



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 148 • NUMBER 010 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, January 27, 2016

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, January 27, 2016

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1405)

[English]

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

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

MAURICE STRONG

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, later this afternoon there will be a celebration of life, just across the street from here, remembering and celebrating the extraordinary litany of accomplishments of Maurice Strong.

Maurice was born in 1929 in the little town of Oak Lake, Manitoba, and grew up in the Prairies through the dirty thirties. I do not need to describe the hardships that his small and enduring family suffered at that time. He never got beyond high school, but a small scrap of paper came to him across the prairies, landed at his feet, and he read it. It was about the United Nations, and he decided, extraordinarily, that his path to be of service to the world would be to become a self-made millionaire and to put his talents to work for the world.

He was the UN secretary-general of two global conferences. He was the founder of CIDA and the United Nations environment program, and he set up the Earth Charter Commission.

We celebrate an extraordinary Canadian, a global citizen. May he rest in peace.

* * *

• (1410)

ALLAN MACDONALD

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I stand to pay tribute to Allan MacDonald from Nine Mile Creek, P.E.I., who recently passed away.

Mr. MacDonald, at 87, was married to his beloved Mary for 67 years. They were the happy and dedicated parents of eight children.

He fished the waters of Northumberland Strait for some 60 years. Serving on many fisheries organizations, including the P.E.I. Fishermen's Association, he was awarded for fighting for the issues of island, Canadian, and international fishermen. Allan was instrumental in changing the design of the Confederation Bridge pillars to include ice shields, thereby breaking ice flows and creating less impact on the fisheries, a design noted in *National Geographic*.

An active community member, he volunteered all his life, including supporting the Liberal cause provincially and federally. Serving his community and family with dedication, Allan was trusted, faithful, and hard-working.

We offer condolences to his family and our thanks for Allan's life's work.

* * *

PARRY SOUND—MUSKOKA

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in my first member's statement, I am saluting my tremendous riding of Parry Sound—Muskoka, and in particular, all of its volunteers and supporters of charity.

My community is a generous one, and I want to highlight some outstanding examples, starting with the pride of Parry Sound, Bobbie Orr, who has announced that in May, he will be hosting an evening recognizing young community leaders and the contributions of youth sport.

In Huntsville, Chris and George Gilley have donated \$250,000 to the Huntsville Hospital Foundation, earmarked for the chemotherapy clinic.

Brock and Willa Napier, from Minett, have donated \$500,000 to the South Muskoka Hospital Foundation. The Napiers have also donated \$750,000 toward a wellness centre in Port Carling.

Burk's Falls Winterfest was held this month and celebrated village mascot Pete the Bear, played lovingly by Ken McIntyre for the 20th consecutive winter.

In December, the Muskoka Parry Sound Hockey League raised close to \$2,000 toward a bursary fund.

These are but a few examples of the generous nature of the people of Parry Sound—Muskoka. I am so proud to be their member of Parliament.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

MARCEL BARBEAU

Ms. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am saddened today to note the passing of one of our great artists, Marcel Barbeau, who died on January 2 at the age of 90. A renowned painter and sculptor and an Officer of the Order of Canada, Mr. Barbeau was a pioneer in the field of abstract art in Canada. He signed the *Refus global*, a call for greater freedom of expression.

His works are in many private collections and appear in public galleries and museums around the world, including the National Gallery of Canada. Artist express the very essence, the soul of our society.

Mr. Barbeau was an important voice for us all. He helped us see who we are and what we can become.

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I stand in recognition of the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust.

On January 27, 1945, soldiers of the Soviet Union's army of the First Ukrainian Front opened the gates and liberated the prisoners of the Auschwitz and Birkenau death camps. It is important that today, 71 years later, we remember. For the dead and the living, we must bear witness.

As Elie Wiesel said, today we bear witness to six million Jews, a third of the Jewish population, who were killed alongside countless others due to their race, religion, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. As Canadians, we must bear witness and demonstrate action against racial, ethnic, and religious intolerance. Canada has been profoundly shaped by the 40,000 Holocaust survivors who settled in this country after the war. We must not forget this history. We must teach our children about the victims of the Holocaust and continue to fight all forms of discrimination.

We must never forget.

* * *

● (1415)

FAMILY LITERACY DAY

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Edmonton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the founding chair of the Centre for Family Literacy, which is located in my riding of Edmonton Centre, I rise to bring attention to national Family Literacy Day.

Research demonstrates that the birthplace of literacy is in the home and that parents and family members are a child's first and best teachers. We recognize the foundational work of family literacy practitioners across the country and thank them for helping to make families healthier and happier through literacy.

[Translation]

Family Literacy Day is held on January 27 every year to raise awareness of the importance of reading and engaging in other literacy-related activities as a family. Literacy is the essential link between potential and opportunities, and families are vital to the acquisition of reading and writing skills.

Mr. Speaker, I invite you to celebrate Family Literacy Day with me and my colleagues.

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL ADOPTIONS

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Wendy Malanchan, of St. Albert, Alberta, has waited more than three years to bring her adopted daughter, Lajoie, home to Canada from the Democratic Republic of Congo. The only thing holding this up is that the DRC has refused to issue an exit visa for little Lajoie.

Lajoie is not alone. Indeed, there are some 16 children adopted by Canadian families waiting for exit visas. Now there is legislation before the Congolese parliament that could force these families to wait years longer. Time is of the essence.

I respectfully urge the Prime Minister to pick up the phone, call President Kabila, and ask for 16 exit visas.

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Darshan Singh Kang (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since this is my first time rising to speak in the House, I give my sincere thanks to the constituents of Calgary Skyview for electing me as their voice in Ottawa.

I want to acknowledge the dedication to public service of Shelley Wark-Martyn, who started her career as a social worker and a registered nurse. She entered politics as a member of provincial parliament for Ontario and served as the revenue minister from 1990 to 1993. In 1997 she continued in politics by being elected to Thunder Bay city council, and from 2014 to 2015, she was the president of the Alberta Liberal Party.

Her continued contributions are to be commended, as she worked with the National Women's Liberal Commission to encourage all Canadians to become equal partners and active citizens in our country's democratic process. Her dedication to public service stands as an inspiration and example for us all.

* * *

[Translation]

FAMILY LITERACY DAY

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House today to mark Family Literacy Day.

Because of my background in education, I know that many Canadians across the country have a very hard time finding a job or position that pays a decent wage.

Statements by Members

In Nova Scotia, approximately 38% of the population has problems reading and writing and must take adult literacy courses.

A few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to work with the executive director of Literacy Nova Scotia to prepare for the delivery of hundreds of books to communities all across my riding and Nova Scotia.

In closing, I urge all parents to set aside 15 minutes every day to read to their children. It can make a huge difference in the lives of those children.

* * *

LUCIE LAUZIER

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured and proud to represent the constituents of Louis-Saint-Laurent here in the House.

The Wendake first nation is at the heart of my riding. We also have the town of L'Ancienne-Lorette, and the city wards of Val-Bélair, Lebourgneuf, Neufchâtel, and Loretteville.

Allow me to pay special tribute to Lucie Lauzier, a 91-year-old woman from Loretteville, who has done volunteer work for 55 years, helping thousands of people. She has spent her entire life collecting food and clothing to give to the least fortunate among us, in order to lend them a hand.

Mrs. Lauzier started her charity work at her home and her efforts were so successful that she eventually opened the La Luciole charity centre. Today, however, her health is preventing her from carrying on her work and La Luciole has to close its doors.

I must say that Lucie Lauzier is truly an example of determination and success for all Canadians.

Thank you, Mrs. Lauzier.

* * *

• (1420)

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this Bell “Let’s Talk Day”, I rise to pay tribute to an exceptional young lady from my riding, Becky Hanna, a happy kid with great friends, an excellent student at Cape Breton University, and a varsity athlete.

She had a great life going on except for one thing: bulimia nervosa. It was a severe disorder that she hid from her family and friends for a year, a compulsion that was more of an addiction that yielded a binge then purge cycle that she could not stop no matter how hard she tried.

Some days Becky would purge once or twice, but other days it would be seven or eight times, taking a heavy toll on her body and a heavier one on her mind.

Becky realized she was not alone and her condition was not uncommon. With the support of her family and friends, she works every day to confront her demons.

On Becky's behalf, I ask the House to visit Becky Hanna's Facebook page and share her video with family and friends. On behalf of all parliamentarians, let me commend and thank this exceptional young lady for sharing her important message.

* * *

HEALTH

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is Alzheimer's Awareness Month.

Alzheimer's disease has been called one of the most significant social and health crises of the 21st century. A recent Nanos survey shows that 47% of Canadians think it is not possible to live with this disease because of the stigma. Advances in treatment have improved the quality of life, but this is not enough.

Some 500,000 Canadians live with Alzheimer's or related diseases. This will double within a generation. Dementia costs the Canadian economy \$15 billion each year and by 2038 this will rise to \$153 billion. Alzheimer's disease puts families under great emotional stress every year.

Early signs of Alzheimer's include loss of memory, misplacing things, changes in personality and mood, disorientation of time, loss of initiative, and difficulty performing tasks.

There is an urgent need for investment in research toward early diagnosis and cure. Early identification of the risk of Alzheimer's is critical in delaying onset.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is Holocaust Memorial Day, a day when we remember the six million Jews and many others who were killed by the Nazis.

Many of my relatives were among the victims. My grandmother, a half-Jew living in Germany at the time, survived but not without suffering the loss of her grandparents, cousins, and many friends.

My relatives could have left Germany earlier, but stayed behind because they did not believe that such unspeakable evil was possible in their civilized society.

As uncomfortable as it may be, the Holocaust forces us to contemplate evil and how we respond to it. We must never be afraid to call evil what it is. When we say, “Never again”, it is time we mean it.

Fighting evil had a cost in World War II and it has a cost today. My grandmother was always grateful that Canada was prepared to pay the cost in her time.

Let us be firm in our resolve when we say, “Never again”.

*Oral Questions***REFUGEES**

Ms. Karina Gould (Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is my first member's statement and I would like to thank the people of Burlington for their support this past October.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize two individuals in my riding of Burlington who have recently inspired me with their kindness and generosity.

Norine Hider, who is 91 years young, took our Governor General's urging for a warm Canadian welcome during a cold Canadian winter for Syrian refugees to heart. Ms. Hider collected 275 sweaters through her sweaters for Syrians initiative.

Another resident, Olivia Walker-Edwards, a grade nine student at Blyth Academy, had the idea to organize a five-kilometre walk to raise funds to help a Syrian family settle in Burlington. Olivia's Walk for Refugees raised over \$3,000 for the Burlington downtown refugee alliance.

I know these are just two examples of the kinds of thoughtful efforts Canadians are organizing in their own communities to help those in need.

I wish to thank Norine and Olivia and all Canadians who are contributing however they can to ensure these refugees truly experience a warm Canadian welcome.

* * *

• (1425)

BANKNOTES

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the member of Parliament for Nanaimo—Ladysmith and the NDP critic for Status of Women, I stand with 72,000 petitioners across Canada who call on the government to do the right thing and put the image of Canadian women on banknotes.

The Famous Five and Thérèse Casgrain, women who advocated for the right to vote, used to be on one of our currencies. The Conservative government removed them in favour of an icebreaker.

Last year, my NDP colleagues asked the government to do the right thing and recognize the role that Canadian women have played in building our country and contributing to our history.

Two weeks ago, I asked the new government to do the right thing and indications in the media were that the finance minister is open-minded on the topic.

I urge all members of the House to do whatever they can to support recognizing the important role Canadian women.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Alberta has not seen job losses as it does today since 1982. Over 100,000 jobs have disappeared.

Over the Christmas holiday I had the opportunity and the privilege to talk with many Albertans in my riding. It was made very clear to me that people are concerned about their present and their future.

National pipeline projects are stalled because the Liberal government does not believe in Canada's energy sector.

The Prime Minister promised Canadian young people a vibrant future and meaningful employment. However, as far as the government is concerned, right now we are seeing one of the worst layoffs this country has ever seen.

This is gutting the middle class, causing families to lose their homes, their livelihoods and hope for their future. Each day that these pipelines are delayed the Canadian economy loses out on \$50 million.

On behalf of all Canadians, I urge the Prime Minister to put down his selfie stick and get to work building these pipelines.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. Michael Levitt (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is International Holocaust Remembrance Day and the 71st anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

[*English*]

Every year we must continue to remember and reflect on one of history's darkest periods: the systematic, state-sponsored murder of six million Jews during the Second World War.

Each year there are fewer survivors to pass on their stories and remind us of the value of human life. Their stories show the need for tolerance and compassion and the price we pay for ignoring injustice and hatred.

We bear a collective responsibility to keep these stories alive by continuing to educate others about the Holocaust and the evil that fuelled this attempt to exterminate an entire people.

In the aftermath of the Holocaust, the world came together and declared, "Never again". On this day and every day we must give special meaning to those words by actively standing up against hate, injustice, anti-Semitism and racism, and refusing to be silent in the face of genocide.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*English*]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday Statistics Canada said that Alberta has lost more jobs than in any year since 1982. Many Albertans do not know where the next paycheque will come from. They are worried about how they will put food on the table or a roof over their heads. Families without work are not feeling refreshed or happy, like the minister for Calgary said yesterday.

How can the Liberal government be so out of touch with Alberta workers and their families?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian government is very preoccupied with the fate of Albertans and the fact that there are massive layoffs and they need support. We are looking to partner with Alberta and with municipalities across the country facing very real challenges. We look forward to putting forward a historic plan to invest in infrastructure to create growth and to support the middle class in this country as will be presented by the finance minister in his upcoming budget.

[Translation]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the numbers explain the despair felt by workers in the resource sector across the country.

Families without work are not feeling refreshed or happy, like the Liberal minister for Calgary said. If the value of our home drops every day, we do not feel refreshed or happy, whether we live in Alberta, New Brunswick, or Quebec.

Why is the Prime Minister refusing to take action and to tell workers that he will work on creating new jobs?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we are going to do.

People voted for us because in our campaign we promised to invest in communities, create growth for the middle class and help Canadians create opportunities across the country.

We are very concerned about the people of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Labrador and Newfoundland, who have been seriously affected by the price of oil. We will be there to help them and all Canadians with our upcoming budget.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Iran's supreme leader consistently calls for the destruction of Israel. The Iranian regime is one of the world's worst abusers of human rights, yet the Liberals say they will be lifting Canadian sanctions on Iran, and why? According to the foreign affairs minister it would be in accordance with our allies, but our allies have also been clear that Canada should leave our CF-18s in the fight against ISIS.

The question for the Prime Minister is this: When do our allies matter and when do they not?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no question that the world is now a safer place because of the P5+1 deal with Iran. We will continue to work alongside our allies to ensure security in the world and to engage with Iran in a responsible way that highlights both the human rights abuses at home and its sponsorship of terrorism abroad. We need to engage in a respectful, responsible way, and we will do exactly that.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal plan to abandon sanctions against Iran overturns a principled stand.

Iran is committing horrible human rights violations against its own people, particularly women and religious minorities. What is more, it supports terrorism and regularly talks about the destruction of Israel.

Why is the government giving Iran a free pass and compromising Canadian values?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will continue working alongside our allies to ensure that we are behaving in a responsible way in the world.

We know that Iran is a cause for concern because of its incitement to terrorism, its human rights violations, and its nuclear ambitions, which have been put aside for the sake of this historic agreement.

We know that responsible engagement is one way of keeping everyone safe and protected.

[English]

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the government is snuggling up to Iran, our allies are going in a very different direction. Reports are that France has asked the European Union to consider new sanctions against Iran over the recent ballistic missile tests.

How can the government reduce sanctions at the exact time that our allies are apparently reconsidering and increasing those very sanctions?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work alongside our allies to ensure that we are behaving in a responsible way to move Iran away from its position of violation of human rights, of nuclear ambitions, and indeed of sponsoring terrorism around the world.

It is through responsible, firm engagement that Canada has always had an impact in the world, and that is what we will continue to do in a thoughtful and responsible way.

* * *

• (1435)

[Translation]

CANADA POST

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, now that the Liberals have been in power for 100 days, Canadians are starting to ask themselves some questions. They are wondering why they are not seeing any of the concrete action promised during the election. Take for example the Liberals' very clear promise about Canada Post. The Prime Minister promised to, and I quote, "save home mail delivery".

Is the Prime Minister prepared to repeat that promise today or will he admit that he has already broken his word?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign, we promised to put a moratorium on the changes made by Canada Post and the previous government. We are working with Canadians and we are going to work with Canada Post in a responsible manner to ensure that Canadians get the services they need and want. We are going to work on this file while showing respect for Canadians and holding consultations, something that the previous government never did.

* * *

[English]

PENSIONS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): It is a little bit like selfies, Mr. Speaker, there are cameras everywhere. We have got a clear tape of that Prime Minister making that promise and not the one he just talked about.

Just for the fun of it, let us read the Liberal Party's platform with regard to another Liberal campaign promise, "A Liberal government will restore the eligibility age to 65 for old age security". The only problem is, the Liberals said they would do that immediately. There are hundreds of thousands of Canadian seniors living in poverty. The government must send a strong signal that it is serious about tackling this unacceptable inequality in Canada.

A simple question for the Prime Minister: When does he plan to keep this promise to restore OAS to age 65?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I point out that OAS is actually right now at 65 and will continue so for the foreseeable future because of this Liberal government.

On top of that, our commitments were made to reach out to seniors, to support seniors, and we will be doing that as we will put forward in our budget.

We are 100 days into this mandate since the day of the election and we are already extremely pleased with everything we have accomplished to show Canadians the real change they need.

[Translation]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during the campaign, the Liberals promised to take action to ensure that Canadians can retire with dignity. Too many Canadian seniors are living in poverty. The retirement age was increased to 67, and that will only make things worse and create greater inequalities in the future. I will try again, since he promised to do this right away. When will the Prime Minister fix the Conservatives' mistake and drop the retirement age to 65 for the future, as he promised to do? Will he do so, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to set the record straight. The Conservative government did promise to change the retirement age to 67, but it did not get a chance to do so. It had planned to do so in 2023, not immediately. We will therefore keep the retirement age at 65 as promised. My dear colleague should get his facts straight before asking a question like that.

[English]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the platform also promised to increase benefits under the Canada and Quebec pension plans, but once in government, the Liberals are walking away from their pledge to Canadians hoping to retire in dignity.

The Premier of Ontario said she would scrap her separate pension plan if the feds moved on the CPP, but instead she has now announced that she is moving ahead with it. Did the Prime Minister tell the Premier that he will break his promise even before he has told Canadians about this broken promise?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, I am happy to correct the record. Our Minister of Finance sat down with all finance ministers across the country to talk exactly about enhancing the CPP, as we have made that commitment.

Ontario had a firm commitment to move forward with that, and it is doing it at the same time as it is working with us to ensure that we are able to enhance the CPP. Our finance minister and finance ministers across the country are working on that very hard.

* * *

● (1440)

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we now know that Bombardier is sniffing out deals and trying to sell its aircraft in Iran.

We also know that some of Bombardier's senior managers met with government representatives, including the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

I have a simple question. Can the government assure the House that Bombardier, or any other company, was not told that the sanctions would be lifted before it became known publicly? Did the Liberals talk to companies in secret to—

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we talked openly about this issue during the election campaign.

The Prime Minister committed to re-engaging with Iran, and we will keep that promise alongside our allies. We will do so with our eyes open, as the Prime Minister said.

Here is a question for my hon. colleague. Why is he working for Airbus rather than for Bombardier?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would remind my colleague that I am the member for Beauce. I work for the people of Beauce and for all Canadians, and I am proud of that.

As a country active on the international stage, we have policy positions. I would like to know why this government is renouncing its policy position on Iran and why it is dropping sanctions against Iran. Iran has not changed. Iran violates the human rights of its own citizens, punishes religious minorities and sponsors terrorism.

Why are the Liberals changing their position and supporting a state that finances terrorism?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Prime Minister gave a very good answer to that question.

However, the issue is this: if Canada were the only country to maintain sanctions against Iran while the others drop most of theirs, Iran would barely notice, but the impact on Canadian industry would be huge.

I would ask the Conservatives to stop working for European and American industries and start working for Canadian industry.

[*English*]

They should work for Canadian industry for a change.

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is what Putin's foreign minister said in regard to Russia's illegal occupation of Crimea. "We have nothing to give back. We are not holding any talks with anyone on returning Crimea. Crimea is a territory of the Russian Federation".

Why is the Minister of Foreign Affairs considering lifting sanctions on Putin's regime, given Russia's blatant disregard for Ukrainian sovereignty?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government will strongly support Ukraine. Our government will always be against, and criticize, the Russian invasion and interference in Ukraine, and we will communicate that very clearly to the Government of Russia. We will do it, and I will be pleased to do it, because we owe so much to our friendship with Ukraine.

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Putin's regime has invaded and illegally occupied sovereign Ukrainian territory. That is a fact. Now our foreign affairs minister is cozying up to the Putin regime. Could the Minister of Foreign Affairs please explain why he is abandoning our Ukrainian friends? Why is he giving in to Russian aggression?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I already answered this question, and said it very clearly to President Putin.

The question is, at the worst time of the Cold War Canada was speaking to Russia. Today, the United States is speaking to Russia. Europe is speaking to Russia. Japan is speaking to Russia. Would he say that all these countries are letting Ukraine down? In what way would it help Ukraine if Canada never speaks to Russia, even about the Arctic?

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as you know, the sanctions imposed against Russia by our Conservative government have been very effective, so effective in fact that the foreign minister of Russia is appealing now for the normalization of relations between Canada and Putin's regime.

Oral Questions

Could the Minister of Foreign Affairs tell us today if his government intends to drop sanctions against Russia in the middle of the night, as it did with Iran?

• (1445)

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is certainly able to keep the pressure on Russia and to engage Russia when it is in our common interest. We are able to do it because our foreign policy will stop being ideological and irrational, and will be effective for our allies and for Canadians.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, Dafna Meir, a 38-year-old Israeli mother, was stabbed to death in her home in front of her three children. This week, 23-year-old Shlomit Krigman was stabbed to death while visiting her grandparents.

The U.S. State Department has condemned the wave of deadly attacks against Israeli civilians, driven by the Palestinian leadership. However, yesterday, the Minister of Foreign Affairs said that a suggestion that he condemn the incitement was partisan politics.

Could he explain this unfortunate remark?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague misinterpreted what I said. I said the opposite. I said that we condemned the violence against Israeli people. We always will. To suggest that we are not doing it is partisan.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal delivered a historic ruling, finding that the federal government practised systematic discrimination against indigenous children. It is time to implement that ruling and rectify this injustice.

My question is simple and is for the Minister of Finance. Will the budget include the funding necessary to put an end to that discrimination?

[*English*]

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his tireless advocacy on behalf of his people, and all indigenous children in the country.

This ruling is really important because it brings Canadians with us to understand the injustice that has taken place over these years. Yes, we will make significant investments in the future budget to try to rectify this injustice.

* * *

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as Cindy Blackstock says, indigenous children have waited too long for justice in the country and they want action now.

Oral Questions

Unfortunately, the pattern of systemic discrimination continues to be the operating culture within various government departments today. For example, Cindy Blackstock has identified Michael Wernick as a key player in fighting her human rights case. He was also lambasted by a parliamentary committee for dragging his feet on the child welfare crisis.

For reconciliation to be real, action must be louder than words. What kind of message is the Prime Minister sending to indigenous families by appointing Mr. Wernick to oversee the entire civil service?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his work on behalf of indigenous people. However, he must understand that the primary goal of the public service in our country is loyal implementation. There is a new government here and the Clerk of the Privy Council is empowered to deliver the work that we promised in the past election, and he will do it.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the Liberals may believe, Alberta is facing an economic crisis. It is losing jobs at a rate we have not seen before or since, ironically, the Liberals introduced the national energy program in the 1980s.

When asked about these job losses, the member for Calgary Centre sounded like a Liberal from the 1980s. He said that the people he had spoken with felt “refreshed” with the Prime Minister’s failed approach. Refreshed is certainly not the feedback I am hearing from Albertans. They are not refreshed to be losing their jobs. They are not refreshed to be losing their homes.

Why is the only job that the minister seems to care about is his own?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know there are job losses across the country in the natural resource sector. We were in New Brunswick only last week where hundreds of jobs were lost in a potash mine because of commodity prices.

We understand that Alberta is very keen to see natural resources moved in a sustainable way. We can no longer talk about the economy without environmental sustainability. That is the economy of now. That is our way forward.

• (1450)

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government’s position on job losses in Alberta is pathetic. The most the Minister of Finance could say when he visited Calgary recently was that he had a heightened sense of concern about Albertans losing their jobs.

Yesterday, the Minister of Veterans Affairs said that Calgarians were “refreshed” with his government’s direction. Really? There are 100,000 lost jobs and people are losing their homes.

My constituents in Lakeland are resourceful, but they are not refreshed.

Was the minister serious? Does he actually think Albertans are happy with his government in charge?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that the change in oil prices has had a significant impact on Alberta. It has had a significant impact on other parts of the country as well.

We have started with a plan that is going to make a difference in the country. We started with tax reductions that are going to help nine million Canadians to be better off. We are going to move forward with infrastructure investments that are going to make a significant impact on growth in the country. We want to focus on things that can help in Alberta and in the rest of the country to improve our economy.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unemployment is skyrocketing in Alberta. In the riding of Red Deer—Lacombe, people are faced with the prospect of losing their homes and their life savings. Some of my constituents are desperate to put food on their table and to pay their mortgage. They do not want to be left out in the cold.

However, the Minister of Veterans Affairs yesterday callously referred to these as refreshing times. Does he think it is refreshing to lose one’s home in Alberta in January?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that the natural resource sector accounts for about 1.8 million jobs in Canada. It accounts for many jobs in Alberta, and many of those jobs have been lost. We recognize this is an extremely challenging situation.

We are working to put in our budget measures that will improve the situation in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Newfoundland and other parts across the country so we can deal with this enormous challenge.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every day the fine print of the Liberal platform becomes more and more devastating to Canada’s economy. We have recently heard announcements from CP and WestJet. The Liberal government’s silence on the job losses in Alberta and Saskatchewan and the resulting impact on the transportation sector is deafening.

Will the member for Wascana continue to remain silent or will he stand up and support western Canadian jobs?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are focused on how we can help Canadians across the country within a challenged global economy. We are particularly focused on how we can help those people in the parts of our country that are so deeply impacted by the change in global oil prices.

We are working diligently to figure out the priorities of Canadians so that in our budget we can address these issues by helping people in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Newfoundland, and across the country.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government has not engaged in any pre-budget consultations here in Parliament, as is usually the case.

Instead, it is using the Liberal Party website to consult people and, unintentionally I am sure, collect information that can be used for partisan fundraising. The economy has slowed down, more and more jobs are being lost, and 38% of people who pay into employment insurance do not have access to it.

Instead of looking out for itself, will the government help those in need immediately and create a universal 360-hour eligibility threshold for EI?

[English]

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this gives me an opportunity to talk about our government's plan to help Canadians in a situation that is very serious for those who are facing it, most acutely in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Newfoundland.

There are inherent barriers in the EI system that we promised to take care of and address immediately, and that will happen very soon.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want answers on timelines. If the Liberals were actually consulting with Canadians on the budget, they would know that they are hurting.

The economy is slowing, but only 38% of Canadians who are out of work are eligible for EI. Instead of speeches to millionaires in Switzerland, Canadians want to see real action in their own communities.

Will the government expand access to EI immediately by creating a universal threshold of 360 hours?

● (1455)

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have indicated to all Canadians that we are reviewing the EI system. It is inherently unfair. It penalizes, in particular, those re-entrants and new entrants into the EI system. It is our intention, as promised, to address it as soon as possible.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, by militarily invading and annexing Crimea, and continuously sending soldiers and lethal military equipment into the Donbass, the Kremlin has not only violated European borders, but has also broken all international agreements on the sanctity of borders.

Recently, the Prime Minister made clear Canada's position to Russia's president. Could the Minister of Foreign Affairs share with the House the government's position on Russia's continued illegal occupation of Ukrainian territory?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the travelling I have been planning for a while to Ukraine will be four days from now. I am so pleased to go to Ukraine to express to the Government of Ukraine the steadfast support of Canada for Ukraine, how much we deeply disagree with the invasion and interference of the Russian government in Ukraine, and also how much we will not tolerate from a Russian minister any insults against the community of Ukraine in Canada.

We owe so much to Ukrainian Canadians and we will always support them.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the United States Senate is holding a hearing entitled "Canada's Fast-Track Refugee Plan: Unanswered Questions and Implications for U. S. National Security". It is our understanding that government representatives may have received an invitation to participate in the hearing but have in fact declined.

Could the minister explain to Canadians why the Liberals would decline this opportunity to be transparent, open and accountable?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is transparent, open and accountable in this House. This is the Parliament of Canada and this is where we respond to the questions, like Canadian security.

We have put in place layers of security activity to ensure that our refugee initiative with respect to Syria can be successful. The program is working well and indeed it will result in something of which Canadians can be very proud.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am sure our allies to the south will find that answer very interesting.

I also find it interesting because I believe that my colleague, the former president of the Treasury Board, actually appeared at a Senate committee hearing to testify in June of this year. That begs this question. Since there is still time for the Canadian government to send a representative to this hearing, will the minister explain to Canadians this new precedent it is setting and what it is trying to hide from both Canadian citizens and our American allies?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely nothing to hide because we have completely briefed the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. ambassador to Canada, and there is a very open line of communication directly to the White House. They understand exactly the layers of security screening that are put in place, from the activity with the UNHCR through the personal interviews that are done to the collection of biometrics to the checking against international databases, to ensure this project is done safely and successfully, which is a very strong humanitarian credit to Canada.

*Oral Questions***IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP**

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, some Syrian refugees have been stuck in cramped temporary accommodations for weeks. They have said that there is hardly any communication from the government.

We are also hearing reports of low-income Canadians being asked to leave their housing to make room for the Syrian refugees.

Will the minister apologize to Canadians and refugees for his failure to provide long-term living solutions for Syrian refugees, because refugees are people, not a number on a scorecard?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member and Canadians that the vast majority of refugees are super happy to be in this country, as they have expressed to the media and to me.

Yes, in the course of accepting thousands of new Canadians everything will not be perfect at every instant and there are some issues in hotels, with which we are dealing. However, it is perfectly normal for refugees to spend some weeks in hotels before going on to their permanent accommodations. All of the workers, the Canadians, all levels of government, and all of the volunteers are doing fantastic work.

• (1500)

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship is on the record saying, “Are we treating Syrians differently than refugees from other parts of the world? Yes we are.”

Can the minister confirm that this is the government's policy and explain if being treated differently means being stuck in temporary cramped housing for weeks?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians across this land are welcoming with open arms and with open hearts the Syrian refugees.

They are proceeding quickly to their housing. Yes, they are spending some time in hotels. That is normal for the process. It is also the case that refugee applicants from other countries are proceeding as planned.

Canadians can be reassured that this operation is a great success, and we will soon have 25,000 new Canadians on our soil.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are proud of our public health care system.

A central principle of our public system is that people's access to health care does not depend on their ability to pay. However, while the Canada Health Act outlaws user fees, Saskatchewan is now allowing those who can afford it to get special access to private MRIs.

Why will the Minister of Health not act? Will she enforce the Canada Health Act in Saskatchewan and across the country to crack down on these private payments, yes or no?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to further inform the House about the excellent meetings that I had last week with the health ministers from all provinces and territories across the country.

Among the things we discussed was our commitment to the Canada Health Act. As the member opposite is aware, that act is one of the foundations of a system that we are proud of. One of the pieces of that, of which I am most proud, is the fact that we are determined to make sure that Canadians will always be able to access the appropriate care they require based on need, and not ability to pay. We will do all that is in our power to uphold that act.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we need more than just discussions; we need action to protect access to health care across the country. Thousands of Quebecers have denounced the legalization of ancillary fees in Quebec: \$300 for eye drops, \$500 for a colonoscopy, and so on. It is unacceptable that people's finances should determine their access to health care.

What action—I repeat, action—does the minister plan to take to ensure that all Quebecers have the same access to health care, regardless of their income?

[*English*]

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the member opposite is so committed to making sure that Canadians will have access to the care they need, when they need it, on the basis of that need. I will support her in that commitment.

One of the fundamental principles that I will go forward with in my work with my colleagues is to establish a strong relationship with them, which I am pleased to say I was able to do.

I will continue working with the health ministers across the country, including the health minister from Quebec, and from other provinces and territories, in order to address the concerns of Canadians.

* * *

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of questions for the Minister of Agriculture.

First, I wonder if the minister could confirm to the House that the Ethics Commissioner has cleared his chief of staff to serve in her new capacity. I also wonder if he could confirm to the House if his new chief of staff has gotten the RCMP security clearances necessary to do her job, yes or no.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my chief of staff is extremely qualified for the job and is dedicated to serve in the best interests of the entire agricultural sector and all Canadians.

She is following the guidelines laid out by the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner and will fully comply with any advice provided by the non-partisan commissioner.

•(1505)

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will take that as a no.

The second very straightforward question I will ask the Minister of Agriculture is if the minister is aware of any past criminal charges involving his chief of staff that may lead Canadians to believe that she is not suitable for the job that she is now tasked to do.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud that she has a strong agricultural background and is a pillar in her community and brings a deep commitment to agriculture. As all members know, all appropriate information will be publicly available on the Ethics Commissioner's website.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a Liberal candidate in Alberta said that pipelines make Canada America's dirty gas tank. That candidate is now the chief of staff to the Minister of Environment. Another Liberal candidate from Quebec wants Ontario to transition away from manufacturing. That candidate is the Prime Minister of Canada.

Why does the Liberal government oppose oil sands in the west, energy east, and manufacturing right here in Ontario?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we realize that a very strong natural resource sector is important to the future of the Canadian economy. We also have a mandate to make sure that those projects end up at tidewater and export markets. With the public confidence of Canadians through a robust environmental assessment process, that is a serious promise to Canadians that we intend to uphold.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my colleagues know, today is Bell Canada's Let's Talk Day. This initiative began six years ago to raise awareness about mental health. Canadians know that it is just as important to take care of our mental health as our physical health.

Can the Minister of Health give us an update on the government's commitment to improving Canadians' mental health?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a family doctor and the Minister of Health, I am committed to working with our partners to improve Canadians' mental health and make mental health services more accessible. Mental health is a priority for our government, and we will continue to invest to promote sound mental health and help prevent mental illness and suicide.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are still waiting for the Liberals to make good on the promises they made to veterans. At the same time, it is important to point out

Oral Questions

that the government will have to run annual deficits to pay for the new measures it has promised.

How does the Minister of Veterans Affairs intend to ensure the long-term viability of these promises when the government plans to run structural deficits?

[English]

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can say that I have an aggressive mandate from my Prime Minister in dealing with Veterans Affairs. We have 15 different commitments that we have made to veterans to see them get the care, compassion, and respect they deserve for serving our country, whether that is through more opportunities in the workforce, more opportunities for education, or more opportunities for their families to succeed. That is what we promised and that is what we are going to deliver.

* * *

STEEL INDUSTRY

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Ontario Court of Appeal just ruled that the secret sell-out deal signed by the Conservatives and U.S. Steel Canada Inc. can be released.

Steelworkers in the city of Hamilton have been fighting for years to unseal this deal, and with bankruptcy proceedings ongoing and the retirement security of 20,000 workers and pensioners at stake, it is more critical than ever.

Now that they cannot hide behind the courts, will the Prime Minister live up to the Liberal commitment to release the deal and finally stand up for workers and pensioners?

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is aware of the decision by the court that just came out yesterday morning. We are taking our time to study the decision, and we will be happy to follow the recommendations of the court.

* * *

•(1510)

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, non-profit organizations in our communities are already working on their summer programming and will soon be hiring employees for the summer period.

Can the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour confirm which programs will be available to non-profit organizations and small businesses?

*Routine Proceedings**[English]*

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to my hon. friend, the member for Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, I am proud to announce that of course we are in the process of increasing or ramping up the number of Canada student jobs. In fact, they are available for non-profits and small business. Small business has in fact been prioritized, which is unusual, as one of the national priorities in the Canada summer jobs program. Please go out and hire young people and give them the work experience they need.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I first want to thank the minister for wishing me a happy 39th birthday yesterday. I was, however, less happy with her response to my question as to why the government will not hold a referendum. She said the conversation is “more complex than a simple yes or no answer”. The government can characterize its consultation process any way it wants, but when the process is over, the government has to write a law for its new electoral system.

Let me ask the minister now a question that really can be answered with a yes or a no. Will she submit that law to Canadians in a referendum, yes or no?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am certainly glad that the member opposite was born and I would like to assure him that I will be working hard with my colleague, the government House leader, to convene a parliamentary committee to examine a wide range of electoral reform options, and it is not wise to predetermine the outcome of that consultation process.

* * *

*[Translation]***AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

Mr. Simon Marciel (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we recently learned that last year alone 257 Quebec dairy farms were forced to shutter their operations. Two hundred and fifty-seven. That is a lot of farms. We are talking about families, men and women who are essential to the development of the regions. Our dairy producers need federal support now.

Will the minister do something right now about rising imports of milk protein?

[English]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course, that any farms are closed for financial reasons is most unfortunate, but there has been a lot of amalgamation. I can assure my hon. colleague and the House that this government fully supports supply management.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of Mr. Achim Steiner, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: I would also like to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Daryl Reid, Speaker of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, and the Hon. David Laxton, Speaker of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: I would also like to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Paula Biggar, Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy for Prince Edward Island, and the Hon. Geoff MacLellan, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal for Nova Scotia.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: Lastly, I wish to draw the attention of the House to the presence in the gallery of Canadian journalist, Mr. Mohamed Fahmy, who recently returned to Canada from Egypt.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

● (1515)

*[Translation]***THE ENVIRONMENT**

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in this House today to report on the historic agreement that was reached by more than 195 countries at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris this past December.

I would like to start with a tribute to a great Canadian, Maurice Strong, who passed away three days before the start of COP21. Maurice Strong had a big impact on international environmental policy. He did not see borders in the world. He saw a world in which resources were the legacy of all humanity. His leadership, determination and vision helped guide and inspire us while we were in Paris.

[English]

For the first time ever in history, all of the world's major economies, both developed and developing, acknowledged the threat posed by climate change. One hundred and ninety-five countries reached an ambitious and balanced agreement to fight climate change. This was the first time that all countries pledged to do their part to address climate change.

This agreement is a significant step forward. Canadians can be very proud of the instrumental role Canada played in reaching this historic climate agreement.

Routine Proceedings

[*Translation*]

Climate change is real, climate change is happening now, and it is the challenge of our generation. Canadians know this. Across our country Canadians can see the real impacts of climate change: from forest fires in British Columbia, to flooding in Alberta, to coastal erosion on Prince Edward Island, to melting ice in the north. The signs are there. This is real. Warmer winters are limiting access to winter roads, which isolates a number of communities and negatively affects their quality of life. Wildlife habits are changing, which has a big impact on the traditional ways of life of hunters. This is why our government is determined to address this challenge through concrete actions here at home.

In Paris, Canada presented a united front and demonstrated a willingness to move forward and to be an active, global leader in tackling climate change. Indeed, our delegation in Paris included provincial and territorial premiers, mayors, and indigenous leaders. It also included young Canadians, environmental NGOs, entrepreneurs, and investors. Our delegation included members from both sides of this House. We must now use the spirit of co-operation to move forward with our commitments to fight climate change.

We now have the incredible opportunity to build a more sustainable economy. Fighting climate change is not only about reducing carbon emissions, it is also about building the clean economy of the future. We must now seize this opportunity.

● (1520)

[*English*]

We can and we will fight climate change without sacrificing growth and prosperity. Our global push toward a low-carbon economy will produce new innovations and new companies, new growth and new prosperity.

Canada is blessed with abundant invaluable natural resources. From energy and metals to minerals and forests, our natural resources are and will always be vital to Canada's economy.

In the 21st century, the future of our economy and of our prosperity must be built on the principle that the economy and the environment go hand in hand.

We are also blessed with great minds and tremendous motivation to do better, to lead the world with new and innovative thinking. The more we develop technology and demonstrate ingenuity in the natural resources sector, the more diverse and stable our economy will be. Now is the time to innovate, to invest and to grow our communities in ways that help both current and future generations of Canadians, while tackling pollution.

The world economies are shifting toward cleaner more sustainable growth and Canada must keep up to stay competitive on the world stage. There is a significant potential market to export Canadian clean technology and knowledge, and the demand will only increase. In India alone, clean growth will require investments of \$2.5 trillion.

Indeed, there are huge opportunities to be harnessed. This is why the Prime Minister and I and other colleagues were at the World Economic Forum last week, promoting Canada and Canadian businesses and working hard to attract new investments to Canada.

The Government of Canada will double its investment in clean technology over the next five years. These strategic investments will help us to both tackle climate change and create good, middle-class jobs. By investing in green infrastructure projects, we will grow our economy in a sustainable way, while protecting our communities from the worst impacts of climate change.

We have high ambitions for Canada and much work needs to be done. I am, however, extremely encouraged by the leadership of our provinces and territories. In Canada, they have been at the forefront of the fight against climate change and moving forward, our actions will build on provincial initiatives.

The federal government is now determined to work in close collaboration with our provinces and territories as well as our indigenous peoples. Canadians voted for a government that understands that the economy and the environment go hand in hand. In 2016, that is a responsible thing to do and the only way we will ensure both our collective prosperity and our future.

● (1525)

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for her comments on the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris. It is my first opportunity to welcome her to her job and I do wish her well.

I am pleased to note that the new government continues to use the nationally determined contributions set by our Conservative government, namely a 30% reduction of GHG emissions over 2005 levels by the year 2030. These targets are ambitious and much work needs to be done in order to meet them within the required time frame.

That said, and despite the language of inclusivity and positivity infused throughout the minister's speech, I would like to take this opportunity to remind her of some of the very real challenges she faces.

The minister, of course, is right to point out that Canadians do experience the impacts of climate change, especially right here in Canada and especially in northern communities.

That is exactly why we are concerned that one of the very first actions of the government after the election was to drop a bombshell on Canadians.

To the surprise of everyone, the Prime Minister announced, without warning or consultation, that he was spending more than \$2 billion of additional taxpayers' money on climate change initiatives not within Canada but outside Canada in foreign countries. Over \$2 billion.

Routine Proceedings

This is money that is being spent abroad without a climate change plan, without a clear idea of who will receive the money and without any assurance the money will be spent as intended. What happened to the minister's commitment to "Address this challenge through concrete actions here at home"?

I want to be clear that we understand Canada's responsibility to help the less fortunate countries of our world and Canada has always done its part. However, the government is sending billions of dollars to the United Nations and other agencies without consulting Canadians, without clear oversight, and without effective control over how the money will be spent. Where is the transparency the Prime Minister and his government were boasting about?

It is our view that the government's priorities right now should be to invest in Canada first under a clear defensible plan to address our own environmental challenges before throwing more money at unelected and often unaccountable agencies outside of Canada. Canadians deserve better.

The minister rightly pointed to last month's Speech from the Throne which stated that protecting the environment and growing the economy go hand in hand. But what she failed to repeat was the actual promise in the text, namely, "Working together, the Government will continue to provide leadership as Canada works toward putting a price on carbon".

While the minister used today's statement to proudly boast of her government's wild spending on foreign green initiatives, I would have hoped that she would have also addressed the actual elephant in the room and that is to say, what additional burden does she intend to place on Canadian consumers and businesses?

What additional price does she intend to place on carbon? What devastation will she wreak upon hard-working Canadian families at a time when our economy is facing such significant headwinds? How many more Canadians will lose their jobs because of her policies? Does she not realize the dire straits facing our energy sector?

Those are the questions the minister refused to answer today. Where is the leadership and where is the transparency? With a Liberal government which speaks so fervently about transparency and inclusivity, I am perplexed that these fundamental policy questions were not even addressed today.

Yes, we must, as the minister states, use a spirit of co-operation to fight climate change, but we cannot very well co-operate if she spends billions of taxpayers' money without warning, without consultation, and when she fails to address the most serious environmental policy proposals contained in the government's Speech from the Throne, including the plan to price carbon.

The minister also failed to address any of the work being undertaken with our North American counterparts. I have applauded the minister for making co-operation with our American and Mexican friends a priority as we seek to align our climate change policies with those of our North American partners. This was also the policy of the previous government, recognizing that Canada's place and competitiveness within the North American production platform can only be maintained if our climate initiatives are aligned with these partners.

Could the minister not have used this opportunity to share with us the progress being made on joint regulatory initiatives? Were those initiatives not discussed at COP21 in Paris when the Prime Minister wined and dined almost 400 Canadian delegates on the taxpayers' dime?

● (1530)

Were these joint North American initiatives not discussed at Davos, where the Prime Minister was hobnobbing with the International jet set? While the Prime Minister used his time in Davos to cheekily promote Canadian resourcefulness, he showed utter contempt for our resource sector by glibly disparaging and dismissing the critical role that oil, gas, and mining play in supporting the Canadian way of life.

Canada is, as the minister stated, blessed with great minds and tremendous motivation. However, let us not forget that it is natural resources that pay for our education, our health, and our high standard of living. Canada must engage in the global economy, we all understand that, ever finding new ways to assure our long-term prosperity. Yes, we must always diversify and promote our knowledge advantage, as well as the Canada brand, but we must never, ever trade our birthright, our competitive advantage in the resource sector, for misguided and uninformed sound bites.

I want to remind the minister that transparency and accountability require more than just vague promises of consultations. They require clear understanding of the impact that carbon pricing policies have on consumers, small and medium-sized businesses, and on hard-working Canadian families. They require a clear understanding that Canadians expect their government to invest first here in Canada before dishing out taxpayers' money abroad.

Transparency and accountability require a clear plan for Canadians to review before that plan is implemented. Sadly, we have yet to see the plan and sadly, we have heard nothing new in the minister's comments today.

We are prepared to work with the government to find that balance between our economy and protecting our environment for future generations. That offer still stands.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my esteemed colleagues.

First, I would like to sincerely thank the minister and her team for the work that was done in Paris with the rest of the world. I am sure that that important work was difficult at times and very exhausting.

[*English*]

I would like to start by setting the context of where we are headed in this next, hopefully new, conversation around climate change in this country by suggesting that there are three factors at play.

Routine Proceedings

One, for the minister and her government, the bar is set incredibly low based on the previous government's inaction, denial, delay, and dithering on doing anything about climate change. Therefore, that is helpful, because almost anything seems like something.

Two, I would suggest that the expectations of Canadians are quite high. After so many years of failed attempts to address climate change, Canadians are now looking to the new government for real steps, concrete action, and resolution of this constant myth of the economy versus the environment.

Three, I would suggest that the need to be effective and satisfy our commitments to the world has never been greater. As we have known for many years, the costs of dealing with climate change only go up the further we delay and the longer we wait to act.

It is important to recognize what future steps we must take by looking somewhat to the past. Canadian governments have failed on two significant fronts with respect to climate change.

The initial failure was to over-promise and under-deliver. Commitments were made to the world at Kyoto by a previous Liberal government with no real plan or intention to follow through on them. The results were quite demonstrative. A commitment to go below 6% of 1990 levels resulted in an increase of more than 30% of our levels. By anybody's measure, that is not success.

This should have been a great teacher to the government that came forward, but unfortunately, as the previous government took office in 2006, we saw a government decide to at first suggest that there was no problem at all, that climate change was a myth and a socialist scheme designed by the UN. It was wonderful to hear the Conservatives actually quoting the UN earlier today and yesterday. However, that was a true missed opportunity. We now see an economy suffering greatly by not having much in the way of alternatives to the energy sector, and not having much in the way of answering for the half a million manufacturing jobs that we have lost in this country over the last nine years.

However, it is not right for us to simply look back at what could have been. We have to look forward. Voters, clearly in the last election on October 19, voted for change.

What is different, a skeptical Canadian voter could say, about this agreement? What is different than the previous efforts at the United Nations? What is different by previous efforts of previous governments?

One would suggest that the goal has been placed quite ambitiously. Initially, the Canadian government came into this conference with a 2°C ambition, to keep global temperatures from rising above that, but left the conference committing to 1.5°C, which is very ambitious by anybody's standard.

It is important to note that when the world had gathered together and signed this treaty, all showed up with various levels of commitment, including Canada. The current Liberal government took the previous Conservative government's goals to Paris, not having established new targets, and said that was the floor but it would get beyond that.

I will quote the eminent Dale Marshall, who said:

Current pledges made by countries to reduce emissions are too weak to stay below the safe 1.5 degree warming limit. We are in great danger of being locked into dangerous climate change, as the Paris agreement has no requirement for these commitments to be reviewed or strengthened in the near future.

The concern, if we pull away from the minister's particular comments, is that the world's commitments right now, that we signed onto in Paris, lead to a 2.7°C warming of the earth's atmosphere, which every climate scientist on the planet will tell us would be disastrous for our environment and our economy. Clearly, we need to do more.

We also know that the key elements of success from those countries that have gone ahead and actually followed through on their commitments are twofold. One is that it actually reduces their climate impact on the planet, and also improves the strength and diversity of their economy. It is the true win-win, which is so rare in politics.

• (1535)

I want to take one small moment to compare the current commitments from the government toward those solutions. Oftentimes, the struggle with talking about climate change is that it is about parts per million, reducing carbon impact, and, as my Conservative colleague just framed the conversation, it is somehow about pain and sacrifice, as opposed to the opportunity that this challenge offers us to have a cleaner, greener, more efficient economy.

Often, our friends in Norway are held out. They have an \$8-billion commitment over the next number of years, which works out to about \$400 per person in that country. The recent announcement by the minister of Canada's commitment of \$100 million over five years is \$1.61 per person. Therefore, Norway's effort at \$400 and Canada's effort at \$1.61 leave lots of room for more ambition, more hope, more hard work, more energy into the green energy solutions that we need. Truly, this is an opportunity we must seize. A lot of the decisions that we will be making as a Parliament in the coming months will not impact on us, but, in fact, on future generations.

If we are to hold sacred that trust that the voters have placed in us to do the right thing, to improve our economy, and to answer our commitments not just to the world but to those future generations, we must strengthen the commitments made by the government to this point. We must gather the forces of our entrepreneurial activity and energy in this country and finally give Canadians that sense of hope that the world can respect what Canada's commitment means, that when we say we are going to do something, we do it, and we follow through with the energy and enthusiasm Canadians are known for.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Montcalm on a point of order.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Mr. Speaker, I seek the consent of the House for the Bloc Québécois environment critic, the member for Repentigny, to be given two minutes to reply.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Address

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

● (1540)

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, two reports from the delegation of the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association respecting its participation at the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association in Paris, France, on July 1, 2015, and at the 43rd annual meeting held in Paris and Nord-Pas-de-Calais, France, from May 18 to 22, 2015.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL ANTHEM ACT

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.) (via text-to-speech software) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-210, An Act to amend the National Anthem Act (gender).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to introduce this bill, seconded by my colleague, the hon. member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill. I am quite proud of her.

On September 22, 2014, I introduced in this House the same bill, which advocates a simple change in the English lyrics of our national anthem. It proposes that “True patriot love in all thy sons command” become “True patriot love in all of us command”, therefore replacing only two words, “thy sons”, with “of us”. This change would render the anthem gender neutral.

Although my bill was defeated in the last Parliament, the drive to make *O Canada* more inclusive has been advanced. Members from all parties supported my bill in what was the first vote on such an initiative in the House of Commons.

I commissioned an opinion poll on this issue which showed solid support for this initiative: a total of 58% supported this measure and only 19% disagreed.

I look forward to engaging with my colleagues as we address this important matter once again.

By the way, it is 2016.

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

* * *

PETITIONS**POVERTY**

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

The first petition is about a national anti-poverty plan brought forward by my constituents. It calls on the Government of Canada to work with the provinces and territories to implement an anti-poverty plan based on human rights that focuses on income security, housing and homelessness, health, food security, early childhood education and care, and jobs and employment and to work with partners to get

measurable goals, timelines, indicators of progress, and ongoing improvement for the anti-poverty plan and underlying strategies.

● (1545)

FALUN GONG

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is based on Falun Gong, which is a traditional Chinese spiritual discipline.

The petitioners are calling for the Government of Canada to pass a resolution to stop the Chinese communist party's crime of systematically murdering Falun Gong practitioners for their organs and to publicly call for an end to the persecution of Falun Gong in China.

[Translation]

SOCIAL HOUSING

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by 271 people from several Canadian provinces who want the government to maintain funding for social housing. Funding for social housing also means housing subsidies, which many people need.

I would like to remind the House that less than a month ago, at the end of 2015, 25,000 housing subsidies across Canada, including 5,200 in Quebec, disappeared because agreements expired. Many agreements have expired, and we simply cannot lose that much social housing.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

[English]

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.

The Address

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of the ministerial statements, government orders will be extended by 21 minutes.

The hon. member for Manicouagan has three minutes remaining for her speech.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today I will continue with my reply to the Speech from the Throne, which I began yesterday. I mentioned that the word “region” was missing from the speech. Unfortunately, when I mentioned the White Trail, which is a reality for thousands of people in my riding, I heard barely stifled laughter coming from the government ranks. In these circumstances, namely here in the House, that laughter could be considered obscene.

Perhaps I should redouble my efforts because that shows that people are uncomfortable with the word “region”, which does not seem to be popular. Should we be laughing about having to travel hundreds of kilometres by snowmobile over snow or ice for lack of a Trans-Canada highway? Should we be laughing about women who put up with violence because in the villages where they live, such as Fermont, there is not enough housing for them to live on their own, and therefore they have to have another spouse in order to have another house?

I would like to mention seasonal workers, because we will have to talk about them when we deal with employment insurance reform. A threshold of 360 hours is not enough for these workers, who live a different reality.

We must not forget the aboriginal children who were taken away by plane from the lower north shore and disappeared. I would like to remind members that there is no road, only the White Trail. I could also talk about rabbit snares or eating seal meat. Why not?

My region, the north shore of Quebec, is not something out of a fairy tale. It is a real place. Mocking an MP who is giving a speech is the same as mocking her voters, and that weakens democracy.

Now that I have dealt with the matter of this idle laughter that serves no purpose other than highlighting the division between rural and urban communities and, in my humble opinion, is a discredit to certain MPs, I respectfully submit that perhaps now we can act like members of Parliament and draw the government's attention to how the regions see certain aspects of the Speech from the Throne.

I used the word “region”, but I will also add the word “colony”. It is often said that we are in the 21st century. However, it seems to me that, although we are in a post-colonial era, the regions are still seen as colonies. We need to justify why we live in ridings that are the size of actual countries. We need to justify why we want to live there, and this goes beyond making a living from the land, sea, and forest. It also means ensuring the social, cultural and economic development, that is to say the human development, of the area.

The fact that the government is so out of touch with the regions shows its disregard for the people who choose to live there even though they have no movie theatres or fusion cuisine. If we really want to talk about economic development, then the government needs to stop thinking of the regions as nothing more than a huge

store of resources that it can shamelessly plunder at any time. It needs to get out of its comfort zone, create, and take risks—

• (1550)

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for standing up for the regions. I want to mention my own region, Salaberry—Suroît, which is also struggling, especially when it comes to fighting poverty and homelessness. Our region is quite underprivileged.

L'Antichambre is an organization in my riding that provides social intervention and housing services to young people aged 12 to 17. They do prevention work with young people who have family problems and who are at risk of running away, becoming homeless, or being thrown out of their home.

This organization does not fall under a specific category at the federal level. Since it is a youth organization that does not provide permanent or long-term housing, it does not receive funds through the homelessness partnering strategy.

Does my colleague agree that the federal government should study this issue and set aside funding to help young people deal with these issues, especially in the regions, where poverty is a big problem?

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Mr. Speaker, I will try to connect the question from my colleague from Salaberry—Suroît to what I was saying earlier.

Obviously, I support action to improve living conditions for young people. As for the regions, I want to give a little perspective. I am talking about a region that is 10 hours from Montreal. I was not looking for pity, but rather I wanted to point out that when a community like mine does not have a road, the situation is not the same as being 45 minutes from Montreal.

In conclusion, I hope that the omissions in the throne speech did not mean that the regions have been forgotten, but rather that the government is simply taking time to consider how much help is needed and how to provide it.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member's comments are just not true. When we look at the infrastructure in communities of all sizes, the Liberal government is investing more in Canada's infrastructure than any prior government. We are talking about billions of dollars. It is a huge amount of money and investment in our infrastructure. The system will be so much better once we start to see that money flow into construction, creating jobs and opportunities, not to mention the sheer economic positive impact of having more modern infrastructure.

I am wondering if the member could provide comment as to how she believes the infrastructure program that will be taking place in the province of Quebec could benefit all Quebecers.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague opposite for his question. He wants to know what would be relevant to the people of Quebec in terms of infrastructure programs.

The Address

When I brought up the issue of port infrastructure, for example, I practised some restraint and spoke only about Manicouagan, which represents perhaps half of Quebec. The wharves along the St. Lawrence seaway, for instance, are very important to us.

There is also the issue of airports, since there are many regions. Actually, speaking of Quebec, eastern Quebec covers half of the province. There is also the issue of the highway. This is 2016, and the Trans-Canada Highway still does not go through Labrador. People who live there are stuck using a dangerous highway to travel outside their region. This program could be very beneficial for Quebec and could even be historic.

• (1555)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time this afternoon with the hon. member for Edmonton West.

It gives me great pleasure to speak for the first time in this place since my election in October. I want to personally thank my family, my wife of 38 years, Ann, my daughter Courtney, and my son Geoff. They all worked hard on my campaign. I should add that our daughter delivered our first grandchild, a girl called Avery, during the election, so we did have a bit of a hiccup. As all members know, we all need support from home, and I certainly received it during the 78-day campaign.

I would also like to thank my campaign team as it put in, like many others around this place, many hours to ensure that this moment could happen here today.

I have spent my entire life serving the public. I was a sports broadcaster in the city of Saskatoon for nearly 40 years. That has helped me in the transition to becoming an effective member of Parliament. I have spent many years on non-profit boards over the years, like KidSport and the YMCA, along with Sport Tourism. I have been involved in a number of fundraising agencies and also served on a number of provincial and national sports governing bodies in the country.

For the last nine and a half years I have served as trustee for the Saskatoon Board of Education. It is the largest school division in the province, serving over 25,000 students. I was also elected as the urban public representative on the Saskatchewan School Board's executive. That represents cities like Saskatoon, Regina and Lloydminster.

As we all know, education is changing. This past year our school division signed an historical partnership with the Whitecap Dakota First Nation. Teachers from our school division are working on the reserve, following the Saskatchewan curriculum, which supports the academic growth of students. It was also sponsored in part by our federal government. While students stay on the reserve in the learning years, they will transfer to the city for the middle years to continue their education. In fact, a new school is currently being built in my riding and will welcome these students from the reserve in 2017.

My riding of Saskatoon—Grasswood is about 93% urban, which is the city of Saskatoon, and roughly 7% rural. The south portion of

the riding is the R.M. of Corman Park. It is the home of diverse farming, businesses and acreages.

Saskatoon—Grasswood has experienced tremendous growth over a number of years, maybe the most in the province of Saskatchewan. Two new massive subdivisions, Stonebridge and Rosewood, have been built. The riding has become a strong economic engine for the city, with a population now of roughly 250,000.

Infrastructure for growing communities is always a top priority. The previous government met those challenges with the construction of the south bridge connecting our community east and west. Over \$90 million of federal infrastructure money was provided for this project. The south bridge project was talked about in our city for nearly 100 years. When we have the South Saskatchewan River flowing through our city, bridges and roads are needed, and more roads and more bridges will be needed.

The previous federal government worked well with our city preparing for the future, a future that will commit over \$57 million to the north commuter parkway bridge. I might also add that our previous government, through the P3 fund, committed another \$43 million to the new civic operations centre, which is currently being built in the city of Saskatoon.

The federal gas tax fund has been a winner in the province of Saskatchewan and the city of Saskatoon. It has committed over \$12 million to the city each and every year since 2011.

Saskatoon has been known as the “hub city”. It is roughly situated about halfway through the province. It is very important for the lucrative resource sector of potash, uranium, oil and gas, forestry, plus the agriculture community that surrounds the city of Saskatoon.

• (1600)

Manufacturing is a big part of employment, supplying the necessary equipment to the mines and the farming community. The throne speech, though, said nothing about agriculture.

I recently attended the crop production show at Prairieland Park. It is the largest winter agricultural event in the province of Saskatchewan. There was little optimism directed toward the federal government because of no mention of agriculture in the Speech from the Throne. Companies like PotashCorp, headquartered in Saskatoon, look for signals and directions from the federal government. Since there was no mention of agriculture, it came as no surprise whatsoever when the company announced the closure of its mine in New Brunswick earlier this month, putting over 400 people out of work.

Saskatoon—Grasswood has the highest number of seniors in the province. During the election we had many meetings with seniors groups. They were excited about the proposed increase in the tax-free savings account. Seniors enjoyed the benefit of income splitting, two very good innovations from the former government. Unfortunately, the Speech from the Throne offered very little to my constituents, the seniors of Saskatoon—Grasswood.

The Address

Our riding has welcomed immigrants, along with refugees, with open arms. Our neighbourhoods have certainly changed over the years. In fact, we have many Muslims in our riding. They provided huge support for myself and our campaign team, along with our party and the riding. Also, the Ahmadiyya Muslim group are currently building a new mosque right in the riding of Saskatoon—Grasswood.

I should add that our riding is also the home of the Western Development Museum. Every summer, we have what is called “Heritage Days” for the public to gain a better understanding of what our ancestors had to go through. I am honoured to be the deputy critic for Canadian Heritage.

We are anxious also to see how the Canada 150 fund is rolled out, as we celebrate Canada's 150th birthday in the year of 2017. Our government committed \$500,000 for playground structure upgrades, and another \$300,000 to help support the White Buffalo Youth Lodge. The previous government played a very important part in our heritage in the city and the province. In fact, we are currently building a new art gallery in Saskatoon in partnership with the province, the city and the community stakeholders; \$13 million from the building Canada fund investments have gone into this project, which will open very soon.

Finally, we all want to live healthy lifestyles. Since I was in sports most of my life, I would be remiss if I did not mention that Saskatoon—Grasswood is the home of five golf courses. We are home to a curling rink, a swimming facility and also two privately run indoor skating facilities, including one that is almost fully dedicated to seniors 50 and over to play hockey when they wish. We, too, have many ball fields in the riding of Saskatoon—Grasswood. We hope that in the future a winter recreation site at Diefenbaker Park will adorn the banks of the South Saskatchewan in the city of Saskatoon.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my friend on his election, and also on his new granddaughter.

As I listened to the speech of the member, it occurred to me that infrastructure played a very important role in the city, as it does across the country.

I would like to get a sense from him as to how the \$60 billion infrastructure fund that our government has proposed will assist his riding, and the important infrastructure needs that he talked about, particularly the arena. How will this fund assist him in applying and developing very needed infrastructure, not just in Saskatoon but elsewhere?

• (1605)

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member and congratulate him on his election.

Infrastructure is very important. We have seen that. However, with infrastructure, we can throw money at projects all we want, but there has to be a lot of planning that takes place. I think in the city of Saskatoon, in the province of Saskatchewan, and like everywhere in the country, planning has to happen. There is a plan, then that plan is executed.

Something we do not often talk about in government is that we have to debrief after projects are done, after we have progressed through them. Sometimes we do not do that in government. We just throw money at a certain project and walk away. We never ask a question like what we could have done differently, or what we could perhaps do differently down the road to help a new project.

Infrastructure, first and foremost, in every part of our country, is most important. We welcome the infrastructure money coming forward. We are concerned a bit about shovel ready because it takes time to plan, but certainly, the Liberal throne speech mentions a lot of money coming forward for infrastructure. We are all excited about this and we want to see how that is rolled out.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for Saskatoon—Grasswood on his first speech in the House. I appreciate the work he has done around aboriginal youth and education in his riding.

Yesterday, we heard about the results of the tribunal, identifying that Canada had actively discriminated against children on reserves. Will the member stand with me for the immediate boost of funding for children's services on reserve?

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Mr. Speaker, we all know in the House what happened in my province in the last week. La Loche, Saskatchewan and the whole country were deeply by the loss of lives of the four people.

Partnerships are so important. We partnered with the Whitecap Dakota First Nation on education. We reached out to it and it was so thrilling to have Chief Darcy Bear reach back and say “yes”, that there was a desperate need in education on his reserve. Whitecap Dakota then worked with the former federal government. It had a plan. It took over two years to educate the federal government on what was needed. As we know, education is a federal responsibility.

What has happened in the last seven to ten days is sobering for all MPs in the House of Commons. Unfortunately, many of the reserves are out of reach, as has been said in the last week about La Loche, Saskatchewan. We need to reach out to those communities.

The human rights tribunal announcement yesterday by chair, Cindy Blackstock, was a step forward. I think all MPs will welcome a change going forward.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your appointment.

I am honoured and privileged to rise in the House for my first time to speak and represent the great people of Edmonton West. The last election was a long and spirited one, with a tremendous slate of candidates in Edmonton West. Each candidate gave it his or her all and worked tirelessly to meet constituents and understand their concerns.

On behalf of the constituents of Edmonton West, I would like to congratulate both Heather MacKenzie and Karen Leibovici on their campaigns and to thank them for putting their names forward for democracy.

The Address

I would like to take this time as well to thank my dedicated team of hard-working volunteers. Throughout the winter, spring, summer, and fall, from minus 35° to plus 35°, they joined me in going door to door in communities throughout the riding, speaking to constituents and building relationships.

Speaking of relationships, I would like to give thanks to my loving wife, Sasha, and my two amazing sons, Jensen and Parker. Their love and support guided me throughout this amazing journey. Without them I would not be standing here today. I give a special thanks to my son Jensen who, at just 16 years of age, knocked on over 3,000 doors by himself, often educating people of the benefits of Adam Smith's invisible hand for the economy.

They say that our role models are the ones who shape us, who help us become the people we are. I am one of the lucky few who have been able to meet with their role model and develop a friendship with him. That role model is a former member of the House and former colleague of many of us sitting here. That role model is none other than Laurie Hawn.

As the member of Parliament for Edmonton Centre, part of which became Edmonton West with boundary redrawing, Mr. Hawn worked selflessly for the constituents he served. He never took them for granted and always went the extra mile to accommodate their needs and wants.

If there is one thing that Mr. Hawn taught me it is this: regardless of our political stripes we must always remember that the job of a member of Parliament is to serve constituents. It is not about political bickering, but about providing constituents with the service they deserve.

For the role of MP there is no better moral compass than Laurie Hawn. If we find ourselves saying that we have checked with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner who has said that it is okay, then we probably know it is not okay. I always say WWLD, what would Laurie do.

That is what I aim to do as a newly elected member of Parliament. I plan on serving the great people of Edmonton West because, after all, as a public servant, it is what we are expected to do.

I am most fortunate to have inherited part of the riding of Edmonton—Spruce Grove, served so ably by a mentor to me and so many Conservatives inside and outside the House, namely, the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

The riding of Edmonton West is also famous for two great wonders of the world, West Edmonton Mall and my dear friend, Ted Byfield, godfather of the Conservative movement in Canada. I am proud to represent both.

Upon assuming the position of MP for Edmonton West, I took a look back at the history of this great riding. The individuals who represented Edmonton West have always put the public before themselves. The hon. Lieutenant Colonel Marcel Lambert, for example, served the constituents of Edmonton West with dignity and respect. Serving as a Conservative in the House for 27 years, including time as Speaker of the House, Mr. Lambert understood the importance of public service and never shied away from hard work.

As his title indicates, not only was he honourable in his capacity in the House, but also honourable and dedicated to serving his country on the battlefield. Mr. Lambert served as a tank commander in the 14th armoured regiment, the Calgary Regiment, during World War II, seeing action on the beaches of Dieppe, where he was captured, spending the next three years of his life as a prisoner of war. Mr. Lambert is an inspiration to me, and I proudly follow in his footsteps of serving the constituents of Edmonton West.

Mr. Speaker, if I may suggest, you should follow your predecessor, Lieutenant Colonel Lambert's lead, and maybe get a tank of your own to help with folks in the House.

I am truly humbled to serve the great people of Edmonton West as their member of Parliament. They are a hard-working and entrepreneurial group of Canadians from a diverse field of professional backgrounds. Not only do they come from different industries, they come from many different regions of the country and the world.

Edmonton West boasts not only West Edmonton Mall but also a thriving tourism sector with many great hotels, restaurants, and attractions, including the best part of the Edmonton River Valley, the largest urban park in Canada.

It is home to Finning Canada, and many companies big and small that are leaders in the energy services industry.

It is home to some of the hardest working people and entrepreneurs in Canada, giving it one of the highest average incomes in the country and allowing it to be the fastest growing city year after year.

● (1610)

It is home to a diverse group of places of worship, including Edmonton's largest synagogue, where Rabbi Daniel Friedman, a personal friend of mine and one of the leaders of Canada's National Holocaust Memorial, hails. There is a large mosque and many churches of Christian faith, including my own, the Annunciation Catholic church. I am proud to have friends at many of these institutions, and equally proud of the interfaith work they do together for the betterment of Edmontonians.

That is the beauty of Edmonton and Alberta. Canadians from coast to coast to coast look to it as a beacon of hope and the land of opportunity.

“Opportunity” is a word I would like to focus on. What exactly does opportunity mean? To me, opportunity means having the freedom to accomplish all that one has ever dreamed of. It means having options available for one to succeed. Opportunity means having a good-paying job, economic stability, and the hope that tomorrow will always bring better things. Unfortunately, the Speech from the Throne by the newly minted government lacks opportunity. At a time when the world economy is fragile and families are struggling, the government appears to have its priorities not on jobs and the economy but on rhetoric and the legalization of marijuana.

The Address

The energy sector has been the greatest source of wealth creation across Canada and yet does not merit a mention in the throne speech. It is the largest employer of first nation people in Canada and yet does not merit a mention in the throne speech. It is Canada's biggest export to the world's markets and yet—everyone is sensing a trend, I am sure—does not merit a mention in the throne speech. However, marijuana does. I know that pot has been a focus for the Liberal Party both during the election and beforehand, but it should not be the focus of the government's agenda. The throne speech offers empty platitudes, not opportunity for Canada.

The government agenda is in stark contrast to the one implemented by the Conservatives. Under their leadership, Canada had opportunity. As a nation, we saw massive growth in our output. We saw a strengthening of our middle class, which achieved the distinction of becoming the world's richest middle class. We saw record gains in our nation's production of goods and services produced for international markets, something that is key in today's world economy. We saw a number of historic free trade agreements. All of these things were accomplished under the Conservatives' time in government and provided Canada and Canadians with opportunity. That now has been snatched away by the Liberal government.

One indicator of this unfortunate turn of events can be seen in our own economic outlook. Conservatives left the government with a \$1.9 billion surplus in October, \$600 million in October alone, and now we are looking at a \$3 billion deficit. Another alarming note with regard to opportunity can be seen in my own province of Alberta. We used to have a “we can make it happen” attitude and now we lack optimism, with opportunity seeping out.

Under the current government, the energy sector, the single largest job-creating sector in the province of Alberta, is looking elsewhere for opportunity. Because of the positions the government is taking, companies are feeling less confident of their future in Alberta. With vague language like “new environmental assessment processes”, companies are thinking twice about investing in Canada. The opposition to pipelines like energy east means that the days of a thriving energy sector in Canada are numbered. The investment dollars that have fled Alberta alone in the last six months dwarf infrastructure money planned for the entire country.

The new government, in its throne speech, stated that it wants to “encourage economic growth”, but rather than encouraging such growth, it is doing the opposite. In fact, investment in Canada is falling at a dramatic rate and investments previously committed to this country are now fleeing our borders. All of this is to say that there is zero opportunity contained in the Speech from the Throne.

For these reasons I will not be able to support the Speech from the Throne. While I am disappointed with the government's agenda and vision for this country, as I am sure other members are as well, I know that the members of my party and I will work with it to get it right, not for the benefit of ourselves but for the benefit of all Canadians.

•(1615)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Intergovernmental Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the member opposite to the House and congratulate him

on his election victory. I hope his work to represent his constituents will be a fruitful one and will deliver good things to good people.

He quoted Adam Smith and said he is an inspiration. I wonder if the member opposite would like to reflect on some of the things that Mr. Smith said, such as, “No society can...be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable.” Smith also stated, “It is not very unreasonable that the rich should contribute to the public expense, not only in proportion to their revenue, but something more than in that proportion.”

The member opposite has the opportunity now to support tax measures that will deliver exactly what Adam Smith said would create not only a good, strong economy, but also a good, moral economy. Will the member opposite now revisit his opposition to the throne speech and perhaps follow his mentor, Adam Smith, and follow us into a better tomorrow?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, I will always follow Adam Smith, as opposed to Keynes.

Tax breaks are always excellent. I do not agree with the tax breaks that the government has proposed. They are focused on some of the highest-paid people in Canada, those earning up to \$190,000, and would do very little for the poor. I also see the cancelling of the TFSA as something that would take away from Canadians.

No, I will not be taking the member's advice and supporting the throne speech.

•(1620)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I simply want to point out that agriculture was not mentioned at all in the throne speech. Of course, we talk about protecting jobs, and one in eight jobs across Canada is in agriculture. This sector is very important not only to our economy, but also to our health and the environment.

In my riding, one agriculture-related issue is of particular concern, and that is the matter of milk protein in liquid form getting through American customs. My riding borders the United States. These milk proteins are coming in from the United States and surreptitiously wind up in our processed food products, with no checks or controls by the federal government. Our farmers find this revolting, because it is costing them huge amounts of revenue.

What do the Conservatives think of this matter? Do they believe that the federal government should intervene to protect our farmers, even though the Conservatives turned a blind eye to the issue when they were in power?

*The Address**[English]*

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, there were quite a few things missing from the throne speech. Agriculture is one. Tourism, which is one of the industries that actually dwarf agriculture, is one as well. The speech lacks a lot of things, but to directly answer the member's question, we do need to support agriculture. In fact, our previous government, as part of the TPP, offered about half a billion dollars in support for the dairy industry. Our previous government had planned to do it and put it in as part of the program, and we stand behind that.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we hear a lot of talk from the current Liberal government about openness and transparency and about how infrastructure will be the answer to all of the economic woes of the west. I am interested in hearing from the member if he has seen a detailed plan for his area to create jobs. If not, does that mean there is no detailed plan, or that the current government is not being open and transparent?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, I have not seen anything from our friends across the aisle regarding infrastructure for Edmonton West. I do point out that when we look at the Liberals' plans for \$10 billion in spending, when we take away their social infrastructure, which is increased EI payments, it works out to about \$15 million to \$20 million per riding, enough to build a half-decent hotel. It is certainly not enough to cure all that ails us. I would be looking for our friends across the way to provide a lot better plan than just a few dollars sprinkled here and there.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Chilliwack—Hope, Fisheries and Oceans.

[English]

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to offer sincere thanks to the member for Mississauga East—Cooksville for generously ceding his time to me today and add that I will then be splitting my new found time with the member for Kitchener—Waterloo.

I am honoured to speak for the first time in this House as the member of Parliament for Halifax. As I rise today, I find that I am full of humility in the face of this profound honour, full of enthusiasm with the prospect of what this House will do on behalf of all Canadians, and full of gratitude for all of those who have helped me, and indeed all of us, get elected to this place.

Please indulge me, Mr. Speaker, as I thank my loving wife and daughter, indeed all of my family, and also my extended campaign family, for working so tirelessly and with such purpose. I thank the people of Halifax, who have entrusted me with the privilege of representing them in this government, for all of their trust and support, and I pledge to them that I will toil ceaselessly on their behalf.

There is one other pledge I would like to make. Earlier this week our colleague, the Minister of Democratic Institutions, astutely likened heckling in this House to common schoolyard bullying. She called upon each of us to show proper respect in this place, and to the Canadians who sent us here, and pledge not to heckle when our

colleagues are speaking, and I so pledge. Further, I repeat the minister's invitation to all colleagues to also take this pledge.

I am proud to serve in a government that is committed to growing our economy through investments in public transit. I am proud to serve in a government committed to investing in green infrastructure, green tech, clean tech to create the jobs of tomorrow.

I am proud to serve in a government committed to investing in social infrastructure like housing, transitional shelters, and early childhood development facilities. I am proud to support a government that will offer more support for seniors.

I am proud to serve in a government committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, committed to making life better for Canadians by implementing a middle class tax cut, and by offering a hand up to Canadians working hard to improve their situation by implementing the new Canada child benefit.

I am so very proud to serve in a new government seeking to forge a new nation to nation partnership with indigenous peoples in urban and rural communities across this country.

These investments and programs will be transformational for our nation's cities and for the millions of Canadians that reside within them. These investments will also benefit our nation as a whole.

With the proportion of Canadians living in urbanized areas now at more than 80% and growing, we stand on the threshold of the urban century, so when our cities succeed our nation succeeds. That is why this House will grow accustomed to hearing me speak about and advocate for Halifax and other cities across this country.

I would like to share a story about what can happen when we begin to harness the power of cities.

It was only a few short years ago that downtown Halifax emerged from a decades-long period of stagnation. An entire generation grew up without ever seeing a construction crane on the horizon of our city. What growth we did have was happening on the edge of the city, eating up forests and farmland, sprawling ever outward while our urban core atrophied.

The cost of this low density dispersed growth was and remains tragically high: financially high with the capital and maintenance costs of vast new systems of infrastructure, environmentally high with ecological degradation and greenhouse gas emissions, and socially high with increased commuting times and poor health outcomes, to name a few, and all of this completely unsustainable.

The Address

In 2006, I became the city of Halifax's first manager of urban design. From that perch, I set out to put my city back on track toward sustainability. I had the pleasure of working with Halifax volunteer extraordinaire Dale Godsoe, fresh off her service on Prime Minister Paul Martin's external advisory committee on cities and communities. Together with a wonderful team of staff and volunteers, and an engaged council, we set in motion a broad, three-year program of community engagement to build a new plan for our city, and our new plan hit a gusher.

In a recent conversation with Halifax mayor Mike Savage, a former member of this House, and now a member of the FCM Big City Mayors' Caucus, and the meeting with our own Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, the mayor revealed to us that downtown Halifax's share of regional growth had ballooned from a mere 16% before our new plan took hold to a share of greater than 40% since the plan did take hold, a stunning public policy victory.

● (1625)

As a result of this plan, cranes now dot the skyline and development activity in the downtown core has increased by 40 times. We are seeing new office, retail, and mixed-use space, and we are on our way toward seeing 5,000 new residential units in the urban core which otherwise would have been built out on those farms and forests.

Because land use and transportation are always two sides of the same coin, the intensification of our downtown has implications for public transit and active transportation, as well. Our transit authority, Halifax Transit, is in the process of redesigning its service, possibly to include commuter rail for the first time, and more and more bike lanes are turning up due, in large part, to the advocacy of groups like the Halifax Cycling Coalition.

However, the jewel in the crown of our downtown renaissance is, surely, the new Halifax Central Library, a project which I am proud to have helped lead, among a cast of other civic leaders.

Our library recently celebrated its one-year anniversary and in the hands of its amazing CEO, Asa Kachan, the library has had nearly two million visitors since it has opened its doors, which is not bad in a province of only a million people. It has exceeded every single expectation we had set for it.

It has become the city's living room. It has become a nucleus of community in our downtown, a place where people come to learn languages, to meet friends, to do business, and even to start businesses. There is a place for every member of our community at the central library.

It has put our city on the world stage of architecture and culture, winning numerous national and international distinctions, and has become a point of deep pride for Halifax.

Although my city still has a tremendous amount of work to do, like many Canadian cities, I will recap some of the things that we have gotten right.

We have authentically engaged with community members, so that they themselves can craft a plan for their downtown, thereby including them in the decisions that impact their lives.

We created progressive public policy that eliminates red tape and allows the private sector to do its work. We are matching these land-use improvements with complementary and necessary improvements to transit and active transportation. In the case of the central library, we made a significant public investment in our community which has given the private sector confidence to initiate multiple and mixed-use projects nearby.

This is a story about the importance of smart public policy and public investment in community infrastructure, such as that referred to in the Speech from the Throne and of how it has helped position Halifax for success: success, with a tremendous opportunity and responsibility of a national shipbuilding contract, with the Irving shipyard already becoming a key economic driver in our city; success with the greatest concentration of ocean-related Ph.D.s of anywhere in the world in capitalizing on our potential of the oceans nearby for research, nutrition, energy, logistics, and even, in the case of the marine research station in Ketch Harbour in my riding, for cutting-edge algae biofuel; success in helping to support our local arts and culture scene with groups like Shakespeare by the Sea, Khyber Centre for the Arts, Neptune Theatre, and the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, and festivals like Nocturne: Art at Night and North by Night Market, which are just a few examples of the vibrant culture found in our city; success with a rich diversity of food and food security initiatives in Halifax, like Hope Blooms, a modest community garden program empowering at-risk youth in the urban core, or like our urban farms, common roots urban farm, the Spryfield urban farm, and the John Umlah memorial community garden; and success in attracting and supporting diversity in our city.

Just last month, I visited the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre in downtown Halifax to discuss with its director, Pamela Glode-Desrochers, how I could help advance its objective of improving the lives of aboriginal people in an urban environment through social and cultural programming.

I visited with Imam Dr. Tayebi and the Muslim community at the Ummah Mosque and Community Centre in Halifax, a group I am proud to call my friends and who have made themselves a pillar of generosity in our community.

Simply put, a smart urban agenda, a national urban agenda, with strategic investment leads to economic prosperity, environmental sustainability and cultural vibrancy.

This is why I am encouraged by the government's urban agenda, as articulated in its Speech from the Throne. These investments in our cities will be transformational. However, we must not stop there.

The Address

I implore my hon. colleagues to consider the power of Canadian cities and to work together with me, with the parliamentary secretary for intergovernmental affairs and other colleagues, and with urban groups across the country, such as the Council for Canadian Urbanism, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, and, yes, the Big City Mayors' Caucus, to continue to advance a national urban agenda.

On the threshold of the urban century, I believe we have no other responsible choice.

• (1630)

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with some interest to the member for Halifax.

In his statements he talked a lot about urbanism and the urban century. We all agree that our urban communities are important to our economy, but that is not a justification to completely ignore rural Ontario and rural Canada, and our small towns and cities.

How can the hon. member justify the complete absence of any mention of agriculture or support for our small communities, like those in Perth—Wellington, in his government's throne speech?

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Mr. Speaker, in 10 years of municipal service, I often had to balance the needs of the urban core with suburban and rural areas.

The answer is really quite simple. Over the last 10 or 20 years, Canadian cities have been focusing growth not so much on the urban core but on the fringe. The intention of a national urban agenda is to rebalance that, to make it a more sustainable balance. With strong cities, we can have strong city regions, and that will help all Canadian communities.

• (1635)

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the hon. member to this august place.

The member spoke briefly about nation to nation and a renewed relationship with aboriginal peoples. I would like to hear his thoughts, and for him to elaborate a little on those thoughts, around the Truth and Reconciliation Commission proposal that the framework of reconciliation in this country should be the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The mandate letters that several ministers received also talked about implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

What does the member understand about this recommendation and about these mandate letters with respect to those specific questions? Concretely, what will that mean for indigenous peoples in this country?

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Mr. Speaker, during the period of the election campaign and since, I have been in conversations with the aboriginal communities of Nova Scotia, predominantly the Mi'kmaq community. I mentioned earlier in my remarks the time I spent with the director of the Mi'kmaq Native Friendship Centre in downtown Halifax.

I am in the process of a wonderful, marvellous education at her hands. I have also participated in a new Canadian partnership that was held in Halifax several months ago. I was very pleased to meet Grand National Chief Perry Bellegarde at that meeting. I had a good conversation with him, as well as other aboriginal leaders from across the country.

I am on a journey of learning and I am excited about it. I am profoundly excited to be part of rolling out the Liberal Party's platform on building that new nation to nation partnership.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to the hon. member's speech. He talked about the environment and the government's intentions, which were very clearly articulated in the throne speech. He also talked about Halifax's success; the government paid attention to that. He specifically mentioned the mayor by name; the government paid attention to him. That enabled Halifax to pursue successful development, which is great.

The government paid attention to the mayor of Halifax. In Quebec, 82 Montreal-area mayors who represent four million people have said that they oppose the energy east pipeline.

When the premier of British Columbia and many other stakeholders expressed opposition to the western pipeline, the Liberal Party immediately stated its opposition to the project.

Does the member think that the government should state its opposition to this pipeline right now considering that it has always said social licence is key to making pipeline projects happen?

[*English*]

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Mr. Speaker, again referring to my long career of public service, I long ago learned that government can give a permit, but only a community can give permission.

I am going to reflect on the commitment of this government to engage Canadians, wherever they are in the country, in the decisions that impact their lives to bring Canadians back into government. I know that the minister in charge of this file is doing just that right now on the journey of this government toward finding a sustainable energy future for this country.

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as this is the first occasion I have had to rise in this revered House, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the good citizens of Kitchener Centre for granting me the honour and privilege of representing them in this great place. I would especially like to thank all of the hard-working volunteers on my campaign who generously gave their time, energy, and talents. Without their efforts, I would not be standing here today.

Like many Canadians, and like many of my colleagues, I am a child of immigrants who moved to Canada with the hope of offering their children a better life. If I am standing here today, it is because of the courage my parents had and their deeply held belief that Canada would allow their children the opportunity to succeed.

The Address

It is so gratifying for so many Canadians, as I know it is for my own family—my parents, Hem Chand and Parakash Saini; my two sisters, Anju and Manju; my brother-in-law Sanjay; and my niece and nephew, Samria and Vikram—to see that with hard work and dedication, anything is possible in this great country, the land of opportunity.

As the Prime Minister is so fond of saying, Canada is strengthened because of our differences and not in spite of them. My own personal journey to this place underscores the truth behind these words.

As a first generation Canadian of Indian heritage, I moved to Kitchener as a young man to set up my business. I was welcomed by the people of Kitchener, a city settled early on by German immigrants, which still holds one of the largest and most well-attended Oktoberfest festivals in the world.

My success as a small-business owner could only have happened in a community that looked beyond my name and heritage and accepted me for who I was, not for where I was born. Our system in this country allows each one of us to rise based on merit and not on our place of birth.

Small and medium-sized businesses are the backbone of the Canadian economy and the biggest job creators. As someone who has owned a small business for over 20 years, I understand the difficulties that small and medium businesses face on a daily basis. In a volatile economy, small businesses are often the first hit and the hardest hit. It is extremely important, therefore, that the government work as a partner with small and medium-sized businesses to help them expand, access international markets, and reinvest in the Canadian economy. This is something I am proud to champion as a member of Parliament.

As members may know, Kitchener is part of Canada's high-tech innovation hub. Kitchener is part of the quantum valley corridor that stretches from the Kitchener—Waterloo region through to Toronto. This unique, innovative, and collaborative high-tech hub is an economic driver, not only locally but for the entire country, and enjoys a global reputation for excellence.

To maintain leadership in this area and to compete in the global economy, we need to ensure that we continue to invest in this sector. We need the ability to attract top international talent. We need improved transit infrastructure along the quantum valley corridor, and we need to provide access to funding at all stages of research, start-up, manufacturing, and expansion.

Climate change is not a theory. It is not disputed. It is a fact. It is a shame that in 2016 there are still those who choose not to believe it. Thankfully, the government recognizes the reality of climate change and the need to address it now by boldly championing a green agenda. I am confident that the innovative and collaborative nature of the Kitchener—Waterloo high tech ecosystem is well poised to help Canada become a world leader in the development of green technology and green innovation.

I am so proud that our government has committed to an ambitious infrastructure agenda that will fix our crumbling infrastructure while stimulating our economy with good-paying, high-quality jobs.

Infrastructure should not be a partisan issue. We can all agree that we all drive on the same roads, we all cross the same bridges, and we all visit the same hospitals. We know that investment in transit infrastructure is good for business, allowing goods and services to reach markets faster. It is good for the environment, by reducing the number of cars on the road. It is good for people, as it allows them to spend less time in transit and more quality time with friends and family.

● (1640)

The number one transit infrastructure priority for my community is two-way, all-day GO between Kitchener and Toronto. This priority is championed by all levels of government and is an essential ingredient to solidifying quantum valley, providing economic growth with good-paying jobs, and ensuring that Canada can continue to compete globally in the high-tech sector.

Affordable housing is also a huge concern for my community. The recent influx of refugees has helped raise awareness of our housing needs and has shone a light on this important issue. The region of Waterloo, which Kitchener is a part of, was chosen as a site for refugee resettlement because of the existing framework of collaborative services between community agencies, its strong regional and municipal leadership, and a broad base of dedicated individuals already engaged in finding permanent solutions to homelessness in our community. When it comes to affordable housing, whether it be for those experiencing homelessness or for refugees, long-term residents, or new Canadians, it is not a matter of one over the other. It is a matter of finding solutions for both. It is worth noting that housing is not the problem; it is the solution.

I am gratified that our social infrastructure proposals would contribute to ensuring that all members of our community would have a place to call home. The development of a national housing framework is not only good social policy and good health care policy but is also good economic policy.

People in my riding are also deeply concerned about the future of Canadian health care. One of the most troubling decisions the previous government made was the decision to not renew the Canada health accord. Predictable funding is necessary for provinces and territories to make the long-term investments needed in our health care system so it can continue to serve Canadians now and into the future. This is something I am very happy to see our government working to restore.

As I mentioned earlier, I am a proud small-business owner. That business is a pharmacy. I have spent a good portion of my adult life helping people of all ages access the medication they need to lead happy, productive, and healthy lives. This is a tremendous responsibility and one that I was proud to undertake for many years. As a pharmacist, however, I was all too often aware of the challenges facing people when trying to afford the medication they needed. This is unacceptable. No one should have to choose between eating and buying medication. No one should have to choose between paying rent and buying medication. This is why I am extremely pleased that our government has pledged to take steps toward bulk buying of pharmaceutical drugs. This is an important and necessary step in the right direction.

The Address

However, that is not the end. I will continue to advocate for policies that make prescription medication more affordable, more available, and more accessible for all Canadians.

We all come to the House filled with great hopes and desires. Each one of us wants to do the best for our communities and our country. These are all noble ideals, and they should be encouraged. However, sometimes political reality intersects with political expediency. All members of this 42nd Parliament should work hard to try to minimize political differences and to concentrate on those issues that make us stronger. I know that this will not be easy. I know that there will be stark differences, and I know that there will be great debate. However, I believe that a combination of mutual respect, striving for high ideals, and a desire to do one's best shall serve this Parliament and our country well.

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

We are all here for the same reason. We all want to serve our constituents as best we can. We are all here to improve the lives of Canadians. I would like to ask all members to keep this in mind over the next few weeks.

[*English*]

Again, I would like to thank the good people of Kitchener Centre for giving me this historic opportunity to represent them, and my campaign team and volunteers for their dedication and tireless work. I also would like to thank my parents for their great judgment in bringing me to Canada and my family for their support. I look forward to working with all members of the House going forward.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate the hon. member on his speech and on his election.

The member mentioned the importance to Canada of small businesses, and I heartily agree.

My question for the member is this. Does he not think that carbon pricing increases and increases in the amount employers pay for CPP and EI will push small businesses out of business?

• (1650)

Mr. Raj Saini: On the contrary, Mr. Speaker. This government believes that a strong economy is always balanced with good environmental policy, and good environmental policy is balanced with good economic policy. We know that within our communities, whether it be small businesses or large businesses, we are all in this together. Each minister has received a mandate letter that encourages him or her to provide a framework for the environment.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his excellent speech and I congratulate him on his election.

Given the member's comments, I believe that he will join with me when we comment on the previous government's policies of division and fear and say that we want something new and different. Canadians are ready for that change, and we want to signal to our communities, sooner rather than later, that it is a new day for Canada.

Part of that old regime of division and fear was Bill C-24, which created two classes of citizenship here in Canada. I would like to ask the hon. member if he would, along with me, advocate as soon as possible the repealing of that bill.

Mr. Raj Saini: Mr. Speaker, I believe that we all, in this House, share the attitude that Canada was built on a principle of equality and equal citizenship. I am sure we will join with her to make sure that this equality is still represented in this country.

Mr. Frank Baylis (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in my riding is the co-operative Cloverdale. It is actually the largest co-operative in all of Canada. Unfortunately, last fall, subsidies for those families were terminated. It amounted to a couple of hundred dollars per family per residence being gone, but for those people, it has had a huge impact.

I would like to ask my colleague what this government perceives doing to help people in this area of social housing, specifically those people.

Mr. Raj Saini: Mr. Speaker, our government ran on a clear idea and a clear agenda that we would be investing money in infrastructure, whether that be social infrastructure, transit infrastructure, or green infrastructure. That idea or principle was that the government would allow municipalities and regional governments to make the decisions that they thought were necessary, to make the investments that they thought would be necessary, with an equal partnership with the federal government. I want to assure my hon. friend that the federal government will be a partner.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague from Windsor—Tecumseh.

Although this is not the first time I have spoken in the House in this session, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people of Port Moody—Coquitlam, Anmore, and Belcarra for the trust and support they have shown in electing me as their member of Parliament. It is an honour to continue to serve such a beautiful and diverse area and community. I will continue to work hard to serve with integrity and respect.

I would also like to acknowledge my wife Lynda, my parents Val and Cy, my campaign team, and the hundreds of volunteers and staff who worked so tirelessly on my election campaign. To them I am indebted.

I was encouraged to hear the Speech from the Throne address some of the real concerns facing the people in my riding and across the country, but a throne speech is just words if it is not followed up with concrete actions.

Every day I hear from constituents who are struggling with the real-life consequences of growing economic inequality, degraded public services, and a changing climate.

The Address

In the last election, the Liberals promised quick, urgent, positive change, so it was disappointing to see such a thin Speech from the Throne, with few details and virtually no timelines, no details on key issues like climate change targets, funding to close the gap for first nations education and water, or reversing Conservative cuts to health care and pensions. Given the lack of details, I sincerely hope that this is not a sign that the Liberals are looking for an excuse to back away from the promises they made to Canadians during the election. Canadians are tired of broken promises and they are understandably suspicious of empty government rhetoric. After 10 years of Conservative rule, it is hard to blame them. Canadians want and deserve concrete action.

During the recent federal election, the Liberals promised to address income inequality and our stagnating middle class, and with good reason. Income inequality in Canada continues to rise and Canadian families are paying the price. Unfortunately, instead of helping Canadian families, the first thing they did when they arrived in Ottawa was make equality worse by implementing their so-called middle-class tax cut. The parliamentary budget office shows the benefits of the new Liberal tax cut plan would mainly go to the top 30% of income earners with the most money going to the richest 10%. My constituents in Port Moody—Coquitlam are feeling the financial pain from the exorbitant costs of housing, expensive child care, prescription drugs, and groceries. We can and must do better. The government needs to tackle income inequality head-on. It can start by asking the richest corporations to pay their fair share, cracking down on tax havens, and bringing back the federal minimum wage to drive up wages and salaries for all Canadian workers.

The Liberals promised investments in what they call social infrastructure. Depending on where one lives that could mean anything. I am hopeful that we will get details on infrastructure spending plans soon, because additional funds for affordable housing are imperative to help relieve the pressure on those struggling with high costs and personal debt.

The staggering cost of housing has many living in Metro Vancouver very concerned. The average cost of a home in the trities jumped between 17% and 25% last year alone. For many young families, home ownership is unrealistic, forcing them to move further from their jobs, meaning more time in traffic and less time with their loved ones. Property tax increases have forced seniors living on fixed incomes to move and sell their homes at a time when there are no affordable options for them to move into. The last time the federal government invested in affordable housing was when the late NDP leader Jack Layton convinced the government to abandon corporate tax cuts in favour of social infrastructure investment. I encourage our new Prime Minister to remember this progressive example and take action now.

I am proud to be serving as NDP critic for Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Canadian Coast Guard. On the west coast the Liberals' promise to open the Kitsilano Coast Guard station is welcome news and it cannot be opened soon enough.

● (1655)

The previous government's closure of the Kitsilano Coast Guard station and the cuts and closures to the marine communications and

traffic services centres has been disastrous for B.C. These cuts threaten the lives of fishers and other mariners as well as putting the marine environment at risk. The government should reopen the Kitsilano Coast Guard station to its full complement and do it now. It should reopen the recently closed Ucluelet and Tofino MCTS station and halt the plans to close the Vancouver and Comox MCTS stations.

Together we can protect our coastal waters from environmental hazards and protect the people who navigate these waters on a daily basis. I am hopeful the government will fulfill its promise and implement the 75 recommendations of the Cohen Commission report. It has been three years since the Cohen report laid out a path of recovery for Fraser River wild salmon and the new government must not repeat the mistakes of the last government by dragging its feet.

Wild salmon are under threat on the west coast due to open net fish farms, industrialization of sensitive habitat, and a changing climate. After completing a two-year inquiry, the Cohen Commission report identified 75 recommendations to improve the future sustainability of Fraser River sockeye. The comprehensive report highlighted the impact of stressors on wild salmon such as climate change, aquaculture, habitat protection, and the lack of funding for research and science.

Fraser River sockeye salmon are integral to the economic, ecological, and cultural health of our province. We cannot afford to lose one of the world's last great salmon rivers and with it countless jobs in coastal communities. Now is the time for action. I encourage the new minister to implement the Cohen Commission recommendations and I look forward to working with him in this regard.

I know my time is running near, but before I conclude, I would like to talk briefly about pipelines, the environmental review process, and social licence. Inherent and treaty rights of first nations are enshrined in Canadian law. First nation, Inuit, and Métis have a nearly unbroken record of about 200 court case wins affirming their rights, so it is time to get serious on a nation-to-nation approach with first nations and make first nations true partners in natural resource development.

The Address

New Democrats believe that the social licence for natural resource projects will engage first nations communities, citizens, and the broader civil society to include their views and expertise in the sustainable development of our resources. I encourage the government to move in that direction. Fixing the environmental assessment process that was dismantled by the previous federal government should be a priority. We need to reinstate the Burrard Inlet environmental action program and the Fraser River estuary management program that were cut under the Conservatives. Increased industrial activities require that we look at the cumulative impacts of each major project and make science-based recommendations to all levels of government. Looking at each project in isolation without taking into account downstream effects is shortsighted for our coastal economy.

New Democrats want sustainable natural resource development that fosters value-added jobs in Canada and reduces our dependence on foreign oil. We do not have to compromise the health of our environment or our future children in the pursuit of these goals. We need federal leadership. We need strong leadership. We cannot continue with the “rip and ship” approach. We can develop a sustainable economy that will provide hundreds of thousands of jobs and protect our environment for future generations.

In closing, Canada is facing some very tough environmental and economic challenges and the Liberals have made many promises to address them. Let us hope they will live up to their promises.

• (1700)

I promise that we in the NDP will hold the government to account. We will be right there to remind them and speak loud about the actions that are needed to move on these very serious concerns. Canadians deserve nothing less.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I would like to remind members in the House of two things.

One, they have to be sitting at their own seat in order to speak in the House, in case there are any questions.

[*Translation*]

Second, before speaking, we must check that the little light on our desk is on. I am sure that people at home and those in the room want to hear what members have to say. If the light is not on, they will miss something.

[*English*]

The hon. member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on winning his seat in October and on his excellent speech this afternoon.

I come from a rural riding, like the hon. member. What I see in the Speech from the Throne would benefit all of the ridings in this country.

From the standpoint of our focus on social infrastructure, green tech infrastructure, and climate resilient infrastructure, our tax cuts will benefit a large proportion of people who live in our ridings, that \$45,000 to \$90,000 income rate. The Canada child benefit will also assist many lower and middle-income families to support their children and lift 300,000 children out of poverty.

On the social infrastructure side, as far as our emphasis on long-term care facilities, affordable housing, senior facilities, and child care spaces, I am sure that the member in his own riding will find that he also sees projects that will be valuable to him as well.

• (1705)

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, just to correct, first, Port Moody—Coquitlam is more of a suburban, perhaps more urban than rural riding. However, we do face many concerns. There are some low-income earners and they will not benefit, unfortunately, by the tax cut, whereas the higher-income earners, as it turns out, will, under the Liberal tax cut. I think the adjustment in that plan could have been done better to affect more, certainly in my riding and those across the country.

In terms of the infrastructure projects, we are looking forward to seeing the details of the plan that is coming forward from the government. We obviously want to know the timelines, the details, how municipalities and provinces can play a role, and how others can be involved. We want to see some details in terms of housing.

Housing is astronomically high in my riding and that is a huge concern for many people, many young families and others trying to make a start in life in Port Moody—Coquitlam.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member on his election.

The Liberal government has talked about real change, but so far we are not seeing many detailed plans that match the timelines in the campaign promises.

My question for the member is, can he tell us which plans and timelines he would most like to see from the government?

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, the Speech from the Throne itself was very thin. It was short on timeline and detail.

Yes, there are many priorities. I mentioned the inequality gap, and I think that needs to be addressed. We need to know the details on housing. That is a concern across the country. We need to have specifics on climate change. When will those targets be addressed at a national level? We have heard a commitment from the government on the international level, which is great, but what does that mean for Canada? When will we see action on the ground in this country?

There are many other issues. I mentioned the reopening of the Kitsilano Coast Guard station, but there is not a commitment to equipment or staffing levels or how soon that will be open.

We are looking at an imminent closure of the Comox marine communications and traffic services centre, which is the eyes and ears for mariners, very similar to traffic control centres for planes. This is a critical function. We need to reverse those plans immediately, stop the closure of this centre, and reopen those that have already been closed to get the kinds of resources needed to take proper care and provide the safety and security on our coast and in our coastal communities that they deserve.

The Address

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased, as the recently elected member for the great riding of Windsor—Tecumseh, to be among all members. I am honoured and grateful to be here. However, for a brief moment, I will speak as the proud mother of my baby, celebrating her 23rd birthday today, Chevonne Hardcastle. I want to give her a shout out and wish her a great day today.

Windsor—Tecumseh is a fascinating place. It is comprised of a number of communities that have come together over time. They were, at one time, distinct communities. They provide a real, vibrant fabric in Windsor and Essex County. I am honoured to accept the trust that they have placed in me.

With the vibrant neighbourhoods of Windsor and Tecumseh, including Riverside, Walkerville, St. Clair Beach, Oldcastle, and Maidstone, we understand how crucial it is to address social, economic, and health equity. We eagerly await the new era we have been promised, a new era of co-operation among all levels of government, as well as a return to national leadership on health care, and the negotiation of a new health accord.

During the election campaign, I promised my constituents that when in Ottawa I would fight on behalf of them for the issues that matter the most to them, and I intend to honour this commitment.

In many ways, the riding of Windsor—Tecumseh is much like the rest of the country. Our people are deeply concerned about the condition of the health care system, opportunities for young people, jobs, security and dignity for people who are retiring, affordable housing, and the list goes on. However, my constituents are also rightly concerned about the environment, especially when it concerns stewardship of the Great Lakes, in which they are ensconced.

In Windsor—Tecumseh we champion the causes of social justice. Fortunately, my being a New Democrat means that the priorities of my constituents are the same as those of the party to which I belong, and this is no coincidence. The NDP exists to fight for these issues and values. The people of Windsor—Tecumseh champion the causes of social justice. We need look no further than the subamendment offered by the NDP to the government's Speech from the Throne to see that this is true. Here is what that says:

...working in collaboration with opposition parties to present realistic, structured and concrete changes that benefit some of Canada's most vulnerable citizens, including: seniors through an increase to the Guaranteed Income Supplement, middle-class families through reducing taxes on the first income tax bracket, low-income workers with leadership by introducing a \$15 per hour federal minimum wage, and supports to those struggling to enter the workforce with a robust and reliable Employment Insurance program.

Members are no doubt aware of the rich history of the city of Windsor and the county of Essex and the role it has historically played in North America's automotive industry. With innovation and research, much can be done to encourage further development of this sector within our region. In their election platform, the Liberals committed to investing in and growing our economy, strengthening the middle class, and helping those working hard to join it. The new government has also declared, and this is important, that it expects Canadians to hold it responsible for delivering on its commitments. The New Democrats are committed to supporting the government as it delivers on its promises and hold it accountable where it does not.

While the Liberal Party did not mention the auto sector in its election platform or in the throne speech, I nevertheless hope that the government will pursue policies that will rebuild this vital sector in our economy. The Americans are already ahead of us in this regard, having launched last year the investing in manufacturing communities partnership. This program encourages communities to develop comprehensive economic development strategies that will strengthen their competitive edge for attracting global manufacturing and supply chain investments. This is mandated with "coordinating federal aid to support communities' strong development plans and [with] synchronizing grant programs across multiple departments and agencies".

• (1710)

This is something the New Democrats envision. We have a number of ideas about how Canada might achieve similar goals within our own automotive industry. We have been vocal about the need for national strategies in our manufacturing sectors, and especially a national auto strategy that is long awaited in Windsor—Tecumseh.

Like our American friends, we believe the Government of Canada should make it easier for automakers and investors to set up operations in Canada. We envision a program that we call "ICanada". ICanada would be a one-stop shop to facilitate the federal government, automakers, and investors with various government programs and incentives that are in place, and we hope, soon, that these will be in place.

We believe the government should improve financial incentives for automakers and parts suppliers in exchange for firm commitments on jobs and investment in Canada. The government must support research and innovation in the auto sector, including immediate funding renewal for the University of Windsor's AUTO21 Network of Centres of Excellence in engineering.

While the Speech from the Throne makes no mention specifically of the Great Lakes, I did look at the Liberal Party platform to find a commitment to protect the Great Lakes and declared intent to work with provinces, as well as our American partners, to prevent the spread of invasive species, to undertake science-based initiatives, to better understand and manage water levels, and to clean up coastal contamination. These are all very important issues of sustainability for the people of Windsor—Tecumseh, and we have a heightened awareness of it because of where we live.

There is even a promise to restore the \$1.5 million in federal funding for fresh water research. That had been cut by the previous federal Conservative government.

I will pause right here and salute our Great Lakes Institute for Environmental Research at the University of Windsor. The work it does is so important, not only regionally and nationally but globally.

The Address

As many members will recall from the many news reports, the shorelines around the Windsor—Essex area have been subject to massive toxic blue-green algae blooms. From the shore, these blooms seem to stretch out and cover the entirety of Lake Erie. They make our water supplies toxic. No boil water advisory can fix that. Boiling water does not work.

These toxic emissions in the water are starving the fish and aquatic wildlife of oxygen. We are all concerned with the safety of fresh water that has been taken for granted. This is a real clarion call for us that we need to do the research and take this seriously.

I applaud the work of the Citizens Environment Alliance and the Detroit River remedial action plan. Along with them, I will be following quite closely the new government's work in these areas, and will do whatever I can to assist it and hold it accountable for the promises made that I mentioned earlier.

On the subject of health care, the Liberals have likewise promised to negotiate a new health accord. The provinces and territories, including a new agreement on funding, are supposed to be included in the plan. So far, few details have been released.

As one might expect, the New Democrats have a few ideas on the subject of health care that our friends across the way will find helpful. On the doorstep in my riding, one issue I heard a great deal about was the exorbitant cost of prescription drugs. The New Democrats strongly believe that increased funding should go to a national prescription drug plan.

One in four Canadian households has someone who cannot afford the medications prescribed to he or she by the doctor. We therefore strongly urge the new government to move quickly to address the important matter. No one should have to choose between paying for food and getting the medications they need in order to stay alive.

We also urge the new government to cancel the former Conservative government's planned cuts to health care so we can work with provinces to improve health care services for Canadians. It is imperative that we support the hiring of new doctors and nurses to help the five million Canadians who do not have a family doctor. This shortage is of particular concern in my area.

As well, we should formulate a clear and detailed plan to help the one million Canadian children and youth who have a mental illness, but who do not have access to appropriate care and the early intervention they need for successful outcomes.

• (1715)

We require a strategy to provide care for seniors in need, at home, in hospitals, in long-term care facilities, and palliative care. So far, we have not heard anything from the new government on whether it intends to cancel the Conservatives' planned cuts to health care, and yet—

• (1720)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order, please. Questions and comments, the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member talks about health care. There is no doubt

that the government of the day recognizes the value and the importance of health care. Canadians take a great deal of pride in our health care system. In fact, we see much more co-operation today between the different levels of government.

Paul Martin established the health care accord that ultimately led to the highest number of dollars being given to provinces to support our health care system. We see that high sense of co-operation.

Would the member not agree that it is more than just providing money? Canadians want to see national standards. They want to see the federal government work hand in hand with the provinces. The most important thing we can do right now is not only provide the money, but work with the provinces to modernize our health care, taking into consideration mental health, home services, or pharmaceuticals. There is so much out there that can be done.

One of the most important steps is to get out of Ottawa, meet with the provinces, and see if we can develop a plan that all of us can be proud of going into the future.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's question helps me reiterate how important it is that we commit to a health accord. We cannot make any long-term plans until we have that commitment and the links to our social strategies that affect our health. We all know this. We hear it called the social determinants of health.

We cannot work on these long-term strategies and work meaningfully with our partners at the municipal and provincial levels if we do not have that commitment at the national level. That is the very simple, first, significant step of recommitting to health care at the national level. National leadership is imperative if we are to address social determinants of health.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member who is my neighbour. I am right next door in Sarnia—Lambton.

Seniors are a priority for me and it was not mentioned at all in the throne speech. That is especially troubling because the bad economic policies of the government have led to a 28% drop in stock market prices already, with another 20% expected. For a lot seniors that will mean their life savings will be cut in half. The government has cut the TFSA allotment and that will drive the price of everything up.

What would the member like to see the government do for seniors?

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle: Mr. Speaker, I agree that we need to look at a more systematic approach for seniors. Our platform makes a lot of sense in terms of the dominos that have to fall. For income security for seniors, the Liberals campaigned on a platform to enhance CPP. I mentioned before the social determinants of health. We have so many seniors right now who are deciding what bill to pay and what medication to pay for, so it also includes a prescription drug plan.

The Address

We need to maximize our resources. Our belief is that to maximize our resources, we have to access them, for instance, the TFSA cuts. Using resources in a smart way for seniors would create a savings down the road. When it comes to prescription a drug plan, there is the saving we have in the bulk costs. There is also in the quality of life for people. The longer people are at home and independent not only improves their quality of life, but our system can flourish and help people who really need it.

These supports have to be put in place. I believe it starts with a national pension reform that addresses income security for seniors.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with my hon. colleague from La Prairie.

First of all, I would like to say that I cannot find the words to thank the members of my family. They are my strength. They gave me the courage to fight to be here today in this venerable institution. My entire life I have wanted to be an MP in order to represent the people of my riding, defend their rights, and help make Canada a better place.

I would also like to thank someone who has been like a guardian angel to me. I want to thank François L'Heureux from the bottom of my heart for believing in me and being one of the most generous people I know.

Once again, I would also like to thank from the bottom of my heart the people of Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle. Thanks to them, I am the very first person of South Asian origin to be elected in Quebec. Their support, suggestions, problems and presence drew me closer to my community and made me take even more seriously my responsibilities as their MP.

For the members of the House who are not familiar with this riding, it is located on the southwest end of the Island of Montreal and it is made up of Dorval, where most people are anglophone, Lachine, where most residents are francophone, and LaSalle, where the people speak hundreds of different dialects from every corner of the world.

This riding is truly a microcosm of Canada. It is home to industry, natural spaces, blue-collar workers, white-collar workers, young people and not-so-young people. The first nations are still the backbone of this region, and the riding has also been welcoming immigrants for the past three and a half centuries.

As it does in the rest of the country, this multicultural mosaic strengthens and enriches our community. That is why I was so happy to hear the Speech from the Throne. His Excellency the Governor General presented an ambitious but achievable plan for the people in my riding and all Canadians.

Just like in Moose Jaw, Scarborough, and Cape Breton, too many people in my riding are having trouble making ends meet. In Lachine, most couples have children and a quarter of them are under the age of six. At the same time, 70% of the city's population earn an individual salary of less than \$40,000 a year. Things are even worse for women because their average income is almost \$900 less than that of men, and four out of five single parents are women.

Fortunately, help is on the way. The government is going to provide a child benefit that will help nine out of 10 families. A typical single-parent family with two children in Lachine can get over \$1,000 a month, and I would like to remind members that that amount is tax-free. This measure will lift over 315,000 children out of poverty.

Our investment in infrastructure, the largest in Canadian history, is also intended to help the most vulnerable members of our society. One in four Canadians cannot afford housing. That is why a third of the money allocated will be used for social infrastructure. Our priority is to build affordable housing and residences for seniors. We are not only going to invest, but we are also going to work with the provinces and municipalities.

Every day, I think about my grandmother, who passed away last year. I learned a great deal from my grandmother. She made me a better person. She was very empathetic. My grandmother was a good woman, with strength of character and an indomitable spirit. She suffered strokes for eight years and was confined to her bed for the last four years of her life.

However, my grandmother never gave up the battle. She kept fighting. She suffered physically, but her spirit is what kept her going for so long. Thanks to my family's support, I was able to be her caregiver during the last four years of her life.

I know that not all seniors are that fortunate. That is why I am so happy and proud that our government has already extended compassionate care benefits from six weeks to 26 weeks. That is six extra months. We will continue to work on creating a more flexible and inclusive benefits program.

Also, let us be clear, we will protect pension income splitting for seniors.

• (1725)

Still on the topic of compassion, I want to recognize the excellent work this government is doing in terms of integrating 25,000 Syrian refugees into Canada. With some of my colleagues, I had the huge honour of welcoming some of the first Syrian refugees in Quebec. When they arrived, their happiness and relief were really moving.

My colleague from Laval—Les Îles and I returned to welcome the first government-sponsored refugees. I was amazed by the improvements made by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and by how well the integration mechanisms are working. On that occasion, nearly half of the newcomers were young children, and instead of being afraid in their new, unfamiliar country, they were all smiles and drew many pictures for us.

When I think of those families, of our seniors, of the thousands of refugees and of our scientists who are no longer muzzled, I am astounded at what this government has accomplished in just 99 days, and every day I look forward to seeing what tomorrow will bring.

The Address

• (1730)

[English]

I am especially looking forward to seeing in action our government's ambitious agenda for the status of women. Tomorrow will mark exactly 100 years since women first won the right to vote. Pioneers such as Nellie McClung fought to have the voice of women heard. It took considerable courage to go against established norms in society. She faced much opposition from both men and women who were frightened that women's rights would lead to the breakdown of families and homes.

However, seeing firsthand the suffering of women and children caused by poverty, neglect, overwork, and alcohol abuse, Mrs. McClung fought for almost a decade to win women the right to vote. She succeeded, and ultimately so did women, because she believed that "The real spirit of the suffrage movement is sympathy and interest in the other woman".

On January 28, 1916, Manitoba became the first Canadian province to give women the vote. Nellie McClung continued to fight for women's suffrage in other provinces and society steadily progressed. There is still, however, much work to do. There is still a significant wage gap between men and women, exacerbated by the fact that it is women who are more likely to reduce their work hours to take care of their children, sick loved ones, or the elderly, and less likely to be properly represented in leadership positions. Some 50.4% of Canadians are women. Though we broke a record during the election with 26% of MPs in Parliament being female, we are only a little more than halfway to achieving gender parity in the House of Commons. At the speed we are currently going, it will take us another century.

An even more pressing issue is the sad reality that women are much more likely to be victims of sexual violence and harassment, thrice so when it comes to indigenous women.

Since the Speech from the Throne, our government has at last launched a national inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women. The disappearances, violence, and death that indigenous women have faced and continue to face is a national tragedy. As per our commitment, we have taken action without delay on this issue.

Considering all of this, there is no question that the need for the Status of Women department is as pressing now as it was when Pierre Elliott Trudeau created it. I am incredibly privileged to have been given the responsibility of Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women. I get to work with the government that considers gender equality to be a priority for all departments, not just Status of Women. I get to work with a minister who has worked all her life to help those in her community who need help. I get to work with a Prime Minister who truly believes in gender parity, with his cabinet composed equally of men and women because, as he so eloquently explained, it is 2015.

Now it is 2016, and considering what we have done in our first 99 days, imagine what we will accomplish together in the next 999. Though we all have different opinions on all of these different issues, gender equality and justice for women is something we can all agree on, whether we are Liberal, Conservative, NDP, Bloc, or Green. That is why I am so lucky to have been given this position now, because I

get to work with all of my colleagues on this unique opportunity. Together let us make history by making gender inequality history.

[Translation]

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague across the aisle for her passion and her genuine concern regarding inequality. I also want to welcome her to the House.

She talked about some of the most vulnerable people in Canada. When we consider the conditions in which indigenous people are living in this country, one of the richest countries on the planet, we are not talking about third world conditions, but rather fourth world conditions. I want to hear her thoughts on that, because her government promised a new era of nation-to-nation relationships with Canada's first nations.

Yesterday the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruled that children in indigenous communities have been discriminated against in terms of the funding provided to assist them. I believe she is aware that the circumstances that led us to this point were created by her party in 1996, when it imposed a maximum 2% increase for programs.

I would like her to comment on how the government could rectify many of these inequalities and these injustices towards indigenous people.

• (1735)

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for that very important question. Over the past 99 days, our government has taken some very positive steps toward resolving this inequality. We will continue to work with first nations, the provinces, territories, and municipalities on resolving this situation to eliminate these inequalities and ensure that this never happens again in our country.

[English]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, creating jobs in the green and clean-tech industries is a multi-year initiative. It will not immediately replace all of the hundreds of thousands of jobs that have been lost in Alberta, nor the jobs that will be lost in the future from the implementation of carbon pricing and higher EI and CPP rates.

We have heard that the infrastructure spending will work out to less than \$20 million per riding.

What is the member's government really going to do immediately to help those who have lost their jobs?

The Address

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Madam Speaker, job losses across Canada are a chronic problem and our government will be dealing with these losses through our infrastructure investments. These will create more jobs to make up for those losses and stimulate our economy. We will be giving more benefits to those who have children under a certain age, so they can grow and reach and stay in the middle class.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Spadina—Fort York, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will follow up on the member opposite's question. Would my colleague not agree that spending the money is so much more important than just announcing it?

When we talked to mayors in the run up to the election and the run up to the party platform, we found that although hundreds of millions of dollars had been announced by the previous government, none of it was actually spent. If we look at the cities of Vancouver, Calgary, Saskatoon, Regina, Winnipeg, Ottawa, Mississauga, Toronto, Montreal, Halifax, and Saint John's, they were all promised infrastructure dollars but not one penny was ever delivered to those cities in the last two calendar years.

Would my colleague not agree that spending infrastructure money is more important than promising it?

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Madam Speaker, not only is this an important question but an important comment: Put your money where your mouth is". I think that is what my colleague is saying. That was not done in the past but it will happen under our government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as this is my first time rising in the House, I want to say that I am very honoured to be among my colleagues to represent the people of La Prairie.

I will remain true to my commitments and the ideologies of our party and our leader, the Prime Minister. I intend to work hard and with determination to be a spokesperson worthy of their trust. I want to thank my wife, Francine Gingras, for her unwavering support. Many thanks to my children, Carolanne and Jason, whom I love with all my heart, and to my wife's children, Michael and Jenny Mantha, for their encouragement.

Many thanks to the people of my riding and the hard-working team of volunteers who stood by me throughout the 78 days of the election campaign. Without their support, I would not be here in this place of democracy. Before getting into my speech, I also want to congratulate all my parliamentary colleagues on earning the trust of their constituents.

I would like to begin by painting a picture of the riding of La Prairie, which is one of three new ridings in Quebec. I could go on for hours, but I will stick to the basics. I know my riding like the back of my hand because I grew up there. Not only was I born there, but I watched it develop for 55 years. Located not far from Montreal on the banks of the majestic St. Lawrence, the riding of La Prairie is a study in contrasts. Within its roughly 295 square kilometres lies Quebec's most populous RCM, Roussillon, which has 99,815 inhabitants. The average age of the population is 38, which speaks to the many young families we have.

The riding is half urban and half rural. That is not surprising because it contains the best agricultural land in the St. Lawrence River valley. The Mohawk community of Kahnawake is in my riding too. La Prairie is blessed with favourable geographical features. Located on the shores of the St. Lawrence, it is close to metropolitan Montreal and major thoroughfares such as Highway 30 and the 15 south, as well as a major rail network and the U.S. border. This adds up to major economic potential, and we have so much going on in so many ways.

That brings me to our rich heritage and culture. La Prairie was established in 1667 and has held a very special place in Canadian history since 1975 because of its architecture and archeological finds. The Canadian Railway Museum in Saint-Constant, the largest of its kind in the country and the third-largest in the world, brings a major part of our history alive with its unique collection of railway rolling stock.

As for the city of Sainte-Catherine, it has a deepwater port with locks and all the development potential that goes along with that resource. Our rural municipalities with their fertile soil produce a wide variety of agricultural products, including vegetables, grains, and livestock.

The people I represent are proud of this unique heritage, and they care about their families' welfare. Throughout the election campaign, I promised to be their spokesperson in the House of Commons, to make the government aware of their needs, and to do everything in my power to contribute to their well-being.

I would like to thank the Prime Minister and his office for the trust they placed in me when they appointed me to be the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. As everyone will see during my term in office, agriculture is my life. I was born on my ancestors' farm. I grew up there and I raised my family there. This farm specializes in the production of milk, as well as vegetables and grains for processing, and was passed down to a fifth generation thanks to my son, who is taking over. During all the years I was an active farmer, I was always in tune with the agricultural community, sharing its joys and sorrows. Although with my new commitments I have had to take a step back from farming, I am still in touch with the agricultural community and what is going on there, and I am well positioned to understand farmers' everyday realities.

From the earth to Parliament, I will do everything I can to protect our agriculture. Farmers do not roll up their sleeves; they tear them off. This industry deserves to be seen for what it is, and that is a vital force. In Canada, agriculture and agrifood are the leading employment sector. They generate 2.3 million jobs and \$108 billion a year, which represents 6.6% of our GDP. Every day, over 200,000 farms put food on our tables and provide us with grains, fruit, vegetables, dairy products, meat, and other food.

The Address

•(1740)

However, there is a threat hanging over this nice picture, namely that one day supply will not be able to meet demand. We have a duty to ensure that Canadians and their families can always count on having healthy, nutritious food produced sustainably and in a way that respects the environment. Meeting the public's basic needs also means ensuring the health of our farmers and our farms.

We cannot deny that in an ever-changing world, feeding our people has become an issue of national security. Agriculture and agri-food is our second-largest export sector. As borders collapse, our agriculture sector must redouble its efforts and find creative ways to adapt to the ever-changing effects of globalization, not to mention climate change.

Some producers are faring well, while others are not. Between 2001 and 2006, Canada lost more than 17,500 farm businesses. We must put a stop to this, because it is having a physical and psychological impact on our farming families. Throughout our election campaign, we saw how important it is for Canadians to have the tools to access healthy food every day. We need to develop a national food policy. In my riding alone, food bank use jumped by 28% in the last two years. It is estimated that two and a half million Canadians are struggling with food insecurity. The government defines that as the inability to acquire or consume an adequate diet quality or sufficient quantity of food in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so.

I urge all of my colleagues to put ideology and politics aside and make a national food policy a top priority. Our food policy, as I see it, will aim to find a responsible way to meet the current and future needs of Canadians and their families, in terms of quantity and quality. It will also relieve our farmers of the massive burden they have taken on, as we continue to ask more of them.

Our farming families work tirelessly to defend everything they have worked so hard to acquire under conditions that are not always equitable. There are discrepancies in quality and production costs, climate, and the size of farms, which says a lot. This has been going on too long and is completely unacceptable. We have to address it and ensure that these key players are part of the solution.

I am ready to work hard and give the best of myself in order to implement such a policy. That is why I am here in Ottawa.

The regions will play a crucial role in achieving these objectives. Every region is unique. We must recognize what they have to contribute and carefully manage what they have to offer. Therefore, we must listen carefully to what they need and the signals they send us. For example, my riding has had to adapt to urban expansion into the countryside. Many people have chosen to live in rural areas near major cities in order to enjoy the best of both worlds. That leads to friction. We know from experience that tensions subside when local initiatives foster understanding and better communication. The *Marché des jardiniers* in La Prairie is a good example of that.

With our positive attitude, we also want to improve the living conditions of aboriginal communities and invest in their education. For too long, their education system was underfunded and their children paid the price. They are behind in reading, writing, and mathematics. In order to correct this deplorable situation, programs

from kindergarten to grade 12 will receive increased annual core funding. The academic success of first nations children is one of our priorities.

The action we are taking reflects our view that we must invest today in the society of tomorrow.

•(1745)

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on his election to this House.

I would like to share with the member that in my riding we also have a strong farming community. In the communities of Black Creek and Merville we have many long-term family farms that have been a very important base to our community in the riding and its generality. Our communities are accessed only by ferry. Therefore, food security, as members can imagine, is a huge issue.

In the Speech from the Throne, there was nothing said about agriculture. I wonder how the member feels about this hole in the speech.

•(1750)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her question.

In my speech, I spoke a lot about food security because Canada has a strong reputation as a producer of safe, healthy, high-quality food. We can build on that reputation.

The Government of Canada will invite the provincial and territorial governments, stakeholders, and Canadians to share their opinions in order to define the scope and direction of a food policy.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, during his speech, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, who is also the member for La Prairie, talked about how proud he is that the Canadian Railway Museum is in his riding.

The Canadian Railway Museum should probably add a new exhibit, given the accident that occurred in Lac-Mégantic a few years ago.

I would like to know whether the government intends to eliminate the use of the DOT-111 cars, the infamous bombs on wheels, increase the number of inspections, and improve rail safety. If so, who will pay for all of this, taxpayers or the railway companies?

The Address

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question regarding the Lac-Mégantic tragedy.

Our government is actively studying the railway transportation file in order to keep all Canadians safe.

Mr. Pierre Breton (Shefford, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened very carefully to my colleague's speech. I want to congratulate him and thank him for raising such a timely issue.

My riding, Shefford, is 80% agricultural, so a huge part of our economy depends on the agriculture and agri-food sector. We have many dairy and pork producers, as well as vegetable and berry growers.

These producers depend a lot on temporary foreign workers. Over the past decade, the Conservatives made it much more difficult for temporary foreign workers to work here, and producers have been complaining about that a great deal.

Can the parliamentary secretary comment on this problem, which affects producers?

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

The Canadian agriculture and agri-food sector must have reliable access to labour. In many regions, temporary foreign workers make up a large portion of the labour force for some industries. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada is working with its federal partners to ensure that the policies and programs pertaining to the labour force take those needs into account.

● (1755)

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this debate on the Speech from the Throne.

On the first day of Parliament, I had the honour of acknowledging and thanking my family, the people who voted for me, and my organizers. Today I would like to take this opportunity to wish them a happy new year; much health and happiness to all these people who mean so much to me and whom I have had the honour of representing for 31 years.

Some members have asked me if I ever feel like I am running out of steam after spending so many years in the House. To the nearly 200 new members who arrived this year, I would say that one's passion for politics grows over the years. The longer they are here, the more passionate they will be about serving the public and about politics, and the more they will respect this great House, this place of democracy. It is truly a privilege to sit here. No one can enter here without wearing the mantle of democracy placed on their shoulders by the people of their riding. I always come back to work in this House with enthusiasm and passion. Often there are heated debates. It cannot be avoided because we cannot always see things the same way.

When people say that things are a bit crazy in the House of Commons, I tell them that we send our soldiers to fight all over the world to spread democracy so that people can have different opinions. Let us therefore make the most of our differing opinions here in the House of Commons. I am still very happy to speak here.

There is one thing I am not happy about. The throne speech was read on December 4, and because our party is considered to be made up of independents, we were 34th and 64th in line to speak. In any other democracy, we would have had a chance to speak sooner. The same kind of thing happened today. The hon. minister made an important statement on the environment, and the other parties got about as much speaking time as the minister. We asked for two minutes for our environment critic, but our request was refused.

The same thing happened with other ministers' statements, and we were also denied the opportunity to sit as members of a special committee. We could speak but not vote. When some members do not have the same privileges as others and the same resources to do their work in the House and in their ridings, that is not right. It is not right, and ours is the only democracy in the world where that happens. There is no provincial government, no democracy in the world that denies political parties the rights and privileges enjoyed by other members of the legislative body. Only here in Canada. There is no reason for it either, because there is no House of Commons standing order that says it has to be that way. It is the way it is because three whips from three parties arbitrarily decided that there must be 12 members.

The Bloc Québécois once held six seats and was denied rights and privileges. At one point, the NDP had nine seats and they were also denied rights and privileges. We have 10 seats and we are being denied rights and privileges, and we were also denied them when we held four seats. It is 2016, the 21st century, and there are many more schools of political thought than there were in the past. It is wrong that our party and the Green Party do not have the same privileges as the other parties. The Green Party has a presence throughout Quebec and Canada. It received over 500,000 votes and should have the same rights and privileges as the other parties, in proportion to the number of seats it holds.

I wanted to mention this in my speech. I am asking the members of the House to discuss this in caucus and to try to defend this way of doing things to their constituents by telling them that they have rights and privileges that other members of the House do not and asking them if they agree with that.

● (1800)

No legal expert or anyone with any judgment at all would agree with that. It is not the fault of the MPs. It is often because of the stubbornness of their whip, and the MPs should challenge that. It is not about giving us the same amount of time. We are 10 members out of 338. We should have the right to some time and a research and support budget, in proportion to our numbers, so that we can work in the House like all the other members.

I will now talk about the Speech from the Throne. During the election campaign, the Liberal Party created high expectations with its sometimes very specific promises regarding the environment, for example. Whether we liked it or not, the winds of change were blowing.

For 10 years, the former government had a very austere policy that Canadians did not agree with in the least. The government was tired, and people decided to listen to the winds of change and the very firm commitments made by the candidates and the Prime Minister.

The Address

However, in the throne speech, the first major official speech by the government, the speech that paves the way for all the bills to be introduced in this session and outlines how things will work in the coming months and what the government's priorities will be, many promises seem to have been forgotten.

In the throne speech, we do not see many of the commitments the Liberals made while they were the third party. I want to give them the benefit of the doubt and assume that perhaps this will come. However, at the end of the day, the throne speech is generally used to dictate the legislative agenda in the coming months.

My first comment is that we have heard a lot about nation-to-nation dialogue with the aboriginal peoples, and I think that respecting nations is a wonderful thing. However, I noticed that the Quebec nation was completely ignored in this throne speech.

When Mr. Chrétien was leading the Liberal Party, his party moved a motion in the House, which was unanimously adopted, that recognized the existence of the Quebec nation. When a government recognizes a nation, it also recognizes that this nation may make choices that are sometimes different from those of another nation, and there needs to be a special agreement when the central government introduces a particular bill or makes a particular expenditure.

The throne speech did not mention the Quebec nation a single time, which leads many to believe that the intent and the recognition itself were nothing but empty gestures.

In addition, this is the first time in over 50 years that the Prime Minister has not appointed a Quebec lieutenant. The first time in over 50 years. This suggests that they think Quebec is just like all the other provinces and that we can dispense with notions of founding people and distinct society. That says Quebec is a province like any other and that this government will seek to provincialize it. That will not work at all with all of the political parties in Quebec.

No Quebec premier ever signed the Canadian Constitution. Legally, we are Canadian, but regardless of the party in power in Quebec City, we never signed the 1982 Constitution because it does not recognize the Quebec nation.

That brings me to health care funding. During the election campaign, the Minister of Health made it clear that she wanted to reinstate the 25%.

• (1805)

I would remind the House that under Paul Martin's Liberal government, contributions to the provinces covered 50% of the provinces' total expenditures. In order to balance the budget, transfers were dropped to 25% under the Liberal government of the day, and the Conservatives followed suit, while collecting the same taxes. The money, then, stays in Ottawa, although the needs are in the provinces, and transfers continue to diminish. What is needed is a readjustment based on 1994-95. Transfers should be restored to at least 25%, and the principle that applied back then needs to be restored. This means that in the provinces, health care should be regarded as a whole, rather than per capita, because some provinces' populations are aging faster than others' and those provinces will therefore need more money to provide services to those individuals whose needs are greater. This will be very important in the

negotiations this government should have with the provinces. Things got off to a good start with a meeting of the health ministers. Let us hope the government listens to their demands.

As far as the environment is concerned, there is a clear intention in the promises and the Speech from the Throne to reduce greenhouse gases. Something tangible needs to be done. We cannot ignore TransCanada's infamous energy east project. British Columbia also had a pipeline project. The premier of British Columbia, many elected officials, and the general public opposed the project. The Liberal Party, which was not in power at the time, immediately supported British Columbia, saying that it was opposed to the pipeline, as were the NDP members.

The Government of Quebec said that at least seven conditions had to be met before it would look at this pipeline that will go through Quebec. None of those conditions have been met. This project does not have the public's approval or the social licence, as the Prime Minister calls it. Eighty-two mayors in the Montreal area representing four million people are saying no to this project. It does not have social licence any more than the project in British Columbia did. The government has to respond accordingly. Eighty-two mayors and the Government of Quebec are against this project. There is a lot to think about. The members from Quebec, no matter what party they represent here, have a duty to stand up and defend Quebec's interests ahead of TransCanada's. It is only right to listen to the public.

Given that the Speech from the Throne spent a lot of time on the environment, I would like to remind members that there will be environmental risks for the 160 rivers that the pipeline will cross in Quebec. We are not talking about two rivers, but about 160 rivers in addition to the St. Lawrence. Do we have the means to cover this risk? The maximum amount of liability covered is \$1 billion. An accident in one of these rivers or the St. Lawrence would cost much more than that. Thus, Quebec is taking the risk and has no financial gain, other than 33 jobs. Therefore, the Bloc's position is clear: we must defend Quebec's interests and oppose this pipeline.

In regard to employment insurance, I would like to reiterate the commitments made by the Bloc during the election campaign and the promises made by some Liberal members here in the House. We wanted to get rid of the infamous reform proposed by the former government that would force a worker to accept a job requiring a 100-kilometre round trip, among other things. There was a firm commitment to correct that.

• (1810)

Today, the minister told the House that she was listening and that she was working on addressing this issue. Good. If she addresses it, I will have nothing but praise for her. However, I would like the government to do more about employment insurance. I would like it to create an EI fund administered at arm's length from government. This money belongs to workers and business owners. The government cannot dip into the fund surplus as we have seen previous governments do.

The Address

I remind members that the last government claimed its budget was balanced. However, it took \$3 billion from the EI fund to achieve that balance. That \$3 billion was intended for the next two budgets. The government must put an end to that and create an independent EI fund. When there is a surplus, the government can increase access to EI, and when there is a deficit, it can increase premiums. The fund will remain independent and will not be used to help the government achieve its financial objectives.

There has also been talk about the revitalization of our regions. My colleague from Manicouagan gave an eloquent speech on this topic, but meanwhile, the government has hardly said a word. The government often forgets that Quebec is made up of many different regions. There are four million people in the greater Montreal area, but unlike Ontario, Quebec has many other regions. Unfortunately, the government does not seem to take that into account and does not adapt its infrastructure and other programs to the realities of those regions, particularly when it comes to forestry, tourism, and the fisheries.

I would also like to briefly mention the child benefit. It seems to me that there is a practical measure that needs to be taken before the government's proposed reform is implemented. Parents are required to report the amount they received for their children under the Conservatives' UCCB program on their 2016 income tax return. That could be corrected immediately so that those benefits are not taxable.

With regard to agriculture, and more specifically supply management, the government clearly promised to compensate dairy producers, who were overlooked in the Canada-Europe agreement and the trans-Pacific partnership. The government talked about it, but nothing tangible was done for dairy producers, particularly with regard to the importation of cheese under these agreements. We will be the watchdog for dairy producers on this matter.

A discussion is needed regarding political party financing. Mr. Chrétien's Liberal government rightly established that funding should be public and that only people with the right to vote could donate to political parties. They even quoted René Lévesque to back up this change. All corporate donations were banned. By way of compensation, every party was given \$2 per vote in order to prevent government members from doing favours in return for slush fund money. It is high time to discuss this and restore the spirit of the bill introduced by the Hon. Jean Chrétien.

The Bloc Québécois will be very vigilant with respect to the promises in the throne speech. It will also be there to support deserving measures and propose real solutions to improve the lives of all Canadians and all Quebecers.

• (1815)

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on being re-elected. He is the dean of the House.

His speech was interesting, but I did not hear him say much about infrastructure. Infrastructure is extremely important in my riding. Will an investment in excess of \$60 billion or up to \$125 billion over 10 years make a difference in his riding?

Mr. Louis Plamondon: You are right, sir. I wanted to talk about infrastructure, but I ran out of time.

We support the government's infrastructure investment plan. We agree that stimulating the economy through infrastructure is a good thing.

However, small municipalities often have a hard time contributing their third. When it comes to infrastructure programs, I would like the government to consider taking on half the cost, the provinces one third, and the municipalities one-sixth. That would give municipalities that are a bit short on funds a chance to participate in this program and ensure that larger municipalities are not the only ones benefiting.

I also hope that green programs will get priority, which is something else the government promised.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind the hon. member, who is by no means new here, that he must address his comments to the chair and not other members.

The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member for his passionate speech bringing forward the concerns of his region.

Coming from a coastal community on Vancouver Island, I know that families, seniors, and small business people are having a harder and harder time making ends meet. The costs of our ferry system have gone up. The price of getting to mainland North America is out of control. As members can imagine, BC Ferries is our highway system, our link, connecting many Vancouver Islanders to the mainland.

In the election, both the previous government and member of Parliament for my riding said that the building Canada fund would include upgrades for new ferries and infrastructure. Later on the provincial minister for transportation in British Columbia said that we did not qualify for the building Canada fund. We have now found out that ferry infrastructure is not included in the building Canada fund.

Because coastal communities that need improvements in ferry infrastructure are affected all across Canada, from coast to coast to coast, I call on the member from Quebec to join me in calling on the government to serve residents in coastal communities right across this country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Madam Speaker, thank you for that remark, and through you, I wish to respond to the member.

The member first mentioned seniors. Indeed, we agree with the NDP's proposals in terms of improving the guaranteed income supplement, for instance. That was also part of our campaign platform.

As for the ferries to Victoria, I would suggest that, if Victoria needs a brand new ferry, the Davie shipyard in Quebec City would be happy to build one of the highest quality and at a good price.

The Address

As for infrastructure, all kidding aside, the member is quite right and the program must be adjusted. Some extremely worthwhile projects have been turned down in the member's province as well as in Quebec. These modifications could only be beneficial for projects as important as those mentioned by the member.

• (1820)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to say that I really liked the speech given by the member for Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel, especially when he spoke so enthusiastically and so passionately about the importance of democracy. I want to congratulate him on what he said today, as well as on his many years of service to our community.

I would like to kindly ask him if he has any advice to offer our younger members, based on his years of experience.

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Through you, Madam Speaker, I would like to tell the minister something about the many years I have spent here.

I began my political career 31 years ago, and after two or three weeks I got into the habit of making statements. I had been on the news three times and my party had not really appreciated it. When I went to a caucus meeting, an old Conservative senator—I was elected as a Progressive Conservative, a party that no longer exists—told me that he would like to speak to me in his office. I went to his office and after addressing me as “young man” and pointing out that I had just been elected, he asked me to look on the wall. There was a magnificent stuffed fish on the wall. The senator told me that had the fish kept its mouth shut, it would still be alive, and that it was pretty much the same in politics.

The best advice that I can give new MPs is to make sure, before they speak, that what they say will not come back to bite them. It was a life lesson. The work done with constituents, and not necessarily making political speeches here and there, is what most benefits voters. I suggest that they listen to their constituents and be there for them. That is the best recipe for success.

[*English*]

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to extend my congratulations to the hon. member for holding the deanship in this chamber.

I wanted to share a statistic about seniors, since he shared with us that it is our duty to defend our constituents and made a comment about seniors and the GIS. I would like to share a statistic.

In my riding of Windsor—Tecumseh, 35% of seniors have an income of \$20,000 or less. I would like to know if the hon. member has any insight about the demographics in his riding, and if he thinks the throne speech adequately addresses those very serious statistics.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Madam Speaker, the statistics are about the same in all our ridings. Seniors are getting poorer, and the cost of living has increased substantially. By comparison, their pensions have increased only slightly in relation to the cost of living and now in all our ridings there are problems with income for seniors.

All parties must think about that. The minister should know what is happening. We need to increase the guaranteed income supplement as quickly as possible.

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a great honour to rise today for my maiden speech in the House. Let me first thank the citizens of Edmonton Centre for placing their trust in me in electing me to represent them here in the House of Commons. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of the volunteers who worked tirelessly through our campaign and in the days since.

Edmonton is truly an amazing place to live, work, and play. In our city, it does not matter where one comes from, what colour of skin one happens to have, or whom one chooses to love. People are welcome, and they should have the opportunity to succeed.

A dynamic technology sector, profitable businesses in a wide range of fields, some of Canada's leading post-secondary institutions, jewels in our nation's cultural crown, and successful sports teams call Edmonton home.

For first nations, Métis, and Inuit people, an increasing number of whom call Edmonton home, there is much work that our government must do, and we are committed to renewing our nation-to-nation relationship and improving the quality of life for all indigenous peoples.

• (1825)

[*Translation*]

In 2016, Edmonton is a vibrant city where residents can fulfill their dreams and where their family, community, business, or non-profit can be successful.

[*English*]

Our collaborative city owes a debt of gratitude to Edmontonians who have served in the House, very notably, my predecessors in this seat, the hon. Laurie Hawn, a devoted and tireless example of public service, and the hon. Anne McLellan, my mentor and dear friend and the former deputy prime minister of Canada.

In the early days of my nomination, people told me that electing a Liberal in Edmonton simply would not happen, yet, as an openly gay man, I have become used to people telling me what is not possible, what simply cannot happen, and then working really hard to prove otherwise. I am thrilled to be part of the largest Liberal caucus from Alberta since 1993. I am honoured to represent Alberta in the government alongside the hon. member for Calgary Skyview, the hon. Minister of Veterans Affairs, and the hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Communities. It is a privilege to chair this Alberta caucus. We may not be many, but we are mighty.

The Address

Right now Albertans need strong advocates such as our caucus because things are tough back home. Edmonton, like the rest of Alberta, has been hit hard by the slowdown in the economy and the energy sector. The effects are being felt across our nation: 100,000 lost jobs in Alberta; tens of thousands of jobs lost across the country; tragically, suicide rates are up 30%; food banks are barely able to meet demand; unemployment is on the rise; and hard-working men and women are at risk of running out of their EI benefits with no plan B in sight.

My caucus colleagues and I know the pain and suffering that this economy is causing. I heard clearly in 10 budget round tables how the previous government's policies ignored the advice from the energy sector and environmental experts for the need for a balanced approach. The sad irony is that after 10 years of misguided handling of Canada's environment, the previous government eroded the confidence of Canadians in our number one exporting sector and systematically failed to create access to new markets. Perhaps if there had been less cheer and more leadership, our economy would be in a better state of affairs today.

Edmontonians and Albertans are looking for leadership to grow our economy. I am proud to say that our government has a plan to deliver that leadership. Our government is committed to ensuring that the environmental assessment and regulatory review processes for pipelines and other natural resource projects have the confidence of Canadians. We understand that the natural resource sector is a critical component of the Canadian economy. That is why our Speech from the Throne outlines our balanced approach to creating a 21st century economy built on the fusion of energy and the environment. This new triple-E, energy, the environment, and the economy, is the way forward.

Edmontonians and Albertans have always been strong contributors to Confederation. We are once again more than ready to roll up our sleeves with Canadians from coast to coast to coast and get back to work.

[*Translation*]

Our government has already cut taxes for more than nine million Canadians.

[*English*]

Edmontonians also know that now is the time to invest in repairing and expanding our infrastructure and now is the time to build up our communities. We want to see our government pay our fair share for the new Valley Line LRT, the west leg of which will run right through my riding. We want to see federal leadership on building new social housing, seniors' housing, and affordable housing. We want to keep our city growing and our citizens working.

[*Translation*]

I am also proud to sit in the House as a franco-Albertan. Alberta's francophone community has been experiencing a boom as of late, fuelled by the arrival of francophones from across Canada, as well as the arrival of many immigrants from French-speaking countries. As a result, bilingualism is on the rise in my province, and we are seeing more and more interest in French and French culture in Alberta.

● (1830)

[*English*]

During the campaign and since, we have heard loudly from Edmontonians and from people around the world that we must fix a broken immigration system. That is exactly what our throne speech sets out and our government is already delivering on real change. Our commitment to bring 25,000 Syrian refugees to our country has renewed our sense of community spirit and reminded us and our international partners of the special role that Canada can and must play in the world.

[*Translation*]

In conclusion, I want to share some words from His Excellency the Right Honourable Georges P. Vanier, former governor general of Canada, who had the following to say about public life and serving others:

[*English*]

We must approach our time here in that spirit of service. Our constituents elected us to serve them, but it is the entire country that demands our attention. It is our task to serve this great modern mosaic north of the 49th parallel that we all call home. Each of us, however long we may be called to serve, must bear this purpose in mind and act accordingly so that on our last day in this place, we might say that we leave a better, more prosperous, and more united nation than when we first rose to speak.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on an excellent speech and on his election.

The government promised Canadians that it would run a deficit of only \$10 billion, but current promises are already adding up to way more than that. The government says that it is going to be open and transparent, but it is not telling Canadians how big this deficit will be. We can do the math. The Liberals added more than \$2 billion to give away to developing nations like China and India related to climate change. They increased spending for Syrian refugees by half a billion dollars. They introduced tax breaks at a cost \$1 billion to \$2 billion, and they added money for public sector workers and the long-form census, for another couple of billion, and it just goes on and on.

How high is this deficit going to go?

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Speaker, I am happy to respond, on behalf of our government, that it is our commitment to grow the Canadian economy, to increase international trade, and to have a review process for pipelines that has the confidence of Canadians. As it pertains to the budget and to the fiscal situation of our government, we are committed to ensuring that the debt-to-GDP ratio continues to track downward, reflecting a healthier economy in each of the years of our mandate. We will hold to that promise, because that is what we promised Canadians during the election and that is the type of government they have in the House.

The Address

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the things the hon. member mentioned was infrastructure, which is very important to municipalities. As a former mayor, I wonder if the hon. member would join with me in encouraging the minister responsible for infrastructure to change the formula, as municipalities struggle economically. The general formula is that municipalities have to come up with the first one-third for infrastructure funding. The province provides one-third and the federal government provides one-third. Coming up with that first one-third is very difficult.

Would the hon. member join with me in encouraging the minister to change the formula and provide more funding directly to municipalities?

• (1835)

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Speaker, our government will be undertaking broad consultations as we fan out across the country to make sure that we have the best bang for our buck when it comes to infrastructure spending. We will be looking at shovel-ready projects. We will be looking to work with communities across the country. That is what can be expected from this government.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 6:36 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

[*English*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

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

• (1900)

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

(*Division No. 10*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag
Alleslev

Alghabra
Amos

Anandasangaree
Arya
Badawey
Baylis
Bélanger
Bibeau
Blair
Bossio
Breton
Caesar-Chavannes
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chan
Cuzner
Damoff
Dhaliwal
Di Iorio
Drouin
Duguid
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyking
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fry
Garneau
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Grewal
Hardie
Hehr
Housefather
Hutchings
Joly
Jordan
Kang
Khera
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lebouthillier
Lemieux
Levitt
Lockhart
Longfield
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)
May (Saarich—Gulf Islands)
McCrimmon
McGuinity
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Soeurs)
Monsef
Morrissey
Nassif
O'Connell
Oliver
Ouellette
Peschisolido
Petipas Taylor
Picard
Qualtrough
Rioux
Rodriguez
Rota
Ruimy
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sorbara
Tabbara
Tassi

Arseneault
Ayoub
Bagnell
Beech
Bennett
Bittle
Boissonnault
Bratina
Brisson
Carr
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Chen
Dabrusin
DeCoursey
Dhillon
Dion
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson
Fillmore
Fisher
Foote
Fraser (West Nova)
Freeland
Fuhr
Gerretsen
Goodale
Graham
Hajdu
Harvey
Holland
Hussen
Iacono
Jones
Jowhari
Khalid
Lametti
Lapointe
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Leslie
Lightbound
Long
Ludwig
Maloney
McCallum
McDonald
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-
Morneau
Murray
Nault
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Peterson
Philpott
Poissant
Ratansi
Robillard
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Saini
Samson
Sarai
Schiefke
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sohi
Spengemann
Tan
Tootoo

Adjournment Proceedings

Trudeau
Vandenbeld
Virani
Wilson-Raybould
Young

Vandal
Vaughan
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Zahid— 178

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
Albrecht
Anderson
Arnold
Barlow
Beaulieu
Bergen
Berthold
Blaikie
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Boucher
Boulerice
Brassard
Brown
Cannings
Carrie
Choquette
Clarke
Cooper
Davies
Diotte
Donnelly
Dubé
Dusseault
Eglinski
Fast
Garrison
Genuis
Gladu
Gourde
Hoback
Jeneroux
Julian
Kent
Kmiec
Lake
Laverdière
Lobb
MacGregor
Maguire
Marcil
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Moore
Nantel
Nicholson
Obhrai
Pauzé
Poilievre
Raitt
Rankin
Reid
Richards
Saganash
Saroya
Schmale
Shipley
Sorenson
Ste-Marie
Stewart
Stubbs
Thériault
Trudel
Van Loan
Viersen
Warawa
Watts
Webber
Wong
Zimmer— 139

Albas
Allison
Angus
Ashton
Barsalou-Duval
Benson
Bernier
Bezan
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Block
Boudrias
Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau
Calkins
Caron
Chong
Christopherson
Clement
Cullen
Deltell
Doherty
Dreesen
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Falk
Fortin
Généreux
Gill
Godin
Hardeastle
Hughes
Johns
Kelly
Kitchen
Kwan
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Liepert
Lukiwski
MacKenzie
Malcolmson
Mathysen
McColeman
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Mulcair
Nater
Nuttall
O'Toole
Plamondon
Quach
Ramsey
Rayes
Rempel
Ritz
Sansoucy
Scheer
Shields
Sopuck
Stanton
Stetski
Strahl
Sweet
Tilson
Van Kesteren
Vecchio
Wagantall
Warkentin
Waugh
Weir
Yurdiga

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

• (1905)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.) moved:

That the Address be engrossed and presented to His Excellency the Governor General by the Speaker.

(Motion agreed to)

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

[English]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to rise in the House today during adjournment proceedings. This is a follow-up to my question on December 11, 2015, regarding the need to end the current monopoly on the lucrative Arctic surf clam fishery in Atlantic Canada.

In July 2015, under the previous Conservative government, the former minister of fisheries and oceans, Gail Shea, announced an increase in the total allowable catch, or TAC, for offshore Arctic surf clams from 38,756 tonnes to 52,655 tonnes. Assessing the stocks on both Banquereau and Grand Bank, Department of Fisheries and Oceans scientists deemed the populations to be healthy and sustainable.

This was great news for Atlantic Canadians. The surf clam fishery is estimated to be worth over \$60 million. The increase in TAC would allow for new entrants into the fishery, breaking the current monopoly held by a single company, Clearwater Seafoods, creating new jobs and economic benefits.

The CEO of Ocean Choice, Martin Sullivan, said this of the announcement:

The decision to expand the Offshore Clam fishery will have a very positive impact on rural communities in Newfoundland & Labrador and Nova Scotia. We would like to thank the Government for listening to stakeholders by growing this fishery while maintaining a strong commitment to sustainability of the resource.

Jim Kennedy, owner of Louisbourg Seafoods, said:

This licence should be a \$30-million-a-year business. It would bring an enormous boost to the economy in Cape Breton Island and to the workers.

By early December, the town of Burin in Newfoundland and Labrador and Cooke Clam Group had joined a growing list of municipalities and companies urging the new Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard to follow through on the scientific advice provided by his own department.

The proposal by Cooke Clam Group, a Canadian-owned joint venture between Cooke Seafood Inc., Brian McNamara and Miawpukek First Nation, promised to create 100 jobs in the region of Burin.

Unfortunately, on December 18, Friday afternoon and a week before Christmas, the minister announced that he would not follow through on the expert advice of his own department and would not increase the Arctic surf clam TAC. To date, the minister has failed to provide the scientific reasoning for making this decision.

Adjournment Proceedings

The consequences of the minister's decision will be felt throughout Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia in lost jobs and lost economic opportunities. The minister has decided instead to protect the monopoly, to protect a single company, Clearwater Seafoods, a company that despite having the sole right to this fishery regularly fails to make use of its full quota.

Will the parliamentary secretary explain to this House and Atlantic Canadians why the government has chosen to ignore the scientific advice from DFO, why it is protecting a monopoly, and why it will not stand up for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia to create these new jobs?

● (1910)

Mr. Omar Alghabra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, on December 18, 2015, the minister announced that the total allowable catch for offshore Arctic surf clam would be set at 38,756 tonnes for 2016, which is the level it has been at for a number of years.

The Government of Canada is committed to science-based decision-making and to making fisheries management decisions in an open and transparent way.

Increasing the total allowable catch should only be done when supported by sound, peer-reviewed science advice. Prior to any changes in the total allowable catch and any decision on new entrants, the minister has asked for additional science work to be completed in order to make a fully informed decision. The minister has also directed the department to consider a spatial management system for the fishery and whether this would improve its long-term sustainability. Arctic surf clams are slow growing and sedentary creatures. A spatial management regime could be designed in a way that would allow for areas to rebuild and mature during years where the harvest is conducted in other areas.

The minister has also requested that further consultations be held to collaborate on the best way to manage the stock. Consultations will be held on these issues and will include input from stakeholders, provinces, and indigenous groups. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans will engage with interested stakeholders, indigenous groups, and the current licence holder on a process to refresh the science framework for this fishery and consider the implementation of spatial management.

To that end, an Offshore Clam Advisory Committee meeting has been scheduled for February 9. In addition, on January 29, an Offshore Clam Management Board meeting will also take place. These meetings will provide an important opportunity for interested parties to share their views on the future of this fishery in an open and transparent way.

The minister recognizes that several groups put significant effort into applications for new access to this fishery for 2016. However, the minister will not be making further decisions about this fishery until he is confident of its long-term sustainability. Thirteen

applications for new access have been received. These proposals remain sealed.

The minister has reiterated his commitment to support the economic development of coastal communities, but has said that the best way to do this is to ensure the long-term sustainability of the resources on which they depend. The fishery opened on January 1, as scheduled.

● (1915)

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the parliamentary secretary for reading the remarks that were prepared for him by staff in the office of the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard.

Why we are concerned on this side of the House is that the science has been done. There were two independent expert analyses commissioned by the department that said that the TAC could be increased, that by bringing in new entrants, we would bring in new jobs. Minister Gail Shea, when she brought in this increased total allowable catch, put in a process to safeguard the sustainability of the fishery. Departmental officials would be working with industry to establish a robust scientific program, as well as a rotational spatial management system, for the fishery starting with the 2016 season.

The science has been done. The industry was going to be part of the very system that the minister now claims he has to set up. Again I will ask the question. Why are the Liberals protecting this monopoly? Why will they not end the monopoly, allow new entrants, and allow more Canadians to get to work fishing on the east coast?

Mr. Omar Alghabra: Madam Speaker, let me reiterate that the Government of Canada is committed to science-based decision-making and making fisheries management decisions in an open and transparent way. Increasing the total allowable catch should only be done when supported by sound, peer-reviewed science advice.

Prior to any change in the total allowable catch, the minister has asked for additional work to be undertaken and the department is currently developing a plan to carry out that work. In addition, the minister has asked that open and transparent discussions take place very soon, with all interested parties in the fishery. These meetings will be taking place in the coming weeks.

The minister recognizes the hard work that several groups have put into the development of their applications. However, he will not be making further decisions about this fishery until he is confident of its long-term sustainability.

[*Translation*]

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

(The House adjourned at 7:17 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Wednesday, January 27, 2016

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Maurice Strong	
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	475
Allan MacDonald	
Mr. Easter	475
Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Mr. Clement	475
Marcel Barbeau	
Ms. Petitpas Taylor	476
International Holocaust Remembrance Day	
Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	476
Family Literacy Day	
Mr. Boissonnault	476
International Adoptions	
Mr. Cooper	476
Public Service	
Mr. Kang	476
Family Literacy Day	
Mr. Samson	476
Lucie Lauzier	
Mr. Deltell	477
Health	
Mr. Cuzner	477
Health	
Ms. Fry	477
International Holocaust Remembrance Day	
Mr. Genuis	477
Refugees	
Ms. Gould	478
Banknotes	
Ms. Malcolmson	478
The Economy	
Ms. Harder	478
International Holocaust Remembrance Day	
Mr. Levitt	478

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Economy	
Ms. Ambrose	478
Mr. Trudeau	479
Ms. Ambrose	479
Mr. Trudeau	479
Foreign Affairs	
Ms. Ambrose	479
Mr. Trudeau	479
Mr. Clement	479

Mr. Trudeau	479
Mr. Clement	479
Mr. Trudeau	479
Canada Post	
Mr. Mulcair	479
Mr. Trudeau	480
Pensions	
Mr. Mulcair	480
Mr. Trudeau	480
Mr. Mulcair	480
Mr. Trudeau	480
Mr. Mulcair	480
Mr. Trudeau	480
Foreign Affairs	
Mr. Bernier	480
Mr. Dion	480
Mr. Bernier	480
Mr. Dion	481
Mr. Allison	481
Mr. Dion	481
Mr. Allison	481
Mr. Dion	481
Mr. Kent	481
Mr. Dion	481
Mr. Kent	481
Mr. Dion	481
Indigenous Affairs	
Mr. Saganash	481
Ms. Bennett	481
Government Appointments	
Mr. Angus	481
Ms. Bennett	482
The Economy	
Mr. Barlow	482
Mr. Carr	482
Mrs. Stubbs	482
Mr. Morneau	482
Mr. Calkins	482
Mr. Morneau	482
Mrs. Block	482
Mr. Morneau	482
Employment Insurance	
Mr. Caron	483
Ms. Mihychuk	483
Ms. Ashton	483
Ms. Mihychuk	483
Foreign Affairs	
Mr. Wrzesnewskyj	483
Mr. Dion	483

Public Safety	
Ms. Rempel	483
Mr. Goodale	483
Ms. Rempel	483
Mr. Goodale	483

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship	
Mr. Saroya	484
Mr. McCallum	484
Mr. Saroya	484
Mr. McCallum	484

Health	
Ms. Benson	484
Mrs. Philpott	484
Ms. Sansoucy	484
Mrs. Philpott	484

Government Appointments	
Mr. Warkentin	484
Mr. MacAulay	484
Mr. Warkentin	485
Mr. MacAulay	485

Natural Resources	
Mr. Nuttall	485
Mr. Carr	485

Health	
Mrs. Nassif	485
Mrs. Philpott	485

Veterans Affairs	
Mr. Clarke	485
Mr. Hehr	485

Steel Industry	
Mr. Duvall	485
Mr. Fergus	485

Employment	
Mr. Vandal	485
Ms. Mihychuk	486

Democratic Reform	
Mr. Reid	486
Ms. Monsef	486

Agriculture and Agri-food	
Mr. Marcil	486
Mr. MacAulay	486

Presence in Gallery	
The Speaker	486

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

The Environment	
Ms. McKenna	486
Mr. Fast	487
Mr. Cullen	488
Interparliamentary Delegations	
Mr. Gourde	490

National Anthem Act	
Mr. Bélanger	490
Bill C-210. Introduction and first reading	490
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	490

Petitions	
Poverty	
Ms. Gladu	490
Falun Gong	
Ms. Gladu	490
Social Housing	
Ms. Boutin-Sweet	490
Questions on the Order Paper	
Mr. Lamoureux	490
Motions for Papers	
Mr. Lamoureux	490

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Resumption of debate on Address in Reply	
Mrs. Gill	491
Ms. Quach	491
Mr. Lamoureux	491
Mr. Waugh	492
Mr. Anandasangaree	493
Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	493
Mr. McCauley	493
Mr. Vaughan	495
Ms. Quach	495
Ms. Gladu	496
Mr. Fillmore	496
Mr. Nater	498
Mr. Saganash	498
Mr. Plamondon	498
Mr. Saini	498
Ms. Gladu	500
Ms. Benson	500
Mr. Baylis	500
Mr. Donnelly	500
Mr. Bossio	502
Ms. Gladu	502
Ms. Hardcastle	503
Mr. Lamoureux	504
Ms. Gladu	504
Ms. Dhillon	505
Mr. Saganash	506
Ms. Gladu	506
Mr. Vaughan	507
Mr. Poissant	507
Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	508
Mr. Barsalou-Duval	508
Mr. Breton	509
Mr. Plamondon	509
Mr. Drouin	511
Mr. Johns	511
Mr. Duclos	512
Ms. Hardcastle	512

Mr. Boissonnault	512
Ms. Gladu	513
Mr. Stetski	514
Motion agreed to	515
Mr. LeBlanc	515
Motion	515
(Motion agreed to)	515

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Fisheries and Oceans

Mr. Strahl	515
Mr. Alghabra	516

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <http://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante : <http://www.noscommunes.ca>