by 2032.

In the *Toronto Star* recently, of all places, there was an article by Thomas Walkom entitled "Ontario's green energy botch-up a lesson for those fighting climate change". This article talked about Ontario's approach of massively subsidizing the production of electricity from solar and wind and biomass, resulting in a massive overproduction of power from Ontario that has to literally pay other jurisdictions to take its power. Interestingly, Ontario's annual average energy surplus between 2009 and 2014 was equal to the total power generation of my province of Manitoba, one of the major hydro producers in this country.

Furthermore, by dumping excess power on the market, Ontario has depressed energy prices for all producers. As Walkom notes, "Canadians are willing to pay a price now to save the future. But these same Canadians will rebel if they believe the governments inducing them to pay carbon taxes are incompetent, venal or both". What we see in Ontario is the likely outcome of the energy policies of the federal government.

I would like a quick word on the firearm's issue. I was chair of the Conservative hunting and angling caucus, and my critic portfolio includes protecting the rights of law-abiding firearms owners. The Liberals have declared their intention to attack law-abiding firearms owners once again. The Liberals are soft on crime and tough on law-abiding firearms owners. Talk about reverting to type. Again, we see them wanting to repeal Bill C-42, the Common Sense Firearms Licensing Act, which ensured public safety was protected while at the same time protecting the rights of law-abiding firearms owners.

In conclusion, I have stressed just a few of the questions that Canadians have been raising in regard to the Liberal agenda.

• (1235)

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my family and I have had the pleasure of visiting Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, the riding of the hon. member opposite. It is a great riding. The people there are kind.

However, I must say that I am a little surprised. I had to check my BlackBerry to find out what the date was. I was certain it was December 8 but was under the impression it was Halloween, because the hon. member was trying to scare the House and Canadians in terms of what the Speech from the Throne was not about.

The hon. member asked about a plan for the economy, and the Liberal plan we have announced is simple. It is to help middle-class families and to help grow the economy. When he asked about infrastructure, he was concerned that there would be no elements in the Liberal government's plan to help out small communities, such as the communities he represents. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Liberal plan made it very clear that we want to make sure we have an opportunity to work in partnership with the provinces

Address

and with municipalities big and small, but I am not certain the word "co-operation" is a word that the hon. member is used to, given that he was part of the previous government.

However, I digress. I want to keep with sunny ways and to make a positive statement.

I would recommend that the hon. member read the Speech from the Throne because it talks about growing the middle class, about helping families, about innovating the economy, and about making sure we leave a clean environment for our children and grandchildren.

• (1240)

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Mr. Speaker, I read the throne speech word for word, which was not difficult to do because, basically, there was nothing in it.

What is critical is to create a climate for investment. To want to give gumdrops to everyone is fine. That is a nice aspirational goal, and that is the kind of goal that is in the throne speech.

We need real and concrete policy, programs, and outcomes that will create a climate for investment in this country so that entrepreneurs, business people, and those people with good ideas can continue to grow the economy and help our middle class out.

What I heard from the Liberals was nothing but fluff. Their programs will do nothing to grow the economy and create the wealth this country needs to provide vital public services.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as this is the first time I rise in the House, I would like to thank the people of Port Moody—Coquitlam, Anmore, and Belcarra for their support and for putting me in this honourable place.

I am the fisheries and oceans and Coast Guard critic for the NDP. My colleague from Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa spoke about the former Conservative government's track record on the environment. I have a different recollection of the Conservatives' environmental track record. They gutted the Fisheries Act, they repealed the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, and they got rid of the Navigable Waters Protection Act, not to mention their complete lack of action on climate change.

I know the Liberals across the way have made many promises on these issues, and we in the NDP will be sure to remind them of those promises. However, I am wondering if the member would comment on what he thinks of those promises.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Mr. Speaker, I served on the fisheries committee with my hon. colleague from time to time. I certainly enjoyed our interactions and his intelligent questions.

Too often, when people talk about the environment, no one mentions any numbers. Environment should be less about emotion and more about math. On our watch, greenhouse gas emissions declined, ambient levels of sulphur dioxide declined on average by 4.8% per year, and nitrogen dioxide levels declined by 2.9% per year.

Address

As well, in terms of the Fisheries Act, the changes we made were common-sense changes to protect rural communities and at the same time protect fish stocks. I would make the point that, up to 2009, the end of the period on which the Cohen commission based its report, there was definitely a crisis in sockeye salmon stocks. However, on our watch, the 2010 sockeye salmon run was a record in history, and the 2014 sockeye salmon run was even larger. The changes we made to the Fisheries Act actually worked, and the proof is in the pudding—by and large, fish stocks in this country are doing extremely well.

● (1245)

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to stand before you today in this honoured House in response to the government's Speech from the Throne.

I would like to begin by thanking my constituents of Langley—Aldergrove for, once again, giving me the great honour to be their voice in Canada's Parliament. I and my beautiful wife, Diane, love our community of Langley—Aldergrove. Four generations of Warawas have called Langley their home and, with our five children and 10 grandchildren, we expect many more generations of Warawas are to come.

I also want to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your posting as Deputy Speaker.

I also want to thank the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa for the incredible job he did in the number of Parliaments in which I served with him. He is passionate about the environment and has been very effective in working on the environment for Canadians.

I also want to thank the interim leader for Canada's official opposition, the member for Sturgeon River—Parkland. She has given me the great privilege of being Canada's voice for seniors across this great country. Taking care of Canadian seniors has always been a priority for the Conservative Party, and Canadians appreciate greatly the work that the previous government did for seniors.

I am very concerned that the new Prime Minister did not appoint a minister for seniors. I am also concerned that seniors were not mentioned at all in the Speech from the Throne and that the new Liberal government has no plan to keep the promises it made to seniors during the election campaign.

The speech delivered by the Governor General on behalf of the new government called on the chamber to represent the diverse voices of Canadians, which include seniors. It also called on parliamentarians to work together collaboratively to improve the lives of all Canadians, and in this spirit, I stand before the House today. While I agree with the government that the economy and the job creation is very important, as is the strengthening of the middle class, there has been a serious omission. The government forgot to address a growing Canadian demographic with unique concerns. Seniors have been forgotten or ignored.

As we know, right now, one in six Canadians is a senior. In 14 short years, one in four Canadians will be a senior. That is a fundamental shift. Canada needs a sustainable plan for seniors that will meet their needs. While the Speech from the Throne mentions an enhancement to the Canada pension plan for future generations, the Liberal government does not have a plan for seniors' needs today.

It is vitally important not only that Parliament create programs that are beneficial to Canadians, but that those programs be financially sustainable and secure. This would ensure that our children and grandchildren can enjoy the stability and economic security that we all enjoy today, due to the past government. Changes to the CPP in the future will not address the needs of seniors today.

I am very concerned that health care and the health of seniors do not appear to be a priority of the new government. The development of a new health accord does not address the growing need for a national palliative care strategy due to Canada's aging population. It is very important that the Liberal government present a plan to ensure quality of life for seniors and all Canadians.

In May of last year, in the 41st Parliament, members voted on a private member's motion calling for the creation of a national strategy on palliative and end-of-life care. That motion passed unanimously in the House, and I want to thank the member for Timmins—James Bay for bringing it to the House. Every Conservative, Liberal, and NDP member supported that motion, including the new Prime Minister. I urge the new Liberal government to keep that promise and immediately start to create the national strategy on palliative and end-of-life care.

One important aspect of palliative care is the caregivers. Caregivers are both medical professionals—such as doctors, nurses, physical therapists, pharmacists—and family members and friends. All of these groups and people must work together to create a healthy, supportive, and loving environment for a dying person. That is not to say that the task is either easy or free of economic concerns. Too often the painful choices that families must make in the care of their loved ones are tied to financial concerns.

● (1250)

This is why the compassionate care benefit was developed to help Canadian families struggling with the impending loss of a loved one, in order to ensure that families have the ability to leave their employment for a period of time to care for the dying loved one or friend. The program was launched in 2004, and it has been growing ever since. When the program was launched, it provided financial support to a very restricted list of caregivers for a period of up to six weeks in a 26-week window. I am very proud that our Conservative government expanded the benefits from six weeks to six months and let the dying persons choose who would be their care provider. It is also important to note that Canadian women represent 75% of claimants of the compassionate care benefit.

In addition to the increase in eligible time that can be claimed for the compassionate care benefit, our Conservative government of the past nearly doubled the funding for this important program from \$6.9 million in 2004-2005 to \$12 million in 2013-2014. This is part of what led to the increase of caregivers, that they receive the support they need. This support is a real demonstration that the government can show Canadian caregivers and their loved ones that their federal government cares about their plight and wants to help them in the painful ordeal of losing a loved one.

Address

While the government is on the right track to follow our support for caregivers, it does not address the other issue raised in Motion No. 456 in the last Parliament. I would like to encourage the government to present this House with a national palliative care strategy that takes into account Canada's geographic, regional, and cultural diversity. As legislators, we are faced with the challenge of an aging population. In my role as critic for seniors, I must shine a light on this important issue, and that is why I bring it up today.

Another concerning omission from the throne speech is the issue of elder abuse. How is the legalization of marijuana going to prevent elder abuse? While I applaud the government's decision to provide further support to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault, preventing violence against seniors is just as important. Elder abuse exists in numerous ways: physical and sexual abuse, psychological and emotional abuse, financial abuse, and neglect. All of these areas are harmful when they occur to any Canadian, but there is a special grievous nature to the crimes when they are committed against the most vulnerable Canadians.

To give an example, we were all shocked and saddened to learn last year of the restraint and robbery suffered by a 101-year-old man, Second World War veteran, retired Colonel Ernest Côté, here in Ottawa. This crime rocked the community and shone the light on a vulnerable demographic that is growing. While on this case, I mention the crime was perpetrated by a stranger.

What makes elder abuse unique is that quite often the abuser is an individual who is trusted by the senior. Family members, assistance providers, and friends can provide important care, or they may be a danger to a senior. It is important that Canadians, especially seniors, are aware of the signs of elder abuse, and that they know who they can call for help. What is the government's plan to educate seniors and the public about signs and dangers of elder abuse? We do not see anything.

The real test for the current Liberal government is whether it will deliver. Canadians want promises kept and a sustainable plan that will lead to long-term results, given our Conservative values that seniors are important, but unfortunately they are not a priority to a Liberal government.

The official opposition cannot support the throne speech as it has been presently written.

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank and congratulate my colleague from the riding of Langley—Aldergrove for his re-election, and I look forward to working with him in this Parliament.

I have some questions. I am impressed with his concern for seniors, but I feel that he has been talking to different seniors from the ones I talked to in the last election. I knocked on the doors of women and men who were concerned about their income having been stalled over the last nine years, with no concern from a government for the fact that their cost of living increased. I talked to seniors who were concerned about the fact that public transit was increasingly expensive with no plan for helping them get around our cities. I talked to seniors who were concerned about the stock of affordable housing, and were continually concerned about not having a place to live, or about spending too much on their rent so they did not have food to eat. Those are the seniors' concerns I have

been hearing, as well as seniors' concerns about climate change and child care, because they are not self-interested.

What does the member propose to actually suggest to the government to improve the lives of seniors?

• (1255)

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member across the way on his election. It is nice to hear he has talked to seniors, yet, the government does not have a minister for seniors. Previous governments did. Why are seniors not a priority for the Liberal government? They should be. One in six Canadians is a senior. It is the largest growing demographic in this country, yet the Liberals do not have anybody to represent seniors.

I, as a Conservative, am proud to take on that mantle and represent seniors in the House. I hope one day very soon the Prime Minister will appoint a minister for seniors, because it is needed. The issues that the member brought up should be addressed in the House. Why are they not being addressed?

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on his re-election and on his advocacy for seniors. The Conservative government brought in income-splitting for seniors, something that the new government, when it was in opposition, voted against.

Something else we proposed in the election was a single seniors tax cut, providing a tax cut for single seniors so that at the time they are dealing with the loss of a spouse they do not have the added financial burden of paying higher taxes.

Is it the member's hope, as it is mine, that the government will bring in new tax relief right away to support our seniors?

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his hard work already in the House. He gets it; Conservatives seem to naturally get that it is important to protect those and assist those who helped build this great country. To help seniors is important. It is a priority for this party and I encourage every member of Parliament to support our seniors.

We should start off with appointing a minister for seniors, amend the Speech from the Throne to include seniors and include tax cuts, but what we are seeing now is a removal of the tax-free savings plan. Over half of Canadians who use the plan are seniors and that is going to be removed.

Are the Liberals going to keep their promises on the backs of seniors? Shame.

Address

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to speak for a moment on the theme of the hon. member's speech, seniors. We know it is important, if seniors want to retire in dignity, to have an adequate, reliable income. We in the NDP know that the expansion of the Canada pension plan is the best way to ensure that all Canadians, no matter their income bracket, retire with that income.

I wonder if in light of those facts the hon. member would urge his colleagues to stop misrepresenting an expansion of the CPP as a payroll tax when it is part of the wage package that Canadians work for every day, so that they can retire with dignity.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, what we have just heard is that the NDP does not understand where the taxpayers' money from. It comes from taxpayers. Every time CPP benefits are increased, the money has to come from somewhere. It comes from Canadians in their deductions off their payroll and the employer also has to match that at a 2.4 level. It means less income and more taxes for the employers. Is that good for Canada? No.

This party supports increasing a CPP package that is sustainable so we will not only help this generation, but future generations.

• (1300)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to be sharing my time with the hon. member for Beaches—East York.

I hope that I can take a moment to enjoy this moment because it is truly unique. Many of us, 200 plus, are enjoying what I am enjoying right now. I would like to also relay my thanks to the good people of Fleetwood—Port Kells who, with their support, have made this moment for me possible and I hope to serve them with honour.

It has been a long time since I have been considered a rookie at anything.

[*Translation*]

I hope that one day I will be much better at speaking French.

[*English*]

For me to go any further would be harmful to the ears of my colleagues who are proficient in French. My high school French goes only so far, but even at my age, I intend to work on this, because this place is the place of expansion of ideas, expansion of spirit, an expansion of things getting done.

Of course at home, the languages I could learn would include Punjabi, Urdu, Hindi, Tagalog, and many, many others. In fact, Fleetwood—Port Kells was described by a member of the B.C. Legislature as a mini-Canada. We have our industries to the north along the Fraser River. Along the Serpentine River, there are grand areas of agriculture.

We have very diverse neighbourhoods in Fleetwood—Port Kells, robust Muslim, South Asian, and Asian communities that really do build the character of the community. Of course we have the Katzie First Nation on Barnston Island as part of our riding.

Truly, like Canada itself, ours is a community that draws its strength and its character from its diversity, not in spite of it. It is a privilege to be here in the Commons to be its voice.

It is also a privilege to once again collaborate with many present in this House. Of course I have my new colleagues from Surrey who have also been successful in the election, but as I look across the way, there are some who have worked with me in the past. For instance, I recognize the member for Langley—Aldergrove who, with me, worked on initiatives to reduce the number and severity of traffic crashes in British Columbia, and very effectively indeed.

Almost 17 years ago now, the member for Vancouver East, then a cabinet minister in the government of British Columbia, was instrumental in working with me and the Vancouver Police to remove a product called rice alcohol from the streets of Downtown Eastside. The Downtown Eastside is racked by many problems. This very toxic potion was one of them and it was being sold under the counter in convenience stores. With that member's help, we got it regulated and off the street, and out of the misery that contributes to people in that part of Vancouver.

In recent years, the member for South Surrey—White Rock and I worked with many others to advance the cause of light rail rapid transit for Surrey, she as mayor, and I as a senior staff member at metro Vancouver's regional transportation authority.

The people back home will be happy to see all the new Liberal members from Surrey, plus the member for South Surrey—White Rock, and our former mayor, collaborate to bring light rail to reality for the people of Surrey. The election campaign was my first, and it proved to be a real privilege to take a message of real change to so many people in Fleetwood—Port Kells, to so many different doorsteps.

People in Fleetwood—Port Kells, as in the rest of Canada, have high expectations that this Parliament will accomplish many things, not just the people on this side of the House, but people on all sides of the House, as we collaborate and move things forward. If it is a good idea, it does not matter who has it, it should be discussed, debated, and enacted. That was a clear message out of our election campaign.

Fleetwood—Port Kells itself is a relatively prosperous riding. Our Fraser Heights area is beautiful. We have estate homes in beautiful settings. Our Fleetwood and Chimney Hills communities are very solid middle class. It is a place where family, community, and individual initiatives have become the foundations for a very, very strong community and a very prosperous one.

However, during the campaign on the doorsteps in Guildford, it was a different story. It was clear that many families, and many of them newcomers to British Columbia and to Canada, were having a tough time.

• (1305)

It was a serious matter to be able to talk to them about a tax cut on middle incomes and about a non-taxable Canada child benefit that would put more money on the kitchen table for them each and every month. We could see in their eyes what a difference those measures would make. What we saw in their eyes was hope. Because of that, I was very proud of our party, our program, and our leader, because we could offer them the hope that real change would bring.

Beyond that, I was also immensely proud of the way our community responded. People seemed to realize once again something that had been missing from the national dialogue. We got too used to being conditioned to be taxpayers and consumers. During the campaign, we discovered that we are also citizens of a country that, historically, has shared care for the common good.

As the votes were counted from our well-to-do neighbourhoods, I became even more proud of Fleetwood—Port Kells because, let us face it, they were the ones who would see their taxes go up as a result of the Liberal program. However, it was clear when the tallies came in that so many of them had validated our leader's faith that those who have a lot will not mind paying a little more to give a hand up to the people who need it.

Our program to build the nation's foundation through infrastructure investments resonated very strongly with people. We could also see in their eyes that they lived in nice houses and they had families who were doing well, but there was this shadow of an economy that threatened their jobs, and the security of our economy was of critical importance to them. They could see how the investments of an activist government that was just not prepared to sit back and let the private sector carry the load meant something to them.

There were so many others, people who make up a large percentage of our population, who agreed with us that would-be Canadians should be measured by the size of their hope, courage, and spirit, and not just by the size of their wallets. I am an old guy. I grew up in Canada in a time when it earned its reputation as being a refuge for people in distress. I remember the news in 1956 and 1957, when we welcomed 38,000 refugees from Hungary, with a population of just 15 million people. I remember from 1975 to 1980 the Vietnamese boat people. There were 55,000 of them from a war-torn part of the world who came to Canada. I also remember the 6,000 Muslims who were given 90 days to leave Uganda. We took them in.

This is the Canada that I grew up with in the 40s, 50s, and 60s, when I was truly a rookie at almost everything. Now, it is the Canada that we are seeing again. Synagogues, Sikh temples, mosques, and churches have gathered together to welcome the Syrian refugees. Just last Sunday, the BC Muslim Association hosted an event in Surrey that in one night raised \$300,000 to welcome these people properly.

I have to say that, on balance, it is a pleasure to be a rookie again and work at restoring and preserving the Canada that we love and that the world loves for myself, my kids, and all of us here.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for Fleetwood—Port Kells on his inaugural speech and I welcome him to the House. It is great to have him in here, providing his perspective.

He talked about talking on the doorstep to the electorate, citizens, and individuals and hearing the concerns that they raised. I certainly did the same, as well. I heard about the issues of housing, child care, jobs, and the environment. Of course, transit also came up quite a bit, about which this member knows a fair amount.

I wonder if the hon. member could talk about a commitment. There were many promises made by the new Liberal government

Address

while campaigning, including on transit. We have been calling for a national transit strategy for a long time. Will the government commit to ensuring that we move toward a new national transit strategy, which many OECD countries already have, but Canada does not? Will the member commit to working with his government to ensure that we have a national transit strategy?

• (1310)

Mr. Ken Hardie: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member very much for the question because that has come up as an issue many times. A national transit strategy relies in some respects on a homogenous environment across the country. I know from my personal experience and from talking to my then colleagues in transit authorities across the country that conditions change from province to province. We have seen this everywhere from health care to any of the other national files that are important.

Our government needs to create an environment where those discussions can come forward, where we create goals, objectives, and a framework for each province and each municipality, which we supported in the past when Paul Martin initiated the transit tax transfer from the fuel tax revenues. We need to come up with a framework that allows every municipality in the country to respond according to its local conditions. The framework and overall goals would be a worthy conversation to have in the House, in terms of discussing what would work in a uniform way across Canada while respecting the regional differences.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as this is the first time I have risen in the House I would like to thank the citizens of South Okanagan—West Kootenay for placing their trust in me and putting me here in the chamber.

The member talked about the hope in people's eyes when he met them on the doorsteps and told them about the income tax cuts the Liberals were planning. I just looked up the income distribution for Guildford and Fleetwood and 75% to 80% of the people in those communities are making less than \$45,000 a year. I wonder how they are going to benefit from these plans.

Address

Mr. Ken Hardie: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question because it is pertinent. One of the things that distinguished our plan was the fact that there were a number of interlocking pieces to it. In the discussions I had on those doorsteps, where the family itself was perhaps not making up to the threshold of around \$45,000 where a tax cut would kick in, more often than not there were children present and those are the people who would benefit very specifically. It has been proven, from independent analysis by *MoneySense* magazine and others comparing the parties' various tax proposals, that those families with children would benefit more from the Liberal program than the others, particularly the program that had been put in place by the Conservatives and adopted by the NDP. It is the Canada child benefit, income tested as it is, that would actually tilt the benefits toward the people who need it the most.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, congratulations.

I want to begin by thanking my wife, Amy Symington, my parents, and my family and friends for their love and support through this year's marathon campaign. I thank also the hundreds of volunteers who worked tirelessly to give me this opportunity and all the residents of Beaches—East York who put their trust and confidence in me.

I am especially proud of my community's recent efforts to come together in the wake of the Syrian refugee crisis. Many neighbours have pledged both their time and money to welcome refugees into our community. I commend the work of local churches, community organizations, and hard-working, caring individuals.

It is an important reminder that long-term peace is forged by a compassionate and inclusive society. I see those values as my fellow neighbours work to welcome newcomers into our community and do their part in our world. Equally, our response to the Syrian refugee crisis is a reminder that we can and should work to put politics aside. In doing so, we have the ability to accomplish great things.

I am one of 197 new MPs, and my home riding sent me here to take a new approach, one focused on honest debate, respectful disagreement, and building consensus.

Pollsters tell us that less than a quarter of Canadians have faith in our democracy. I am asking everyone in this House to help change that. I believe that politics is a noble profession and I am naive enough to want every Canadian to feel pride in the work that we will do here when they watch us in action. Canadians agree on more than we often realize. Rather than scoring points and tearing each other down, we should work as hard as we can to prioritize agreement.

In the throne speech, we were promised a government that is smart and caring. Those two themes are important: fiscal responsibility and social progress — matching a social justice perspective and an investment outlook.

There are any number of issues where we may disagree on why we support a given policy or initiative, but we do in fact agree on the end conclusion. It is our job to point these out, and many of these issues were rightfully highlighted in the throne speech. I will mention five.

First is a recommitment to science, evidence and data-driven government. In the U.S., former officials in the Obama and Bush

administrations estimate that less than one out of every hundred dollars of government spending is backed by even the most basic evidence that the money is being spent wisely. We experienced similar problems here in Canada, yet good data is central to good decision-making. We need to collect better data about the policies and programs that work, to fund or increase funding for what works, and to direct funds away from those programs that fail to achieve measurable outcomes.

I am proud that 2016 will be a census year, but that must be only the beginning. Fairness requires that our social programs are effective. Reason requires that they are also efficient. Good data is essential for both.

Second, we should work across the aisle to end poverty in this country. Our Canada child benefit is one significant piece to that puzzle. It is effectively a guaranteed annual income for kids and families in need. As an aside, a basic annual income has been advocated by those in both the traditional left and the traditional right, including the hon. Hugh Segal.

Bringing kids out of poverty is obviously a matter of social justice. It is on its face the right thing to do, but we also know that kids lifted out of poverty are more likely to finish high school, go to university or college, and contribute to our economy in a serious way, not to mention the savings in future social assistance, criminal justice, and health care.

In 1989, this House unanimously committed to ending child poverty by the year 2000. It is now 2015 and over one million children still live below the poverty line, but the importance of that objective should not be forgotten.

Our benefit aims to bring over 300,000 of those kids above the poverty line. More work obviously remains to be done, but it is an important initial commitment. We will not dictate how the money should be spent. We will simply ensure that the money is targeted to those families in real need.

Third is public infrastructure investment. We talk a lot about deficits in the House, but we should be clear which deficit most concerns us. My primary concern is the infrastructure deficit. It exceeds \$120 billion across the country, according to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. It costs our economy billions of dollars in productivity every year.

The Board of Trade of Toronto has estimated that congestion costs the GTA economy at least \$6 billion every year. The C.D. Howe Institute estimates that this figure exceeds \$11 billion in the GTHA. If we do not make investments in core infrastructure and public transit now, it will cost us more in the long run. With interest rates at historic lows, we have a unique opportunity to invest.

Address

In the spirit of not scoring points, let me remind Canadians that investment in infrastructure rose from 2.5% of GDP a year in 2000 to 2006 to 3.3% in 2007 to 2012. In other words, our former Conservative government understood the need for public infrastructure investment, made historic investments, and we are continuing and expanding upon that work.

• (1315)

Fourth is our environment. The provinces have moved forward in the absence of federal leadership over the last 10 years. We need to work with them. Without question, there is a significant future cost to climate change. Reports tell us that inaction will ultimately cost us more than action.

For starters, we need to ensure effective carbon pricing across our country. In 2008, B.C. implemented an effective carbon price that is revenue neutral. I am encouraged by similar efforts to date in Alberta.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke of intrusive government yesterday, but there is a consensus among economists about the usefulness of a carbon price. It is supported by those who believe in free markets. It emphasizes the principle that polluters should pay. It is a classic economic response: internalizing the externalities imposed on our environment that are not adequately captured in the current price of fossil fuels. When Preston Manning and the cross-partisan Ecofiscal Commission are calling for carbon pricing, it is quite clearly not the job-killing tax on everything that Canadians have been repeatedly told.

Fifth is health care, including preventive health care and a focus on the social determinants of health, poverty alleviation, and better support for nutrition and physical activity programs. There are many steps we can take to improve Canadians' quality of life, all the more important when one considers that an unhealthy Canadian costs our public system \$10,000 more per year than a healthy Canadian.

Similarly, we must heed the call of the Canadian Medical Association and invest in home care and long-term care facilities. Hospital stays can cost over \$1,000 per day, long-term care \$130, and home care as little as \$55 a day. As seniors already represent 50% of health care spending, it is incumbent on us both to improve the quality of care and to create savings in our health care system.

There are many other ideas and issues to add to this list, from expanding the housing first initiative to reversing unjust tough on crime policies that put more Canadians in jail at an average annual cost of \$120,000, to a public health approach to drug policy, and on and on.

Finally, there are a number of initiatives that respect the rights and freedoms of Canadians and the openness of government without affecting the public purse. Our merit-based and practical plan for Senate reform to remove partisanship and patronage in the upper chamber is endorsed by constitutional experts.

I look forward to helping craft death-with-dignity legislation to protect the constitutional rights of the terminally ill; to demanding better customer service from our government agencies for Canadians in times of need, especially in Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada; to fixing Bill C-51 to ensure that our charter rights are respected; to bringing animal welfare laws into the 21st century; and

to adopting long-overdue electoral reform, not only making every vote count but also strengthening Elections Canada and respecting the freedom to vote our conscience, as promised by the Right Hon. Prime Minister.

I want to end on this note and stress the importance of independence in the House, the importance of thoughtfulness, and the importance of respectful disagreement. I am a proud member of the Liberal caucus, but I am prouder still of standing here in the House as the voice of all residents of Beaches-East York.

I look forward to being a strong voice for my riding in the House over the next four years and to working with each and every member in the House for all Canadians, to build consensus, to prioritize those issues where there is consensus, and to be a government that gets things done.

• (1320)

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, congratulations. It is good to see you back in the chair.

I would like to congratulate my hon. colleague for his maiden speech in the House. I had the good fortune when I left the military to live in Beaches—East York, in the Beach Triangle. It is a lovely community with wonderfully warm and caring people, and I see that he is taking that approach here in the House.

In his remarks, though, he said how troubled he is that people are losing faith in their political system, noting that only one-third have faith in their system. How can he work within the new government to keep that faith when, in the first two months of his government, a litany of promises made during the election have already been changed, whether on refugees, the revenue-neutral changes to the tax code, or, indeed, the pledge that deficits would stay below \$10 billion for only three years? Those have already been cast aside.

He had a very good and passionate list of issues he wanted to bring to the House, but how can he build that faith when his government is eroding the trust that was just given to it on October 19?

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Mr. Speaker, it is about listening to Canadians.

My friend sees a broken promise with respect to Syrian refugees; I see listening to Canadians and actually working across the aisle with the other side.

Address

The commitment remains 25,000 Syrian refugees to be brought into Canada by the end of 2016. We will have 15,000 government-sponsored Syrian refugees by the end of February 2016 and the remainder over the rest of the year. We will exceed those targets with respect to private sponsorship. If my community is indicative of other communities across the country, there is an outpouring of support, and I expect we will well exceed the 35,000 we have currently targeted.

• (1325)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on getting elected and on his speech.

He spoke about the importance of making sure that every vote counts. With regard to electoral reform, the government has already indicated that it is leaning toward a preferential ballot system.

What does the member think of the fact that many Canadians who have studied this topic for many years, some of whom are members of organizations such as the Mouvement pour une démocratie nouvelle or Fair Vote Canada, believe that we should follow the example of many other countries and go with a mixed member proportional system? Such a system would truly ensure that every vote would count.

What does the member think about that?

[*English*]

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Mr. Speaker, I do not speak for the government; I speak for myself. The government is committed to electoral reform and it is committed to listening to Canadians.

I have not heard the government commit to a preferential ballot and no other option. I understand we will strike a working committee and listen to Canadians. I am a member of Fair Vote Canada and I look forward to advocating to introduce an element of proportional representative into our system.

We cannot tell Canadians how we will change the system. This decision is too important. We have to listen to Canadians.

The Deputy Speaker: My compliments to hon. members, by the way, on these rounds of questions and comments. When members keep their questions and responses succinct, we get more participation in these rounds of questions and comments. That was a way of pre-staging my comment that we still have time for one other question and comment.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Foothills.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague across the floor on his election and I welcome him to the House.

He made a comment at the very end that an issue as important as this was something about which we had to speak to Canadians. I find it very interesting that he talked about an open and transparent government, and that they needed to talk to Canadians about important issues.

However, yesterday and again today we heard the government say that this would be the last election ever decided by the first past the

post system. This was decided without any debate in the House and without any discussion with Canadians across the country.

Does the member feel that changing the electoral system on how the government is elected is not important enough to discuss with Canadians? Will the member commit to having a referendum on this very important issue?

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Mr. Speaker, I am open to a discussion regarding a referendum, but the fact is that we just had an election. I am not suggesting that the Liberal Party obtained enough votes to make this a mandate, but the NDP also ran on electoral reform.

Canadians were very clear that they wanted to move beyond the first past the post.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before I begin my speech, I would like to indicate that I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River.

As this is my maiden speech in the House of Commons, I would like to thank the people of Vancouver East for giving me a strong mandate to represent them in the House of Commons, in the people's House.

Vancouver East is a wonderfully diverse group of neighbourhoods and communities that come together to form an incredibly diverse part of our city, our province and our country. Whether refugees, immigrants, new Canadians, retirees, young people working to make a start, artists and writers from the creative community who feed our soul, or people who are homeless, grappling with addiction issues or mental health challenges, or grassroots activists who give strength to the fight for a better tomorrow, in Vancouver East everyone makes a contribution to our community. The activism in Vancouver East is unparalleled. We fight hard for what we believe in. We are so proud to be a pro-democratic movement for social, economic, and environmental justice in an unequal world.

In Vancouver East, we know that addressing the social determinants of health is key to healthy communities. We are never afraid to fight to be the agent of positive social change for the entire nation. The way forward for a better future demands that we address the root causes of past injustices. Canada has a shameful chapter of how indigenous peoples have been treated. The effects of colonialism have had a profound effect for the first peoples of this land. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights released a report to say, "The disappearances and murders of indigenous women in Canada are part of a broader pattern of violence and discrimination against indigenous women in the country."

It makes my heart sing to see in the throne speech the government's commitment to a national inquiry into the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. I do hope, with all my heart, that this nation will finally address the root causes that exacerbate the violence against indigenous women and girls. The New Democrats stand ready to work with the government to fulfill this important election promise.

Address

The throne speech stated, "...the Government believes that all Canadians should have a real and fair chance to succeed". If this statement is to ring true, and I do hope that it does, is it not time to have a national plan with real targets and progress reports to end poverty? After all, it is 2015, and former NDP leader Ed Broadbent's motion to eradicate poverty, supported by every member of the House, was made in 1989. It is startling to me that in Canada 19% of the children live in poverty. That is 1.3 million children. In B.C. alone, that is 170,000 children.

It is a myth to say that people choose to be on welfare. People do not choose to live in poverty. A parent does not choose to send his or her child to bed hungry. The majority of the people on income assistance are people with disabilities, people who are just trying to make ends meet, and people who are working multiple low-income jobs, minimum wage jobs. It does not have to be this way. If we ask the people of Vancouver East, they will tell us that closing stock option loopholes and investing in a plan to eliminate poverty is an easy choice for the government to make.

Though the throne speech did not mention child care, I do hope that the government will recognize that an affordable national universal child care program would ensure that we are taking care of future generations by laying a strong foundation for success.

• (1330)

In East Vancouver, it is a struggle to find accessible, affordable, quality child care, yet we know that early childhood development is good for the child, the family, and the economy. Families and business leaders know that a national child care program equals economic prosperity for the nation. What goes in tandem with that is a national housing program. We do not have to be rocket scientists to know that ending homelessness is not just plausible, but possible. It requires political will.

During the campaign, Liberal candidates promised to renew the co-op housing agreements that were set to expire and to bring back a national housing plan. While housing was not mentioned in the throne speech, I do hope those are not just empty words. It is important for Vancouver East that the federal government gets back to being a committed housing partner and starts building safe, secure, affordable, social housing, and co-ops once again.

From the young to the old, our seniors deserve dignity and support in their golden years. They should not have to worry about not being able to access health care, prescription drugs, home support or having a roof over their heads. Lifting seniors out of poverty by increasing the guaranteed income supplement and returning the retirement age from 67 to 65 is what the government has promised them. In the days ahead, I hope the government will lay out its plan to deliver on that promise. We are worthy of a Canada that honours all those who have sacrificed so much so we can have a better future.

My parents immigrated to Canada because it was a beacon of freedom, hope and opportunity. They dared to dream for a better future for their children, they dared to seek opportunities to make a better life, and they dared to cherish our freedoms and civil liberties.

I am honoured to be the NDP critic for immigration, refugees and citizenship. I look forward to working with the minister and his parliamentary secretary, along with the Conservative critic and

deputy critic, on this important portfolio. From honouring the commitment to bring 25,000 government-sponsored Syrian refugees to Canada, to eliminating the backlog for family reunification, to spousal sponsorship applications to getting rid of arbitrary quotas, to addressing concerns with the temporary foreign workers program and removing barriers to citizenship, there is much work to be done.

No Canadian should be made to feel that they are second-class citizens, not immigrants, not those with dual citizenships, no one. The Liberal government promised to repeal Bill C-24. It promised to reverse the invasion of privacy and threat to civil liberties in Bill C-51. Canadians are ready for change. In the days ahead, I hope to see concrete plans and timelines for these election promises, because it is important for the government to deliver on what it promises. The plans that were campaigned on were ambitious, but the expectations need to be met post-election.

We have a collective responsibility to leave our country a better place than what we inherited from the last generation. I look forward to working with all members of the House to do just that.

As the final words in my maiden speech, I want to also thank everyone who worked on my campaign team: the volunteers, the staff, the people who put their trust in me and who toiled in a long election campaign to send me here. I will live by the words of the late Dr. David Lam to "bring honour to the title" that the people have bestowed in me with the work that I do.

• (1335)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I commend the member on her speech and her passion for the most vulnerable.

There seems to be a disconnect with what we hear from the government. The Liberals talk about helping those who need it most, but they are bringing in a tax cut that will benefit those making over \$90,000 a year. Meanwhile they are cutting tax-free savings accounts even though most of the people who use tax-free savings accounts are making less than \$60,000 a year. There is a real disconnect on the part of the government with respect to that.

In the interest of helping those who need it most, will the hon. member join us in supporting the continuation of the tax-free savings accounts?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, my riding is one of the poorest in this country. I would like to see the government give the tax breaks to the bracket of people who are not eligible right now for those tax breaks. Many of the people in Vancouver East need that break. They need that support. A government that wants to ensure everybody succeeds should change the tax breaks, work with the NDP caucus, and bring that forward.

*Address**[Translation]*

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member from Vancouver East for her inaugural speech.

I would like her to elaborate on her comments regarding co-operative housing. I began working in the co-operative housing sector 25 years ago, and I found that it was an excellent way to help people have a good quality of life.

Can the member elaborate on this issue?

• (1340)

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, there is no question that safe, secure, affordable housing is needed everywhere in this country, from social housing to co-operative housing. They play an important role. In my riding, there are more than 3,000 units of co-op housing whose operating agreements are set to expire or might have expired already. We need the government to follow through on its commitment to ensure that those operating agreements are renewed, so that nobody is displaced.

Equally important, we need to see a national affordable housing program, so that we can see the government build affordable housing once again and build co-op housing once again.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on her excellent speech. I was very impressed.

She is obviously very familiar with the housing situation in her riding, which she mentioned. The Liberals talk about co-op housing, but we never hear the term “social housing”. However, the end of the agreements does not just affect co-op housing. Other types of non-profit housing are affected as well.

My colleague told us how many of her constituents are on a wait list, and about \$2 billion per year would be allocated to renewing agreements that amount to \$1.7 billion alone. That does not leave much for building other social housing.

I would like to hear the member's thoughts on that.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, we need a full continuum of housing options. There is no question that co-op housing is an important component, and there needs to be support there, but building social housing is equally important. In British Columbia more than 10,000 people are on the wait list. People have given up and do not put their names on the wait list anymore.

We need a national affordable housing program. That program was cancelled in 1993 by the former Liberal government. Hopefully with this new sunny way with the new Liberal government, there will be a national affordable housing program again and we will see affordable housing being built with subsidies to support everybody in our communities across the country.

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to thank the voters

of Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River who have placed their trust in me to represent them in this Parliament. I thank them very much, for my volunteers and the support I have received in my riding.

I am standing here today as a Dene woman from a small village in the northern part of Saskatchewan called La Loche. From my front door, I can see the rich boreal forest and can hear the children playing by Lac La Loche where generations of children have played and mothers have washed their families' clothes from time immemorial.

In my mind, I can travel along Highway 155 south to where it meets the Churchill River at Île-à-la-Crosse. From there the river travels north to the tiny hamlet of Patuanak, east through the boreal forest to Pinehouse Lake, then on to Stanley Mission, where the river seems of two minds: continue east to Pelican Narrows and Sandy Bay, or cut out north to Wollaston Lake where the currents curve back to the west, to Lake Athabasca and then into Alberta to join the mighty Mackenzie River.

Even as I say the names of these places, I cannot help but feel a little homesick, because it is a place of a beauty beyond parallel for me.

The proper appreciation of that environment means protecting against its destruction and recognizing the traditional owners of that land. This is done by recognizing the treaties and inherent rights of the Métis to maintain their traditional way of life, which is intrinsically tied to this geography, and for these people to be included not as an afterthought or as courtesy, but as equals. They must be consulted about any use or occupation of this traditional land.

This past summer, we lived through a devastating fire season. The elders say that we will have another one again soon.

The immediacy of climate change is all too real for people who live in this part of the boreal forest, who see the summer storms coming over from the west, bringing only lightning strikes that ignite fires, instead of replenishing the lakes and rivers.

For us in the north, climate change is all too real, and it is apparent we must take real action. How often, though, do we reflect on northern Saskatchewan with much different thoughts in our minds than its natural beauty? We hear that the north, as we call it back home, has the highest incidence of violent crime and interpersonal violence, highest rates of suicide, highest rates of alcohol consumption and abuse, highest rates of mental illness. However, sometimes we are also the lowest: lowest rates of educational achievement, lowest rates of employment, lowest average incomes.

My first thought is to stand here and ask for help. That is what a leader would do, and I have been asked to do that from time to time. However, that implies that we are helpless, and we are not.

Our communities and population want recognition of these problems and want understanding. We want it understood that, when we speak of interpersonal violence, we are not talking just about an act a person perpetrated against another person. We need to talk about the whole context of that act.

When we talk about an inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women, we are not asking for an incident report or even a string of incident reports that only itemize criminal facts. That would have no purpose.

Even the phrase “an inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women” acknowledges that this violence is neither normal nor acceptable. Clearly, we would not have an inquiry into something that is normal or acceptable.

Perhaps the biggest danger we face as a community is to say that it is just a normal thing that happens in these places.

• (1345)

It is the entrenchment of complacency when communities themselves think that this violence is normal, that it is acceptable, and that it is the northern way. How can healing take place when we are conditioned to accept that this level of violence is normal?

An inquiry amounts to recognition that this is not a problem for any one community, nor is it a problem that can be resolved in isolation at the community level. What is required is for all groups, including indigenous groups, governments, our justice systems, and our police, to work together to help our communities heal and to give them space to heal. By “space”, I do mean physical space in some cases.

In northern Saskatchewan, we only have one women's shelter for 40,000 people. That is one structure for all of northern Saskatchewan where women and children can go to escape violence.

While climate change and the inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women are issues that touch me and the communities I represent, the people in my riding have many other concerns.

Ours is one of the most diverse ridings in the country. Our large boreal forests and lakes are bordered to the south by rich agricultural farmland. North and south, there are only a few cities. Mostly, our riding is a collection of villages and small towns. Many of these are thriving, but some are struggling. The boom and bust cycle means that economic hard times are never far away from resource-dependent communities. The challenge for parliamentarians is how we can help create economic opportunities to ensure the equality of opportunity to break the cycle of welfare dependency. That is the key to getting people out of stressful situations, and to help children grow to be strong, resilient, and proud.

It is a question that I ask myself now, and because I am standing here, I am asking that question of the government.

Clearly, education is one of the keys. For first nations and for everyone, equality of opportunity means, above all, equal access to educational resources. It means funding schools on reserves as well as the schools in the villages or towns down the road are funded. We know that the government has committed itself to that end. If it is able to deliver, I will gladly commend it for that. However, I will remind the government that, while commitments are good, action is better: more of the first, and even more of the second.

I told my constituents while I was campaigning that I would fight for equal access to child care spaces. My constituency has one of the highest natural population growth rates in the country. It also has

Address

very high dependency rates. That is a lot of kids to look after. What good are employment opportunities for young mothers if there is no one to help take care of the children or if child care is simply out of reach?

In addition to that, I want to flag the deplorable state of housing in rural and remote communities, particularly on first nations. It is among the many challenges that stand in the way of breaking the silence that has led to many negative outcomes in northern communities right across Canada.

In closing, I want to remind the Liberals that they were elected on a call for change, and they cannot take their time if they expect to maintain the good will of Canadian voters. The history of their party is filled with uneven results and long timelines that saw election promises repeated from one Parliament to the next. Theirs is the party that imposed the 2% funding cap and wrote the white paper, which were the causes of many problems. They are now in a position to right some historical wrongs.

New Democrats are committed to many of these goals, and we are here to roll up our sleeves and make sure this Parliament works. The government has signalled its intent to work with us on the important issues and challenges that Canada faces. I am certain that, if that actually happens, the real winners will be the Canadian public.

• (1350)

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

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments that the member made. One of the things about a throne speech is that it gives the government the opportunity to set the stage. In our case, it is a very important stage.

A very important aspect of that stage is supporting Canada's middle class. That would be done, whether through the Canada child benefit program, which would lift tens of thousands of children out of poverty, or a tax cut to the middle class.

Is there something that the member would like to say about the importance of Canada's middle class? We believe that a healthy middle class means a healthy economy. Would she not agree with the Prime Minister that if we want to build a strong economy we have to give a special focus to Canada's middle class?

Ms. Georgina Jolibois: Mr. Speaker, the median income in Canada is \$31,000. It is not clear to me, and I will ask the Liberal government to describe what it means by low-income families and medium-income families in Canada. Where I come from, that is exactly what the constituents want to know.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her speech and congratulate her on her election.

Statements by Members

She spoke about her rural community and the infrastructure needs there. I am also concerned about rural communities and the need for infrastructure. In the throne speech, I heard about a lot of money going to urban centres, but in rural areas within my riding and across Canada, we do not have high-speed Internet. This is a huge barrier for people trying to create businesses or receive education in rural areas.

I am hoping that when the government is talking about all of its infrastructure spending, it does not forget the rural communities and the needs that the member and I have spoken of.

• (1355)

Ms. Georgina Jolibois: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her comment. I appreciate the opportunity to express my thoughts here.

I agree with the member about the rural communities in my constituency. It is not only my rural communities, but all constituencies that have issues around the Internet and broadband coming to northern Saskatchewan. The previous government promised to do exactly that, but it has not occurred yet. Therefore, I would like to know if the Liberal government will be doing that across Canada.

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my hon. colleague, the member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, for her excellent speech.

Members across the way were asking about the importance of the middle-class tax cut. I would ask my colleague to clarify how many residents of her riding would benefit from a tax cut on incomes over \$45,000 a year and whether there might be a way to reconfigure that to actually provide some assistance to her constituents.

Ms. Georgina Jolibois: Mr. Speaker, it is very important that we sort through these descriptions of middle-class and low-income families across Canada, as it seems to change. I have not received a clear answer to that question. Certainly, I would look at about 40,000 northerners who fit in this category.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

HONORÉ-MERCIER

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am moved and proud to rise today in the House. I want to start by thanking the people of Honoré-Mercier for their trust and their support. I am truly sincere when I tell them that I will do everything in my power to live up to this trust.

I also want to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your election as Speaker of the House.

We concluded the last election campaign, the longest in modern history, with a clear Liberal victory and with a mandate that was just as clear: to do things differently; to build a new relationship with Canadians, based on dialogue, openness, and respect; to create a more prosperous middle class and a more equitable society; and to make Canada greener and more open to the world.

I challenge all members of the House to help us fulfill this mandate together.

* * *

[*English*]

KITCHENER—CONESTOGA

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today for the first time in Canada's 42nd Parliament, having been re-elected for my fourth term to serve the best riding in Canada.

I first want to humbly thank the people of Kitchener, Wellesley, Woolwich, and Wilmot for trusting me to represent them once again the House. I look forward to meeting constituents in Kitchener, New Hamburg, St. Clements, St. Jacobs, Elmira, and many more of the great communities of Kitchener—Conestoga. I want to ensure constituents that I will be working hard for them every day, and for the next four years I look forward to serving in every way that I can.

Of course, I would not be here today without the support and prayers of a huge team. I thank Rob, Linda, Stephanie, Mark, Darryl, Michael, and dozens of other volunteers who worked long hours day after day, for weeks, to ensure my election victory.

Special thanks to my wife Darlene for her constant love, support and encouragement, and to our three children, Gavin, Benj, and Arja, and their spouses and our nine grandchildren, who make what I do here in the House so very worthwhile.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CHÂTEAUGUAY—LACOLLE

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the people of Châteauguay—Lacolle for doing me this honour. I want the House to know that I will work very hard to be worthy of their faith in me.

My riding is between the St. Lawrence and the American border. Part rural and part urban, it is blessed with rich land in Les Jardins-de-Napierville. The people there are creative, they have a fascinating history, and their economic sights are set on the world.

My riding is well known as the largest vegetable producer in Quebec and as a model of environmental protection thanks to the Île Saint-Bernard wildlife refuge.

Statements by Members

● (1400)

[English]

However, there is some confusion about the name Châteauguay–Lacolle. Lacolle is actually in the neighbouring riding. Rest assured that I am consulting with my fellow citizens as to a name that better represents our community, and I will be proposing a new name in due course to this House.

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LEVIATHAN II

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as this is my first opportunity to rise in the House, I want to thank the people of Courtenay—Alberni for putting their faith and trust in me by electing me as their member of Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to congratulate you on your election as Speaker.

On October 25, the *Leviathan II* sank off my home community of Tofino, and six lives were lost. Fishermen from the Ahousaht First Nation were the first to arrive on the scene and began pulling survivors from frigid waters. They were joined by marine tour operators, first responders, members of Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations, and local Tofino residents. People's homes were open to strangers, and temporary beds were set up for the injured. In the village of Ahousaht, a community where unemployment is as high as 70%, people pulled out five and ten dollar bills to buy gas for boats so the search for survivors could continue.

Today I ask all members in the House to join me to pay tribute and respect to the families of those lost at sea, the survivors, rescuers, and all of those whose courage and compassion embody the very best of Vancouver Island.

In the Nuu-chah-nulth language, I say *klecko klecko*, thank you to our local heroes.

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NEPEAN

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank all 34,000 citizens of Nepean for electing me to represent them in this august House. I pledge to work hard for the benefit of people from all backgrounds and viewpoints.

For the economic development of Nepean and Ottawa and to create quality jobs, there is a need to work in collaboration with all three levels of government. I have had several formal and informal talks with Mayor Jim Watson, and five City of Ottawa councillors: Jan Harder, Michael Qaqish, Keith Egli, Scott Moffatt, and Rick Chiarelli. I have also had several meetings with the provincial member of Parliament, Lisa MacLeod.

In my drive to bring respect back to public service and to understand how best we can work together, I have had meetings with Debi Daviau, president of the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada, and Larry Rousseau, regional executive vice president of the National Capital Region, Public Service Alliance of Canada.

MANMEET SINGH BHULLAR

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Alberta Conservative family has lost a giant. Manmeet Singh Bhullar was a big man with a big heart.

In what turned out to be one of the last causes he ever took on, Manmeet championed the cause of Afghanistan's increasingly desperate religious minorities. At one time, Afghanistan had around 200,000 Sikhs and Hindus. Today, they number less than 10,000. Security concerns have even prevented some Sikh children from attending school.

The Canadian government can help Afghanistan's religious minorities by creating a special program under section 25 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. This has been done in the past, and communities in Canada are ready to step up if the government takes the necessary steps.

To honour Manmeet, but also because it is the right thing to do, I call on the government to take the necessary steps to help persecuted religious minorities living in Afghanistan.

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CANADIAN COAST GUARD

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, three years ago, the previous Conservative government shut down the Kitsilano Coast Guard base, despite pleas from MPs, the City of Vancouver, the Province of British Columbia, and the Vancouver police and fire departments. Conservatives were warned that lives and the environment would be put at risk, so there was no surprise at the huge delay in identifying and cleaning up the 2014 bunker fuel spill and the expanded time for rescue craft to arrive from Sea Island.

Our Liberal government made a commitment during the election to reopen Kitsilano Coast Guard base and the marine communications on B.C.'s coast. I was pleased to see that commitment in the Ministry of Fisheries and Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard's mandate letter from the Prime Minister. The voices of the people of Vancouver were heard.

I had presented thousands of petitions in the House and held rallies to get the previous government to reverse its decision, to no avail. I look forward to being there when our new Liberal government reopens the Kitsilano Coast Guard base in the near future.

* * *

● (1405)

GREATER CHARLOTTETOWN AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as this is the first time on my feet in the chamber in this session, allow me to express my appreciation to the good people of Charlottetown, the birthplace of Confederation, in Canada's smallest and nicest province, for having re-elected me to represent them in Parliament. I am proudly honoured to have re-earned their support.

Statements by Members

Today I rise to recognize one such constituent, Kathy Hambly, the executive director of the Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce. Kathy joined the chamber as a member in 1978, was on the board, served as its president in 2002, and began her career as executive director in 2005. In that role, she has transformed the organization, introducing initiatives such as Island Advance, PEI Connectors, Biz2Biz Expo, and the annual excellence awards.

As a crowning achievement to her legacy of excellence, she was honoured by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce Executives of Canada as executive director of the year—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Foothills.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the constituents of Foothills for re-electing me once again to be their representative in the House of Commons. It is an honour to have earned their confidence, and I will do my utmost each and every day to maintain that trust.

The people of southern Alberta are committed to our families and our communities. They have a profound love of the land and an inspiring work ethic. However, the families, small businesses, and communities in my riding depend on the resource sector—oil and gas, mining, forestry, agriculture—which is one of the reasons I was extremely disappointed to see that these industries were absent from the Speech from the Throne.

The oil and gas sector has been Canada's economic engine for decades, and agriculture has been part of our heritage for generations. These industries create jobs and prosperity in rural communities throughout the foothills area of Alberta, and Canada. I want this to be crystal clear. Unlike the new government, I know my colleagues and I in the opposition will stand up for the resource industry; we will stand up for all Canadians, and we will stand up for Canada's economy.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Hon. Judy Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 100 years ago today, Punch magazine ran what is now the most recognized war poem in history. *In Flanders Fields* was inspired when a young Canadian artillery officer was killed by an exploding artillery shell. That officer served alongside a Canadian doctor named John McCrae.

As the brigade doctor, John was asked to conduct the burial service, and following that service, McCrae began drafting his now famous poem. A hundred years have passed, and while much has been done to commemorate those lost to war, those who have returned from battle also need our help. From PTSD to resettlement issues, to physical injuries and skills development, it is time to honour the dead by truly caring for those who are living.

Let us never forget to stand with those who stood with us, today and every day.

LOUIS RIEL

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on November 16 of this year, at his gravesite in the Saint Boniface Cathedral, the Manitoba Métis Federation, the Union nationale métisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba and I paid our respects on the 130th Anniversary of the execution of the Father of Manitoba and leader of the Métis nation, Louis Riel.

[*Translation*]

The Father of Manitoba, Riel stood out for his passion, his respect for difference, his acute sense of social justice, and his unwavering defence of Métis and francophone rights.

[*English*]

Riel understood the importance of consulting all interested parties, Métis and non-Métis, when negotiating Manitoba's entering Confederation. It was his ability to build consensus that resonates with us still today.

[*Translation*]

As a proud Métis, I am inspired by this great Canadian hero, this man of vision and consensus building. Riel's legacy is still felt today in Manitoba and across the country.

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● (1410)

FINANCE

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this first opportunity to congratulate all my colleagues on their election and to thank the people of Mégantic—L'Érable for the trust they have put in me. I rise today for them. I know they have concerns.

They are concerned that the government is unable to explain who will pay for all the spending announced during the election campaign and in the Speech from the Throne and repeated yesterday by the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister, not to mention how.

The tax cuts will cost an extra \$1.2 billion. Yesterday, Canadian families learned that they will lose half their sheltered savings room in TFSA's. As we say back home, the Liberals have bitten off more than they can chew.

For the sake of our future generations, I hope the government will find its calculator again and put our country back on track to balanced budgets as soon as possible.

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[*English*]

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the citizens of Vancouver of Quadra for re-electing me as their member of Parliament.

On September 30, 100 years ago, the University of British Columbia opened its doors and welcomed its very first class of 379 students. From that rather modest beginning, UBC has grown to host 60,000 students on 2 campuses with alumni living in more than 120 countries. A global centre for research on teaching, UBC consistently ranks among the 40 best universities in the world, driving positive change throughout Canada and worldwide.

British Columbians are rightly proud of UBC's deep commitment to sustainability. In fact, its strategic plan commits all aspects of the university to be a living laboratory, exploring and exemplifying social, economic and environmental sustainability.

Please join me in congratulating UBC for a century of learning, research and community engagement excellence.

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JIMMY ALLEN “OLLIE” CHICKITE

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as this is the first time that I rise in the House, I would like to thank the people of North Island—Powell River for sending me here. It is a great honour.

Sadly, on November 24, one of our communities lost an elder. Jimmy Allen Chickite, fondly known as Ollie, was a man of the ocean. From 1972 to 1986, a photo of his seiner with him on it was on it was on the back of the Canadian five dollar bill.

When I last spoke with Ollie, he shared with me his concern about the potential closure of the Comox Coast Guard. With his years on the water, he knew how important the Coast Guard was for the safety of people, the environment and the many isolated communities in my riding. He asked me to remind the government that B.C. needed the Coast Guard to be healthy and strong.

In remembrance of a great man, I am proud to be the voice of my riding and for Ollie. My thoughts are with his family and community during these hard days.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is not one member in the House who is not horrified by the national tragedy of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls in Canada.

As a British Columbian, the stories of CJ Fowler, the Highway of Tears, and the horrors of the Pickton farm have struck close to home.

In the past, we thought it was important to allocate resources and move forward with action on services and programs that have proven to be effective. The current government's pledge to have a national inquiry to hear directly from the families affected in their ongoing search for answers reflects the call from many across the country.

We offer our support to this initiative and for the government to fulfill its promise to these families. My sincere hope is that the national inquiry will bring the answers, closure and peace that these families so desperately need.

Oral Questions

HOLODOMOR

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today marks the 82nd anniversary of the Holodomor, the famine genocide of 1932-33, when Stalin put in place an evil master plan for Ukrainians.

Behind barbed wire, Ukraine became a Hell on earth. Her lush countryside denuded of leaves and grasses as people ate anything that grew. It became a land where no fields rustled and no birds sang, where the deathly silence in villages was only broken by the sounds of wagons picking up the dead. One by one, thousand after thousand, million after million laid their skin and bone bodies down onto Ukraine's fertile black soil and became one with their land.

Today, hybrid military invasions and annexation has been visited upon these same lands. Thousands have died standing against this new Kremlin evil. We say for them, *Slava Ukraini*.

• (1415)

The Speaker: My dear colleagues, before we begin question period, I want to thank members for their good conduct yesterday. I know we all want to show respect to one another and listen when someone else is speaking as we would in dealing with our constituents, for example. Our constituents will appreciate the good behaviour on display.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

TAXATION

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Liberal Party put tax-free savings accounts on the chopping block. Over 11 million Canadians have invested their savings in this excellent program. Eighty per cent of them are low- and middle-income Canadians, including seniors.

We know the Prime Minister is in a mad scramble for cash, but why did he decide to take such a huge bite out of the savings of seniors?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party made campaign commitments to help seniors, particularly our vulnerable seniors. That is why we committed to increasing the GIS for low income single seniors to help them with almost \$1,000 more a year.

We have also recognized that time and time again the previous government took on initiatives that helped the wealthiest and not those who needed the help. We have committed to turning that around and giving help to the people who need the help instead of helping the people who have \$10,000 to set aside at the end of every year.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are imposing new limits on TFSAs because they believe that the wealthy are the only ones who use them, and they need that money to finance their massive expenditures.

What will they do next—eliminate TFSAs altogether?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Conservative Party is simply trying to scare our seniors. As we learned from Hazel McCallion, it will not work.

The Liberal Party is committed to protecting and maintaining the TFSA contribution limit at \$5,000 and to helping those who need it, the most vulnerable seniors, who will see an increase in the guaranteed income supplement.

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it took barely a month for the Liberals to take an axe to the limits for tax-free savings accounts, but let us hear from an important voice when those limits were increased. “I think it's really quite a positive move for retirement security in general.” Who said that? Morneau Shepell, the Minister of Finance's own company.

On this side of the House, we could not agree with them more. Why does the Prime Minister not agree?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Once again, Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party demonstrates that it has not been listening to ordinary Canadians, that it is out of touch with the real concerns.

If Conservatives think that average Canadians have \$10,000 to set aside at the end of every year, they are sorely mistaken about the impact of 10 years of your government.

The Speaker: I remind the hon. Prime Minister that it was not my government.

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course our Conservative government was proud to introduce the tax-free savings account to help people save and plan for the future. There is a lot of talk these days about the future and commitments.

Why is the new government reducing the annual contribution limit? This tool allows people to save, and a large percentage of them earn \$60,000 or less.

Why are they attacking this public service?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, ordinary Canadians and vulnerable Canadians do not have \$10,000 to set aside at the end of the year. Only the wealthy can do that.

The reality is that this government still plans to help those less fortunate, rather than those who do not really need help. That is why we were elected: to help those who really need it.

● (1420)

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, even though government operations had a surplus during the election campaign, this Prime Minister announced that he would incur a modest deficit of \$10 billion.

Not too long ago, the Minister of Finance announced that the deficit would exceed \$10 billion.

This government talks a lot about transparency. Can the Prime Minister therefore tell us the exact amount of the deficit? It seems as though it could be much more than \$10 billion.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that we have always been open and transparent on this topic and we will continue to be.

In the fiscal update presented a few weeks ago, we set the levels for real growth, and in our budget we will update all of our expectations, since our reality has gotten considerably worse since the Conservative Party's last budget.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the NDP commends the process to examine the serious national problem of murdered or missing indigenous women, a problem that was ignored by the previous government for far too long.

[English]

Canadians are indeed heartened to see that the new government is moving ahead on the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. However, the question is this. Given the urgency of this national crisis, can the Prime Minister provide Canadians with a timeline for real action? Can we expect a report by the end of 2016?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the ongoing tragedy of missing and murdered indigenous women has continued for decades now in this country, and it is time, absolutely, that we engage in a national public inquiry that is properly informed in collaboration with experts, groups, and indigenous communities themselves.

I know that in order to get healing for the families and justice for the victims, and to put an end to this tragedy, it needs to be done right. That is exactly what we are committed to doing.

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TAXATION

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in a previous response, the Prime Minister just said that the former government had a tendency to “help the wealthiest”. The Prime Minister now claims that he is helping the middle class, but perhaps he can help us with his definition.

Here we go.

*Oral Questions***PUBLIC SAFETY**

A family with two children, earning \$45,000 a year, would receive precisely nothing from the middle-class tax cut. One of the Prime Minister's 35 parliamentary secretaries earning \$184,000 would get the full benefit. How does he define "middle class"?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it curious that the hon. member would talk about families with two children because they absolutely would benefit from our new Canada child benefit, which would be more generous. Both the Conservative Party and the NDP defended the idea that the wealthiest families should be receiving thousands of dollars in child benefit cheques, when indeed what we would do is ensure that people who need it would receive it. That is what the Canada child benefit would do when we present our next budget.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are talking about what we are doing in Parliament this week.

The Prime Minister is talking about a tax cut for the middle class. Then why will a family with two children, earning \$45,000 a year, receive precisely nothing from this tax cut while any of his 35 parliamentary secretaries earning \$184,000 a year will get the full benefit?

Where is the fairness for the middle class when the rich receive the full amount and everything else is just empty promises for the spring, maybe?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we find ourselves in a situation where the Conservative Party is criticizing us for excessive tax increases for the rich and the NDP is criticizing us for insufficient tax cuts for the middle class.

The Liberal Party was elected on the strength of a balanced approach, which recognizes that we must help those in need and we can ask a little more of those who are successful. We are going to create growth that will benefit people at all income levels.

* * *

• (1425)

[*English*]

CANADA POST

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister promised during the election campaign to restore home mail delivery, there were no ifs, ands, or buts. I would like to give the Prime Minister another chance because yesterday we could not get a straight answer. The Prime Minister has made a solemn promise to Canadians to restore home mail delivery. Will the Liberal government be restoring home mail delivery? Yes or no.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I actually would suggest that the hon. members opposite consult the Liberal electoral platform, which is still online, which clearly states that we would ensure a moratorium on the installation of community mailboxes, and work with Canada Post and citizens and groups to ensure that we are giving the kind of service that Canadians need. That is the commitment we made in the election and that is the commitment we are keeping.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is hard to believe that the only meaningful security screening for the 25,000 Syrian refugees is a 45-minute interview conducted by an immigration official through a translator. The government is treating this as "business as usual", despite the fact that this is a massive influx of people from a region ravaged by terrorism and strife.

Why is the government cutting corners on security, just to keep its arbitrary timelines?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the short answer is we are not doing that. We have a system in place that provides for robust layers of security screening that will all be done overseas before the refugees board their planes. When they board their planes, they will have that complete security screening done up to the standards that we would expect in Canada in the normal course.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. minister just said that the process would be robust, but a few weeks he said that the screening process would not be 100% foolproof.

Can the minister inform the House of the percentage he thinks is acceptable?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the standards that are being applied with respect to the refugees are the same high standards that Canada always applies. We have made sure in the system that we have put in place that there is no compromise on safety and security. That is important in ensuring that this process can be successful.

Canadians, at the end of the day, can be very proud of what we have accomplished together.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will give the minister a second chance by asking the question again.

Canadians were very concerned to hear the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness say that the refugee screening process would not be 100% foolproof.

Could the minister clearly state for the members of the House what percentage he thinks is acceptable? I am asking for a simple percentage, a number.

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, clearly, the Conservative campaign strategy was not 100% foolproof.

Oral Questions

The fact of the matter is that Canadians expect a strong system. They expect security to be applied in the way that it has always been applied with Canadian refugees. That is why we have robust layers of security in place, interviews, biometrics, checks against computer systems, and repeated examinations of identification to make sure that this process works.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, right now, public servants from several departments are on the ground in Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan to identify and screen refugees. It has been reported that the government is using private security contractors to keep those Canadians safe.

How can the government guarantee that these Canadians are truly safe?

• (1430)

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the process that we have put in place in this very difficult part of the world is a process that has been designed by the immigration and refugee department, by the Canada Border Services Agency, by the RCMP, and by CSIS. The strongest, best Canadian officials have put this plan in place. They are determined to keep our officials on the ground doing the work safe, and they are absolutely determined to make sure that every proper screening and security measure is adequately followed.

* * *

HEALTH

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, can the minister please tell us here about the immunization records of Syrian children who are about to enter school in Canada? It is important that we do not put these Syrian children at risk. It is also important that we do not put Canadian kids at risk. Moms and dads are telling me that they are concerned about a potential outbreak of measles or mumps, or another infectious disease.

Where are the records? What medical screening is being done? Can the parents in my riding be reassured that their children are going to be safe, and that the Syrian children are going to be safe?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that a thorough health examination is taking place for all of the Syrian families who are being considered for entry into Canada. That includes an international immigration exam and asking about immunization records.

I, like the hon. member opposite, am concerned with making sure that we keep Canadians safe, and all necessary measures will be undertaken to make sure that vaccination schedules are up to date.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, genocide is an intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national ethnic, racial, or religious group. In the Iraqi-Syrian region, entire Yazidi villages have been emptied and their people enslaved. Mass graves have been filled with their people, and Yazidi girls as young as six have been raped, all at the hands of the so-called Islamic State.

Will the Minister of Immigration name this genocide for what it is and tell us how many of the 1,385 permanent resident visas granted to refugees since November 4 have been issued to Yazidis?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course I deplore and denounce the tragic attacks on Yazidis as I do the tragic attacks by ISIS on all manner of people. Therefore, first and foremost when choosing refugees we take the names given by the United Nations and choose the most vulnerable, irrespective of religion. It is the most vulnerable who we bring to this country and welcome as permanent residents and soon to be new Canadians.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 36 years ago my friend Myrna disappeared from my home community of La Loche. Her sister Dora LaPrise has been one of the many voices calling for an inquiry into her murdered and missing indigenous sisters. Like Dora, there are hundreds of families who are looking for answers. The voices of these families need to be heard.

Can the minister assure the House that these families will receive the support and the funding they need to participate in the national inquiry?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her ongoing commitment to this issue. I think there are many families across the country like Dora's who will indeed be heard. We also want to hear from the families during the pre-inquiry phase, the design phase to ensure that the design of the inquiry will meet their needs, that the families will be involved throughout the inquiry to ensure justice for the victims and healing for the families. We will have concrete action to ensure there is action taken after the inquiry is over.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we applaud the announcement of today's inquiry. In order to get it right we must learn the lessons from past inquiries, such as the Oppal commission in B.C. The scope there was so narrowly focused that the inquiry achieved little in the way of real change.

Families and communities want to see systemic issues addressed, such as poverty, racism, and violence against women. Therefore, I ask if the minister will reverse the previous government's cuts to the funding for indigenous women's organizations and provide adequate funding to families so that they can participate meaningfully in the process ahead.

*Oral Questions***FINANCE**

●(1435)

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the organizations that have provided that voice and ability to bring people together have been essential to what disparate families and others have needed. We are looking at the funding for all of the national aboriginal organizations, and the organizations on the ground. Together with the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Status of Women, we will try to put together the kinds of resources that will allow everybody to participate in this inquiry and the concrete steps to stop this national tragedy.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the foreign affairs minister has said that our air strikes against ISIS will not be missed by our coalition allies and that the contribution to the bombing mission by our brave men and women in uniform has gone unnoticed. Instead, he should listen to Falah Mustafa Bakir, who heads the Kurdistan Department of Foreign Relations. He said that the air strikes have helped save lives and destroy the enemy.

The Kurdish people are on the front lines of the fight against ISIS. Instead of insulting our troops, why is the Liberal government not listening to our allies?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague for his first question as spokesperson for foreign affairs. Indeed, we have a lot of support among our allies for a reorientation of our efforts to fight this awful terrorist group in a more efficient and effective way in order to be complementary, and also to be sure that at the end of the day the Iraqi people will have institutions in which they believe in order to help them to rebuild their country.

Mr. James Bezan: Name one country.

The Speaker: The member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman will want to listen to the answers.

The hon. member for Thornhill.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has been among world leaders in acting to counter Iran's nuclear adventurism and human rights abuse. Iran continues to call for the destruction of Israel and is an open sponsor of terrorism, yet the Prime Minister has said that Canada will reopen our mission in Tehran, and that he wants to re-engage with Iran.

Why would the Liberal government cozy up to Iran when it continues to sponsor terrorism, calls for the destruction of Israel, and disregards basic human rights?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a condition of the government that when we disagree deeply with a regime, it is not a reason to cut all the links with that regime. It will not help the people of Iran. It will not help our allies, Israel or other countries. Canada needs to be engaged, to speak frankly, and to have results by frank dialogue and information and to be sure that we work with our allies, because everybody spoke to Iran except Canada until we changed the government.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here we are on day two and officials in Finance have confirmed that yes, indeed, the Liberal tax plan is not revenue neutral, that there is at least a \$1.2 billion shortfall. Promise broken.

Another promise is that the government would not run deficits greater than \$10 billion per year. Now I think the finance minister has admitted that this promise too will be broken, but what Canadians need to know is by much? How big will the deficit get?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a great week for Canadians. We have come through on our plan to reduce taxes for the middle class. We made a commitment to do something that will help Canadians and we are following through on it. We also know that we need to be prudent and transparent as we move forward. We have been transparent in describing this commitment and describing where we are at. The budget will give more information on our exact situation.

●(1440)

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think the minister just said he is transparent in breaking promises, which is what we have seen so far.

Of great concern as well is the fact that the finance minister's plan for growth so far is simply not adding up. The minister announced yesterday that the centrepiece of his growth plan is essentially to provide families a tax break of \$10 per week, and that is for an average family. That is not a plan for growth. How can Canadians take the government seriously on economic growth?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are facing an era of low growth. We recognize this and we have created a plan in order to invest in infrastructure. The very first step this week is to reduce taxes. We will be coming forth in the budget with investments in infrastructure that will make a real and sustained difference in our growth in this country to help Canadians and their children and grandchildren with a fairer and better growth rate in the future.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mrs. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during the campaign the Liberals promised to consult the public on TPP before taking any position, but the Prime Minister has reportedly promised world leaders he will sign the Conservative-negotiated deal. People in southwestern Ontario whose jobs are on the line want to know when they will be consulted. They want a government that will stand up for their jobs.

Does the minister believe that a better deal is possible and will she try to negotiate a deal that protects Canadian jobs?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for Essex on her election and her first question in the House.

Oral Questions

We absolutely understand that a deal of the magnitude of the TPP requires extensive public consultation. I have been engaged in that energetically. I would like to thank my colleague, the Minister of Innovation, who when it comes to the auto sector particularly has been working with me. We have spoken already with labour. We are having a couple of labour meetings this week. We have spoken with the car parts manufacturers. We are meeting with more car companies this week. Consultation is essential and we are looking forward to hearing from Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister allegedly said that he will move forward with the trans-Pacific partnership, even though it could have a negative impact on our supply management system.

What is more, the Minister of International Trade recently called into question the compensation for the dairy industry. This industry is important for Quebec's economy, since it provides 92,000 jobs and generates over \$8 billion.

Will the government commit to working with producers in Quebec and across the country to make sure that they are compensated fairly?

[*English*]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague on her appointment as critic for agriculture.

I can assure my hon. colleague that our government is fully committed to supply management. We are engaging with the stakeholders continually. The Minister of Trade and I have continually met stakeholders and we will protect supply management.

* * *

PARKS CANADA

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as you well know, the Acadian village of Beaubassin was a vibrant centre of life in the 1600s and 1700s, but was burned to the ground in 1750, just at the beginning of the expulsion of the Acadians.

Over the past 13 years, Parks Canada archeologists have discovered over 50 foundations of houses, churches, and businesses in the ruins and now have found over 7,000 artifacts from the 1600s and 1700s.

Will the government commit the required resources to preserve, restore, and present this important piece of Acadian and Canadian history in time for Canada's 150th birthday?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from Cumberland—Colchester for his excellent work in promoting and uncovering the historic site at Beaubassin. His support of the Acadian community is something that means a lot to people all over Atlantic Canada.

I can confirm to him that my colleague, the minister responsible for Parks Canada, is in a position to say that the investments will continue in the Beaubassin site. Parks Canada has worked successfully with the local community to develop five seasons of

visits. There are other exhibits coming, travelling exhibits across the country, and we look forward to working with him to ensure that the potential of this important site is realized.

* * *

[*Translation*]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign, the three political parties promised that they would not impose a tax on Canadian Netflix subscribers. However, the president of Quebecor Media recently asked the government to reopen this file.

Can the government confirm once and for all that no Netflix tax will be imposed on the four million Canadian families who use this service?

• (1445)

[*English*]

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thank you for this opportunity. I want to thank the member first and foremost for the question. I would like to thank the residents of Mississauga—Malton for electing me and allowing me this opportunity to speak in the House of Commons.

As the member knows full well, we are going to respect the competition and net neutrality, and I look forward to working with him on this issue.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has barely been a month and already we see that the Liberal government has turned its back on the resource sector. Reports are predicting 185,000 job losses in 2016, most of those in Alberta. This is not even mentioned in the Speech from the Throne. In fact, the Minister of Employment has been AWOL for the past month.

Why is Canada's resource sector not a priority for the government and why have we not heard from the employment minister?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me start by saying how much of a privilege it is for me to represent the people of Winnipeg South Centre.

It is always very hurtful to review the consequence of job losses in any sector. The natural resource sector in Canada accounts for 20% of the gross national product of the country. We in the government know that we have to grow the economy sustainably while protecting the environment. That is what we intend to do.

Our hearts go out to those who are suffering because of economic dislocation. It is our commitment—

The Speaker: Order please.

The hon. member for Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte.

*Oral Questions***EMPLOYMENT**

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, back in January, the leader of the Liberal Party was asked what the most pressing issue was in southwestern Ontario. The response was, transitioning away from manufacturing based employment. It could not be more clear. The Prime Minister has given up on manufacturing and the 744,000 families it supports.

Why does the Liberal Party's real change mean real people losing real jobs?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance have said, we are running on a growth agenda and we are focused very much on good quality jobs.

When it comes to manufacturing, we are going to work with FedDev and other regional development agencies to put forward an innovation agenda that would help Canadians and create good quality jobs and make sure we grow the economy.

* * *

[Translation]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the people of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier for putting their trust in me.

Organizations across the country submitted proposals for infrastructure projects in their communities under the Canada 150 community infrastructure program, or 150CIP, to ensure that they are prepared to celebrate our country's 150th anniversary in 2017. For Quebec alone, over \$31 million has been earmarked to revitalize our regions. The projects must be complete before December 31, 2017.

Can the minister confirm that these organizations will receive an answer before the end of 2015?

[English]

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the 150th anniversary is going to be such an important part of our celebrations. Many applications come to my department and other departments. Some applications have been approved and some are in the process of being approved. We are going to look at those and those that are tied into our agenda to grow the economy and create prosperity. We are going to look at tying that to the celebration.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is the release of the Wait Time Alliance's tenth national report card. It shows that progress to reduce wait times for health care is inconsistent across the country. Palliative care, mental health, home care, and long-term spaces are under-resourced, although demand is climbing. First nations, refugees, and veterans are especially experiencing challenges accessing timely care. According to the alliance, without a system-wide approach and more resources, things will not improve.

Will the government reverse the Conservative cuts and act to address this critical need?

● (1450)

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a family doctor, I am clearly aware of the serious concerns Canadians have around wait times. That is exactly why as a government we are addressing the systemic transformation that needs to take place in our health care system. That is why I will be meeting with my provincial and territorial counterparts in January to negotiate a new health accord that will address not only wait times but also the many other gaps in our health care system.

[Translation]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, two reports confirm that too many Canadians are still waiting for health care in Canada.

Despite dire need, the Conservatives forced massive cuts amounting to \$36 billion on the provinces. The government promised to negotiate a new agreement, but nobody knows if there will be any money.

Can the minister confirm that they will cancel the Conservatives' \$36-billion health care cut?

[English]

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is indeed an important question. It is exactly why I will be meeting with my counterparts to be able to address these concerns. It would be premature for me to discuss the details of what that health accord will look like, but we know that it is not always money that is the answer. It is in fact transformation of the system that Canadians expect from us. We will begin discussions to improve access to home care, to reduce drug costs, and to improve mental health services.

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SCIENCE

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, science and innovation drive economic development, which creates good jobs for hard-working Canadians, but there is no mention of science in the throne speech. Investment in science is critical to agriculture, forestry, mining, the energy sector, genomics, and nanophysics.

How can the government claim to be serious about job creation when the word "science" does not even appear in the throne speech?

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Minister of Science, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague across the way. We have already met.

I am proud to say the war on science is now over. This government respects research and science and the important work it does. We will work with the scientific community to ensure openness now and in the future.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: Order, please. Members might be encouraged to keep their applause reasonably short to ensure ministers get a chance to answer the questions.

Oral Questions

The hon. member for Edmonton Manning.

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TAXATION

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the Liberals proposed changes to the tax system, they claimed the cuts would benefit the middle class. However, their proposal would give the maximum benefits to those who are making over \$89,000 per year. Was it the government's intent to give the biggest tax break to people making between \$100,000 and \$200,000 annually?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we introduced this week the very first step in our plan to help our economy grow. We introduced a step to reduce taxes. We will be following that up with the introduction of the Canada child benefit, which would help hundreds of thousands of Canadian children living in poverty to get out of poverty, and would help nine out of ten families to live better lives in Canada.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Liberals announced with great fanfare that they would pay for their spending schemes on the backs of Canadian seniors by cutting \$4,500 off tax-free savings accounts. These accounts are an important tool for seniors to save their hard-earned money, and 50% of tax-free savings accounts are held by seniors. Why is the Prime Minister paying for his promises on the backs of Canadian seniors?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we ran on a commitment to create a fair tax system for Canadians. Of Canadians eligible for the TFSA, 6.7% used the maximum. We have made a commitment to create fairness by reducing taxes for the middle class and introducing measures that would help other Canadians through increasing their benefit through the Canada child benefit, which would help a broad cross-section of Canadians.

* * *

•(1455)

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the high rate of indigenous women and girls who are missing and have been murdered in this country is an ongoing national tragedy, which all Canadians know must be addressed immediately. Can the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs update this House on the steps this government is going to take to address this ongoing crisis?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question and the opposition members for their questions, and I thank the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo for her elegant and eloquent member's statement.

Today, I was proud to stand with the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Status of Women as we delivered on our commitment for a national public inquiry on missing and murdered indigenous women. Today, we announced phase one, which includes the three ministers. We will meet with family members, national organizations, and provinces and territories to actually help us and other members in dealing with the design of the inquiry. This is the first and urgent step, and—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Banff—Airdrie.

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DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, some questions must be answered with a clear yes or no. Yesterday, the Minister of Democratic Institutions skated around the question when asked whether the Liberals would be holding a referendum on a proposed new electoral system.

Today I will ask a very direct question. After the consultations on electoral reform have taken place and a proposed new electoral reform system has been designed, will the government hold a referendum on that proposed new system? Yes or no.

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question, and I remind the 337 other members of Parliament in this House that what we committed to was an open and robust process of consultation. I will not prejudice the outcome of that consultation process by committing to a referendum.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign, the Liberal Party promised to "...immediately reinstate the tax credit [for labour-sponsored funds] in full." Unfortunately, that is not mentioned anywhere in the Minister of Finance's plan. If nothing is done by January 1, yet another cut will have a devastating effect on these funds, which create thousands of jobs in Quebec.

I am reaching out to the government. Let us work together. Let us fix this right away so that we can help thousands of people save for retirement. Is the Minister of Finance ready to—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question. We made promises during our campaign, and we promised to do that during the next budget consultation for 2016. We will hold consultations, and a decision will be announced in the 2016 budget.

* * *

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, infrastructure is an important part of our plan to grow the economy, create new jobs, and build a Canada for the 21st century.

The Address

Infrastructure projects like the Burnside expressway in Nova Scotia can create jobs in the short and medium term and increase trade and productivity in the long term.

My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities. Can he please tell us about the development of our government's 10-year infrastructure plan?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians understand that investing in infrastructure is vital to grow our economy, increase productivity, and create middle-class jobs.

I have been busy consulting with my provincial, territorial, and municipal partners. Our plan would double investment in public transit, social infrastructure, and green infrastructure over the next 10 years.

These investments will help those strong, sustainable, and livable communities.

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DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister actually just said that she will not prejudice the outcome of her process by asking the Canadian people what they think of her electoral proposals in a referendum.

Heaven forbid that she should ask the Canadian people what they think in a referendum. Is she really asserting that Canadian people are incapable of deciding in a referendum how they should be governed and how our elections should take place, in the same way that the people of British Columbia, of Prince Edward Island, of Ontario, of New Zealand, or of the United Kingdom are asked?

Are Canadians too immature to handle a referendum on this subject, yes or no?

• (1500)

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the people of this country deserve to be consulted on a matter as important as democratic institutions.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Thanks. This is great.

The Speaker: Order. We may have to extend the time for the minister's answer.

The Minister of Democratic Institutions has the floor.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Mr. Speaker, we were clear in our commitment to the people of this country that this would be the last first-past-the-post federal election in Canadian history, and we will do that by engaging the people of this country, coast to coast, in the robust process that is inclusive and involves every single member of this Parliament as well.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie pointed out, labour-

sponsored funds are vital tools for Quebec's economy. The Minister of Finance can say that he plans to move quickly to reinstate the tax credits for labour-sponsored funds, but why did he not put that measure in the ways and means, which would have applied immediately, rather than punishing Quebec's businesses, small investors, and middle class?

[English]

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we made numerous commitments during the course of our campaign.

We wanted to introduce some commitments that were important to get out for tax planning right now for Canadians, which is why we introduced the tax cuts for the middle class and our changes to the TSFA.

We will be looking at other commitments during the course of our budget consultations, in order to give a clear and transparent understanding for Canadians of our budget in 2016.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Simon Marciel (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the people of Mirabel for their trust.

The Minister of International Trade does not feel bound by the farmers' compensation program under the trans-Pacific partnership. That is one thing, but what about the compensation arising from the agreement between Canada and Europe? It is time to put in place a compensation fund for Quebec's dairy and cheese producers who will be penalized by this agreement.

Will the Minister of International Trade promise that compensation for dairy and cheese producers will live up to their expectations or will she simply reject the demands of a major sector of Quebec's economy?

[English]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada fully supports supply management. The government, as I indicated before, is fully engaged with the stakeholders. We understand fully the importance of compensation for the supply management sector. The Government of Canada supports compensation in the context of the Canada-EU trade agreement and the trans-Pacific partnership, should it come into force.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

• (1505)

[Translation]

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed consideration of the motion for an address to His Excellency the Governor General in reply to his speech at the opening of the session, of the amendment, and of the amendment to the amendment.

The Address

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague and friend, the hon. member for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame.

I am very pleased to contribute to this debate on the Speech from the Throne. I am kind of going back to my roots here. Before my forced leave in 2011, I had the good fortune and privilege of being elected in three general elections, in 2004, 2006, and 2008. I attended the reading of a number of throne speeches and participated in the debates that followed. I must say in all objectivity, in a non-partisan way, that this is the best Speech from the Throne I have heard in the past 10 years.

This throne speech came in the wake of the longest election campaign in modern history. The election gave the government a clear and unequivocal mandate, a mandate for real change. The form and substance of that change will be tangible and visible. By form, I mean our way of relating to others. The government has been very clear about that. It will build a new kind of relationship with Canadians, a relationship based on openness, dialogue and respect. We will restore trust. It will be obvious to everyone that the tone has changed completely. Instead of instilling fear and mistrust, the new government will focus on what brings us together and unites us as Canadians.

In terms of substance, we were equally clear throughout the campaign, and that is why Canadians gave us a clear mandate. They gave us a mandate to strengthen the middle class and make it more prosperous and to develop a fairer and more effective social safety net, especially for our young families and seniors. They gave us a mandate to create a greener, more prosperous Canada with a more international outlook.

We have talked a great deal about the middle class, about helping it and strengthening it. That is precisely what the government plans to do. The first thing we will do is lower taxes for the middle class. I want to congratulate the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance on the leadership they have shown on this matter. Yesterday the Minister of Finance presented what he plans to do. He was very clear about his plans. We are talking about a tax cut that will make our tax system more efficient and help the middle class directly.

In concrete terms, it means lowering taxes for the second tax bracket from 22% to 20.5%. That is a concrete commitment that will affect nine million Canadians who will benefit from this measure. This is a serious commitment that will affect a lot of people.

Another thing the government is doing to strengthen and help the middle class is creating the new Canada child benefit. It will be a simplified, enhanced, and tax-free benefit that will also provide direct support to those Canadians who need it most. We have already seen two concrete measures to help Canadians: a tax cut and the Canada child benefit.

However, we need to do more, and the government is prepared to do a lot more. Specifically, we plan to introduce the largest infrastructure funding strategy in the history of Canada. We will double the current infrastructure allocation, raising it to \$125 billion. I am talking about an additional \$60 billion for new infrastructure investments. That represents a very concrete measure.

• (1510)

We are going to invest in social and green infrastructure as well as transportation. Providing funding for infrastructure is an investment in our future. We will have a better transit system, better water systems and more affordable housing, especially for our most vulnerable seniors.

As an aside, I would like to mention that it will be an honour and a privilege for me, as the parliamentary secretary, to help the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities take up this important challenge.

We have talked about lowering taxes for the middle class, increasing the benefit for families with young children and making significant investments in infrastructure. However, that is not all, and I am sure that our colleagues will be pleased to hear more.

For one, we are going to bolster Canada's reputation and credibility abroad. We will listen to and open a dialogue with other nations. Canada will finally take its place once again at the table of nations. I am thinking in particular of the environment, an issue on which we will once again show leadership, after the Conservative government's failure in this area. I would like to point out the excellent work already done by the Minister of Environment and congratulate her on being chosen as one of 14 facilitators tasked with ensuring the success of the Paris climate conference. This honour reflects on all Canadians.

Since I am already talking about the environment, I will continue in that vein. I repeat: Canada is going to once again become an environmental leader both at home and abroad. We are going to work with the provinces and territories to fight climate change because the situation is critical. All of the reports say so. We need to act now, so we are going to work on climate change.

We are also going to invest in green jobs. That is good not only for the environment but also for our economy. We are going to strengthen environmental assessment processes to ensure that they are strong and rigorous. We are going to work to protect our rivers, lakes and oceans. It is clear that the government has an ambitious but solid environmental plan. The Prime Minister presented this agenda to Canadians, and Canadians accepted, supported and approved it.

We are also going to strengthen retirement programs, and one way we are going to do that is by increasing the guaranteed income supplement, which provides direct support to our most vulnerable seniors. We are going to invest to support youth, particularly with regard to employment access. We are going to rebuild our relationship with our first nations by opening a dialogue based on recognition, rights and respect. As promised, our government will launch a critical and absolutely necessary inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women. The people who have been affected by this terrible tragedy have waited long enough.

We will support our veterans, to whom we owe so much. Veterans and their families deserve our recognition and respect. We need to give back to those who have given so much for their country.

The Address

I will stop there because I am running out of time, but I just want to add that we are going to invest in culture, official languages, and so many other areas. We clearly have an ambitious agenda that was supported by Canadians for all Canadians.

• (1515)

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the return of the hon. member for Honoré-Mercier to the House, to congratulate him on his victory, and to offer the constructive co-operation of the official opposition.

The member spoke about the importance of investing in infrastructure. As an engineer, I must agree. However, we already had a plan to invest in infrastructure without passing on a debt to future generations.

Why put Canadians in debt to invest in infrastructure? Why also give tax cuts to people who earn \$200,000 a year, when people who earn much less are getting a trivial tax cut?

I had the opportunity to sit with my colleague and he knows that under the Conservatives, Canada reduced its greenhouse gas emissions and that the targets set by the Conservative government were the ones studied in Paris.

Why put Canadians in debt? We hear a lot about sustainable development, but right now we are not in an economic crisis.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis for his gracious question. Actually, it was five or six questions.

On the first question, I understand that the former government had its own infrastructure plan. We want to strengthen this program, and we will double investments in infrastructure. Investing in infrastructure is not an expense; it is an investment. The bridges and roads our children will use tomorrow will be possible as a result of the investments we make today. This creates stable, well-paying jobs, in addition to building the future.

As for the climate change targets, it goes without saying that the Liberal government will be much more ambitious than the Conservative government was, since we are serious and responsible when it comes to the environment. This is already clear in Paris.

I invite my hon. colleague to follow our work, because a lot will be done in the coming weeks and months. I would be very happy to see him—

• (1520)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Drummond.

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech.

He said a lot about the environment, which is of great interest to me, as everyone knows. He talked about climate change. I liked his tone. I was happy to hear what he said about harmonizing the environment and the economy, which is a good thing. Nevertheless, the Liberals went to Paris with the same targets as the Conservatives, even though everyone said that the Copenhagen targets were weak and pointless. That is a little disappointing. We would like to know what the Liberals' targets are going to be.

He also talked about environmental assessments. I was a member of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development when environmental assessments were changed. The environmental assessments we had under the Conservatives just do not make sense. It is really awful, but projects such as the energy east pipeline are still being looked at.

Will my colleague commit to starting the energy east pipeline environmental assessment process over again?

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

There is going to be a change in both form and substance when it comes to fighting climate change. The work that has already begun is really just a first step. The Liberal government has a lot more ambition than the previous government. We will have significant but realistic targets.

It is important to point out that this work will be done in partnership with provincial governments, the Northwest Territories government, and the municipalities, in order to achieve something that is realistic and that we can carry out by working together, with achievable targets. This is going to happen; in fact, it is already happening, if we look at Canada's current efforts in Paris.

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the speech given by my colleague, whom I know very well. I have had the pleasure of serving with him on a few different occasions. He is such a skilled orator, I am surprised that he did not get a cabinet position.

I would like to hear what he thinks about political party financing. I know he was a strong advocate for the principle established by former prime minister Jean Chrétien, specifically that financing should be based on two rules: one, only people who have the right to vote should be allowed to contribute, and not businesses or associations; and two, because that means lower revenues for political parties, and in order to prevent another sponsorship scandal, the federal government should contribute \$2 per vote, similarly to what is done in some provinces. The previous government changed that policy and eliminated the \$2-contribution.

Would the member not agree that we should go back to the principles established by Jean Chrétien when he proposed the bill on political party financing, which was then based on voters' contributions and government compensation to existing political parties?

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. I am very pleased to see him again here in the House. I congratulate him on his longevity.

As far as political contributions are concerned, I completely agree that they should be made by individuals and not corporations or associations. I think that the current system ensures that parties have to do better, be creative and appeal to a much larger voter base. They may get smaller donations, but from a larger number of people. I think the Liberal Party of Canada successfully adapted to that model. It received the largest number of donations from a larger number of Canadians.

The Address

I invite the other parties to modernize the same way the Liberal Party of Canada has.

● (1525)

[English]

Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is my first speech outside of questions and comments. It is my turn to reply to the Speech from the Throne, but before I begin, I want to thank the constituents of Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame for giving me the honour to be here. I want to thank the former constituents of Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor for providing the last 11 and a half years of representation.

I would be remiss if I did not congratulate one particular individual who will be here this week, and that is Mr. Dwight Ball, who recently won the election and is now the premier designate of Newfoundland and Labrador. I want to wish him all the best, as well as his new cabinet and the new government. I look forward to working with them.

Over the past little while, as I travelled around, primarily through central Newfoundland, certainly in the past three months throughout the election, the discussion was more about openness. Discussion in Newfoundland and Labrador took on a theme of getting back to business, getting back to governing, getting back to listening, and getting back to providing people with investments, with hope, and with clarity so they could get on with their lives and they, their children, and their grandchildren could succeed.

For Newfoundland and Labrador, it was very adversarial, going way back to the mid-2000s when we had what was then called the ABC campaign, the “anybody but Conservative” campaign in Newfoundland and Labrador. One would expect a Liberal or NDP government at the time waging war against the Conservatives, but, in fact, it was the Conservative Party of Newfoundland and Labrador that waged that war against the Conservatives of Ottawa. This gives people an idea of the kind of situation with which we were faced. Now that I think about it, they were Progressive Conservatives in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Throughout the debate on the Speech from the Throne, I have heard many themes that are of particular interest to me and my constituents, for several reasons. For many years, particularly in central Newfoundland, one of the greatest exports, as most people would know, has been in the seafood industry, whether it be cod, crab, shrimp, mackerel, all other species throughout the area. It has been a fantastic export and has sustained the 140 communities in my riding for over 500 years. Mining and forestry are also a big part of that. However, lately we have seen a far greater export come on the scene, and that is the export of skilled trades.

Back in 1992, the greatest layoff in Canadian history took place when the fishery was closed in Newfoundland and Labrador. Millions of people were out of work at that time. The goal was to re-educate. The goal was to create colleges, to bring money to invest in skills so people could transition to making a living and help the communities survive.

At the time, there was a lot of contention about it. People said that by doing this, there could not be five carpenters or five salons in a town of about 20 people, that it was just not possible. At that time,

the colleges were becoming bigger and adapting to the world market, not just the Canadian market, and that is key.

Now people who live in my riding spend weeks at a time flying to places like Nigeria, Russia, Norway, all over Northern Africa, and, of course, Alberta and Saskatchewan, with the trades they have acquired. I bring all of that up because the only reason people were able to survive and flourish through the recession of 2008 was because the province was able to export its people, their trades, their skills and their talents.

The only way that happened was because back in 1992 to 1996, we were able to have a discussion about what would be best for not just those who were laid off in the fishery but for those who followed. Their children and grandchildren are now benefiting from the investments that were made back then.

That brings me to today with regard to infrastructure. We are doubling up on an infrastructure investment for a very good reason. We are investing not just in roads, bridges, and Internet connectivity, we are also investing in the future of our youth to provide them with the facilities, the jobs, and the skills that follow.

● (1530)

There is a myriad of opportunities presented in the Speech from the Throne that I am so proud of for several reasons, such as the well-being of Canadians and a new health accord.

I spoke earlier about the ABC campaign and how tumultuous it was, not just with my province but with other provinces as well. I mean, God forbid the prime minister of our country would have a discussion with the premiers. It seems like that was sacrosanct for a while. It was almost to the point where we took for granted that we could not have an open discussion within one room among three territorial leaders, the premiers of 10 provinces and one prime minister. This used to happen all the time. I remember the days when we would see former Prime Minister Trudeau and others, even Brian Mulroney, a true Conservative, have these discussions, but they just disappeared, and nobody had these discussions anymore. This is why the Conservatives get angry when we talk about having a discussion with the provinces. They know they could not get that part done. Nor did they want to.

I will get back to the health accord and the cuts that were made to the health accord. The one that was done ran out in 2010. In many cases, the wait times were reduced in 2005 when we brought this in. We also looked at a more generous home care, which is also in our platform and which I look forward to as well.

I want to get to something else that happens in Atlantic Canada. It is about employment insurance, but not just employment insurance. This is about seasonal work. It is about people who engage in seasonal work, not just in Atlantic Canada but all over the country, in construction, forestry, farming, the agriculture sector, and fishing. We know that many places need the workers, which is why many avail themselves of the temporary foreign workers program. However, the employment insurance program did not help either.

The Address

What bothered me the most in the last session was that people who were on employment insurance were treated as those who wanted to milk the system for what they could get out of it. However, employment insurance represented a way of life, because they wanted to succeed in their communities and it allowed industries to succeed. It is not just the people on employment insurance who needed it the most, but companies also needed it as well because they needed the workers. However, that discussion never took place.

In the last session I served as the democratic reform critic, and I am very proud of what has been said so far on our democratic institutions. The reason why I am proud is that we made a commitment regarding the first past the post system, because it does not work for most Canadians. We decided that it was time for us to have a national discussion.

We know that discussions took place in British Columbia, Ontario and Prince Edward Island. It was a great exercise for many people, because they had to learn about our system and how we elected our representatives in a truly democratic and responsible way. Many ideas did not get off the ground, and the fundamental changes were not made. However, if that is the case, why can we not, as a federal government, make that discussion possible coast to coast to coast? It is about time that happened. We know we have the status quo. We know another party wants to have a particular type of proportional representation.

We decided to have this open discussion with people who had never had that discussion before. In Newfoundland and Labrador, we have never had a provincial discussion based on what type of system we would like to transition to, if we chose to do that. Therefore, what I like about this is that we will undergo a process that allows Canadians to have that discussion. It may be with premiers. It may be with certain groups such as Fair Vote Canada and others. At least the discussion will be one that will be responsible.

The first thing I learned when I came here in 2004 was to listen far more than talk, and right now I will leave it at that.

• (1535)

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since this is my first opportunity to stand in this place, I would like to thank the voters of Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock for putting their faith in me to represent them. I will do my best to not let them down.

I would also like to congratulate the member opposite on his re-election. I am happy to say that we went to the same post-secondary institution, and with that in common, I look forward to working with him.

I appreciated the member's comments on democratic reform. I understand the Liberals did commit to a process and will go through with that.

After that is all said and done, why not take it to referendum? Why not ask the people if it is what they actually want and let them have the opportunity to decide? This is a fundamental change to our voting system.

Mr. Scott Simms: Madam Speaker, I want to point something out. It is nice to know that the member and I went to the same

institution. Because I had graduated from that institution, I used to think it was a little mediocre. However, knowing that the member has graduated from there also, it is now a much greater institution.

Now to the point at hand. If we look at the process by which this takes place, in most of these provinces that step was not taken at that time because we wanted to have an open discussion. We cannot put something into the measures before the discussion even takes place because that would cause the conversation to be prejudiced. Most jurisdictions do that because that is a part of that open discussion.

My question to the Conservatives is this. They wanted a full reform of the Senate to have its members elected. Where was the vote on that? I did not see that one come forward.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Madam Speaker, congratulations on your new role.

Speaking in the House is always a privilege. However, the opportunity to speak is a responsibility we must all honour and I promise to do that on behalf of the people of Trois Rivières who did me the honour of re-electing me.

The part in my colleague's speech about employment insurance in particular caught my attention. We know what workers and employers in our respective regions need in terms of employment insurance.

Does my colleague think that his government will make a steadfast commitment, a commitment that I did not see in the Speech from the Throne, to ensure that employers' and workers' contributions are used only for the purposes they were intended for or, in other words, not used for purposes other than those they were intended for?

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Simms: Madam Speaker, I agree with the member that it is for the beneficiaries in this particular case. In most cases, I agree that is true. The first goal, and most important measure we need to take with respect to our short-term and long-term goals for employment insurance, is to ensure that the processing is quicker. We have reduced the waiting time period. Now we are looking at increasing efficiencies within the system to make it better. There are people who have to wait upwards of two months for that first cheque to arrive. That is two months of bills that climb up before they get paid. I appreciate the member's comments. Hopefully, these short-term measures will be in place soon.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, allow me the opportunity to congratulate you on your appointment. As well, I thank the voters of Cape Breton—Canso for the great honour of coming back to the House to represent them for a sixth term.

My riding and that of my colleague are similar. I know that in Atlantic Canada 54% of the regional GDP is generated from seasonal industries. What I heard over the course of the campaign was that the changes that had been made really had an impact on the EI system and depleted the workforce in these seasonal industries.

The Address

I would ask my colleague if he had heard the same and if he understands the urgency on the part of our government to make changes to ensure that these industries will have access to a workforce that is so necessary.

Mr. Scott Simms: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague and to say I am a fan is the biggest understatement I have mentioned today.

Indeed, I did hear that, not only with respect to traditional industries but with respect to newer industries as well. I have mentioned forestry, fisheries, and mining. Of these industries that are seasonal by nature, the one that I forgot to mention is tourism. It is a major factor in tourism right now because employers are having a hard time finding employees based on the inefficiencies in the system.

• (1540)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before we continue with the next speaker, I want to thank all members for their kind words. It is an honour for me to be here today, especially on the fourth birthday of my grandson Kade. I mentioned my grandson Kade. However, I cannot mention him without mentioning Kian, because he would be jealous that his brother was named here, and of course their little brother Preston who has just come out of ICU. He is only three weeks old. We wish him all the best in his recovery.

I want to say that it is an honour, and I appreciate all of the kind words from the members. I look forward to continuing to work with all members, and learning their names, their positions, their ridings, and their seats. Because it is difficult for us to see with all of these additional spaces that have been brought in, members will have to excuse us if we do not get the name of their riding right initially. However, please feel free to correct us.

On that note, I ask the hon. member for Provencher to begin his speech.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Madam Speaker, I, too, congratulate you on your new position. I can hardly believe that you are old enough to have grandchildren.

I would like to advise you that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

I would like to begin by saying that it is an honour to stand in the House today to speak on behalf of the people of Provencher. I want to thank my constituents for their renewed faith in me and for voting me in to serve their interests here in Ottawa for a second term. I look forward to working with my colleagues in an environment of collaboration, in sunnier ways, while at the same time holding the government to account as the opposition. As the official opposition, it is clear that we have a lot of work to do, and I am confident that we are going to live up to that challenge.

I would like to take this time to also thank my wife, Irene, who was with me on the campaign trail. She tirelessly knocked on many doors with me and was at my side for the entire time during the campaign. I thank her for that, as well as the rest of my family.

I also want to take this time to address the many promises made to Canadians this past Friday during the Speech from the Throne. The Liberal Speech from the Throne was long on platitudes and very

short on details. I am troubled by the long list of spending commitments that the Liberals have indicated that Canadians can soon expect, while simultaneously neglecting to describe how these promises will be paid for.

We know that it is easy to make commitments. What is the cost? Who is going to pay? These are all lofty promises.

I fear that when we choose to run large deficits, far too often the costs fall onto future generations. The costs fall on the backs of our children and grandchildren. I, along with many of the constituents I have spoken to, am not comfortable with the promises that come with that kind of price. I want Canadians to have resources, programs, and benefits that we can collectively afford, and I want to set future generations, my seven grandchildren, their children, and their grandchildren up for success.

The government has the capacity to provide great programs and benefits to Canadians, but it involves careful, long-term planning, sound budgeting, and fiscal responsibility. I cannot say that I am very surprised that one promise that the Liberals will not even be close to keeping is the \$10 billion annual cap on deficits. They are introducing a tax cut that actually costs people money. The deficit is now up to \$14 billion and counting. This is taxpayers' money that has been committed by the Prime Minister in just over a month in his position. It includes large sums of taxpayers' money and funding to many international projects, without any parliamentary debate or review.

If that is what we can expect in one month, I do not even want to imagine where Canada will be in four years. It is truly unsettling to watch years of careful financial planning, which brought our Canada into a sound and secure financial place during challenging economic times, including a global economic downturn, being unravelled in so little time.

With the Liberals' sights set on spending, they also do damage by not addressing as priorities in the throne speech the prominent pillars of our economy. Again, the Liberals are long on platitudes and short on details.

Coming from a large rural riding with a strong and vibrant agriculture community, I can say that rural Canadians were left with questions following Friday's throne speech. In fact, farmers were left out in the cold and, apparently, not even deserving of a platitude. Not once were our farmers or agriculture sector mentioned. It is a sector that accounts for more than \$100 billion in economic activity each and every year and employs more than two million Canadians.

The Prime Minister has stated to the world that Canada is back. What are we back to? Are we back to thinking that the issues and interests of rural and western Canada can be ignored? I hope not.

The Address

Farmers are the backbone of this country. Farmers work long days in physically demanding environments so that Canadians can eat and remain nourished. This cannot be emphasized enough. While it seems as though Canada's farming and agriculture sectors were passed over as a priority for the Liberal government, I can assure the House that the Conservative Party will be here to work for and represent the interests of Canadian farmers.

Farmers were not the only ones left out of the government's priorities. There was no mention of Canada's private sector or of its industries. Conservatives have long looked at ways to bolster this part of the economy, knowing full well that it is essential for job creation and a thriving economy.

● (1545)

Is Canada back, back to the old way of thinking that big government knows what is best when it comes to creating jobs and prosperity? It concerns me when a government speaks of growing the economy but neglects to acknowledge or make plans for its key supporters and sectors.

Where was the mention of Canada's small businesses and entrepreneurs? They are critical to the health of the Canadian economy. Small businesses represent 99% of all business in the country and employ half of all Canadians in the private sector, and yet they were not even brought up. The government needs to keep taxes low for these businesses, enable access to finance, ensure entrepreneurs have the tools and the resources that they need. Small businesses are vital to Canada's economy, and the Liberal government needs to invest in policies that help them to grow and succeed.

It is easy to promise job creation and a robust economy, but without a plan or consideration of key players, they are empty words and broken promises.

I am also concerned about a government that continually repeats its commitment to families but is seemingly unconcerned with the rights of families to decide what is best for them. Cancelling income splitting for couples, as promised by the Liberals, will hurt the middle class. It will punish the many families that I know have made a decision to have a full-time stay-at-home parent, and it will hurt families that have a low-income earner.

Is Canada back, back to believing that government is better at raising a family than mom and dad? I hope not. It wants to take away the universal child care benefit and introduce a middle-class tax cut. This cut will cost Canadians money.

Conservatives know that families are better off when families make their own decisions about what is best for their household. Cancelling income splitting for families will limit options for households that need it the most. Conservatives will continue to stand by families and advocate for fairness and choice.

I am not the first person nor will I be the last to rise in this House with concerns about the acts of terrorism occurring around the world. These violent and horrendous acts appear to be occurring more frequently. The Prime Minister, in the wake of the terrorist attacks in France, offered all of Canada's support, again simply more platitudes.

While our allies come together to address these real threats straight on, the Liberals are offering real change and Canada is simultaneously working to withdraw its fighter jets. Sadly Canada is back, way back when it comes to supporting our allies, when it comes to doing the right thing. My default, my preference would be to negotiate a peaceful solution. However, when this is not possible, we must do the right thing. We must stand with our allies. The fight against ISIS continues. The threat of terrorism is very real, and yet it seems the government would rather turn a blind eye. There was no mention of this in Friday's throne speech. I find it disconcerting that the government is more focused on the legalization and regulation of marijuana than it is with the growing threat of terrorism around the globe.

To conclude, I believe there are occasions when it is necessary to run deficits, but I am not convinced this is one of those times. After years of careful financial planning, Conservatives promised and successfully delivered a surplus. The Liberals, on the other hand, made lofty promises when they campaigned to curry favour with voters and are now willing to put the economy into jeopardy to immediately put forward those plans.

These commitments, as evidenced in the Speech from the Throne, lack important details, key players, and long-term vision. I want to remind Canadians that all these promises come at a cost. Deficits put additional burdens on future generations. Our Prime Minister continues to tell us he plans to increase the tax on the top 1% of Canadians. This will only begin to offset the cost of expensive promises already made.

How do the Liberals intend to pay for their spending spree? Is Canada back, back to tackling huge deficits by slashing health care and social transfers to the provinces?

Conservatives are a party for the Canadian taxpayer not a party of platitudes. We will continue on behalf of all Canadians to push the Liberals for details as to how they plan to finance all their lofty promises.

● (1550)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my friend for his submissions and congratulate him on his re-election.

Investment in infrastructure is a critical component for Canadians. As we know, our roads are broken, our transit system is in dire need of a boost, and the economy is in tatters. We need to spend money on critical infrastructure so that we can create jobs. Small businesses have demanded that we invest in our infrastructure. They need people to be able to move in order for them to have a market in which to do business.

The Conservative government has added \$150 billion to the national debt in the last nine years. By my calculation, that works out to about \$16.66 billion for every year that the Conservative Party was in government.

The Address

My question is, how do we reconcile the record of the Conservative government for the last nine years with the Conservatives' assertion that we need to have a balanced budget immediately?

Mr. Ted Falk: Madam Speaker, I too want to offer my congratulations to the member on his election to this honourable House. I am looking forward to the contribution he will make to his constituents, and of course all Canadians.

In answer to his question, the Conservative government had the longest and largest infrastructure spending in Canadian history. During the Conservatives' tenure, we also increased transfer payments to the provinces every single year. We invested heavily in infrastructure that is critical for small businesses. We also invested in trade, and in training the workforce to adequately meet the demands of a growing economy. The Conservative government focused on the things that are important to small business, that are important to keeping our economy moving, and on infrastructure.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate you on your new role. I am sure that you will take on this new role with grace.

I want to thank the people of Salaberry—Suroît for choosing to re-elect me for a second term. I am very proud to rise today in the House to represent them.

I have a question for my colleague. There was very little mention of greenhouse gases in the Liberals' throne speech. It did not talk about greenhouse gas reduction targets or deadlines. However, the Conference of the Parties is currently taking place in Paris. Now would be the perfect time to talk about how a reduction in greenhouse gases could be incorporated into pipeline projects, for example.

Yesterday, residents in Sainte-Justine-de-Newton, in my riding, protested the decision to reverse the flow of line 9B. People are very worried.

Would my colleague agree that we should continue to work on reducing greenhouse gases, especially with respect to pipelines, even though, in theory, the Conservatives are not in favour of this?

• (1555)

[*English*]

Mr. Ted Falk: Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate the member from Vancouver on her election to the House as well. I wish her well as she serves her constituents.

The Conservative government was the only government in Canadian history to actually reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It has a very strong record when it comes to looking after the economy. The climate talks in Paris will come up with new and interesting ideas. I hope the representatives from the Liberal government are very careful as to the commitments they make there. The Conservative government was always very careful to make sure it balanced concerns about the environment with the economy, and Conservatives will continue to advocate for those kinds of results.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague mentioned there was nothing for agriculture in the Speech

from the Throne. I come from Oshawa, and there was absolutely nothing for manufacturing or automotive, but there were a lot of anti-competitive policies that the Liberals put in the throne speech. I am talking about the increase in payroll taxes for the pension, a new carbon tax, and, of course, the huge deficits, which are deferred taxes.

I am wondering if the member could comment on the anti-competitive policies that the Liberals have said they are going to be implementing and how they are going to affect small businesses in his community.

Mr. Ted Falk: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent question from my colleague, which requires a lengthy answer.

My guess is that with the legalization of marijuana, the new government is going to hope that everybody is living in such euphoria here that nobody will notice the extra burden.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Thank you very much.

Before we resume debate, in my nervousness a while ago, I wanted to also thank the people of Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking for re-electing me, for putting their trust in me. It is an honour and a privilege to be able to represent them, and I know that this position will help to elevate the knowledge of Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking throughout not only this riding, but across Canada.

On that note, I would like to resume debate with the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, let me congratulate you on your appointment. It will be a pleasure to work with you to make the House a place where, with your assistance, my hon. colleagues from all ridings across the country will provide Canadians with a voice.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the voters of Mégantic—L'Érable for placing their trust in me on October 19. They have bestowed on me the privilege of representing them in this noble chamber, and I can assure you that I will work tirelessly to prove that I am worthy of this honour.

I would like to thank everyone who supported me by working on my election campaign: volunteers, friends, and my in-laws, Laurent and Viviane. I certainly would not be here today without them.

If I could, I would have the House adopt a motion to change, once and for all, the old saying that behind every great man, there is a great woman. In my mind, Caroline, my wife of almost 25 years, has never been behind me; she has always been beside me, in the good times and the bad times. We have had many adventures together. Naturally, our greatest joy and source of pride are our three children: David, Marie-Soleil, and Justine. I would like to thank them for their support, because entering politics is a family affair for us.

The Address

I have not often had the opportunity to speak about my parents. I would just like to take a few seconds to talk about my father, Yvon, who died of cancer when he was only 48 years old, which is about the same age as I am now. I am sure he would be very proud to see his grown-up son in the House of Commons today. My mother always let me follow my heart, even though she must have sometimes wondered what I would become.

Given that this is my first speech in the House and a somewhat solemn occasion for me, I would ask all parliamentarians to take a few moments to remember the victims of the Lac-Mégantic tragedy. Just as we must always remember the victims of terrorism and violence against women and children, we must never forget the 47 men and women who lost their lives in the terrible accident that occurred on July 6, 2013.

Since the House never sits in the summer, I wanted to take the first opportunity I had to commemorate this sad anniversary and to remember the families and friends of the deceased.

[A moment of silence observed]

The Lac-Mégantic disaster is not over. All parliamentarians are presently being asked to help the people of Lac-Mégantic in their quest for peace.

In the coming weeks, I will have the opportunity to convey to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Transport the expectations of citizens and newly elected officials concerning rail safety and the search for a long-term solution to the railway running through the downtown area.

Lac-Mégantic is no longer a town like all the others, and the government must find an extraordinary response to an extraordinary situation. The riding of Mégantic—L'Érable includes three RCMs and three different administrative regions, and the various parts of this large riding face very different challenges.

As the former mayor of Thetford Mines, I had the opportunity to work on many projects and files with municipal employees, the Société de développement économique de la région de Thetford, the Community Futures Development Corporation, our chambers of commerce and business people. Together, we built a new drinking water plan, natural gas plant, and new cultural and sports facilities. We also created businesses. The honourable Christian Paradis, former MP for Mégantic—L'Érable, who served in the House for nine years, made a major contribution to establishing these businesses.

I also went through some tough times, including job losses and the closure of the last asbestos mines in Thetford Mines. As I mentioned earlier, I witnessed one of the worst tragedies in Canada, a tragedy all the more poignant when the victims are people in our own community.

As mayor, I was familiar with the everyday lives of the people: their recreational activities, organized sports, the holes in their streets, their heroics, the food banks, birthdays, seniors' dances, and high school graduations. I attended activities hosted by social groups in my community. All those dedicated people deserve our admiration and deserve to be recognized here in the House.

As mayor, I also had to make choices, make easy or tough decisions, and take action when everyone felt like giving up, doing nothing, or even yelling even louder. Every year, I had to draft municipal budgets and announce tax increases to people who were sick of paying taxes.

● (1600)

Like them, I had to cope with government decisions, top-down decisions that were supposedly for our own good. I can guarantee that the people at the top figured out how to get their hands on what is good for us. I have always been close to the people, and every person who came to see me found the attentive ear they were looking for.

Reflecting on my years as mayor, I realized just how much the federal government's decisions could affect our lives. In our case, it was altogether positive. The Conservative government was there for us in the good times. The people of Thetford Mines drink clean, clear water today thanks in large part to our work with governments.

We worked with economic decision-makers to convince the Government of Canada to fully subsidize bringing natural gas to our region, which desperately needed it. When the mining industry shut down, the only government that shouldered its responsibility for communities that depended on asbestos was the Government of Canada, which provided a \$50-million fund. That fund was used to create a space for entrepreneurship, a business incubator that empowers young people to forge a future for our community.

Which is the only government that did not pick our pockets over the past 10 years? It is the Conservative government. Not only did it not pick our pockets, it also chose to weather the worst economic crisis in years by lowering our taxes and investing in our infrastructure in order to retain jobs and prepare for the end of the crisis. That bears repeating, and I think that Canadians should remember our track record in this new era of Liberal deficits.

Let us now talk about my first disappointment as a member of the House: this government's inaugural speech.

I have spoken to a lot of people since I was elected. I have talked to hundreds of people: working women, white-collar workers, blue-collar workers, factory workers, unemployed workers, elected officials, entrepreneurs and others. None of them begged me to raise taxes and incur deficits, so I am very worried after hearing what the members of this new government are proposing.

We heard a long list of very expensive promises, and we all know that this government does not have the money to fulfill all of them. I do not know whether it was because the throne speech was read in the same month as Christmas, but it reminded me of my children's list for Santa Claus. Obviously, mom and dad always found a way to explain that Santa could not bring all of those presents, and despite their young age, the children understood that Santa had to bring gifts to other children too.

The Address

I am therefore concerned for my children's children. The Liberal government is preparing to drive Santa, Mrs. Claus, the elves and the whole North Pole into debt because it is not reasonable enough to say that mom and dad do not have the money to keep their promises. Let us be serious. This government, which is promising in advance that our country will have a minimum deficit of \$10 billion a year, will one day have to pay the piper, and that means all taxpayers will have to go to the bank.

Mégantic—L'Érable is a beautiful riding. There are many reasons why this large riding is now well known around the globe. Whether tragic or happy, these events, which put it on the map, brought out the best in all of us. I am particularly aware of the projects undertaken by our people, and the economic factors that will allow us to create jobs.

We have plans in place to achieve that goal. Natural gas is an important economic development tool and we need to make it more accessible to our small businesses.

Because this is 2015, it is unacceptable that the people of too many rural municipalities in Canada still do not have high-speed Internet access or cellular service. I helped the dairy producers in my riding establish a committee to make sure that their rights are fully respected, specifically by preventing American producers from circumventing the supply management system with diafiltered milk, and ensuring that they get the compensation they were promised and are expecting.

It is time to prepare for the future. I offer my services, my experience, my knowledge, and my passion and I will stand up for my riding and my constituents over the next four years.

•(1605)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my honourable colleague on his election and inaugural speech.

This side of the House understands full well that there are economic challenges at present. There were economic challenges under the Conservative government, which repeatedly ran up deficits.

Getting back to my hon. colleague's speech, he asked whether we would be taking care of children. Yes, it is very important to take care of children. Is he not aware that we are going to increase the child benefit and lift 315,000 children out of poverty in Canada?

Would he put balancing the budget, something his government never did, before addressing child poverty?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I am somewhat surprised by this question.

We should remember that we weathered an unprecedented financial crisis and that Canada came out the other end in better shape than any other country because we made good decisions.

It is easy to make endless promises in order to get elected. However, when the time comes to follow through, there is the realization that it will not be possible to keep those promises to everyone and to their children and grandchildren.

One day, when the bank calls to say that there is no more money in the account, which Canadians will not receive services because the government overspent and did not consider Canadians' ability to pay?

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable for his first speech, which was quite interesting. His bits of humour kept me interested, especially when he said that the people at the top knew exactly how to get their hands on what was good for us.

My question is directly related to this statement and to the statement he made about the previous government apparently making good choices. My question is very simple.

When the Conservatives and Liberals used the employment insurance fund for purposes other than those for which the money was collected, was that just another way for the people at the top to get their hands on what was good for us and for all the contributors to the EI plan?

•(1610)

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, as a mayor, I dealt with all kinds of situations in the community. Sometimes, I would come across people looking for work, but I also come across employers who were unable to find workers to fill jobs.

Throughout our region back home, in Lac-Mégantic, Plessisville or Thetford Mines, our big problem is unfortunately that we do not have enough workers to fill the jobs. This limits our economic growth.

Why not give all Canadians the opportunity to take these jobs in Thetford Mines, Lac-Mégantic or Plessisville, so that these people can earn a decent living?

[English]

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate the member on his speech. I found it very interesting that the Liberals continue to attack our members for what we did during the 2008-2009 post-economic crisis.

First, we went into stimulus, and it was temporary, while what the Liberal government is proposing now is at least three years of deficits. There was also a demand for it at that time, because banks were not lending and also we actually saw demand fall. The economy would have spiralled and it would have been more like a Great Depression rather than that. What we have today is that the Liberals are saying it is not going to be temporary but it will be three years at least. It probably would be structural based on some of the decisions.

Last, I would just point out that the Liberals are not even targeting it. They are talking about green infrastructure, social infrastructure, bridges and roads, and whatnot. Some of those may have some value. However, this approach that the Liberals are taking is completely contrary to the reality of the economy. I would like the member to point out his thoughts on this magical thinking.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, the member used up all of the time, but I will give the member 10 seconds to answer.

The Address

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, that was an excellent question that covered all of my answers.

[English]

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Oakville today.

I would first like to thank the people of Mississauga—Erin Mills for entrusting me with their voice, so that I may raise their concerns and advocate for their rights and needs. I want to heavily thank the people who really came out in hundreds to support the campaign for my first election for Mississauga—Erin Mills.

The people of Mississauga—Erin Mills are a diverse group of people, with over 50% of the riding composed of first generation Canadians, representing more than 40 nations and speaking that many languages. It is a riding that hosts a university, and it is a not only a place where persons go to raise their families but also a place where persons choose to retire. Mississauga—Erin Mills is truly a representation of Canada in its full diversity.

I am a first generation Canadian, a Muslim woman of humble background speaking three different languages. I am honoured to present this esteemed House a different lens through which we can peer, to see a more wholesome perspective on life in Canada and how the government's mandate will have a more positive impact on the lives of Canadians.

My story is that of many who live in Mississauga—Erin Mills and across Canada. When my family and I immigrated to Canada, my father was not able to find employment in his area of expertise. His PhD. was not recognized by Canadian institutions to settle and work in Canada, even though he had been approved as a skilled worker in that field. He worked as a security guard, my mother worked as a tailor, and my older brother worked in a factory in order to make ends meet.

Even though many years have passed, today newcomer families still feel the same hardships. Jobs are inaccessible or in high demand.

Studies show that immigrants are the biggest contributors to labour market growth in Canada, so it makes sense, then, that providing support to the largest contributor to our labour market growth be a government priority in this economy.

In the Speech from the Throne, the government mandate—to make it easier for immigrants to build successful lives in Canada, reunite their families, and contribute to the economic success of all Canadians—will really help the people of Mississauga—Erin Mills. Enhancing programs like foreign credential recognition will help transition newcomers into the Canadian workforce and help us to build a stronger economy and a stronger Canadian fabric.

I also rise today in this esteemed House to speak about that part of the population in my riding and in Canada that is often marginalized. I speak of that half of the population that on average makes 78¢ to every dollar that its counterpart makes. I speak of women.

Although Canada has come a long way toward gender equality, we still have a long way to go. Gender-based barriers are even bigger

in racialized and marginalized groups. A report by the Status of Women Canada on February 10, 2015, outlined that key variables place some groups of women at the forefront of additional challenges to a stable life in Canada.

For example, immigrant women have lower rates of labour force participation and employment than other women. Muslim women are far more likely to be victims of hate crimes, as recent events in the GTA have shown. Aboriginal women experience higher rates of domestic violence, mental illness, and poor overall health.

About 75% of women in Canada have post-secondary education compared to 65% of men. Despite their efforts, women are not attaining benefits commensurate with their credentials. The government mandate on the Status of Women brings me and those like me hope.

By providing an economic direction of growth for the middle class and those working hard to join it, by providing a more inclusive and accepting direction to Canada's vision, and by appointing half of our talented cabinet as women, our Prime Minister is leading by example, showing Canadians that equality of opportunity, eliminating barriers, is possible. A lot more must be done to help those who are vulnerable.

There are many factors that affect vulnerable groups like women, and our government is committing to provide the required support. Single mothers of visible minority are more likely to require social housing. My riding hosts many social housing sites, and while speaking to residents in the riding, I came across a very bright young boy, Kemal, and his mother. She outlined to me the hardships of her day-to-day life as a single mother of growing boys. Working at minimum wage, living in social housing, she is not able to make ends meet.

● (1615)

She asked me if I knew how much a size 13 pair of shoes cost, and then she asked if I thought that a minimum wage salary could afford that and have enough left to put food on the table for the rest of the month.

Her story is that of many in my riding. The wait time for access to social housing is years long. The projects themselves require maintenance and support. With investments in social infrastructure, children like Kemal would have a more stable life to grow and become a part of Canada's workforce.

Further, by working with the provinces and territories to make post-secondary education more affordable, I strongly believe that this government's mandate will help people like Kemal to reach their full potential. Kemal and children like him are our future, and the time to nurture them is now.

Canada's strength is our people, and by investing in our people, by ensuring equality of opportunity regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, or age, we will build a stronger and better Canada.

The Address

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, congratulations to you for your new position; and a big congratulations to the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills for her first speech. I enjoyed her speech very much, listening to her stories to learn about her constituents.

She mentioned single parents in her community who are working at minimum wage and are having a hard time making ends meet. To that end, I wonder whether or not the member would agree with the NDP's view that her government should in fact change the tax cut policy to include families—and there are some 16 million families or individual Canadians who would not benefit from this tax cut—to allow that bracket of people, who very much need support from the government to make ends meet.

• (1620)

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Madam Speaker, it is very concerning to hear stories from our constituents about how hard it is to make a living now. I really think the government's mandate will help people who are working hard to become part of the middle class, by investing in items like social infrastructure and developing programs to assist in ways other than providing tax breaks.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Mississauga—Erin Mills for her first speech.

I paid particular attention to the part on gender equality. Naturally, I am pleased to see this equality reflected in cabinet. As we prepare for the potential upcoming review of our voting system and our entire democratic process, would it not be a good idea to consider gender equality for election candidates, to ensure that elections fully represent the society we are meant to represent in the House?

[English]

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Madam Speaker, Canada is a democracy that not many around the world can enjoy, and I can attest to that. It is very important for women to be a part of the electoral process, and our Prime Minister has led us in a very positive direction by including 50% women in our cabinet. I see that our great opposition leader has done the same with her shadow cabinet.

Measures are being taken to have a more inclusive government, to have more political involvement of women, and I look forward to being part of that process.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am really encouraged by the new member's comments in regard to how important it is for us to recognize that we do have a cabinet of the same number of females and males. It is the first time in Canadian history. All of us in the Liberal caucus take a great deal of pride in that. It is great that she referenced it.

One of the other issues we need to highlight is the fact that we have the Canada child plan, which is going to see many children lifted out of poverty. I am wondering if the member might want to add some of her thoughts in regard to the importance of that child family plan that will be brought through by our government.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Madam Speaker, yes, our child benefit program would help people like Kemal, who I really got to know over the

past year. As a 14-year-old child with younger siblings, living in today's age, I think he would be one of the 315,000 children that would be raised out of poverty with our new child benefit.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on her speech.

I am quite pleased to see that the throne speech is fairly positive and sets out to change things. However, it is silent on compensation for farmers and cheese and dairy producers in connection with the trans-Pacific partnership.

People in my riding are very worried. Many farmers participated in demonstrations at border crossings during the election campaign because they want to preserve their land and continue to earn a living from farming.

The Liberals have not said whether they intend to keep their promises about compensation for dairy and cheese producers.

• (1625)

[English]

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Madam Speaker, the government really does support supply management.

I will add a little personal story as well. My family owns a grocery store where we sell farmers' products like Ontario spring lamb, etc., so at a local level, we really are working with our farmers to help promote business.

Mr. John Oliver (Oakville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a great honour to address the House today for my first time as the member for Oakville.

I would like to congratulate you, Madam Speaker, on your appointment. I am going to confess when I wrote these notes I heard myself saying “Mr. Speaker”, so if at some time during them I make that mistake, I apologize in advance.

I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude and thanks to the people of Oakville for supporting me, for putting their trust and confidence in me, and for asking that I be their voice in this chamber. I intend to do my best to be their voice.

I would also like to express my thanks and gratitude to the amazing team of volunteers who worked tirelessly with me over the past year to ensure that the people of Oakville understood that the opportunity to bring real change to Canada lay in part in their hands.

Finally, to my family, my grandparents who have passed on, my parents who are listening carefully at home, my wife Joanna, and my children Rachel, Alex, and William, I would like to express my deepest appreciation for their support and encouragement not just in this endeavour, but in all aspects of my life. I am very pleased that my wife Joanna has joined me in Ottawa today.

The Address

Over the campaign period I knocked on thousands of doors in Oakville and had countless conversations with people from Oakville about the issues that were affecting them, their families, and their community. Without a doubt, the most frequent concern expressed was about our economy and the uncertainty of employment. This is particularly true for 20-something Canadians who have struggled to find quality permanent jobs. I have also watched friends and neighbours similarly caught in a constant cycle of employment, unemployment, underemployment, and so on. This should be simple. We need to get Canadians back to work in quality, durable jobs. We need a robust economy to create employment and wealth for everyone.

The Speech from the Throne speaks directly to these concerns. To grow the economy and create jobs, our government will deliver a tax cut for the middle class, provide the Canada child benefit to help those with young families who are struggling financially, and introduce significant new infrastructure investments in public transit, green infrastructure, and social infrastructure. Our government will act to create new jobs for young Canadians and make post-secondary education more affordable for those from low and middle-income families.

A second area of concern raised by my constituents was access to health services. I am pleased to advise the House through you, Madam Speaker, that in a very few days at 6 a.m., Sunday, December 13 to be exact, Oakville will open a brand new state-of-the-art hospital. The new Oakville Hospital was a \$2.7 billion public infrastructure project, the 13th largest public sector infrastructure project in Canada. It is very near and dear to my heart. In my previous work as president and CEO of Halton HealthCare, one of my responsibilities was to see this project through from inception to near the final stages of construction. I am proud to report that this remarkable project in Oakville is opening on time and on budget.

In preparation for its opening, the hospital recruited an additional 800 people to work and volunteer at the new facility to introduce an extensive array of new and expanded patient services. Today, under the leadership of the board of directors and new president and CEO, Denise Hardenne, an incredibly talented group of people are working hard to ensure that on opening day the community experiences a seamless transfer of care from the old hospital to this incredible new facility. I thank the leadership, staff, physicians, and volunteers of Halton Health Care for their hard work and diligence, and congratulate them on delivering a terrific new hospital for Oakville. I would also like to recognize the CEO, Tina Triano, and thank the Oakville Hospital Foundation and the 28,000 people who donated to meet a record fundraising goal for the community.

Hospitals are just one part of our health system. The Canada Health Act and our national commitment to help each other in times of health crisis are a large part of what defines us as Canadians. We need federal health leadership back. We need a new health accord. We need national strategies to deal with the changing circumstances of people with mental illness, chronic diseases, and those who are aging. We need to reinvest in health research to ensure that investments are routed in evidence-based, clinically proven strategies.

The Speech from the Throne speaks explicitly to these issues, laying the framework to develop a new health accord in partnership

with the provinces and territories. Our government will also take action to support the delivery of more and better home care services, improve access to necessary prescription medications, make high-quality mental health services more available, and advance collaboration across Canada in health innovation. Our government is taking the necessary steps to ensure that our universal health care system remains sustainable and accessible for all Canadians today and for generations to come.

● (1630)

While I was knocking on doors in Oakville, I met many people who were employed at the Ford assembly plant. My riding of Oakville is home to Ford Canada's corporate offices; Ford's globally competitive assembly plant, which creates the Ford Edge, the Ford Flex, and the Lincoln MKX models; as well as the Unifor Local 707, one of the largest Unifor locals in Canada. Oakville is also home to auto parts manufacturers, as are many communities in the Great Lakes Basin.

The majority of automotive units produced in Oakville are exported, mostly to the United States, but 10% of production from Oakville is now shipped to China, and as we speak Ford Canada is introducing the Edge into European markets.

The success of the automotive industry in Canada is vital to our economy. From iron ore extraction and refining, to steel production, to tool and die businesses, stamping and moulding concerns, assembly plants, supply chain components, and so on, this industry creates thousands of high-quality jobs and countless spinoff jobs. It stimulates manufacturing research and development, and provides support to local charities and community programs in cities and towns across Canada.

In recent years, Canada fell behind other countries at attracting foreign auto manufacturing investment in an increasingly competitive global environment. Action will be taken today to ensure that new capital investment, capital reinvestment, and research and development occur in Canada's automotive parts and assembly sectors to ensure a strong and robust automotive sector for decades to come.

Our government is committed to engaging auto manufacturers, workers, and stakeholders, including the Canadian Automotive Partnership Council, on matters that have a direct impact on the future of our auto sector. Those discussions are under way as we speak. We are committed to mobilizing the experience and expertise of stakeholders and incorporating their input into decision-making.

The government also knows the Canadian auto industry needs qualified workers, improved infrastructure, and a positive climate for investment. These are areas in which our federal government can and will play a positive and meaningful role. As the member for Oakville, I am personally committed to working in the House to help ensure the long-term viability of the Canadian automotive sector.

The Address

I could share much more with the House and my fellow members about my wonderful community of Oakville and its accomplishments as it strives to be the most livable town in Canada. I could also share more of the comments and concerns that were raised by residents, such as environmental and climate change issues, a desire for a return to open and transparent government processes, and concerns about pensions, poverty, the elderly, and the remarkable responsiveness of this government's plans to address so many of those expressed concerns. However, I think I am short of time.

I salute our Prime Minister for his open and participatory leadership with a strong and capable cabinet.

Once again I thank the people of Oakville for the honour of representing them in the House. I also extend my congratulations to all members of the House on their election or re-election to Parliament. I am committed to working with members from all sides of the House to help the 42nd Parliament of Canada produce extraordinary results for all Canadians.

•(1635)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I welcome my colleague from Oakville to the House. I also welcome his statement that he will be a strong advocate for the automotive sector. I believe he is sincere with respect to that. However, we just had a Speech from the Throne and his leader decided to ignore the auto sector 100%. He mentioned all kinds of sectors except the auto sector and the manufacturing sector.

My community of Oshawa depends on the manufacturing sector for a lot of jobs. One assembly job actually has a spinoff of seven other jobs in the community. We have had 300,000 job losses in Ontario. In speaking with the manufacturers who have left, the reasons were the high costs of energy and labour.

Therefore, going forward with the budget, I was wondering if we could get a commitment from the member as to what the Liberals will put into their auto action plan to contradict the policies they have put in place to decrease the competitiveness of Ontario, such as the increases to payroll taxes, which increases the costs of labour, and a tax on carbon, which will increase energy costs. When we compare Ontario to Michigan, Michigan has competitive electrical rates, stable payroll taxes, and does not have a carbon tax. What will the member put forward in his policy to ensure that his leader and the forthcoming budget will have measures in there for the auto sector and manufacturers?

Mr. John Oliver: Madam Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member on his election to the House.

As I said, this government, and I am very proud to be part of the Liberal government, is actively in discussion with different parts of the auto sector. The Minister of International Trade spoke to that today during question period. I know that both the Minister of International Trade and the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development are, as we speak, in an ongoing meeting with different firms, industries and associations to ensure they fully understand and appreciate what is required for the auto sector.

I have heard continued reference to the payroll tax. The average Canada pension plan pay out for seniors today in Canada is \$7,500.

That is not a payroll tax. That is a defined benefit contribution that will increase retirement benefits for all of us.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to stand here on behalf of the residents of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. I am glad to hear the member for Oakville pledge some strong support for manufacturing.

There is another sector of manufacturing that also needs some dire help out on B.C.'s coast, which is the manufacturing in the wood sector. British Columbia's coastal communities have seen countless numbers of sawmills close down. One of the biggest problems comes from the export of raw logs. We are continuously shipping out raw logs only to buy the products back from other countries.

Will we see the same kind of commitment for other sectors of manufacturing, particularly stopping the raw log exports in British Columbia, so we actually make more value-added manufacturing?

I think all members in the House can agree that this is where the value-added jobs, the well-paying jobs, come from that will really support families in my community and countless others.

Mr. John Oliver: Madam Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member on his election to the House.

Canada is a country of small and medium-sized enterprises. Our prosperity is embodied in entrepreneurs who take chances and produce well for us.

The government has committed to a \$200 million per year over three years innovation fund to provide direct support to business incubators and accelerators for research facilities to finance small companies that want to grow. It is very similar to what is happening in Germany where it linked together government, business, universities and schools. This government is committed to helping manufacturing across Canada.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I welcome the hon. member to the House. He has a very important role to play in this government, because he represents a riding that is manufacturing based, and like all manufacturing, it is dependent for its success on being innovative.

The member already addressed this in his answer to the previous question when he discussed innovation, but perhaps he could talk a little more about how this industry is surrounded by small and medium-sized businesses all over Ontario and in other parts of the country. For these businesses, these parts makers and so on, their success also rests on innovation. Perhaps he could expand a bit on the government's commitment to innovation and to science and technology above and beyond that, but to innovation in particular.

The Address

•(1640)

Mr. John Oliver: Madam Speaker, as I said, there is a very strong commitment to innovation, science and development from this government. We have formed a small group of members that have auto parts manufacturing and assembling units in their ridings, which is sort of a caucus on our side.

I would very much like to collaborate with other parties. However, what we hear from all of those areas is that the innovation and research is happening in this sector, and that there is a willingness to partner and work with government to ensure we move this sector forward successfully to grow our economy and to keep the automotive sector strong in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your new position, which is a very important one in the House. I would also like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the member for Winnipeg Centre.

I am extremely proud to be the member for the new riding of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, formerly known as Sackville—Eastern Shore.

Not only am I proud to represent this new riding, but I am also very pleased because my riding has a very rich history and a wealth of culture and resources; it is full of potential. I am also pleased to be part of a very progressive government that will bring real change to the whole country.

[*English*]

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my predecessor, Mr. Peter Stoffer, for his 18 years of dedication to the House and his public service, as well as his strong advocacy toward the veterans in our riding and across Canada.

I would also like to thank, of course, my electorate who chose to send me to Ottawa to continue the hard work that needs to be done for our riding, our province and our country.

I need to also express my gratitude to the volunteers who have helped me since the beginning of this long journey about 18 months ago.

I want to also express my thanks to my family, including my wife and my three adult children, three of whom watched some politics but were not what we would call political tigers like my dad was, or I have been all my life. After having a successful campaign and hard work for a year, they have become somewhat tigers in the political sphere.

I also want to mention as well that if my mom and dad were here today, they would be extremely proud that their son will stand in this House with this strong government in the next four years.

I want to speak to five key issues from the throne speech of last Friday.

[*Translation*]

First of all, the tax cut for the middle class and the new Canada child benefit will have a positive impact and help young families.

[*English*]

In Lower Sackville and surrounding areas, we have a very high number of households with young families. Therefore, I am extremely excited to be on the government side working with it to support these young families when we talk about child care, community facilities, post-secondary education, and having a comfortable retirement.

•(1645)

[*Translation*]

People in my riding are worried about the economy, growth, and jobs. Our historic investment in infrastructure will give them hope.

I would now like to take a moment to talk about infrastructure.

[*English*]

Of the special infrastructure needs in my riding, one is senior residence in affordable housing. Today there are only two across my riding and we need to ensure that we have sufficient housing for our seniors so they can stay in their own communities.

Municipal water supply is also a very important project. In the Fall River and surrounding areas, we need to expand the city water system. It is not only necessary for affordable housing, but it is also necessary for the business world and opportunity and investment.

Transportation is also a big issue, such as commuter rail, busing, the Aerotech-Wellington connector road, the Burnside/Sackville expressway, and improving of the Highway 107 going from Dartmouth to Porters Lake.

Another very important infrastructure project required in our riding is the dredging of the inlet. In Eastern Passage, we have a very beautiful fishing community at the entrance of the Halifax harbour.

Due to the proximity of the McNabs Island and the tides, the fishermen who make their living on the water have trouble coming into Eastern Passage and going out to do their work, as well as other commercial boats and others that could take advantage of this and create more opportunities, jobs, and tourism in the area.

Therefore, I want to confirm my support for the government's plan for infrastructure, including the \$20 billion plan for public transit in the next 10 years.

Talking about open and transparent government, during my campaign I heard throughout the riding about the need for a government that listens, the need for a government that works with people, with provinces, and with municipalities. I am extremely excited by our open government policy to work with all Canadians to get the job done, the job that is required for Canadians.

The Address

On the clean environment and a strong economy, I am also very excited about our government's commitment to this. However, the two main environmental issues that are important in my riding are the Lake Echo dumping site and the Fall River quarry projects. In both cases my constituents feel that these projects will have a negative impact on their lives. What kind of pollution will it bring? What effect will it have on the water, property value, noise, etc.?

[Translation]

Let us talk about diversity, which is our strength.

Fully 22% of my constituents are veterans, military personnel or family members of military personnel. That is a very high number, the highest in Nova Scotia. It is time we ensured that they get the services and respect they deserve. We must be able to offer our soldiers and our veterans the support they need during and after their military service. This includes support for the families, the soldiers, and the veterans who have to live with the aftermath of their experiences.

[English]

My riding is also rich in culture and history. The people of African descent from Nova Scotia have a story that goes back 300 years. North Preston is the biggest black indigenous community in Canada. The Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia is also the largest black community centre in Canada. It is a museum, it is a gathering place, and it is an excellent example of the Canadian heritage that must be protected, promoted, and shared.

[Translation]

Canada's official languages and our heritage are very important to me and to the people of my riding. I am a proud Acadian from Nova Scotia and I have had to dedicate much of my life to protecting our language and culture for future generations.

Chezsetcook, which is in my riding, is the second-oldest Acadian region in Nova Scotia. Francophones came to Nova Scotia to work or to serve on the military base. Providing services in French, ensuring access to a good education in French, and promoting the francophonie across Canada are all things that I am very familiar with and very passionate about.

• (1650)

[English]

Nova Scotia has a long history of receiving and supporting immigrants and refugees, many of whom entered through Pier 21 in Halifax. We look forward to continuing this tradition and welcoming more people to our province and country.

I have many service members in my riding who are very proud to continue to support and contribute to Canada's national defence and to helping the international community. I would like to thank each member and their family for their dedication and ongoing service. The shipbuilding contract is also a very important spinoff in my community.

Therefore, in closing, the word “opportunity” is what is giving my constituents hope. Our government will work closely with all Canadians to achieve a better tomorrow for our great country.

[Translation]

I am pleased to have the opportunity to share my thoughts about the Speech from the Throne and my beautiful community of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook.

[English]

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the member opposite for his election, and I congratulate you, Madam Speaker, for your appointment to your role. I cannot speak for everyone else, but I will do my best to make your time here as easy as possible.

The member opposite talked about infrastructure, and all of us in this place have municipalities that need a lot of infrastructure dollars. The federal government is going forward with its infrastructure plan, but I have not heard much about its plan to help municipalities pay for this infrastructure. I have a very rural riding, so a lot of the burden of these services falls on the backs of property taxpayers, and they can only take so much.

Does the federal government have any ideas on how it is going to help municipalities pay for this valuable infrastructure, other than saying that they should continue to borrow because money is cheap?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, I congratulate the member on his election as well.

Our government is committed to doubling the investment in infrastructure, from \$65 billion to \$125 billion over 10 years. As well, the Liberal government has promised to work closely with the provinces and municipal governments to ensure that there will be funding available to them, allowing them to bring projects forward so we can be partners in future infrastructure projects.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, congratulations to my colleague and to you. It is wonderful to see you in the chair presiding over this place.

My question has to do with infrastructure. I am very anxious about all kinds of infrastructure, whether it is hard infrastructure in terms of water, sewer, and roads, or the all-important social infrastructure like child care.

Given that the previous Liberal government made significant cuts to things like affordable housing, employment insurance, the things that support communities, and failed in terms of the important infrastructure that would have created a national child care system, what assurances do we have from the current government that it will follow through and make sure that employment insurance, housing, and children are taken care of?

• (1655)

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for asking the question and congratulate her on her election.

I appreciate the question on infrastructure. This government is committed to infrastructure, including social infrastructure, which includes affordable housing and day care centres. Facilities of that nature will be a high priority for this government, and we will invest in those areas as promised on October 19.

The Address

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook on his fiery maiden speech and on being elected.

What piqued my interest was his mention of the highway project that links my riding of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour to his riding of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, what we call the Burnside expressway. I wonder if the member would expand a little on the history of the project, and perhaps the delay of the project which Nova Scotians have been awaiting for many years.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question and congratulate him on his election.

I do want to expand somewhat on this project. This is a long-awaited project, at least ten years. It connects a number of regions, which is extremely important. It is a big industrial park in Dartmouth that would facilitate the highway issues.

There has been a ten-year wait on this project. The former government did not invest in this very important project, but this government has guaranteed infrastructure investment of this nature. I am very confident that we will successfully move forward on this extremely important project for our people.

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House with a heavy heart and with mixed feelings. While I am very proud to sit in the House, I am also aware of the House and its history, one which has been terrible at times for many of my people. It has made decisions that were not to the benefit of all Canadians.

I think of our first prime minister, John A. Macdonald, God bless his soul, who imprisoned indigenous peoples, stole our children, and stole our languages. There was Mackenzie King, who imprisoned Japanese Canadians.

This House, though, has made many great decisions, like giving the vote to women. In the living memory of my indigenous relatives, it has made them citizens of this country. It started tearing down the abuses of the Indian Act.

The decisions of this House will affect each and every one of us today and into the future.

There has been much history made with the election of this Parliament. For instance, November 16, the day I chose for my swearing-in ceremony, is an infamous day. Over 130 years ago, Louis Riel was hanged for his values. He was killed by the Canadian government while he was fighting for justice and against the trampling of the human rights of his people, the indigenous people of the northwest. My ancestors fought and died with Riel, and with Gabriel Dumont, the Métis general.

In 1869, 1871, and 1885, we suffered at Red Pheasant First Nation, where my people are from, with the largest mass hanging in Canadian history. There were ten men from our community. My great-great-grandfather, Joseph Ouellette, died at the Battle of Batoche at 93 years old, yelling out the word “justice”.

Riel is a father of Confederation. I am very proud, and it is an emotional moment to have the opportunity to stand in the people's House. Riel was elected three times to this chamber but was never

able to take his seat, upon pain of death. For my family and my people, it is a symbolic and literal closing of a moment in Canadian history.

I would like to acknowledge that we are here on the traditional territory of the Algonquin people. I will even go further.

• (1700)

[*Translation*]

We are here on unceded, traditional Algonquin territory. It is a meeting place for all Algonquin, Iroquois, Huron and Cree peoples, it is the land of the Métis, but it is also the national capital of all Canadians and of all those who come from all over the world.

[*English*]

I am very pleased with the Speech from the Throne, but I hope it will go further.

I have heard parties talk and talk about the middle class, and I thought I would tell the House about the needs of my riding, my community, Winnipeg Centre. It is the poorest in the country. Last month, 63,000 people used Winnipeg Harvest, and most of those people live in Winnipeg Centre. Of the people in Winnipeg Centre who used Winnipeg Harvest, 42% are children. They are our most vulnerable. The people of my riding have been ignored for far too long, and we are not complaining with our bellies full.

There are those in the House who might blame the poor, ignore them, or tell them they have not worked hard enough, that it is their fault they have not succeeded in life. Last year, while participating in the CEO Sleepout for homelessness in Winnipeg, I came across a young man, 18 years old. He had been in 77 different foster families throughout his life. Is anyone here going to say that is justice in our country? Is that a country with human rights? Is that gentleman going to be successful in his life? Will he feel loved?

Some might say that child and family services is not a federal responsibility, but under section 35 of the Constitution, it certainly is. First nations people are a federal responsibility, and we should never shirk that responsibility.

By the age of 15, 24% of all first nations children in Manitoba will have been in the care of the state. Eighty-nine per cent of all children in Manitoba are not taken into the care of the state because of abuse, but because of negligence, the inability of parents to provide good housing and good food for their children. These are issues related to poverty. There are 11,000 children in the care of the state in Manitoba, and 8,000 of those children are first nations. If Ontario had the same numbers, it would be over 140,000 children.

[*Translation*]

In Quebec, that same percentage would translate into 90,000 children being in foster care, as wards of the state.

[*English*]

Of the 11,000 children in the care of the state in Manitoba, only 11% have allegations of abuse and of that, only 11% were actually substantiated abuse.

The Address

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has just finished looking at the issues surrounding residential schools, yet we continue to maintain such a system today, day after day, through our own ignorance and through our own lack of understanding of what is really going on in this country.

We make decisions in this House. We make decisions that are important. A mother in my riding is looking after her three children in a rooming house, a one-bedroom apartment that is smaller than the office that I have on this Hill. When I was canvassing during the election, I walked up to the second floor and there was a man sniffing gas in the apartment above. What is going to be the future of those three young children? Who will be their role models? Who will be mentors in their lives? This I do not know because I do not know if we have the ability to find solutions in the way we conduct our affairs in the House, if we will be able to help those people. How do we break that negative cycle?

My riding is composed of 20% indigenous people and 20% Filipino people who have issues with language skills. When they become Canadian citizens, they cannot see if they will have access to the training that they require in order to get past their survival jobs. They are important. There are 4% of Muslim people in my riding. For too long now, they have been demonized and ask me when will it stop.

The dream that is in Canada is unrealized. While we listen to each other in the House concerning the rhetoric about securing a future through hard work and through education, that path to success is slipping through the fingers of many of our fellow citizens. There was a time when a strong back and strong arms could support a family.

I met a young aboriginal man named John. He is a good person who lives downtown in my riding and he wants to do well, but he has never had anyone in his life say “I believe in you”. John is a big guy. He is dark. He has been in prison. He has had addiction issues, but today he has a partner, kids, and goes to post-secondary school, but it seems that is not enough. He asked me why the police always stop him, why he feels that others are afraid of him when he walks down the street. If John is listening to me, I know he will succeed. I know he can do it. I believe in him.

We must be collectively tired of being fearful of others. I will no longer have fear. I will no longer be afraid. I hope we will make decisions in the House that are based on our intelligence and not listen to the fearmongering that is far too prevalent in our society. The obligation that we have to each other is deeper and higher in our roles as parliamentarians. It is moral. It is an issue of social justice.

As members of Parliament, we should be able to look back in 20 or 30 years' time and say the actions we took in this chamber were important and this was a turning point because the people we represent in our individual ridings across Canada, this is not just their future, it is our future, the future of our communities, our country, our nation, and the world.

• (1705)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, congratulations for being in that chair again. It is always an honour to have you keeping us under control.

I would like to congratulate the member for Winnipeg Centre for his election and share with him that I have had the honour and privilege for many years of working with the Métis peoples of Alberta. I developed an aboriginal peoples guide to safe drinking water. I bent over backwards, not just to talk about the rights and interests of first nations peoples, but also the Métis.

Could the member speak to how he sees that under the new government the Métis peoples will receive equal recognition that has always been required under the Constitution and does he see that in addressing the needs of vulnerable people, what specifically is he going to be looking for in the government delivering programs on behalf of the Métis peoples of Canada?

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, obviously, I am not speaking on behalf of the government, just as a member of the governing party, so my views might not represent exactly what the minister might be planning, but I will advocate on behalf of the Métis nation in this country who have been ignored for far too long.

I truly believe they are a federal responsibility, and they negotiated a treaty in 1869 for the foundation and the founding of Manitoba. For me, this represents the ideal of what this country could have been and what it should have been. By creed nor colour should we be judged, but what we actually bring: a society based on merit. For me, this ideal comes back to giving pride back to people who deserve pride most of all because they are the indigenous peoples of this country.

I do not have any specific measures to address what the member has raised. I simply say that I am very committed to ensuring that justice is served and that people's voices are heard, and I will do so whether it is within this House, outside in the lobby, in the foyer, in the minister's office, in my constituency office, or travelling around this country to all the communities.

• (1710)

Mr. TJ Harvey (Tobique—Mactaquac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to congratulate you on your appointment. I would also like to congratulate my fellow colleague for Winnipeg Centre on his election.

One of my first duties as the newly elected member for Tobique—Mactaquac was to meet with Mr. Brian Barton and Mr. Allison McCain, two representatives of the Carleton County Refugee Committee. It is with a great sense of pride that I share with this House today that this New Brunswick-based committee, working with the celebrated Carleton County Multicultural Association as well as the Catholic Church of Saint John Diocese, has successfully raised the funds to bring five or six refugee families to my riding of Tobique—Mactaquac.

I would ask my esteemed colleague to elaborate on our government's commitment to unite us as a country, seeing that we are strong because of our differences and not in spite of them.

The Address

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I was told a prophecy by an elder of mine who is Cree, Winston Wuttunee. He said that indigenous people will not simply stand up by themselves, but it will be through the help of all people. They may be non-indigenous, often what people sometimes call white or Euro-Canadians, and also newcomers. It would be our strength of standing together. We would actually be able to move forward, by working together. This was a prophecy that was told to him by an elder who was told by an elder before that, so it is a prophecy that is over 150 years old.

I can simply say is that I sincerely welcome the newcomers to this country, because I believe we will actually be much stronger and I will learn much from them.

At the same time, we have so many needs in this country that we have to address here and now. That is why I am very pleased with the child benefits, which would lift 315,000 children out of poverty, whether they are indigenous or non-indigenous.

That is something concrete, real. On November 26, 1988, this House unanimously voted to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000, and we have not done so. We have not moved on that issue. I hope sincerely that we will be able to do that in a good way, so that the mother in my riding who lives below the man who is sniffing gas will be able to offer better lodgings to her children so they all have a better future, improving all our lives.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my great honour to rise today as the new member for the new riding of Calgary Rocky Ridge.

I would like to start by thanking my family for the overwhelming support they have demonstrated for the huge change that public life will mean for us. I thank them very much.

I congratulate the newly elected members and re-elected members. I also thank the volunteers who put countless hours toward our successful campaign in Calgary Rocky Ridge.

In response to the newly elected government's Speech from the Throne, and in light of my responsibilities as deputy critic for the Treasury Board, I would like to speak to our democratic institutions, public finances, jobs, foreign policy, and trade.

The government has proposed measures that I believe will be harmful to the residents of Calgary Rocky Ridge and to Canada as a whole. I encourage the Liberals to reconsider any attempt to abolish the first past the post system and to rethink proposed tax increases. I also encourage them to reduce barriers to trade and employment, and to re-evaluate the decision to abandon the combat mission against ISIS.

Canadians enjoy free and fair elections with rules they understand. Under our present system, we know that we cast one vote at one location for one candidate. However, the government wants to abolish this cornerstone of Westminster-style government in favour of preferential ballots or possibly proportional representation. This is puzzling when one considers just how well the system has served Canada for the past 148 years, including some 85 years of Liberal government.

No system is perfect. In a large and diverse country like Canada, voters are often divided over the question of who should form the

government. The Westminster style of first past the post voting is an ideal system for ensuring that a workable government can be formed even in times of division. First past the post is both fair and simple. The candidate with the most votes wins. Under preferential voting, a candidate who is no one's first choice may win, because he or she received the most second or third choices. The ranking system is harder to understand and will result in the election of members who no one truly supports.

More complicated systems also mean more explanation and more bureaucracy to administer. Imagine what even more advertising and electoral education will cost. Imagine the extra hours and expense of counting, recounting, and redistributing votes. It makes more sense to keep our current system.

In addition to its simplicity and familiarity, our present system allows for decisive and accountable government. In stark contrast, preferential ballots could lead to one-party government with less accountability. Our current system not only protects Canadians from one-party rule, it allows decisive majority governments with clear mandates from voters, and allows strong and effective oppositions to hold these governments to account.

Proportional representation would lead to more minority government, more frequent elections, and more gridlock. Is this really what Canadians want? It would not appear so. As a colleague mentioned yesterday in the House, whenever the question of changing the voting system has been put directly to Canadian voters in a referendum, they have rejected it.

In Calgary Rocky Ridge, I knocked on thousands of doors. Not one single voter asked for this reform. Not one single voter even raised the issue. Changing the way we choose our government is simply not a priority for ordinary Canadians who are more interested in jobs than in potentially rigging a system for a governing party to stay in power indefinitely.

Simply put, the voting system is not broken. It does not need fixing. I daresay, the Liberal Party has historically been its principal beneficiary. I encourage the new government to refocus its efforts on eliminating electoral fraud and increasing public engagement.

Moving to my next topic, Canada is truly fortunate to have access to vast reserves of energy. To benefit from this abundance, we must get this energy to both internal markets and world markets. Unfortunately, the new government appears determined to put up regulatory barriers to moving our oil and gas products. A ban on tanker traffic along British Columbia's northern coast would prevent oil and gas from reaching the Pacific Rim market.

The Address

The top priority of voters in Calgary Rocky Ridge is employment. When I knocked on those doors, the voters could not understand why any party at a time like this would intentionally obstruct Canada's economic engine. They are afraid for their jobs.

• (1715)

I would like to also announce that I intend to split my time with the member for Calgary. I am sorry for not being clear about that from the outset.

Along with the government's plan on the restriction of tanker traffic, it plans to introduce carbon pricing and a moratorium on transit. This would destroy jobs across Canada, from Atlantic Canadians working in Fort McMurray to Ontarians who manufacture extraction equipment, to British Columbian port workers at oil and gas terminals, to countless workers from Alberta and Saskatchewan whose jobs depend directly on oil and gas. Everyone loses when production stops for lack of transportation.

Blocking oil sands transportation also means less royalty revenue, less income and sales tax revenue due to lost jobs, less equalization funding, and higher expenses through employment insurance claims. The government is already promising to run deficits. It cannot afford to shut down a major source of revenue while increasing its expenses.

This brings me to the topic of the government's proposed new taxes. The government plans to raise taxes on the top-earning Canadians by 4%. However, it overestimates how much tax revenue this hike would bring in. According to a recent C.D. Howe report, the tax hike would generate less than \$1 billion in revenue. This would leave a \$4 billion shortfall in the government's estimates, and it would also likely cost the provinces \$1.4 billion in lost revenue. When combined with the provincial rates, this tax hike would put the highest marginal tax rate at well over 50% in some provinces. The highest-earning Canadians may choose to work less, rely more on investment income, or relocate.

Speaking of job-killing taxes, the new government plans to expand the Canada pension plan, thus increasing payroll deductions and employer contributions. This would make it more expensive for employers to hire workers, thus stopping job creation.

The government also plans to make it harder for Canadians to save for themselves. The new government is threatening to reduce the tax-free savings account contribution limit, contrary to popular demand. According to a recent survey, 53% of Canadians want to keep the TFSA limit where it is, while only 19% want to reduce it. I encourage the new government to rethink its planned tax grabs and trust Canadians to make their own savings decisions.

Turning from revenue concerns to foreign affairs, the new government says it wants to draw closer to the United States and our allies in fighting terror. This announcement is somewhat confusing, since the government is eliminating the combat role of the Canadian Armed Forces in the fight against ISIS, even as our French, British, and German allies are preparing to send additional forces.

By only providing humanitarian aid, the government is addressing symptoms while leaving the disease intact. When people are attacked by terrorists who burn men alive, capture women and children and

force them into sexual slavery, and systemically exterminate religious minorities, they become refugees by fleeing their homes; but helping refugees flee without also helping fight the perpetrators does not solve the problem. I urge the new government to recommit combat forces to fight ISIS, to save lives, and to help solve the refugee crisis by eliminating its source.

On a more positive note, the new government has a unique opportunity to implement the single greatest trade agreement of our time, the trans-Pacific partnership. The TPP will benefit all regions of Canada. It will grant our businesses access to 40% of the global economy, with more than 800 million customers. It will modernize the trade rules for the Pacific Rim and create tens of thousands of jobs for Canadians. I encourage the new government to protect Canada's long-term economic interests and implement this treaty.

I look forward to serving the people of Calgary Rocky Ridge as their representative in the 42nd Parliament. I am humbled by the confidence they have shown in me by electing me. I will zealously defend our democratic institutions. I will promote job creating measures like pipeline construction, international trade, and lower taxes. I will stand for Canada as an important and reliable ally in the fight against international terror. To do this, I will co-operate with my opposition colleagues. I will gladly work with the government when it introduces sound policy, and I will vigorously oppose it when it proposes harmful new measures.

• (1720)

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your election. I congratulate all members in this House.

I would like to ask my colleague what he thinks about the efforts made by our Prime Minister and this government in order to rebuild the image and the reputation of Canada at the international level.

I was a consultant in international affairs, and for the last 10 years under the previous government, I felt that Canada's reputation was always below ground. We need to exert all efforts in order to re-establish and rebuild this image and reputation. That will enhance and encourage trade, and that will stimulate our Canadian economy.

• (1725)

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, I am concerned that the new Prime Minister has already done additional damage to our reputation by making one of his first acts as our Prime Minister the announcement of the withdrawal of our armed forces from the conflict with ISIS.

The Address

He is cutting against the grain of the rest of our alliance. He has withdrawn his help to the United States while claiming to want to restore relations with that country. That is not the act of a friend. We are running against the grain with our British, French, and German allies as well.

I am concerned about the reputation of Canada, definitely. I do not see that the government, so far, in its early actions, has done anything to improve Canada's standing in the world; quite the contrary.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for Calgary Rocky Ridge on his impassioned speech. I was struck by his defence of our current voting system, the first past the post.

I would like to just start out by pointing out that most members in this hon. House were elected on a platform of bringing in some form of electoral change. I was struck particularly by his mention of a decisive majority government. That may be true in this chamber, but I would like to point out that in the 2015 election that we just had, and in the 2011 federal election, both majority governments were elected by only 39% of voters. That is a proportion of the people who actually bothered to show up at the polls.

I would just like to hear the hon. member's comments on how he can reflect upon that case with what he was proposing.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your election.

Canadians are often divided on whom they would like to choose as a new government. Not all Canadians vote for the same party, and thank goodness for that. We do not want one party ruling Canada. We want choices for the voters. There is no question about that.

In defence of the Westminster system, it allows for effective government. It allows a government to be formed even in times of division. Our country, over the last 148 years, has done so well. We have accomplished so much as a country. This is one of the finest places in the world to live. We have been very well served by the Westminster-style Parliament.

I see no reason to change, particularly when, in a lengthy campaign, going to thousands and thousands of doors, I did not hear one single voter ask me to go to Ottawa and change the electoral system.

The Deputy Speaker: We are going to go to resuming debate, but before we do, I just want to express thanks for the co-operation of all hon. members, in these early days, for those of us chair occupants attempting to recognize members, new faces for most of us, and locating you on the chart. I appreciate the members' patience with that. We will continue to endeavour to do our best. When members shout out the name, we can usually pin it down pretty quickly. We appreciate that.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Bow River.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to stand here today. We also have to take note and keep in mind when the Chair changes. As I was rapidly making notes to change to "Madam Speaker", you showed up and I came back to "Mr. Speaker", so we have to pay attention on this side as well.

Bonjour to my 337 new friends and colleagues, and I congratulate them on their election.

It was 1959 when my parents brought our family to this particular location and said that we needed to see where the people are who make decisions for us, that we needed to see that they are just like us, regular folks, and we needed to understand that. It is with great honour that I stand here in remembrance of the day that I was here with my parents in 1959. It was also a much different time, because we walked around on the grounds of the prime minister's house at 24 Sussex Drive. It was wide open and a public space, as the Governor General's home is today.

There is another thing that I notice. In the gallery, we have many students who come to view the procedures on a daily basis. I work with a program called "Encounters With Canada". I would encourage people who have children or grandchildren in the age range of 15 to 17 to have them participate in this great program. It happens 30 weeks of the year. The member for Calgary Nose Hill is a person who learned about politics. She attended the program in high school and is now a representative. There are others in this House who also have done so. If members get the opportunity to be asked to speak to that group, please support that program. About 3,000 students a year come through there. They learn about Canada and about what we do here.

As I am humbled to represent the residents of the warm and friendly new riding of Bow River, I promise to work hard on their behalf to the best of my abilities. I thank those volunteers who helped in the campaign. I thank my family—my wife, my children, and my grandchildren—who were out campaigning with me, door knocking, and driving cars for me. It was a great experience for our family.

I would like to address the Speech from the Throne that officially opened the 42nd Parliament. Trade, infrastructure, and environment are topics that were touched upon.

People who have been in this country for many years, as I have been, have had opportunities to see great agricultural areas. In the Annapolis Valley, tremendous apples are grown. In Nova Scotia, people are into vineyards and there is a wine industry growing. In the red, rich soils of Prince Edward Island, potatoes are grown; and there are the green fields and dairy farms around the St. Lawrence River. Have they been to Leamington, Ontario? There are the largest greenhouses in Canada for the agriculture products grown there. There are the golden wheat fields of the Prairies and the canola fields. There are the vineyards of the Okanagan, and many more agriculture products are grown.

What does this have to do with trade? Agriculture in our country is newer in some areas, and there is lots of it. However, in my area there was an explorer by the name of John Palliser, who in 1840 came through southern Alberta for the British government, the area I am in, and said that it was a desert and that there should be no inhabitation of this area. He wrote a report to the government on that basis. The aboriginal people probably thought that was a little weird, if they could understand what he was talking about. However, it was a false assumption.

The Address

In this area now we have ranchers and farmers. The ranchers have huge ranches, township size. They are incredibly efficient and modern, with technologically oriented, professional people who work with the soil. The Canadian farmers and ranchers, I believe, are the best in the world. Bow River is part of this region with many of these people. It also has many villages, hamlets, towns, and small cities, like Chestermere, the newest city in Alberta, and Brooks, *The City of 100 Hellos*. Many members may not realize that Brooks is probably one of the most ethnically diverse cities in Canada, out there on the Prairies. It is also home to a world heritage site, Dinosaur Provincial Park. Most of the world's dinosaur fossils have been found in this location, more than any other place in the world.

Bow River is the location of many large irrigation projects in Canada. Irrigation farmers have tripled the amount of land being farmed, but they have not increased the amount of water they use from when they started. They have increased threefold in efficiency. What other industry sector can say that? The irrigation systems in southern Alberta are recognized as the most advanced in the world in the efficient use of water and the increase to food production per acre.

● (1730)

The types of niche crops in this region have increased significantly. Sugar beets were one of the first. My grandfather was involved in bringing the sugar beet industry to southern Alberta. There are potatoes and hemp. Ninety per cent of the hemp that is grown in Canada is grown in this constituency. There is also the famous Taber sweet corn. Those are just some of the examples of niche crops grown in our country.

Food processors in production across Canada have tremendous facilities. Some of the largest in Canada are located in the Bow River riding. For example, the JBS-Lakeside beef plant in Brooks is capable of processing 4,500 head a day. Where is the beef? I know where the beef is in my riding.

These industries in Bow River rely on exports. It is a critical part of these industries that makes them sustainable. Predictions would suggest that this will be even more important in the future. In the next 30 years, it is predicted that there will be a billion more people on this planet, but more interesting is the prediction that there will be three billion more people living in cities. I do not think the farmers' markets are going to make up the difference for food supply.

Food demand is going to increase significantly, especially when 15% of the food is now directed to biofuels. It is an interesting thing to do with food. There are only seven countries in the world exporting more food than they actually need in their own countries. These countries have sufficient rainfall and river flows to grow more food than needed for their own use. They have highly advanced agricultural industries, and that is what is in my riding.

The Canadian agriculture sector needs export trade to sustain its business. There will be a need in the world for Canada's food. We know why export trade agreements are critical to the agriculture sector and the whole Canadian economy. We can feed our own citizens and others in the world.

This region has significant resources. Coal was discovered by early settlers along the banks of the Bow River. Natural gas was

discovered by the early settlers in the village of Tilley when they first drilled water wells and hit gas instead. There are still natural gas co-ops in this constituency today. Oil was discovered a few years later. There are the natural resources of sun hours in big sky country and wind.

Do people know many hundreds of tonnes of coal it takes to produce the steel for one power-generating windmill blade? Do people know which long-time, first world country is now producing an increased amount of coal for the production of wind-generating mills? That is a lot of coal being produced somewhere in a first world country, but not this one.

Infrastructure includes roads, bridges, rails, pipelines, and ports. We need to maintain, repair, replace, and build infrastructure to be able to move product to internal and export markets.

Bow River is at the centre of the Canadian Badlands. It is also the location of Lake Newell, the largest manmade lake in Alberta and rated as one of the best sailing venues in western Canada. Surprised to find that on the Prairies? As an old windsurfing sailor, it is fantastic. Tourism is important to be moving people in our country. We need infrastructure.

I know that cities demand rapid transit, for example, but if rural infrastructure fails, how are food products and exports moved to market? There are many small communities in rural Canada that cannot compete with the cities in the grant funding lottery. They do not have the means to have engineered, shovel-ready projects on the shelf, with internal grant writers to fill out applications, as the big cities do.

With 8¢ on the dollar returned to municipalities of tax money that leaves these communities, we need a different system for infrastructure in rural Alberta for products to continue to be moved to market. The infrastructure in 60% of the country is in rural municipalities and not in the big cities. We need a different way to fund it. It is critical to rural ridings to have that.

In conclusion, I believe we need strong export trade agreements for the agriculture sector to be sustainable, to feed our citizens, and to feed others in the world. I believe we need infrastructure to move products to market and to support the many smaller communities in rural Canada. I believe we have thousands of incredible environmentalists, the people who work with the soil.

I have appreciated the opportunity to address this incredible body of dedicated, elected Canadian citizens.

● (1735)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on the other side of the House.

Two years ago, the previous government closed an agricultural research centre in my riding. It conducted applied research for farmers, which allowed them to plant new crops that were suitable for our region.

The Address

Does my hon. colleague believe that closing that institution was a good thing? Given the new opportunities for trade with Europe, should we invest in a new institution, or at least in applied research?

• (1740)

[*English*]

Mr. Martin Shields: Mr. Speaker, in our constituency, we have a research station that specializes in hydroponics for tomatoes and green peppers. It is a leading research facility in the world. Anything that supports the tremendous farmers, ranchers, and agriculture research moves us forward, because we have some of the leading producers on the ground. Anything that supports them supports the Canadian economy, and I support that.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome my colleague to the House. He took some of my riding, so he definitely deserves to be here.

In the throne speech on Friday, one of the things that really struck me as being absent was agriculture. It is something that I think is absolutely vital, not only to our rural communities across the country but to our Canadian economy.

My esteemed colleague touched on it a little, but I would like him to address a little more on why agriculture should be a priority of the new Liberal government, and how it is disappointing that it is not a priority.

Mr. Martin Shields: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the part of the riding that he donated to me. I am sure it is probably the best part. Maybe soon, some of those citizens will quit looking for the member and recognize that I am their MP.

It is a phenomenal part. No matter what we do in this world, what conveniences we have, how much technology we have, or how grand we build things, if we do not eat, it will not happen. Agriculture is therefore critical to our economy in the sense of providing food that is healthy for our citizens. When we have the capability as one of seven countries to produce it for other parts of the world, it is a phenomenal part of our economy and a contribution to humanity.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member on his first speech. Prairie people are the best. I grew up in Edmonton and spent many years in western Manitoba, in Brandon, the farming country, and I have a great deal of respect for the folks who go out and work the land.

I am also concerned, though, because I personally have feelings about the sovereignty of our food supply, its quality, and its security. Could the member address what may be some gaps between the provisions of the trans-Pacific partnership that his party supports and those values that keep our rural communities alive and well?

Mr. Martin Shields: Mr. Speaker, one of the challenges, in the sense of all of the different varieties and sectors that we have in our agricultural communities, is can we meet all the demands and resolve all the questions in a trade agreement? I am proud of the number of trade agreements that have been negotiated over the years.

One of the factors that I have heard this is the dairy industry. Having met with dairy people, they were very concerned about what might be in this agreement. Dairy people in our country are some of the hardest working people. They work the longest hours. They are

tremendous people. They live in rural areas and they support their communities. Therefore, it was a concern to me about how they would respond to this. They said that what they had seen so far, they agreed that this agreement would work for them.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time today with the hon. member for Brampton East.

As this is the first time I am rising in the House, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the people of Ottawa West—Nepean for placing their confidence and trust in me to be their representative. I will continue to listen to the views of all the residents in Ottawa West—Nepean and to bring their ideas into the decision-making process in the House.

I would also like to thank my family, whose support and encouragement made it possible for me to be here: my parents, Herman and Maria Vandenberg, who immigrated from the Netherlands to start a new life in Canada, as so many others have; my sister, Melinda; my loving husband, Don Dransfield, and my stepdaughter Courtney, who are here watching me today.

I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on the assumption of your role in the chair, and I congratulate all the hon. members for their election, especially the 196 other hon. members who, like me, are newly elected. I look forward to working with all members, from all sides of the House, to bring a fresh perspective and will work hard to improve the lives of Canadians.

Today, I would like to touch on a few highlights from the Speech from the Throne that matter to the people of Ottawa West—Nepean.

First, I would like to speak to our government's commitment to more open, transparent, and inclusive government. We have committed to making every vote count and consulting broadly with Canadians so that 2015 will be the last election using the anachronistic first past the post electoral system.

However, this is not the end of it. We will also ensure that hon. members are able to be more effective once we are elected to this place. Through more free votes, strengthening committees, and ending the use of omnibus bills and prorogation, we will promote more dialogue and debate, which will lead to better policy-making.

• (1745)

[*Translation*]

A democratic country's greatest assets are its people, its ideas, its knowledge and its experience. We will respect and listen to public servants, scientists, diplomats, and all Canadians.

*The Address**[English]*

I am proud to represent many public servants in my constituency. The Speech from the Throne commits to more open, transparent and collaborative government. We will respect the independence and professionalism of public servants and listen to scientists, experts, stakeholders, and all those affected by government policy when making decisions. We will base our decisions on evidence and facts and we will govern for all Canadians.

I represent a riding that is incredibly diverse. One in three residents was not born in Canada. We have many seniors. Over 10% of the population is over the age of 65. There is also a growing number of young families with children. There is a large income disparity, with some of the richest and poorest neighbourhoods in the country. It is a vibrant and welcoming community where people understand that if our neighbours do well, we all do well. That is why I am proud of the commitments in the Speech from the Throne to cut taxes to the middle class, to enhance the Canada pension plan to provide seniors with a more secure retirement, and to strengthen the employment insurance system.

The investments that our government will make in social infrastructure, green technology, and growing the economy will help to close the gap between the rich and the poor and ensure that every Canadian has an equal chance to succeed.

I am especially pleased with our commitment to creating more opportunities for young Canadians and providing a new Canada child benefit that would raise over 315,000 children out of poverty.

[Translation]

My parents are immigrants. They came here from the Netherlands in the 1960s. My sister and I had the opportunity to succeed, to go to university, and to find good jobs. I want every child in Canada to have the same opportunities for success that I did.

[English]

Canada has always been a welcoming country. People have come here from all over the world to seek peace, prosperity, and to make their homes here. Those who were born here, whose ancestors were here, have always welcomed the newcomers. We have built bridges and sought to understand one another. This is even more important in difficult times. This is the reason that Canada is strong.

I am proud of our government's commitment to more inclusivity, to gender parity, to welcoming refugees and supporting family reunification of immigrants, and to real reconciliation with first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

I am proud that the cabinet has 50% women and men, but we need to do more.

Too many women face violence in Canada simply because they are women. The fact that over 1,200 aboriginal women and girls are missing or murdered is a stain on our national fabric. That is why I am pleased that our government announced a national public inquiry. However, that is only the first step. We have a long way to go to achieve full gender parity in Canada. I am encouraged by the recent remarks made by the new Minister of Status of Women regarding improvements to the material well-being of women and children.

Just as Canada is committed to human rights and equality at home, we will be renewing our commitment to the most vulnerable in the world. The Speech from the Throne refers to development assistance to the world's poorest people, and a renewed commitment to the peacekeeping operations of the United Nations.

As a civilian who has taken part in such peacekeeping operations, I know first-hand how vital a role Canada can play in conflict prevention, post-conflict reconstruction, and support for both military and civilian peacekeeping operations. I especially look forward to Canada being a global champion for the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which states that women must be involved in all stages of peace negotiations and peacekeeping efforts.

We must also remember that early and rapid intervention can often prevent conflicts from escalating and that Canada is in an ideal position to invest in democratic governance institutions in failed and fragile states. We have much work ahead of us to rebuild our international development and aid mechanisms, but such challenges also provide opportunity for innovative thinking and for building on other successful global models.

Having worked for agencies of the United Nations for many years, I was heartened last week to see that the UNHCR referred to Canada as an international model with respect to the resettlement of Syrian refugees. Like many Canadians, I am proud that we will be taking in 25,000 Syrian refugees by February. However, I am more overwhelmed by the generosity and goodness of the people of Ottawa West—Nepean who have been coming to me in large numbers asking how they can help. I was especially moved by how many established immigrant groups were reaching out to help the new arrivals. It is this kind of community spirit that makes Canada one of the most remarkable and unique countries in the world. It is this coming together of Canadians toward a single goal that makes the impossible possible. When I see the outpouring of support by ordinary people to help those in need, I have never been more proud to be a Canadian.

Canada is once again taking a leadership role in the world. Climate change is probably the key issue on which our children and grandchildren will judge us. I am encouraged by the leadership role that our Prime Minister and minister have taken at the talks in Paris, and by the commitment in the Speech from the Throne to invest in clean technology and reduce carbon pollution. Canada really is back.

In this, my first speech in Parliament, I wish to put on the record the reasons that I am here and for whom I plan to work during the coming years.

The Address

I am here for Flaminia, a 12-year-old girl whose parents fled the Congo as refugees seeking a new life in Canada. She is growing up in public housing in one of the poorest neighbourhoods in my riding as one of six children in her family. She is among 14% of my constituents for whom French is their first language. Flaminia wants to be a journalist when she grows up. I want to make sure that is possible for her.

I am here for Vesna. She is 79 years old and still looking after her 55-year-old autistic son who has been on a waiting list for housing for 15 years. I want to ensure that our investments in social infrastructure will help her to know that her son will be able to live independently once she is no longer able to care for him.

I am here for Roland. He is an engineer who lost his job at Nortel and has been working part time as a French instructor.

I want every Canadian to have the opportunity to use their skills and contribute fully to our economy.

I have many more such stories. However, my time today is short.

I am optimistic that this 42nd Parliament will work collaboratively to listen to Canadians and build on the commitments in the Speech from the Throne to improve our communities and our country.

• (1750)

Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is good to see you back in the chair.

I listened with interest to my hon. friend's questions. I have been hearing this theme from more than one Liberal member of Parliament, in their hostility—perhaps that is too strong a word—to the first-past-the-post system and their argument that it was clearly stated in the election campaign.

Interestingly enough, the Liberal candidate in my riding did not advertise that, nor were there any communications about that issue in the entire campaign. Perhaps it was different in the rest of the country.

As has been pointed out before, this is a major fundamental change the Liberals are proposing, whether it be a proportional system, a ranked ballot, etc. Would the hon. member be open to having a referendum on the major changes they are proposing once we have done the entirety of the study? If not, why not, for something this major and substantive?

Looking back, we have had a history of doing referendums and consulting the people. Would the Liberals be open to consulting the people about a major change to Canada's electoral system?

• (1755)

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Mr. Speaker, this is exactly the reason our government is committed to consulting with Canadians regarding the kind of electoral system they would choose.

The first-past-the-post system, if we look around the world, is never used as a best practice internationally. In fact, the bottom 10 countries globally that have the lowest number of women elected are all first-past-the-post systems.

During the election campaign, I met many people who felt that, with the current system, they could not vote for their first choice, because they wanted to vote strategically.

I believe that people should have more choice in voting, not less. People should have the opportunity to vote for who they want. This is precisely why we are going to start by consulting Canadians and making sure we have broad consultation on the electoral system that Canadians will choose for themselves.

Mr. Arnold Chan (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to congratulate the new member for Ottawa West—Nepean. I want to welcome her to the House and let her know that she is filling some very big shoes, given who the previous member was for Ottawa West—Nepean. I want to pay tribute to the hon. John Baird for his tremendous service in this House. I know that the present member will make the same kind of contribution as the previous member did.

In looking at the biography of the hon. member, I see she has been an expert in the area of international development. I would like her thoughts on what would be the necessary investment or things that we need to do to rehabilitate Canada's role internationally, particularly in the area of international development.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for that question and for his kind words about me and my predecessor. I would also like to pay tribute to other predecessors in this role: Marlene Catterall, David Daubney, and many others whose shoes I plan to fill.

With regard to international development, I believe that we have an opportunity now to look at global best practices and what other countries are doing, both in terms of how we structure our aid mechanisms and also in terms of where Canada can provide the best expertise, whether that be geographic or in particular areas such as governance.

We have an opportunity, particularly because we have changed the model recently, to make sure that Canada is helping the world's most vulnerable but also preventing conflict in the first place and working with failed and fragile states. That is something our government is committed to.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate you on your new position, which is actually not all that new to you, since you have already worked in that capacity.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks about this. In the throne speech, the Liberal government talks a lot about helping families, but there is no mention of how it is going to help families get universal access to affordable day care. That would help many women enter the labour market, something that is not always easy, even in 2015. It could also help young women to get involved in politics, for example.

[*English*]

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Mr. Speaker, we are very proud that the Canada child benefit will help nine out of ten families and will raise over 300,000 children out of poverty.

The Address

In addition, in the infrastructure funding we will be providing money for social infrastructure, which will also include things like housing, child care, and other things. All families, including families with children, will benefit from our middle-class tax cut.

• (1800)

Mr. Raj Grewal (Brampton East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and privilege to rise in the House for the very first time.

Let me begin by thanking the wonderful people of Brampton East for giving me the opportunity to be their voice in Ottawa.

I also want to take a moment to thank the countless number of volunteers who put up signs, made phone calls, pounded the pavement, earning the trust of the people of Brampton East the old-fashioned way, one house at a time and one vote at a time. I stand here because of their efforts. I will never forget the people who sent me here.

I have called Brampton East home for the past 24 years. My family's story is so similar to families all across our great nation. I am the proud son of a taxicab driver and a factory worker. My parents immigrated to our wonderful nation in the late seventies. They worked hard to achieve their very own Canadian dream. My mom even picked up an extra overtime shift to ensure that my sisters and I had the best of everything. What my parents realized was that anything was possible in this country with a bit of hope and a lot of hard work. It did not matter where one came from or what one looked like; if an individual worked hard, anything was possible. Only in the greatest nation in the world is my story even possible. Thirty-five years after my parents immigrated to this country, I have had the opportunity to attend some of the best schools in this nation, be called to the Ontario bar, and take my seat as the member of Parliament for Brampton East. Only in Canada.

I was so proud to listen to the government's throne speech and its focus on helping Canadians, cutting taxes for the middle class, working with the provinces to enhance the Canada pension plan, making significant investments in public transit, green infrastructure, and social infrastructure, and ensuring that the government is more transparent and more accountable to Canadians.

Let us never forget the Canadians who have sent us here, fathers all across the country who drive taxis and trucks to ensure that their families have a better life, our single mothers who lift boxes in factories to put food on their family's table, the new immigrants who come to our nation in search of their very own opportunity to achieve the Canadian dream.

We need to ensure that the Canadian dream is alive and well for future generations, for they will judge us for our contributions. Were we nation builders or did we play divide and conquer politics? Let us make this session of Parliament something special. Let us ensure that all Canadians have an equal opportunity to achieve their dreams. The best part is that we are all going to do it together.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am really pleased with the manner in which the previous speaker presented himself. He told an important story here on the floor of the House of Commons. Whether one comes to Canada as a permanent resident through immigration or as a refugee,

there are so many success stories at all different levels, whether it is the economic or social fabric that make up our society. The speaker that we just listened to is just one of many examples of success. Parents make huge sacrifices so that their children will be able to succeed and do them proud. I am sure that both of his parents and his siblings are proud of him. The constituents he represents will no doubt be very grateful over the years ahead as he continues to represent them in an able way.

My question is specific to the throne speech. The member referenced the Canada child benefit, which will lift literally tens of thousands of children out of poverty and provide more money for the middle class. Maybe my colleague could comment on the importance of supporting Canada's middle class and our children.

• (1805)

Mr. Raj Grewal: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member on his re-election to the House. It is an honour and a privilege to sit with all hon. colleagues in this House.

That was an excellent question on our commitment to helping the middle class and the introduction of the Canada child benefit, which will be introduced in the government's budget. The Canada child benefit will help raise an estimated 300,000 children across this nation out of poverty with a direct investment into their families' pockets. For example, a family with two children with a household income of \$45,000 will receive cheques in the amount of \$6,000, after tax. These are rough estimates.

I am pleased that the government has made a commitment to helping the middle class. This Canada child benefit will have a direct impact on the pockets of families all across this nation.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member on his election to Parliament and his eloquent speech about the Canadian dream. The opportunity and tremendous ability to fulfill that dream is something we all share, on all sides of this House.

One thing that his family would have benefited from, because he is not far from my age, and indeed even the Prime Minister would have benefited, was the baby bonus, a previous generation's attempt to help families with the costs related to raising children. The interesting part of the baby bonus, which we both received, and our universal child care benefit that the last government introduced, was that it was universal. We did not pick and choose; we gave all families opportunities.

I would ask the member why Liberals are getting rid of a benefit that applies to all families to use as they try to support their children in their own way. Universal is something that worked for the baby bonus, and it worked for the UCCB. Why is government now picking and choosing which families will get that support?

Mr. Raj Grewal: Mr. Speaker, the reason that the universal child care benefit did not work is that it disproportionately helped the richest Canadians.

Another thing to note on the tax credit that the former government imposed was that it was taxable. When we were in campaign mode, going door to door, families were saying that they were getting the benefit but then they had to pay taxes on it. It felt like it was coming in through one door and being taken out another door.

The Address

The Canada child benefit is a targeted investment to help the most vulnerable Canadians, the people who need the help the most, get more money. We are asking the richest 1% of Canadians to do a little more so that middle-class families have more.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for Brampton East for a very impassioned speech in this House. When we bring our personal stories here, it brings to light the reasons for why we are here.

I would also like to share that I had the honour of working as a constituency assistant for the former member of Nanaimo—Cowichan, Jean Crowder, who was a colleague to many in this House. When doing that constituency work, I also had the experience of witnessing people who had to work two or three jobs just to make ends meet. For many of these people, the 40-hour work week was simply not providing the means to get the job done.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague to help those people, to give them a livable wage. Will he join with us and establish a federal minimum wage of \$15 an hour, so we can show the leadership necessary in this great country of ours that the provinces may follow?

Mr. Raj Grewal: Mr. Speaker, that was an excellent question.

One thing I have in common with my hon. colleague is that we were both constituency assistants. I used to work for the hon. minister of industry. It is pretty cool that we get to come here and sit as colleagues today.

The question was about helping families across this country. Our government has made two clear pledges. One pledge is to reduce taxes for middle-class families, putting money right into their pockets, helping the most vulnerable Canadians across this nation. The other one is the Canada child benefit, which I already spoke on, another direct investment into people's pockets to help them with their day-to-day activities.

While I was a constituency assistant, a lot of Canadians came in to talk about how difficult it was to live paycheque to paycheque. Our government has taken a lead to ensure that all Canadians across this country have more money to live with.

●(1810)

The Deputy Speaker: Before we resume debate with the hon. member for Scarborough—Agincourt, I will let him know there are only about three minutes left in the time allotted for debate this afternoon, but he can get started and he will have his remaining time when the House next gets back to debate later on this week.

Resuming debate, the hon. member Scarborough—Agincourt.

Mr. Arnold Chan (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to join the debate with respect to the Speech from the Throne, but before I do that, as this is the first time I am rising in debate, I want to first pay tribute to the residents of Scarborough—Agincourt for returning me to this place, despite the fact that I had some health challenges earlier this year. I deeply appreciate the tremendous show of support that I received, not only from my constituents, and it was an overwhelming response that I and my family received, I received a tremendous show of support from this place from colleagues from the 41st Parliament.

I want to pay tribute to members on all sides of the House for their tremendous show of support during what was, I will be honest, a difficult time.

I also want to take this opportunity to congratulate all of the new members who are joining this Parliament in the 42nd Parliament. I look forward to working with all members in the course of this particular Parliament in advancing our democracy and making sure that we work hard for all Canadians across this country from coast to coast.

Turning to the substantive matter before the House, which of course is the Speech from the Throne, I will note that the Speech from the Throne outlined five major themes that were reflected in what was essentially a very workmanlike speech. It basically outlined the importance that we ultimately had put forth during the election campaign, of making sure that we grow our middle class and that our middle class has that particular opportunity again to feel that they are participating effectively in the Canadian economy.

Over the course of debate and during question period, we have heard concerns about our proposed changes to the electoral system. I simply want to say to hon. members, particularly from the official opposition, that our intent here is to make sure that we end the first past the post system. We want to ultimately bring a parliamentary process to establish the terms of reference by which we can consult Canadians in moving beyond the first past the post process that we currently have to use to elect our members of Parliament.

The third issue is re-establishing our perspective with respect to the environment. The Speech from the Throne essentially outlined the fundamental change between the current government and the previous government as we recognize the importance of tying the environment to the economy. Clearly, we will be moving forward and making sure that we can grow our economy and do so in a sustainable manner.

The fourth theme that was established in the throne speech is ultimately recognizing the tremendous diversity that is Canada, whether it is diversity with respect to the different regions of our country or the very changing nature of our population.

Finally, the throne speech dealt with issues relating to security and opportunity. The Speech from the Throne outlined the really important component of making sure that we move forward in such a way that we keep ourselves safe, while at the same time pursuing new opportunities to grow our particular economy—

The Deputy Speaker: Order please. I was slightly in error. We will be taking the decision on the debate on the subamendment moments from now, and when the hon. member gets up for debate at the next stage on, perhaps, the amendment, then he will have the whole slot available to him to speak to that point.

It being 6:16 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the subamendment now before the House.

The Address

● (1815)

[Translation]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment to the amendment 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:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

● (1850)

[English]

(The House divided on the amendment to the amendment, which was negatived on the following division:)

(Division No. 1)

YEAS

Members

Angus	Ashton
Aubin	Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu	Benson
Blaikie	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boudrias	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brosseau
Cannings	Caron
Choquette	Christopherson
Davies	Donnelly
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dusseault	Duvall
Fortin	Garrison
Gill	Harcastle
Hughes	Johns
Jolibois	Julian
Kwan	Laverdière
MacGregor	Malcolmson
Marcel	Masse (Windsor West)
Mathysen	Moore
Mulcair	Nantel
Plamondon	Quach
Ramsey	Rankin
Saganash	Sansoucy
Ste-Marie	Stetski
Stewart	Thériault
Trudel	Weir — 52

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Aldag
Alghabra	Alleslev
Allison	Ambrose
Amos	Anandasangaree
Anderson	Arnold
Arseneault	Arya
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains

Barlow	Baylis
Beech	Bélangier
Bennett	Bergen
Bernier	Berthold
Bezan	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Boissonnault	Bossio
Boucher	Brassard
Bratina	Breton
Brison	Brown
Caesar-Chavannes	Calkins
Carr	Carrie
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chan	Chen
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Cooper
Cormier	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
DeCoursey	Deltell
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Dion
Diotte	Doherty
Dreeshen	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Dzerowicz
Easter	Eglinski
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Eyking	Eyolfson
Falk	Fast
Fergus	Fillmore
Finley	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Foote	Fragiskatos
Fraser (West Nova)	Fraser (Central Nova)
Freeland	Fry
Fuhr	Gallant
Garneau	Généreux
Genuis	Gerretsen
Gladu	Godin
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale
Gould	Gourde
Graham	Grewal
Hajdu	Harder
Hardie	Harper
Harvey	Hehr
Hillyer	Hoback
Holland	Housefather
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Jeneroux
Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Kang	Kelly
Kenney	Kent
Khalid	Khera
Kitchen	Kniec
Lake	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	Lebel
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Lemieux
Leslie	Levitt
Liepert	Lightbound
Lobb	Lockhart
Long	Longfield
Ludwig	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKenzie	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maguire	Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
May (Cambridge)	
McCallum	McCaughey (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinity
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès	Mendicino
Mihychuk	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	
Monsef	
Morneau	Morrissey
Murray	Nassif
Nater	Nault

Nicholson
 Obhrai
 Oliphant
 O'Regan
 Ouellette
 Peschisolido
 Petitpas Taylor
 Picard
 Poissant
 Raitt
 Rayes
 Rempel
 Rioux
 Robillard
 Romanado
 Rudd
 Rusnak
 Saini
 Samson
 Sarai
 Scarpaleggia
 Schiefke
 Schulte
 Sgro
 Sheehan
 Shipley
 Sidhu (Brampton South)
 Simms
 Sopuck
 Sorenson

Nuttall
 O'Connell
 Oliver
 O'Toole
 Paul-Hus
 Peterson
 Philpott
 Poilievre
 Qualtrough
 Ratansi
 Reid
 Richards
 Ritz
 Rodriguez
 Rota
 Ruimy
 Sahota
 Sajjan
 Sangha
 Saroya
 Scheer
 Schmale
 Serré
 Shanahan
 Shields
 Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
 Sikand
 Sohi
 Sorbara
 Spengemann

Stanton
 Stubbs
 Tabbara
 Tassi
 Tootoo
 Trudeau
 Van Loan
 Vandenbeld
 Vecchio
 Virani
 Warawa
 Watts
 Webber
 Wilkinson
 Wong
 Young
 Zahid

The Address

Strahl
 Sweet
 Tan
 Tilson
 Trost
 Van Kesteren
 Vandal
 Vaughan
 Viersen
 Wagantall
 Warkentin
 Waugh
 Whalen
 Wilson-Raybould
 Wrzesnewskyj
 Yurdiga
 Zimmer— 276

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the amendment to the amendment defeated.

It being 6:56 p.m., this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:56 p.m.)

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