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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, January 29, 2019

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, January 29, 2019

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

BILL C-421—CITIZENSHIP ACT

VOTE ON THE DESIGNATION OF AN ITEM

The Speaker: The Chair wishes to make a brief statement on the manner in which the secret ballot vote will be conducted on the designation of Bill C-421, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act (adequate knowledge of French in Quebec).

The Chair wants to clarify some of the procedures to ensure that the proceedings unfold in an orderly fashion.

Members may obtain their ballot from the table officer seated on their side of the chamber. However, during routine proceedings, statements by members and question period, the ballots will be handed out in the hall behind the Speaker's chair.

[*English*]

Members will then be able to mark their ballots in secret at the two voting stations situated in the corridor behind the Speaker's chair. Completed ballots are to be deposited in the ballot box, which will be placed at the foot of the table during Routine Proceedings, Statements by Members and Oral Questions. The ballot box will be placed behind the Speaker's chair so as not to disrupt the proceedings in the chamber.

I trust this now clearly explains to all hon. members how proceedings will be conducted. Therefore, pursuant to Standing Order 92(4), I now direct that the vote on the designation of Bill C-421 commence.

[*Translation*]

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

POINT OF ORDER

VOTE ON THE DESIGNATION OF AN ITEM

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today not to speak about the method you will be using for the next secret ballot on the votability of Bill C-421, which was introduced by the member for La Pointe-de-l'Île, but to ask that the result of the secret ballot be announced at the same time as the result of the vote.

We therefore ask that the Speaker announce not only whether Bill C-421 is votable or not, but also the number of votes in favour and votes against.

Standing Orders 92(4)(a) and 92(4)(b) have been used only once before. Mr. Speaker, on that occasion, you followed the practice following upon the election of the Speaker, which is to announce the result of the vote with no reference to the number of ballots cast for each side of the question.

On November 27, 2017, my NDP colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby clearly articulated one of the issues surrounding the announcement of ballot results. On that day, he said:

This place runs on precedent and previous practice and the only other use of a secret ballot vote in the House is for the election of the Speaker. That procedure is prescribed by Standing Orders 2 through 7 and they are designed to show the importance of the following of these rules.

It is rather ironic to compare the election of a Speaker of the House of Commons, which falls under sections 44 and 49 of the Constitution Act of 1867, to the votability and thus the constitutionality of Bill C-421, which should be considered as part of the regular legislative work of the House.

We understand full well why it is important to protect and not undermine a new Speaker by not divulging the number of supporting votes he or she received. That helps prevent the Speaker's mandate from being challenged, but who is the government trying to protect in the case of Bill C-421?

The purpose of the secret ballot under Standing Order 92(4)(b) is to allow members to vote freely without their party whip knowing how they voted, but how would we know if the vote was in fact whipped?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Luc Thériault: If any of the members opposite have something to say, then they should rise and say it; otherwise, they should let me talk.

Privilege

The government is trying to muzzle the opposition by saying that the bill is clearly unconstitutional, when that may not in fact be the case. We are not calling into question the secret ballot, but we believe that it is essential that the number of members who are in favour and the number who are opposed be made known, precisely to counter the government's will to impose a gag order.

To put this in context, a bill can be rejected if it is clearly unconstitutional. The third edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* from 2017 is very clear on the subject:

Bills and motions must not clearly violate the Constitution Acts, 1867 to 1982, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

During his testimony in committee, a House of Commons law clerk explained that Bill C-421 was not clearly unconstitutional because arguments could be made both for and against its constitutionality. Unfortunately, the Liberal majority decided otherwise, not based on whether the bill was unconstitutional, but for its own partisan reasons.

Over the next two days, members will decide whether private member's Bill C-421 can be designated votable. This matter relates to the legislative procedure governing private members' bills, which is something we have dealt with about a thousand times since the last election. It is not a constitutional matter like the election of the Speaker of the House.

It is rare that we see such an obvious imbalance between parliamentary democracy and partisan politics within the Subcommittee on Private Members' Business of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs and the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

For the government to use its majority to defeat a bill after debate in the House is one thing, but for it to stop the debate before it begins is another thing altogether.

• (1010)

Civic debate must be allowed in Parliament. What is the point of debate otherwise, if not to serve a parliamentary dictatorship?

Disclosing the vote results, while respecting each member's secret vote, would fall in line with what seems to me should be the goal of this Parliament in the 21st century, namely transparency and democracy.

For the same reasons given by the member for New Westminster—Burnaby, for the additional reasons I just outlined regarding the spirit in which the standing order was written, and for the reasons I mentioned about avoiding the kind of obfuscation that can undermine the vitality of parliamentary democracy, we are asking that the vote results be disclosed, specifically the number of votes in favour of the bill and the number against.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Montcalm for his arguments. I think he will have to seek the unanimous consent of the House, but I will consider the matter and submit my response to the House today.

I understand that the hon. member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel is rising on a question of privilege.

PRIVILEGE

THE HON. MEMBER FOR SAINT-LÉONARD—SAINT-MICHEL

Mr. Nicola Di Iorio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on December 13, 2018, at the end of the very last sitting of the House before the long Christmas adjournment, the hon. NDP member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley raised another question of privilege about me.

At that time, the NDP member had the following information in his possession.

First, he knew that on April 25, 2018, I issued a press release in which I announced that I intended to step down for very serious personal and family reasons and that in the meantime I would continue performing my duties as MP.

Second, he knew that I was present in the House until the adjournment in June. In fact, on June 12, 2018, I rose in the House to thank my constituents and wish my colleagues well.

Third, on November 6, 2018, I publicly announced that I would be resigning on January 22, 2019, and that I would be donating my MP's salary as of that date.

Fourth, two days after the announcement of my resignation and the donation, the NDP member submitted a request for an inquiry by the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, who I will henceforth simply refer to as the commissioner.

In this request, the member alleged that I breached the conflict of interest code by collecting my salary and not being present in the House during certain periods.

Fifth, on November 26, 2018, the NDP member raised a question of privilege about the same issues found in his complaint to the commissioner.

Sixth, on December 11, 2018, I addressed the House in response to the question of privilege raised by the member, who admitted that he was aware of my comments, including the statement that I would not keep my salary for the period from the fall to the return of the House.

Seventh, on December 11, 2018, the Chair ruled on the NDP member's question of privilege and concluded the following:

[*English*]

The member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel provided the House with his reasons for his absence.

[*Translation*]

He added:

[*English*]

...the Chair finds that there is no prima facie question of privilege....

[*Translation*]

I want to share some other facts with the House.

On January 11, 2019, the ethics commissioner ruled on the NDP member's call for an investigation. I had previously submitted everything required, as well as the information and answers to the questions asked of me.

Privilege

In his ruling on the NDP member's request for an investigation into me, the commissioner stated the following:

Based on your statements and on the information you submitted describing how you continued to carry out your parliamentary duties while engaging in extra-parliamentary activities, I've decided that an investigation is not warranted in the circumstances, and have informed [the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley and his colleague] of my decision.

Even though the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley was trying every trick in the book to damage my good reputation, all of his complaints and recriminations were rejected by the appropriate authorities. I remind members that no one else has made any accusations against me.

Since the member waited until December 13, 2018, just before the break, to raise the new question of privilege, you indicated that it would be dealt with when the House reconvened. I asked whether I could respond to it during the break. I intended to resign my seat on January 22. That day, I received a message from you saying that, if I wanted to respond to the NDP member's question, then I would have to do so in the House when it reconvened.

Although your message was dated January 21, I was unable to read it until the next day because of technical difficulties. Since yesterday's schedule involved dealing with protocol issues, today is the first opportunity I have had to respond.

On December 11, I responded in French to the NDP member's November 26 question of privilege. I wrote the response myself. When drafting his December 13 question of privilege, the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley made a very surprising choice. He chose to rely on the English translation that I had nothing to do with drafting. The NDP member chose to ignore the original French version and rely only on the translation.

I will never ever, under any circumstances, apologize to anyone for speaking in French. French is the language of this country, my county. French is the language Canada was built on. Although I cannot and do not plan to force anyone to learn it, I can still insist that it be shown the proper respect.

It is true that I switch between English, French and also Italian when speaking to my colleagues. Let us agree that this is each person's choice to make. In Quebec and in the other provinces in general, I work with Canadians in the language of their choice. However, when I rise in the House, I mainly speak in the first language I learned at school, after my mother tongue, Italian, which I still speak on a daily basis, as does my entire family.

The NDP MP ignored my French statement. If he had bothered to use the language spoken by the other Canadians he represents, he would have realized I did not say the words he attributed to me. What I said was “je n'empoche pas de salaire”, meaning I am not pocketing any salary. If he had just checked, he would know that “empocher” means “collect”.

• (1015)

Furthermore, he knew that I had also said, in the same statement, that I would not keep my MP's salary for the period in the fall when I was not present in the House.

The NDP member was aware of all these facts and knew that I was not keeping my salary for the period beginning with the return of the

House last September. Nevertheless, he chose to tell the House that I had been absent for eight months, although he knew full well that that was false because he referenced a statement I made in the House in June 2018, around the time of adjournment for the summer. His statement is false and the member who made it knew that it was false.

The vagaries of life would have it that, one way or the other, I would not have been able to carry out my mandate. Nevertheless, I served my constituents to the end. I was not present in the House, but I continued my work as an MP and worked on a cause that is dear to me. At the beginning of my leave I chose not to keep my salary. I was also very clear with those I spoke to. I did not publicize it because, during my career, I made charitable donations in addition to volunteering.

• (1020)

The Speaker: Order. Would the member please tell me how much more time he wants? I would like him to conclude his remarks. I appreciate the points he raised, but I would ask him to be brief.

Mr. Nicola Di Iorio: Mr. Speaker, on December 11, you made the following statement:

[*English*]

...the presence...in the Chamber is largely a function of politics, not procedure or law.

[*Translation*]

Politics is certainly a part of all this, but there can be no doubt that, at all times, I acted, I worked and, above all—let me make this clear—I fought to protect my constituents. I believe in my country, in our values, and in my duty to stand up to danger to ensure their survival.

On January 22, 2018, I announced that I was donating \$100,000 to a cause that is very close to my heart and that I have worked hard to support: preventing impaired driving.

That amount is much greater than the salary I collected during the period I mentioned. It is much greater than the \$120 deducted per day of non-attendance in excess of 21 days as set out in the Act. That deduction was not made because I continued to carry out my parliamentary duties. Anyway, I would point out that, like many of my colleagues, I was switching Fridays from the start. On other days, like my colleagues, I had to be away from Ottawa to participate in various activities. There were also health-related absences.

As I prepare to leave this place, I do not wish to draw attention to the fact that I worked without keeping my salary for myself. I want everyone to focus instead on the prevention work we can all do to make a difference. I helped establish the National Impaired Driving Prevention Week, created by Motion No. 148, which my government committed to supporting and was passed by all my colleagues in the House. We are in the early months of cannabis being legal, a time when we must all be extra careful and, above all, pursue and redouble our efforts because—and I cannot stress this enough—prevention saves lives.

Although life circumstances dictate that I can no longer complete my term, there is no question that no matter how much time I have left, I will dedicate all my energy to supporting this important cause.

Routine Proceedings

In closing, I extend my hand to my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley, who has publicly expressed his doubts about pursuing his career in the House, out of concern for his family. I wish him well. If he looks carefully he will see that there are more things that unite us than divide us. For example, when I look at the things he is passionate about, I can say that I was the first MP in history to come to work in a fully electric car, one without a fuel tank.

I would also like to say that I have nothing against him. My NDP colleague talked about cynicism in his question of privilege. Anyone looking at the situation could easily see it in a completely different way. It makes me wonder what more I could have done, in my case, to reconcile the service I owed to my constituents with my loyalty to my caucus.

• (1025)

The Speaker: Order.

I very much appreciate the hon. member's comments, but I have already given him a lot of time, and he addressed several topics in his question of privilege. I asked him how many more minutes he needed to finish his speech and I did not get a response. The hon. member is now talking about something else. Perhaps he could conclude his intervention in one minute.

Mr. Nicola Di Iorio: Mr. Speaker, I continued to work, I fought for my constituents, I worked to save lives, and I made a \$100,000-donation. If anyone can do better in my circumstances, I would ask them to walk the talk and prove it.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member. I will come back to the House with a ruling.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Hon. Robert Nault (Kenora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a proud occasion to have the chance to speak in this new chamber for the first time.

Pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, three reports of the Canadian section of ParlAmericas respecting its participation, first, at the Bilateral Visit to Panama and 3rd Gathering of the Parliamentary Network on Climate Change in Panama City, Panama, from October 1 to 5, 2018.

The second report is on its participation at the 40th Annual Forum for Parliamentarians for Global Action in Kiev, Ukraine, on November 16 and 17, 2018.

The third report is on its participation at the ParlAmericas meeting on Transformational Leadership for Gender Equality in the Caribbean, Bridgetown, Barbados, on November 19 and 20, 2018.

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 16th report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage entitled “Gender Parity on the Boards and Senior Leadership Levels of Canadian Artistic and Cultural Organizations”.

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

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise for the first time in this new House of Commons.

Pursuant to Standing Orders 104 and 114, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 81st report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of committees of the House, and I would like to move concurrence in the report now.

• (1030)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[English]

PETITIONS

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition in support of Bill S-240 on organ harvesting.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present e-petition 1825 from more than 600 Canadians.

The petitioners state that the Canadian government has publicly committed itself to the defence of human rights and that the federal law, the Magnitsky Act, has been passed, whereby the government has the power to take action against foreign nationals responsible for gross violations of internationally recognized human rights. They are concerned that the government has not taken action on Oleh Sentsov, Oleksandr Shumko and Volodymyr Balukh.

The petitioners therefore call on the government to take action to protect the 60 Ukrainians who were imprisoned in Russia and against those Russian entities.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise for the first time in our new facilities, even though we are still struggling to get used to them.

I have two petitions to present. The first is from numerous residents of Nova Scotia, particularly Pictou County. The petitioners draw the attention of this House to the ongoing threats from the kraft mill at Abercrombie, Nova Scotia. It has a long history of pollution that is causing concern locally. To deal with a pollution problem that for decades was handled completely inadequately by the Nova Scotia department of environment, the proposal the petitioners draw our attention to is to put a pipe out into the Gulf of St. Lawrence. This pipe will pump untreated effluent directly into the gulf.

The petitioners call on the House of Commons to call on the Government of Canada to insist on a full environmental review under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition was referenced already in the House this morning. It addresses the horrific problem of organ harvesting and of trafficking in human organs. Petitioners from throughout the GTA have signed this petition that I submit to the House today to end this abominable practice.

* * *

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 would ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—FEDERAL DEFICIT

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC) moved:

That, given the Prime Minister broke his promise to eliminate the deficit this year and that perpetual and growing deficits lead to massive tax increases, the House call on the Prime Minister to table a plan in Budget 2019 to eliminate the deficit quickly with a written commitment that he will never raise taxes of any kind.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in this new chamber for my first speech here, and may it always remain faithful to the principles and practices of its predecessor. That is our inheritance as parliamentarians and as Canadians.

Speaking of inheritances, the Prime Minister inherited a massive family fortune. He has bragged about it. He has called it a family fortune. Because he has never had to worry about money, he does not worry much about Canadians' money. He believes budgets balance themselves. For people who inherit a family fortune, I suppose they do. He believes one can borrow one's way out of debt. I

Business of Supply

guess if one has always made other people pay for one's mistakes, that might make sense.

However, for ordinary, everyday Canadians who get up in the morning and earn a living and pay their bills with their own money, none of those things makes sense at all. The problem with this mindset is not just that it dances riddles in the Prime Minister's brain, but that it plays out in real consequences for Canadians, consequences they feel in their everyday lives. Canadians are paying for his mistakes.

Political life has only grown the Prime Minister's fortune. He forces taxpayers to fund his nannies while working Canadians pay for their own child care expenses. He was found guilty of breaking ethics laws by accepting hundreds of thousands of dollars in free vacations from someone seeking a grant from his government. He accepted thousands of dollars in speaking fees from charities and school boards while he was being paid to work here in the House of Commons. At that time, he had the third worst attendance record of any of the then 308 members of Parliament. He even forced Canadian taxpayers to pay the expense for him to clown around India with a terrorist and a celebrity chef in tow, until that great country laughed him out of town.

Canadians work hard and they pinch their pennies, so they laugh when the Prime Minister says that the budget will balance itself. Many of them, though, believed him when he put his hand on his heart and promised that the budget would be balanced this year. He looked them straight in the eye and said there would be three modest deficits followed by a balanced budget this year.

However, now we know that not only did this Prime Minister inherit a fortune, but he is costing Canadians a fortune. The debt is growing to four times as much as he said. Far from being balanced this year, the budget will not be balanced, according to Finance Canada, until the year 2040. We know what this means, and that is the purpose of this debate.

We know that this Prime Minister's out-of-control and growing deficit today will lead, if he is re-elected, to higher taxes tomorrow. Before we get into the case to prove that reality, let us just point out that not everybody is doing worse.

The wealthiest Canadians are doing much better. The Prime Minister and people like him who have family fortunes, such as the trust fund finance minister, are in the class of the one per cent. According to the CRA, the wealthiest one per cent is actually paying \$4.6 billion less in income taxes than it was in the final year of the previous Conservative government. This, of course, runs contrary to the Prime Minister's promise, but it is the factual reality, which his own department of tax collection has publicly reported, and which has been printed in the *Globe and Mail*.

Business of Supply

Unfortunately, for everyone else, those people without a family fortune, life is getting more expensive. Let us just recap why it is getting more expensive. When it becomes costly, the government makes life more costly. Deficits drive up interest rates and inflation in the present, and they drive up taxes in the future. That is why Canadians are consistently telling us they cannot make ends meet.

● (1035)

Half of Canadians now say they are \$200 away from insolvency, not able to pay their monthly bills. I have an unfortunate message, a warning, for all Canadians. Yes, taxes have gone up under the present Prime Minister, but they ain't seen nothing yet, and let me give the evidence for that claim.

First, the Prime Minister broke his promise and raised taxes once before. The average middle-class family is paying \$800 more in taxes than when he took office. This is because he took away the children's fitness tax credit, the transit tax credit, the textbook tax credit from students and the education tax credit from those same students. That is in addition to the increases in payroll taxes that take effect this year and the carbon tax that takes effect on April 1.

The Prime Minister took in all of the extra revenue from these taxes, and one would think that would have helped the budgetary balance, but instead the \$20-billion windfall that resulted from higher taxes and a booming world economy has vanished, because the Prime Minister blew every penny.

That brings us to the second point. The Prime Minister not only raised taxes, but he got caught trying to raise others. He attempted to impose a 73% tax on small business investment. He attempted to impose new tax penalties on family businesses that transfer the company or the farm from father to son or mother to daughter. He tried to tax health and dental benefits.

He even tried to put in a new tax on what are called employee discounts, like when a waitress has a chicken salad sandwich on her 10-minute break at one o'clock in the morning. Her employer was going to have to put that on her T4 slip and force her to pay income tax on it at the end of the year. Thank God we caught the Prime Minister and forced him to put that plan on ice.

He also attempted to take away the disability tax credit from diabetics. These tax hikes will all be back if he is re-elected, when he will no longer need voters but will still need their money.

Then we have the carbon tax cover-up. It started with the blacking out of documents that I requested in an ATIP, asking for the real cost to average families of the Liberal carbon tax. The Liberals claim that this tax makes people better off. If that were true, surely they would be determined to release every single government document they have to prove it. Instead, there are dozens of pages covered, ironically, with black ink, which is of course a carbon-based product itself. They have not revealed how much carbon went into that ink either, so that is another part of this cover-up. That is only the first part of the costs they refused to reveal.

The second part is that the documents they released that were not blacked out indicated that they will not be able to meet their climate change goals with a \$50-a-tonne carbon tax. They now admit that it will require a \$300 carbon tax. That is six times higher than they admit and 15 times higher than the tax is expected to be this year.

Rather than, as the government claims, costing Ontario families about \$600, when the carbon tax is implemented it will cost them over \$3,000. Rather than costing the average Saskatchewan family about \$900, it will cost that same family well over \$5,000.

Again, that is based on documents the government released, and the numbers are calculated based on the government's own figures. These are not the opposition's calculations; they come directly out of the government's documents. In reality, if Canadians re-elect the present Prime Minister, they will pay carbon taxes in excess of \$3,000 per year in Ontario and \$5,000 a year in Saskatchewan.

The Prime Minister will tell Canadians not to worry because he will send them a rebate for \$150 a year. Big deal. Trading \$3,000 for \$150 might make sense if one has inherited a family fortune, but for the folks who pinch their pennies in order to get by, that is a financial disaster. For families who are \$200 away from failing to pay their monthly bills, that is a mathematical impossibility. They recognize that they are already paying for the Prime Minister's mistakes, and they cannot afford to pay a fortune more.

● (1040)

The next proof point that the government will impose massive tax increases if the Prime Minister is re-elected is the deficit. The Prime Minister promised we would have a balanced budget. He broke that promise. He broke his promise on deficits; he will break his promise on taxes. It is a mathematical fact that runaway and growing, permanent deficits must eventually lead to tax increases. The only way to avoid that is to set in place a plan, starting this year, to phase out that deficit over a reasonable time frame so that we can avoid the higher taxes that the Prime Minister is setting Canadians up to pay.

This is an unavoidable fact. We have seen it before. Back in the eighties and nineties, the deficit grew and grew until the interest was consuming one out of every three dollars that Canadians spent on their federal taxes. Now we see the same trend. The deficit is growing, and so is the debt interest. According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, by the year 2023, only four years from now, we will be spending \$40 billion a year on debt interest. That is an increase of two-thirds from last year. We will be spending more on debt interest than the government currently spends on health transfers. In other words, that means money for bankers and bondholders rather than for doctors and nurses.

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Of course, when that happens, the Prime Minister will come back here and say that circumstances have changed and he can no longer keep his promises, and that yes, he denied and denied during the 2019 election that he was going to raise taxes, just as he had denied and denied that he would run long-term deficits in the election before, but that unfortunately he is going to have to make Canadians pay more. We can almost imagine him giving the speech now, a tear rolling down his cheek, blaming everyone but himself: “It is the world’s fault. It is Stephen Harper’s fault. It is John A. Macdonald’s fault. It is Wilfrid Laurier’s fault.” He could go further back into history, I am sure. There is no one who is more skilled at externalizing blame for his own failures than the Prime Minister. We can count on him to do it again in the future. If—God forbid—he is re-elected, he will impose massive taxes.

It is a common characteristic of those who have never had to pay for their own mistakes. If people inherit a family fortune, they just pass on their mistakes to others and let them pay for it. That is how he has lived his life and that is how he has governed the country. However, Canadians can no longer afford to pay for his mistakes.

That brings us to the fifth and final proof point: because he inherited a fortune, he costs one. He costs Canadians a fortune.

Most people understand the basic principle of scarcity. When they are raising their kids, they will tell them they can do skiing in the winter or hockey, but they cannot do both, or they can have a great vacation at the cottage or at Disneyland, but they cannot do both. Most people who go out and buy groceries are going to make sure they get the best price for those groceries so that their dollar goes as far as possible. Someone who inherits a family fortune does not have any appreciation for that sense of scarcity, because there is always someone else’s money to spend. It is always “yes” and “get me the most expensive one you can find”. That is exactly how he has run the government.

Do members know that the Government of Canada is 25% more expensive today than when the Prime Minister took office? Does anybody out there in the real world believe they are getting 25% better services or products from the Government of Canada? I cannot find a constituent who can identify a 25% increase in the benefit.

•(1045)

If a grocery store charges 25% more than the competition but says to just trust it because it is worth the money, yet the product is exactly the same as before or worse than before, then really the grocery store is asking the consumer to pay for the brand name. Does that not remind us of someone? Even though it is way more expensive, worse in quality, costs more and does less, we would pay 25% more for the brand name.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: It is Prime Minister’s choice.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Someone said that it is the Prime Minister’s choice, not President’s Choice. I thank the member for that very helpful intervention.

However, there it is, the case that Canadians need to hear: if the Liberal government is elected with the current Prime Minister at its head, they will raise taxes, and those tax hikes will cost Canadians a fortune. We know this because he raised taxes before. He got caught trying to raise them again, and he covered up the true cost of the

carbon tax. We will have to pay for his never-ending and growing deficits. Of course, he inherited a fortune, he spends a fortune, and therefore he will cost a fortune.

I do not want it all to be about bad news, because in a democracy there is always an alternative, and we have a good one. We have as our leader the son of a working-class family who grew up with the same struggles as ordinary Canadians. He worked at a local restaurant in order to pay his bills and get through university.

He had a driver too, but his driver was a bus driver. He talks fondly about how hard it was trying to convince a girl to go on a date when they had to meet at a bus station. He worked in insurance briefly before he was elected to Parliament. He raised his five children with the same values he inherited from his working-class family. Those values were that he had to work for everything he had, had to live within his means, and could not make others pay for his mistakes.

We need to empower individuals and their families to get ahead through their own ambitions and hard work. It is not about us and it is not about him. It is not even about our leader; it is about everyday Canadians achieving their dreams through their own hard work. It is about putting people before government.

Under our leader, we will make government live within its means so that life is more affordable and Canadians can achieve their dreams.

•(1050)

Ms. Jennifer O’Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Youth Economic Opportunity), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech, but I find it interesting that once again my hon. colleague quoted the Fraser Institute’s numbers. He stopped for a while when he realized that they did not include the Canada child benefit or the CPP changes that our government implemented.

Why is the member so scared to put up the Conservative Party’s own economic plan and instead using false numbers and fake facts to try to scare Canadians into voting for them? Why will the hon. member not speak the truth and demonstrate the real numbers instead of using the Fraser Institute’s numbers, which leave out a lot of the equation?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, I will list for the member all of the tax increases that she voted for and that the Prime Minister implemented, breaking his promise to the middle class.

One, he took away the children’s fitness tax credit. As his justification, he said that soccer moms and hockey dads are too rich and do not deserve a tax credit, according to him.

Two, he took away the tuition and education tax credits, making working students, particularly low-income ones who have earned income, pay higher taxes.

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Three, he took away the transit tax credit, which again targets lower-income people who are disproportionately likely to take public transit.

These are just some of the tax credits that he took away from everyday families.

Another one that is very interesting is that he imposed new taxes on charities. It used to be that if a business person gave private shares to a charity, the transaction was exempt from a capital gains tax. It meant more money for charities such as food banks, hospitals, dramatic arts centres and other things, but he put a tax on that too.

These are the tax increases he has imposed on Canadians. They work out to about \$800 for the average Canadian family.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to wish the member a very happy new year. I enjoy working with him on the finance committee and will enjoy working with him going forward.

However, we do not always agree. We do not agree on the rampant tax evasion that we are seeing from the wealthiest of Canadians. As members know, offshore tax havens and the exclusion of the web giants from having to pay any sort of income tax, or taxes of any sort, cost Canadians tens of billions of dollars a year. This means less money for housing, less money to support a national pharmacare program, and less money to make investments in Canadians.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer tried to get a handle on this and had to fight for five and a half years, first with the former Harper government and then with the current government, to finally get the information for a report about this gap between revenues that should be coming in to make investments in Canadians and the money available to the federal government. The Parliamentary Budget Officer will be publishing the report this spring.

My question is very simple. Why did the member's government stonewall for three years the Parliamentary Budget Officer's attempt to get the real information on the growing tax gap in Canada?

• (1055)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, of course we did no such thing.

However, the member is correct in pointing out that the wealthiest Canadians are paying less tax under the current government. The wealthiest 1% are paying \$4.6 billion less in tax under this government. That breaks another campaign promise. It is a reality and it comes from CRA data. It was reported in *The Globe and Mail* in a very informative front-page piece by Bill Curry, a respected Ottawa-based journalist. That is a fact.

Another fact—and socialist parties do not like to hear this fact—is that whenever government gets big and expensive, it is always the working class that pays. The rich guys always find a loophole. They move their money out of the country, they hire the best accountants, they go to the black market, or they just make the decision that they have enough money already and do not need to earn more, and therefore they do not have additional taxable income to declare and pay tax on.

The reality is that big government always falls heaviest on those with the least. That is why we need to limit government and expand the scope of economic freedom: so that everybody, not just the wealthy and well-connected who have their hands in government pockets, can get ahead.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be supporting the motion.

One of the things I wonder about is what we got for all the spending. When we look at the facts, we did not get much.

Here are four facts that prove we received very little for all of this out-of-control spending.

The Liberals like to talk about how Canada, under their watch, has improved its standing in the world. Here is a fact: Canada's overseas development assistance goal is 0.7% of GDP. With the Liberal government it is 0.25%, one-third of our international commitment.

Canada's NATO commitment is 2%. In fact, when President Barack Obama was in that very chair, everybody on the opposite side applauded when he said that Canada needed to meet its 2% commitment. Well, Canada spends less than half of that commitment on national defence each and every year.

As well, Canada's climate change commitment is not going to be met. We are going to blow through the Copenhagen targets. We are going to blow through the Paris targets.

Finally, the most important daily activity for millions of Canadians, some 15 million Canadians, is commuting. Commute times under the current Liberal government have gone up. In the GTA alone, it now takes over an hour for Canadians to commute each and every day, a 4% increase over the previous census—so what did we get for all of this out-of-control spending?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, I am afraid I cannot answer that question, although it was a good one.

What did we get for all of this spending? It is funny that the well-informed, hard-working member from Ontario would ask the same question my constituents ask me over and over again. They say that they are paying more and that their government is up to its eyeballs in debt, and what do we have to show for it? We have a big embarrassing trip to India and legalized weed, and what else?

We have a 25% increase in the cost of government, and what is there to show for it? We just have a more expensive government that is spending a fortune and is led by someone who inherited a fortune who is going to pass on to future generations a massive debt that will cost a fortune.

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Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Kildonan—St. Paul, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is such a pleasure to be here in the new chamber. It is my first opportunity to speak. I could not help but stand to talk about the member's motion to look for a rapid reduction of the deficit. I would point out that \$16.5 billion of the expenditures announced in the fall economic statement were directed at business.

My question to the member is this. If he looked at aggressive tax cuts, would he first slash the housing program for the poor? Maybe he would go after single mothers and the child benefit. Maybe seniors would feel the wrath of the Conservative plan. How about veterans? Let us not forget infrastructure, which we need so much more of. Maybe it would be the program of pay equity that would be the first to go. Would it be, finally, our efforts on reconciliation with indigenous people?

I look forward to the Conservative plan to see who is going to be hurt first.

• (1100)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, the government has achieved nothing in any of those areas. It is true. It is true that they are more expensive. It is true that everything the government does is more expensive. The only thing it uses as a success metric is how much money it has shovelled out the door.

If we ask the Liberals how they are doing on, let us say, roads, they say that their road program costs three times as much as the previous government's, and therefore, it must be good. "Are you filling any pot holes?" "No, not filling pot holes, just costing a lot of money." No other business, no other sector in the world, would judge its success by how deliberately and exorbitantly expensive it can be, none but the government.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Youth Economic Opportunity), Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to participate in a discussion with hon. members about our government's record on good fiscal management. Our government has strengthened the middle class. We have provided real help to those who need it and we have grown the economy with more good, well-paying jobs for Canadians.

By investing in people and in their communities, we have created hope and opportunities for success. Hard-working Canadians are seizing these opportunities, building better lives for themselves and their families. Over the course of the past three years, Canadians have created over 800,000 jobs. The unemployment rate is at a historic 40-year low, and the share of working age Canadians with jobs is also at a historic high.

Our economy grew at the fastest pace among our G-7 peers in 2017, and we are expected to remain among the leaders in growth this year and next year. Most importantly, the benefits of this economic growth are being widely shared among Canadians. Groups that have been under-represented in the labour force, namely young Canadians, new Canadians, women and indigenous people, are seizing the new opportunities we are creating, joining the workforce or improving their positions within it and contributing to a stronger, growing middle class.

Our government came in determined to help hard-working Canadians have more opportunities to share in the benefits that

come from a strong and growing economy, and that is exactly what we have done. We have taken decisive and effective action, based on the shared values that define us as a country, to make Canadians' priorities a reality.

We asked the wealthiest one per cent of Canadians to pay a little more so that we could cut taxes for the middle class. The middle-class tax cut is benefiting over nine million Canadians.

We created the Canada child benefit. Compared to the previous system of child benefits, the CCB is simpler, more generous and better targeted to those families that need it most. It is also entirely tax-free. With the CCB, nine out of 10 Canadian families are getting more in benefits than they did under the previous system. Canadian children are better off as a result. The CCB has already helped lift hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty. The extra support it gives makes a big difference for those working hard to make ends meet. This additional support from the CCB helps pay for things that can make a real difference in a child's future, such as nutritious food, sports activities and music lessons.

Thanks to the middle-class tax cut and the Canada child benefit, a typical middle-class family of four receives on average of about \$2,000 more each year to help with the cost of raising children, saving for the future and helping grow the economy for the benefit of everyone.

With our middle-class tax cut and the Canada child benefit, a couple, one earning the average wage and the other earning two-thirds of that wage, with two children, now keeps nearly 85% of the couple's gross income. For a single parent of two children earning the average wage or for families with two children where only parent is working at the average wage, the benefits are even more significant. According to the OECD, when the CCB and other benefits are added to family income, those families effectively pay personal tax rates of just 1.8% and 1.2% respectively. This means that they keep more than 98% of what they earn. I am proud to be able to say that Canada is truly a global leader.

We have gone even further to ensure that the benefits of economic growth are widely shared. In our 2018 budget, we introduced the Canada workers benefit. The CWB will put more money in the pockets of low-income workers, encouraging more people to join and stay in the workforce and offering real help to more than two million Canadians who are working hard to join the middle class.

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Beginning this year, the CWB replaces the working income tax benefit. The CWB will provide for a benefit that is more generous and more accessible. To give a sense of what this will mean for Canadians, low-income workers earning \$15,000 could receive up to almost \$500 more from the Canada workers benefit in 2019 than they would have under the previous system. That money can be used to support their priorities to get ahead, making a real difference for Canadians who are working hard to join the middle class.

• (1105)

With these investments in Canadians and a growing economy, we are proving what Canadians already know: a country cannot cut its way to prosperity. A different approach, one that includes smart investments and fair choices, is what keeps us strong, united and growing together.

That is especially the case when it comes to Canada's most vulnerable. Rather than cutting services for the most vulnerable, we are supporting them while responsibly managing our fiscal track. For Canada's most vulnerable seniors, we increased the guaranteed income supplement top-up, which is providing greater income security for close to 900,000 seniors, 70% of whom are women, while helping to lift 57,000 vulnerable seniors out of poverty.

We also introduced Canada's first-ever national housing strategy. This 10-year, \$40-billion plan will give more Canadians a safe and affordable place to call home, lifting 530,000 households out of housing need and reducing chronic homelessness by 50%.

Investments in infrastructure, including public transit, roads, bridges and ports that support trade, water and waste-water facilities, cultural and recreational infrastructure, and affordable housing, are helping to improve the quality of life for people across the country while setting the stage for sustained economic growth and the creation of well-paying jobs over the long term.

In addition to support for Canadian scientists, researchers and innovators, new trade agreements, including the new NAFTA, the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement with the European Union and the Comprehensive Progressive Agreement for Trans Pacific Partnership, will mean even greater economic opportunities for Canadians in the years ahead.

Our government also recognizes the importance of a competitive tax environment for small businesses. Lower tax rates for small businesses allow them to keep more of their hard-earned money so it can be reinvested to support growth and to create jobs. That is why we have reduced the small business tax rate, first to 10%, effective January 1, 2018, and then to 9%, effective January 1, 2019. The combined federal-provincial-territorial average income tax rate for small business is 12.2% in 2019, the lowest in the G7 and the fourth-lowest among members of the OECD. For small businesses, our actions mean up to \$7,500 in federal tax savings per year compared to 2017. For the average small business, it means an average of \$1,600 per year to reinvest in new equipment, growth and job creation.

Small business is a key driver of Canada's economy, accounting for 70% of all private sector jobs. The small business tax reductions introduced by our government will support jobs and growth in small

businesses and will create new opportunities in communities right across the country.

We are taking action to ensure that all Canadians benefit from the opportunities we are creating and will continue to benefit in their retirement years. We have worked in collaboration with our provincial and territorial partners to enhance the Canada pension plan so that Canadians can enjoy a dignified retirement. The CPP enhancement will be phased in starting this month. It will mean more money for Canadians when they retire so they can worry less about their savings and focus more on enjoying time with their families. Over time, this enhancement will raise the maximum CPP retirement benefit by up to 50%. This translates to an increase in the maximum retirement benefit of nearly \$7,300, from \$13,855 to more than \$21,100 in today's dollars.

To conclude, we have accomplished all of this—creating jobs and economic growth, investing in new opportunities in the future and supporting our most vulnerable—while carefully managing our fiscal track. We are being fully responsible in safeguarding the advantages Canada enjoys as a result of this approach to financial management. Canada's strong fiscal position has allowed our government to invest in Canadians while keeping the debt-to-GDP ratio on a downward track and protecting the long-term fiscal sustainability of Canada's economy.

• (1110)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the hon. member spoke about many things I disagree with. I am flabbergasted that she still contends that the USMCA, for example, was in any way an improvement on the previous situation we had under NAFTA. Canada made nothing but concessions in the context of those deals. The triumphs the Liberals pointed to were merely concessions they did not make.

I want to ask this, which pertains particularly to the topic of the motion that was proposed. The government talks about all its spending. Does it, at a basic level, acknowledge that when it takes on debt it has to pay interest on that debt, which ends up costing Canadians more over the long term? In other words, if it does not have a plan to balance the budget, if it fails to develop such a plan, that failure has a significant cost to Canadians in terms of higher taxes. What ends up happening then is that we pay taxes not for social programs, not for the vital needs of Canadians, but we simply end up paying more and more taxes to fund interest on debt to pay bondholders more money. Surely, that is not in the public interest.

Business of Supply

Does the member accept, as a point of basic principle, that we should be, as much as possible, using our taxes to fund things for Canadians and not interest on debt that is continually being accumulated as a result of the failure of the current government?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, what I will first say is that I would take absolutely zero lessons from the Conservatives on how to manage a stable economy. The Conservative government added \$150 billion to the debt in 10 years. The Conservatives speak about the debt, yet they added \$150 billion. What did that get Canadians? Tax cuts for the wealthiest, low growth rates, high unemployment rates and cuts to things like services for veterans and Canadians. They did nothing to support seniors and to ensure that Canadians have a dignified retirement.

Therefore, I do not accept the Conservative member's premise on how to manage an economy that grows for everybody. That is what Canadians elected us to do and that is exactly what we are delivering on.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I wish the member a happy new year. I look forward to working with her on the finance committee. However, I found her speech absolutely unbelievable.

At a time of the greatest housing crisis in our country and a family debt crisis that is not only the worst in our history but the worst in the industrialized world, with families struggling under record debt levels and unable to pay for their medication, their housing or their kids' schooling, the Liberals are saying that everything is just fine. It is not. Their misplaced sense of priorities could not have been more evident than last fall in the mini-budget when the Liberal government handed out \$14 billion to Bay Street so that they could write off their corporate luxuries, such as a private jet or a stretch limousine, more quickly on the taxpayers' tab. This is a misplaced sense of priorities.

When are the Canadians who are struggling under these family debt loads, and struggling in the worst housing crisis in our history, going to get the same priority from the current government that Bay Street always seems to get?

• (1115)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, we agree that, after 10 years of fiscal mismanagement by the Conservatives, families were struggling. That is why they elected our government, which is focused on them, focused on lowering taxes for middle-class Canadians and focused on creating a more generous Canada child benefit. That is precisely what we have been focused on and delivered on. As I said in my speech, on average, a typical Canadian family will be \$2,000 better off under our plan than that of the Conservatives.

It is tough to hear the criticism from the New Democrats given the fact that in the last election they agreed with the Conservative fiscal plan, which was austerity, cuts and balancing the budget at all costs. We knew we had to make investments to support Canadians, which as a result have created over 800,000 jobs.

Our plan is working and we are focused on Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I found my colleague's speech to be very interesting. I have the honour of sitting with her on the Standing Committee on Finance.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague a question. In 2015, when we decided to invest in Canadians, one thing we did was create the Canada child benefit. I know for a fact that, in my riding, it helped address to some degree the worldwide problem of the gap between the rich and the poor. The benefit certainly helped families in need and made a huge difference for thousands of children in my riding.

I would like my colleague to comment on the Canada child benefit and the positive impact it has had on Canadian families.

[*English*]

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the work he does on the finance committee.

The Canada child benefit has been transformational. The member spoke of how the benefit is helping families in his riding, which is precisely its intention and why we knew that this type of investment was important. The Conservatives' motion today as well as the press conference done by the member for Carleton earlier is very concerning to me because it indicates that if the Conservatives were to form government they would make significant cuts.

I suspect, since the Conservatives never supported lowering taxes for the middle class and they did not support the Canada child benefit, that is precisely what they would cut. They are going to cut the Canada child benefit. They are going to hurt the families across this country and in particular in the riding of the member who asked the question. Thousands of families would not be better off and the Conservatives do not care about the hundreds of thousands of children we lifted out of poverty. They just want to cut it.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is important that we make an accurate comparison today. When the previous government and our prime minister were in power, we faced the most difficult—

• (1120)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Dark days.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Yes, Madam Speaker, it was dark days for the entire world and our government was the envy of the world for the way that we dealt with the issues that we were facing as Canadians. Canadians came out of that recession in better shape than any other country in the world. On top of having to go into deficit numbers for a good reason, we were able to turn around and have a plan to balance that budget to lower taxes for Canadians.

Business of Supply

The current government is spending carelessly at a time when it should realize we are in a good position. The Liberals are wasting Canadian tax dollars with no plan to balance their budget. Do you have a plan to balance the budget if you are so fiscally responsible?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member that she is to address questions and comments to the Chair and not to individual members.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, if we are going to speak of a history lesson, maybe we should talk about the fact that the Conservatives blew through the Liberal surplus that was left to them long before the global economic changes. Let us talk about that for one second. In addition to that, I love how the member opposite referred to the investments we have made in Canadians as wasting money: things like the Canada child benefit, lifting hundreds of thousands of kids out of poverty; investments in transit; investments in seniors; and investments in veterans services, which the Conservatives cut. These are investments in Canadians who, after the dark days of the Harper Conservatives, said they wanted a change and a government that was working for them and not for the Conservatives' millionaire friends. That is exactly what we have been doing.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I go to resuming debate, as members know, we have been trying very hard to improve decorum in the House. We have some repeat offenders here. I would hope that, just as they are afforded an opportunity to speak, they would ensure that there is no rhetoric being thrown back and forth. Therefore, I want to remind the member for Kingston and the Islands, the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan and the member for Yorkton—Melville to please refrain from having other discussions across the way or making comments when someone is speaking. I am sure that they would appreciate having that respect as well, and I know that the member for Yorkton—Melville experienced it a while ago when she was making her speech, where people were making comments during that speech.

Therefore, I would again ask people to refrain. If they wish to partake in the discussion, they should ask to be put on the speakers list or they can wait until questions and comments.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will start by referencing the opposition day motion from the Conservatives, which starts to talk about deficits and ends up with the commitment that the government should never raise taxes of any kind.

I will start with the issue of deficits. For those who have been following the political debates around the issues of deficits and debt, they could always ask, because every party seems to be raising this issue in the House of Commons, who they can trust when it comes to the issues of deficits and debt. The best way to find out who is credible on this issue is to consult the fiscal period returns of the Department of Finance.

Over the years, every year, the Department of Finance in Canada tracks how governments of all types manage the fiscal pot that is

available for investments in Canadians. NDP governments have the reputation of investing in people. New Democrats do not tend to give massive subsidies to business or a lot of giveaways to Bay Street. In fact, it's quite the opposite. We decry this because we think it is bad practice. We make sure that education and health care are taken care of first. We make sure that those investments go to the Canadians who need them most.

With an NDP government, people can trust that seniors are going to have their pensions taken care of, that they are going to go beyond the cost of living. New Democrats do not believe that seniors should be living in poverty in our wealthy land. We take the principle that all Canadians should have a roof over their heads and NDP governments have historically been the best at creating housing and making sure it is affordable.

With those kinds of investments, people would have to ask themselves who has been best at managing deficits. What the Department of Finance's fiscal period returns tell us year after year—we are not talking about a three-year snapshot or a 10-year snapshot, we are talking about the last 40 years—is that Liberal governments historically are not very good at handling deficits. In fact, they have the worst record. The second worst record belongs to Conservative Party administrations. The reality is that even though New Democrats do not put that forward as our number one issue, NDP governments historically, according to Finance Canada, have been the best at balancing budgets and paying down debt.

That is not something New Democrats carry forward because we believe that, primarily, the business of government is to make sure that those investments are made for those who need them and that the education system is accessible to everyone. Our health care system, of course, comes from Tommy Douglas, the father of Canadian medicare, who had the courage to build the modern health care system, the public, single-payer health care system that we enjoy in Canada. The NDP will be relentless in continuing to push for that next stage in Tommy Douglas's dream, which is to have universal single-payer pharmacare in this country so that every Canadian can take the medication that he or she needs. That continues to be a priority.

If we talk about deficits generally, the NDP has the best track record, but we do it by eliminating these massive subsidies and handouts to big business. We do it by eliminating the pet project financing that we see by both Liberal and Conservative governments. We do this by making sure the investments are made in people.

I was very interested to see the member for Carleton stand on behalf of the Conservative Party and point his finger at the Liberal Party, saying the Liberal Party has increased the cost of government 25% over the term of its mandate. We know a lot of that cost of government has gone to Bay Street. There have been massive subsidies to fossil fuel companies, massive subsidies to corporate CEOs and most recently, the \$14 billion that was handed out to Bay Street in the fall mini-budget. The priority was not housing or universal single-payer pharmacare. The priority for the government last fall was to give \$14 billion to Bay Street. Therefore, it is not surprising to me that we have seen the cost of government increase to 25%.

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●(1125)

However, we just ran the figures, because the member for Carleton surely would have also tested what the Conservative Party increase in the cost of government had been. He would not be pointing the finger at the Liberals unless he had done his homework before coming forward with another figure. Surprising to me, and this undermines everything Conservatives members will say for the rest of the day, the cost of government under Stephen Harper went up 34%, worse than the Liberals.

It is incredible to me that the Conservatives did not do their financial homework. They have come forward with a motion in which their key point is that the Liberals increased the cost of government by 25% with handouts to Bay Street and all those giveaways. He is absolutely right, but he did not do the homework to find out what the increase was under the Conservatives. The cost of government went up 34%, again because of these massive subsidies to Bay Street and to the very wealthy and largely foreign-owned fossil fuel sector.

Handing money left, right and centre to banks and corporate CEOs is something the Conservatives and the Liberals love to do, a pox on both their houses. Neither of them knows how to manage money effectively. Neither of them seems to understand how to invest in people. Neither of them seems to understand how to run government in the interest of Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

As the member for Carleton pointed out, it is true that Canadians are living tough times. They are experiencing some of the toughest times we have seen in a number of generations. I completely disagree with my Liberal colleague's point of view that everything is just fine. The Prime Minister said in the House yesterday that he was getting compliments. Therefore, it does not matter that so many Canadians are struggling with the cost of housing. However, the figure that came out last week is indicative of how poor the approach of the Liberal government has been. Forty-six per cent of Canadians, nearly half of our population, is \$200 away from financial insolvency in the course of every month. Half our population is struggling with this.

If this figure does not give a cause for the Liberal government to change what has been the incredibly irresponsible and mean-spirited direction it has taken, I do not know what could. After three years of Liberal government, half the Canadian population is a scant \$200 away from financial insolvency every month.

I am going to mention three people I know personally who experience first-hand that desperation that comes from just trying to make it through every month. In question period yesterday, I mentioned the case of Sarah, and I did not get a response from the Prime Minister.

Sarah is indicative of so many other Canadians across the country. She is struggling to find affordable housing for herself and her three children. She works full-time as a nurse. She contributes to our health care system. She is dedicated. She works night and day. In fact, she works night shifts. I have knocked on thousands of doors over the course of the last few months and heard these stories so many times about getting affordable housing in Burnaby, British Columbia. In the case of Sarah and her three children, the only

affordable housing she can get will take her entire monthly salary. She will have no money for food. She will have no money for clothes, school, transportation or heat.

The Liberals say that everything is fine when half the country is just a scant few dollars away from financial insolvency. They need to consider the case of Sarah, who is struggling. The \$14 billion for Bay Street that came out in the mini budget in November was simply disrespectful to her situation.

Let me tell members about Heather. I have raised her name in the House before as well. Heather lives with her mother and her disabled daughter. She is trying to get by every month in a one bedroom apartment. It is a family of three. She is struggling every month to get through the month and keep that apartment.

●(1130)

This is not a rare story in any way. Right across the Lower Mainland, in parts of Toronto, in many of the big cities in the country, families are living in one bedroom apartments, sometimes in bachelor suites, just to get through the month. In the north it is even worse and more chronic. We hear about families of a dozen or 15 people living in a one bedroom home because there is simply no affordable accommodation available. Heather's case should give the Liberal government pause and have it change direction as well.

Let me tell the House about Jim, who I have referenced in the House of Commons before. Jim is very indicative of the crisis that so many Canadians are living through while Liberals hand out billions of dollars to Bay Street. Every Liberal MP would pass Jim every day. He is in a wheelchair on the bridge between the Chateau Laurier and the East Block. We can see him as we walk by. If we talk to Jim, he will say that he is there because he needs to get money for my medication. He lives on social assistance. His medication costs him \$540 a month. He has to pay \$540 a month out of pocket and the only way for him to do that, whether it is -30° or whether it is pouring rain, is to be on that bridge begging so he can take the medication that keeps him alive.

The Liberals say that everything is fine, that everything is great and they hand out more money to Bay Street. Jim is not fine. Heather is not fine. Sarah is not fine. People are suffering, while the out-of-touch Liberals make the worst policy decisions one can imagine, handing out \$14 billion to Bay Street, handing out \$15 billion for the Trans Mountain pipeline, which not only have they paid twice its asset value, not only is it a money-losing pipeline but the construction costs are escalating. The impact of that project on the possible loss of jobs in the fisheries and tourism industries in British Columbia is unaccounted. That is where Liberal priorities seem to be. They hand out billions of dollars and do not think of the consequences at all.

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•(1135)

[Translation]

The question now is how do we fix this. We believe that we need a fair tax system. Our tax system is the most unequal among all industrialized countries. Our effective corporate tax rate is around only 9%, which is not at par with the corporate rate in other industrialized countries.

We think the solution is the opposite of the Conservatives' proposal. They are suggesting that we maintain the existing tax system, which is antiquated and unfair. Unfortunately, this tax system does not allow for investments to help people like Sarah, Jim and Heather.

Other countries are currently working on this. Some European countries are taxing web giants. France was upset that web giants were just paying the effective tax rate of 9%, although this is better than what major corporations pay in Canada. France decided to implement a fair tax system. Web giants will be required to pay their fair share of taxes, which will allow for investments to help people like Jim, Sarah and Heather.

Major corporations are often associated with tax havens, which help them pay an effective tax rate of only 9%.

People like Sarah pay an effective rate much higher than the 9% that the Liberals impose on major corporations. Fortunately, our Parliamentary Budget Officer heroically stepped in. His office said that we needed to find out the exact difference between what companies should be paying in Canada and what they are actually paying. Five and a half years ago, the Parliamentary Budget Officer started this process and asked the Harper government to disclose how much the big companies were paying. Ordinary Canadians pay their fair share of taxes, but we needed to know what the corporate tax rate was for big business. The Harper government and the Conservative MPs all said they could not reveal that information because it was confidential. For three years, the Parliamentary Budget Officer relentlessly pursued his mission. The Conservatives refused to allow for any transparency in the tax system, which is disgusting. They wanted to keep Canadians from finding out the real tax rate and the difference between the rich and the regular folks who pay their fair share of taxes.

We got a new government in 2015, but nothing changed. The Liberals blocked the release of that information for two and half years. The Parliamentary Budget Officer finally said that enough was enough and that he was going to take the government to court, so the Liberals gave in and released the information. In a few months, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who is working hard to figure out all those numbers, is going to announce to Canadians the exact discrepancy between the amount that big business should be paying and the amount that they are actually paying as a result of tax havens. That will change things. That was the last argument that I wanted to raise.

Earlier, the member for Carleton said that eliminating a tax credit is effectively a tax hike. That is not what we want. Big oil companies are getting billions and billions of dollars' worth of subsidies. That makes no sense. That sector turns huge profits. Canadians' tax dollars are being used to help those big oil companies, which are

primarily foreign-owned corporations. The Conservatives believe that oil companies should continue to receive those billion dollar subsidies, and the Liberals do too. The Liberals say that they do not like it and that they will deal with it later, but how can we possibly count on them do to that?

•(1140)

[English]

Climate change is already costing the Canadian economy and Canadians billions of dollars a year, billions of dollars in insurance payouts, billions of dollars as these catastrophic climatic events occur. For the Liberals and the Conservatives to say that they will continue to subsidize wealthy, very profitable fossil fuel companies does not make any sense at all. Effectively, that is what the Conservative motion would do. The tax credit, according to the member for Carleton, is a tax hike. Therefore, Canadians have to continue to subsidize, according to Conservative logic, a sector that makes enormous profits.

My conclusion is this. The Liberals and the Conservatives have been running the country for decades. They have been running the tax system for decades and they have been running it into the ground. They have created a monster, the most unequal, inequitable tax system in the industrialized world.

We in the NDP believe that we need a fair tax system, a tax system that ensures that everybody pays, as we say in French, *leur juste part*. By creating that system, we can have the resources to make the investments that make a meaningful difference in the lives of regular Canadians..

[Translation]

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I always enjoy listening to my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby. He is very eloquent.

In 2015, the NDP promised an austerity budget. I would like my hon. colleague to tell me which of the measures we have introduced he would cut. Would he get rid of the tax cut for small businesses, which lowered their rate from 11% to 9%? Would he get rid of the Canada child benefit? Would he raise the retirement age back up to 67? We lowered it to 65. Would he cancel tax cuts for the middle class?

I just listened to him talk about a fair tax system. Do my colleagues opposite regret having promised voters an austerity budget in 2015?

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, the Liberals are talking about a fantasy budget. In 2015, they promised all sorts of things, but they have done nothing to keep those promises in 2019.

In 2015, they tried to reassure Canadians by saying that they would deal with housing. They said that access to affordable housing was important. Today, people like Sarah and Heather are still waiting.

In 2015, the Liberals said that they were going to institute democratic reform and that the 2015 election would be the last under the existing system. Will that change in 2019? Not one bit.

Business of Supply

Today, the Liberals are presenting a fantasy budget and platform. They had no intention of keeping any of their promises. It is now 2019 and it is clear that the quality of life of most Canadians is getting worse. Household debt has reached a record high, not just in Canada but in all of the other industrialized countries. In 2019, I am convinced that Canadians will question the Liberals about all of their broken promises.

• (1145)

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is entertaining to watch those two parties argue over who can be more expensive to Canadian taxpayers, who will pay more than the other. It is really impressive to see how quickly they can run up the costs for Canadians taxpayers and that they measure their success by how costly they can be. We will let them continue to carry on this bidding war. We will stand on the side with people who earn the money in the first place, hard-working Canadian taxpayers.

The member is debating a motion related to gradually eliminating the deficit and balancing the budget. He claims always to be against handing fortunes to wealthy people, on Bay Street in particular. There is no mechanism that more readily hands money to the wealthy on Bay Street than interest on our national debt. Who does he think the lenders are who collect the interest? Does he think they just hand over the money out of the generosity of their hearts, all of these investment banks and private equity fund managers? Does he really believe they expect nothing in return? I do not think he does.

He accepts that we pay interest on that debt, that the interest comes from the working class and then it goes to the super rich, that it is a transfer from the have-nots to the have-yachts. Does he not therefore support our view that we should limit public debt?

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, the member for Carleton is really hilarious on this because he asked the question just a few minutes ago about who would increase the cost of government most. He should already know the answer if he was listening to the debate. The answer is, the Conservatives. Yes, the Liberals increased the cost of government 25% over the term of its mandate, and the member raised those figures quite rightfully in the House of Commons. What he forgot to do, in not doing his homework, was check what the comparative figures were for the Conservatives. There was a 25% increase for the Liberals. What happened under the Conservative mandate? It was a 34% increase in the cost of government. Thirty-four per cent is far worse than the Liberals.

The Conservatives love giving money to Bay Street, love giving money to have-yachts, love giving money to anyone who is rich. With the motion today, they will permanently fossilize any attempt to actually build a fair tax system.

According to the member, the web giants will never have to pay a single dollar of income tax in Canada and all of those offshore tax havens will continue under the Conservatives. That is why we are voting against the motion. The Conservatives did not do their homework. They actually win the gold medal for increasing the cost of government from 2006 to 2015.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to commend my colleague for his speech. He

spoke very eloquently about the major differences between them and us and about both the Liberals' and the Conservatives' lack of vision when it comes to management. He talked about the measures that make it easier for web giants to do business and make profits here in Canada without paying any taxes.

I would like to ask him about compelling web giants to collect sales tax, GST and HST, since, unlike Canadian companies, they are currently not required to do so.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I know he is working tirelessly to fix this very situation. This is not just about taxes. It is also about unfair competition. Many Quebec companies have to compete against web giants while paying their taxes and their employees. They are doing everything they can to be good citizens, yet web giants are exempt from all these obligations. I am very grateful to my colleague for asking the big question.

What are European countries doing? The United Kingdom and France are in the process of making web giants pay their fair share and levelling the playing field between them and British and French companies. Only Canada is giving foreign web giants a leg up instead of instituting a system that is fair for everyone.

An NDP government led by Jagmeet Singh will change that and bring in a system where web giants pay their fair share of taxes.

• (1150)

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is very fascinating to be in this room today, listening to the Conservatives lecture us about fiscal responsibility. In reality, out of the last 19 budgets the Conservatives introduced into the House, 16 of them ran deficits. Now we are also hearing from the NDP about balancing budgets and ensuring we are fiscally responsible. In the last election, the NDP committed to balancing the budget.

I am not going to ask the question that we seem to ask a lot, which is why the NDP committed to balancing the budget. These are straightforward questions for the member. Did he agree with the position that his party took in 2015? If he did not, is he regretful of the fact that his party did take that position in 2015 to balance the budget?

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I agreed with the NDP position that we should have universal single-payer pharmacare in the country, and most Canadians agree with us. The Liberal promises have been broken and shattered, left in Centre Block. We have seen more broken promises even since we started here.

The NDP's commitment to universal single-payer pharmacare has never wavered and we will continue to push for that. The NDP principle and commitment to ensuring all Canadians have a roof over their heads at night is a commitment from which we have never wavered and one we will never change.

Business of Supply

We believe in making investments in Canadians. We do not believe in handing out \$14 billion to Bay Street, as the Liberals did this fall. Next October 21, Canadians will be the judge of who is more true to the principles of putting in place a government that actually works in everybody's interest.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to support the motion before the House. I will be sharing my time with the member for St. Albert—Edmonton.

Members may recall that in the last election campaign in 2015, the then leader of the third party promised modest deficits, if elected, leading to a balanced budget by the end of that Liberal term. He said that the promised balanced budget in 2019 was “very” cast in stone. It is not very grammatical, but that is what he said.

The Conservatives warned the brash new leader that in times of modest growth, responsible governments did not run the country into deficits. I am sure members will recall that in 2015 Canada was in modest growth mode. After guiding the country through the 2008-09 recession, Canada was hailed by economists around the world for being the last country to go into recession and the first to emerge, and emerge strongly.

After guiding the country through the 2008-09 recession, our Conservative government raised infrastructure spending by three times and we did it while balancing budgets and lowering taxes on Canadians. In short, our previous government's building Canada plan was the largest long-term infrastructure plan in Canadian history that was itself structured to keep the country out of a structural deficit.

We know that Canadians, for a variety of reasons, made a fateful choice at the ballot box. Almost immediately, buyer's remorse began setting in as the new Liberal government began breaking promises. It broke promises across the policy spectrum. There is not time to list all of those broken promises again today, but the biggest, the most damaging broken promise was the “very cast in stone” promise to run three modest deficits of \$10 billion a year, returning to balance in the final year of the mandate, this year, 2019.

Instead, and despite a \$20 billion windfall of a booming world economy, the Liberal government blew it all, and has run huge budget deficits, leading to today when the Parliamentary Budget Office tells us that the deficit is more than \$21 billion this year alone. According to Finance Canada, the budget will not be balanced until at least 2040. By then, Canada will be looking at an additional \$271 billion in debt.

It is abundantly clear that as the Liberal government and the misguided Liberal Prime Minister runs now chronic deficits, he is borrowing money not only from our children but from our grandchildren, in fact, from our great grandchildren. Today's deficits are tomorrow's taxes. As much as taxes have been raised by the Liberal government and continue to be raised based on its past, current and future spending plans, the worst is yet to come.

As the leader of the official opposition, the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, warned Canadians on the weekend, if the Prime Minister is re-elected, our taxes will go up. Taxes will go up in many areas and for a variety of reasons. My colleagues have spoken, and will speak, about the results of misguided policy

mistakes and ineffective spending. However, I would like to discuss another example of irresponsible deficit spending with regard to the almost \$650 million committed to the ill-considered commitment to bail out the Canadian news industry, widely seen as a cynical election year attempt to co-opt, to buy-off, media owners and publishers.

Members will recall that \$50 million was allotted in the 2018 budget and another \$595 million promised in the 2018 fall economic statement. There is a stark disagreement between the owners and shareholders and those who actually generate news content on the worthiness and acceptability of the bailout, and I will address that in a moment.

I grew up and was blessed to develop a career in the golden age of 20th century conventional media after arriving in Canada from England near the end of the Second World War. I was born in a Canadian army hospital in Sussex to Albertans serving in the army and army medical core. My father went to work for the Southam newspaper chain in Canada: the Ottawa Citizen, the Medicine Hat News, the Calgary Herald and so forth.

● (1155)

I enjoyed many happy days with my dad at the various papers, captivated by the smell of hot lead, clanking Linotype machines and the wonderful roar of the presses. That led me to a wonderful career in journalism, more than four decades in radio, television and newspapers, working for CTV, Global, CBC, NBC and Monitor Television. I was honoured to host CBC's *The National* for a couple of years in the mid-70s, before being assigned, or actually exiled, abroad for successfully challenging Trudeau government interference in CBC editorial decision-making during the time of the Parti Québécois government in Quebec.

I participated in the ultimately ill-fated attempt to converge the Global Television Network with the former Southam newspapers to adapt to the rapidly changing media changes at the turn of the century.

I saw far too many colleagues deal with the harsh downsizing of newsrooms, as fragmented advertising budgets and audiences took a destructive toll on the gathering and generation of Canadian news content: local, national and international.

Business of Supply

Back now to the stark disagreement over the almost three-quarter-billion dollar news industry bailout I mentioned earlier between boardroom and newsroom. News organization CEOs and publishers, who draw multi-million dollar salaries and equally outsized bonuses as their newsrooms are depleted, are delighted. Then Postmedia CEO Paul Godfrey enthusiastically welcomed the finance minister's fall economic statement announcement. Mr. Godfrey recommended that "Everyone in journalism should be doing a victory lap around their building right now."

However, I agree passionately with a host of Canada's most respected journalists who immediately rejected the Liberals' bailout as an unacceptable intervention that will compromise the independence of their craft. I share their opposition to the Liberal proposal of a panel of news experts who would distribute the election-year beneficence by deciding which newsrooms are credible and worthy and which newsrooms are not.

The Canadian news industry is not disappearing. It is being transformed from conventional print and broadcast forms to digital platforms. To my mind, struggling conventional organizations will survive only with public policy adjustments that will reset and level the playing field for private sector newsrooms.

The finance minister cannot justify the Liberals' \$600-million-plus election year bailout, because he has absolutely no idea what will happen after his subsidized transition period. That is unacceptable. Intervention should have a goal beyond short-term survival and dependence.

I will save discussion of the public policy remedies the government should be considering for another day. I offer the misguided attempt to bail out the Canadian news industry as just another example of the out-of-control deficit spending by the Liberals.

I will conclude by returning to the ask of today's worthy motion:

That...the House call on the Prime Minister to table a plan in Budget 2019 to eliminate the deficit quickly with a written commitment that he will never raise taxes of any kind.

• (1200)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise for the first time in this new chamber. It is always a privilege to sit here.

I will get to my question to the Conservative member in just a second. There is also the whole question of how we pay for the things we need in our society. We have had the Liberals throwing the old canard at the NDP that somehow, in the last election, we suggested an austerity budget, when nothing could be further from the truth. We suggested a budget that served the interests of ordinary working Canadians and in which everyone, including corporations, and especially the big web giants, paid their fair share of taxes.

What I just heard from my hon. friend is that the Conservatives are asking for no new taxes ever. My question is fairly simple. Are the Conservatives actually telling us that we should never ever place any new taxes on those great web giants, like Google or Netflix, and that they should continue not paying their fair share for the services that ordinary working families need in this country?

Hon. Peter Kent: Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with the member that the Liberals grossly misspoke in describing their last budget as an austerity budget, which required stimulation to an economy that was in growth, although through no credit of their own. They have been riding a worldwide economic revival, and they have been spending money when they should have been putting money aside for the next economic downturn.

When it comes to the digital mega-giants, the data-opolies, that is one of the public policy adjustments I would like to see considered. It is being considered by our ethics committee today with regard to the Canadian advertising dollars that are going untaxed to American digital platforms. If they were advertising in American conventional media, they would be paying taxes and supporting the Canadian advertising industry.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have heard several members talk about things such as getting rid of the child fitness tax credit. One of the things that stands out to me from before the election was a conversation I had with someone who was telling me that she could not afford to actually sign her daughter up for soccer, because she could not afford the cleats or the registration fees. This was something that was outside her means. What she needed was help to afford that initial cost.

I was looking at an article by the CBC, which reported that when the tax savings from this tax credit were analyzed, the credit began to look more like a windfall for rich families, which could likely afford the activities regardless, rather than something that helped pay for what lower-income parents could not otherwise afford. I put that out there because I think what everyone wants to see from government is that we are smart about the decisions we make with a budget and our spending.

Would the member not agree that doing something like the Canada child benefit, which gives money to families in need so they can actually sign up their children to participate in those sports is a better decision than having a tax credit available so that wealthy people can sign off on something they were already able to afford?

Business of Supply

●(1205)

Hon. Peter Kent: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my Liberal colleague that too many Canadians are simply getting by. They are not getting ahead. It comes back to the basic motion before the House today that these tax-and-ineffectively-spend Liberals sending billions of dollars out of the country because they bought the Trans Mountain pipeline, sending billions of dollars to the Asian Development Bank to develop infrastructure in Asia and not in Canada, and raising taxes on hard-working Canadian families with a carbon tax that is a revenue plan, not an environmental plan, are contributing to the economic pressures on hard-working Canadians who are struggling to not only get by but to get ahead. I would suggest, and remind my colleague, as we remind members today during this opposition day debate on this motion, that these deficits will only be translated permanently into continuing tax increases. If we re-elect the Liberal government, as we were told by the official leader of the opposition on the weekend, Canadians' taxes will certainly go up.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to rise for the first time in this new chamber. It is a privilege to rise to speak to this Conservative opposition day motion. By bringing forward this motion, we are fulfilling our duty as the official opposition to hold the government to account.

What we have before the House today is a relatively straightforward motion, a motion that, quite frankly, I would hope the government would support, because, after all, all we are asking the government to do is fulfill the promise it made to Canadians to balance the budget.

When the Prime Minister was elected in 2015, he inherited a Conservative balanced budget. Indeed, it was a surplus budget, and very quickly, the Prime Minister turned the Conservative surplus into a Liberal deficit. One could say that was not entirely surprising, given that the Prime Minister, during the 2015 election campaign, campaigned on what he called short-term small deficits. To be fair to the Prime Minister, by turning a Conservative surplus into a Liberal deficit, one could say that it was consistent with the promise he made to Canadians.

Aside from turning a Conservative surplus into a deficit, when it comes to keeping promises made to Canadians with respect to the fiscal management of this country, it has been all downhill from there.

It is important to remind members of the government what the Prime Minister said in 2015 when he was talking about what he again characterized as short-term small deficits. What he meant by that was that in the first year of the Liberal government, the deficit would be no more than \$10 billion. What happened to that promise? It turns out that it was a Liberal promise made and a Liberal promise broken. Instead of running a \$10-billion deficit in the first year, the government managed to run a deficit of \$19 billion, 92% higher than what the Prime Minister promised Canadians.

When the Prime Minister talked about short-term small deficits, he said that in the second year of the Liberal government, the deficit would again be no more than \$10 billion. What happened to that commitment? What happened to that promise? Once again, it was another Liberal promise made and another Liberal promise broken.

Then the Prime Minister said that in the third year, the deficit would be no more than \$5.7 billion. What happened to that promise? It was another Liberal promise made and another Liberal promise broken. We are beginning to see a pattern of Liberal promises made and Liberal promises broken.

The Prime Minister, quite famously, in the 2015 campaign, made the commitment that in fiscal year 2019-20, Canada would be back in the black. The budget would be balanced. What happened to that promise? Again, it was another Liberal promise made and another Liberal promise broken. Instead of balancing the budget, the government is projected to run yet another massive deficit in 2019-20, another massive deficit in fiscal year 2020-21 and another massive deficit in fiscal year 2021-22, and on and on.

●(1210)

It is quite interesting, given how specific the current government was about balancing the budget in 2019, that when the member for Carleton rose in the House and asked the finance minister a very straightforward question, namely, in what year the budget would be balanced, he refused to say. He would not answer the very simple, straightforward question of what year the budget would be balanced.

It is no wonder the finance minister refuses to answer that question, because the true answer is that the budget will never be balanced with these Liberals. Indeed, according to the Department of Finance, at the current rate of spending, the budget will be balanced in 31 years. I am 34. In 31 years, the Liberals will maybe get around to balancing the budget. Therefore, instead of three years of what the Prime Minister characterized as small, short-term deficits, what the government instead is delivering is more than three decades of red ink.

What is quite remarkable about all of this is that the government has managed to run rather large deficits, which are two and three times larger than what it promised Canadians, in times of modest economic growth. It begs the question of what the fiscal situation would look like in the not so unlikely event of an economic downturn.

According to the Fraser Institute, if the economic conditions were the same as 2008 and 2009, the last time this country saw a major economic downturn, instead of running a \$20-billion deficit, the deficit would balloon to \$120 billion. If the member for Kingston does not like the Fraser Institute, I think he and any reasonable person would agree that the deficit will increase substantially in an economic downturn because two things happen immediately, without any change in policy, when we have an economic downturn: revenues decrease and government program spending increases.

Business of Supply

The fact is that the current government has set Canada on a very slippery course, which is unsustainable and comes with a price. It comes with a price in the form of higher taxes. We have seen that from the government. This is a government that rolled back tax credits for public transit users and cancelled tax credits for students and families. This is a government that has shaken down diabetics and the most vulnerable in our society by trying to take away disability tax credits. This is a government that tried to get away with taxing employee discounts and health and dental benefits. This is a government that has increased taxes on the average Canadian family by nearly \$1,000. This is a government that is now prepared to impose the mother of all taxes, the tax on everything, a massive and unfair carbon tax.

Quite frankly, it is time the current government did what it said and said what it did, kept its commitment to Canadians and tabled a plan in this House to do what the Prime Minister said he would do all along, which is to balance the budget.

• (1215)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I always listen closely to what my colleague from St. Albert—Edmonton has to say.

Does he know that families in his riding have received 11,910 tax-free child benefit payments for 22,430 children? That is an average of \$6,840 a year. Our hon. colleague voted against that.

I would like to know what the Conservatives' plan is. What are they going to cut? Are they going to promise to balance the budget in 2020? I would love to hear what they have to say.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, every day that this government spends it becomes more and more difficult because the government keeps digging a hole. It keeps digging it bigger and bigger. It is completely unsustainable.

What a Conservative government will do is ensure that the government lives within its means, spends no more and puts more money back into the pockets of hard-working Canadians.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I always think it is interesting when the Conservatives, who express their concerns about the influence of foreign money and politics, then turn around and cite the Fraser Institute, which receives enormous donations from the Koch brothers in the United States. However, my question to the motion today goes back to the last part, which says there should never be any tax increases ever and no new taxes ever.

I want to ask the member for St. Albert—Edmonton this. Does he really agree that the web giants should continue to pay no taxes, even while profiting greatly upon their activities that take place in Canada? Does he believe that the super rich in this country, who have seen their marginal tax rates go down, should never pay their fair share for the benefits they have achieved from their economic activity in Canada? Is he fully in support of this motion that would allow those people to continue to avoid paying their fair share of taxes?

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, what we are committed to doing is making life easier for everyday Canadians by putting more money into their pockets and scrapping the carbon tax.

I will say this. We have seen many examples that when governments cut taxes, not only does it put money back into the pockets of hard-working people; it helps stimulate the economy and it helps stimulate growth. That results in increased revenue, not decreased revenue, over the long term.

• (1220)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it very perplexing to hear the Conservatives lecture this side of the House on fiscal responsibility and, in particular, balancing budgets when, in reality, 16 of the last 19 budgets introduced into this House by Conservative governments ran deficits. Of the three that ran surpluses, two of them came on the heels of Paul Martin's \$13-billion surplus. The other one happened in 2015 when the former Conservative government slashed veteran services and sold off shares of GM at bargain prices, just so it could produce a money budget to take into the 2015 election.

My question to the member specifically is this. What would the Conservatives cut in order to do what they are proposing? I want to hear specifically what they are going to start cutting out and what services they are going to take away from Canadians in order to get to the desired place he wants to be. In fact, will they actually commit today to being able to do that in 2020 if they were given the opportunity to govern?

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, we would not have spent \$4.5 billion to buy a pipeline that cannot be built. We would not have spent hundreds of millions of dollars to build pipelines in places like Azerbaijan, instead of getting our product to tidewater here in Canada.

With respect to the fiscal record of the previous Conservative government, let the record show that under that government a historic amount of money was repaid in terms of debt, more than \$40 billion. The previous Conservative government guided Canada through the biggest economic downturn since the Great Depression, creating more than one million jobs, the best economic growth rate in the G7 and a balanced budget that the current government has blown.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is wonderful to rise in this new year in this new chamber. It is not wonderful to rise to speak to an opposition motion brought forth by the member for Carleton that is, in my opinion, useless, if I can be so direct. It is an opposition motion that does not speak to the needs of everyday hard-working Canadians, middle-class Canadians at home, and their concerns of ensuring they have a bright future for themselves and their kids, or ensuring we make life more affordable for Canadians from coast to coast to coast. Reading the text of this motion, it does nothing to that effect.

Business of Supply

Let us speak to the record. We, as a government, cut taxes for nine million middle-class Canadians in the last three and a half years. The opposition, the Conservatives, voted against that. As a government, we raised the guaranteed income supplement by 10% for our most vulnerable seniors. They, as the opposition, voted against that measure. As a government, we brought in the Canada child benefit, which makes nine out of 10 families in Canada better off by \$2,300 on average. They, as the opposition, voted against that.

We expanded or enhanced the Canada pension plan, which will benefit generations of hard-working, middle-class Canadians. They, as the opposition, voted against that. We asked the wealthy to pay a little more. They have done well and we all know that. They, as the opposition, voted against that. We cut the small business tax rate to 9%, a savings of \$7,500 for SMEs from coast to coast to coast, and Conservatives voted against that.

We have created 800,000 new jobs, a majority of which are full time and in the private sector. We have the lowest unemployment rate in 44 years. What did the Conservatives say? Nothing. Do they have a plan? No. What services will they cut? We know what Doug Ford is doing. He is cutting services for university students, making education less affordable for hard-working families in Ontario. That is the Conservative philosophy. That is what we have. Shame on the Conservatives. Shame on them for not bringing out any ideas.

We are growing our economy. In 2017, we led the G7 with 3% growth. This year, we will come in at 2% and change. Where is the Conservatives' plan? There is no plan. On our fiscal finances, the finance minister met with the rating agencies. They affirmed our AAA credit rating here in Canada. I think the word they used about our fiscal finances was "solid". Canada's finances are in great shape.

We are doing things to benefit Canadians. For hard-working, low-income Canadians, the ones we really want to help get into the middle class, we introduced the Canada workers benefit. The Conservatives voted against it.

We need to speak about records. As someone who has worked in the financial markets for 23 years, both in New York and Toronto, someone who grew up working at a McDonald's, the Donut Factory, Zellers and a pulp mill and grain elevator, and who comes from the low middle class because my parents were immigrants, I can say we are doing things that are lifting people, children and families out of poverty. What did the Conservatives do? They voted against everything, everything helping families in my riding.

Over 15,000 kids and their families receive the Canada child benefit in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge, which amounts to almost \$5 million a month. What did the Conservatives do? They voted against it.

I will move to the speech I would like to give today, but when it comes to leadership on the economy and the environment, we are acting. That is what Canadians want. They do not want platitudes. They do not want hot air. They want us folks here, who have been elected and have the privilege of serving, to demonstrate leadership. They want us to leave a better environment for our kids, as well as a stronger economy and future for all Canadians.

I welcome all opportunities to remind the House and all Canadians of the work this government is doing because we are very proud of

it. We are building a stronger Canada, a better Canada, while continuing to reduce the federal debt-to-GDP ratio. In fact, the work our government is doing is attracting praise from all around the world. The IMF has hailed Canada as an economic model for the world, with the IMF's managing director, Christine Lagarde, saying that the world needs more Canada.

● (1225)

I know the opposition party members like to comment and state facts from the Fraser Institute. How about if we just listen to the residents of our ridings and what they are saying? Why do those members not just go back and speak to them instead of to some think tank? Why do they not ask them what they want to do on the environment? They would like us to put a price on pollution and they would like us to make life more affordable for our residents, and that is exactly what we are doing.

Let us talk to our residents. Let us talk to them about our tax cut for nine million Canadians. Let us talk to them about the Canada pension plan enhancement. Let us talk to them about rolling back the age of eligibility to 65 from 67, which the Conservatives brought in. Let us talk to them about that.

Last year, the OECD gave us positive recognition for the government's historic investments in infrastructure and our first-ever national housing strategy, as well as the expected positive impacts of the new employment insurance parental sharing benefit.

Last week, the best-country rankings the U.S. News and World Report for 2019 put Canada at number one for quality of life, something we should all be proud of, because a strong economy is about people and ensuring that all Canadians have the tools to succeed. From the beginning, this government has put people at the heart of its plan for economic growth. It is one thing to grow the economy, but we must grow it in an inclusive manner, and that is what we are doing.

That is why we have lifted 300,000 kids out of poverty. That is why our national housing strategy, which again the Conservatives voted against, is lifting hundreds of thousands of people out of poverty and giving them a secure place to stay and to live. We are doing that. In my riding alone, in 2019 we will open a new building with 162 units of affordable housing for our residents. There is much work to be done, and we will do it.

[*Translation*]

We came in determined to help hard-working Canadians have more opportunities to share in the benefits that come from a strong and growing economy, and that is exactly what we have done. That is why our government's first action was to ask the wealthiest Canadians to pay more so that we could cut taxes for the middle class.

Business of Supply

[English]

Yes, there is a tax cut for nine million hard-working Canadians at home. Maybe some in Ontario are home today because it snowed so much, but most of them are out working.

[Translation]

Thanks to the middle-class tax cut, over nine million Canadians can save more, invest, or buy what they need. To help parents raise their children, the government created the Canada child benefit, the CCB, a more generous, tax-free benefit targeting families that need it the most. Thanks to the CCB, nine out of 10 families are receiving more money now than under the previous system. This benefit has raised hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty.

Thanks to the tax cut and measures such as the CCB, a typical middle-class family of four now gets about \$2,000 more each year to raise their children, save for the future, and contribute to economic growth, which benefits everyone. That money is changing these families' lives. For example, it is helping them provide healthy food for their children and buy new winter boots.

● (1230)

[English]

The Canada child benefit is transformational. We brought it in, and it is helping families every month in ridings across Canada, including the ridings of the opposition parties, and we have to acknowledge that. It is lifting hundreds of thousands of kids out of poverty and it is helping families, and that is something we all need to be proud of.

Would the Conservatives cut the Canada child benefit when they talk about it? Would they do what Doug Ford is doing, cutting services to hard-working Ontario families? I hope not, and they will not.

[Translation]

This money is changing these families' lives. Moreover, in fall 2017, the government introduced measures to help low-income workers, which led to the creation of the Canada workers benefit, or CWB, in budget 2018. The CWB is an enhanced, more generous and more accessible version of the working income tax benefit. Since January 1, the CWB has made it possible for low-income workers to keep more money in their pockets. It will also encourage a larger number of workers to secure and keep jobs while providing real assistance to more than two million Canadians who are working hard to join the middle class.

[English]

These Canadians are working hard. We are going to help these low-income Canadians with the Canada workers benefit. People earning about \$15,000 right now will get roughly about \$500 more when they file their income taxes. We will help them join the middle class.

We will ensure that we take care of all Canadians, including our most vulnerable Canadians. That is why we brought in the 10% increase to the GIS. In my riding alone, over 2,000 seniors received the 10% increase to the GIS, almost \$847 on average. It is real and it is helping them.

Our measures have helped Canadians from coast to coast to coast, and we are going to continue to build a strong and inclusive economy for today and tomorrow.

[Translation]

Retirement is a reward to look forward to after many years of work. For many seniors in Canada, and especially women, retirement can be fraught with financial difficulties. We think that is unacceptable.

That is why we increased the guaranteed income supplement for single seniors with modest incomes, thereby giving the most vulnerable seniors greater financial security and greater peace of mind.

We also improved the Canada pension plan, a historic measure if ever there was one. The improvements to the Canada pension plan, to be phased in beginning early this year, will give Canadians more money when they retire, allowing them to worry less about their future and spend more time with their families.

[English]

Ensuring Canadians have a secure and dignified retirement is something we ran on in 2015, and we did several things.

In Switzerland, the former Conservative prime minister announced that his government would raise the eligibility age for OAS and GIS from 65 to 67. We reversed that bad plan. For bricklayers or carpenters who had worked all their life and whose bodies were showing a bit of wear and tear and who were looking forward to retirement, going from age 65 to 67 was asking a lot from them. What the Conservatives did was unfair, and we reversed that. That measure would have put people into poverty, and because of the way the system worked, that would have been dumping it onto the provinces. We reversed it.

We enhanced the CPP for future generations, and that was something great. We increased the GIS again. We said we would do that and we acted.

● (1235)

[Translation]

By working with the provinces and territories to improve the Canada pension plan, and thanks to the government's decision to restore the eligibility age for old age security to 65 from 67, more Canadians will be able to spend their retirement under better conditions.

Thanks to the 30,000 infrastructure projects approved since 2016, we are also building strong and resilient communities. The majority of these infrastructure projects are already being built, which is creating more well-paying jobs for the middle class.

As a result of many of these useful economic measures, consumer confidence is practically at an all-time high. With more money at their disposal, Canadian consumers have every reason to have greater confidence in their financial situation and their future.

Business of Supply

That is also true for Canadian businesses. Since 2015, their after-tax profits have nearly doubled, which means that businesses and Canadians have more money to invest, stimulate growth and create good jobs.

We know that small businesses drive our economy. Small businesses provide 70% of all private sector jobs. That is why we lowered taxes for small businesses last year. In January 2018, the government lowered the small business tax rate to 10% and this year we lowered it again to 9%.

[English]

In my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge and in the city of Vaughan, there are over 12,000 small businesses that employ over 200,000 hard-working Canadians.

Yes, we have reduced the small business tax rate from 11% to 9%. Yes, we brought in a fall economic statement, which the NDP does not like—to be honest, I am not sure what the NDP likes these days—and it is going to help firms make capital investments and invest in machinery to make their firms more productive and more competitive.

I visited Alps Welding in my riding. It is building components for pipelines in Kazakhstan and components for pipelines in Canada, in Ontario, in Alberta. It is building components worldwide. I invite opposition members to come to Woodbridge so that I can take them to see the great work being done.

The company's biggest issue is that it cannot find enough welders. Its order book is full and it is hiring and expanding, but it cannot find enough skilled labour.

The company is exporting to Alberta, south central Asia, the United States, Ontario and Quebec. It is a Canadian success story owned by a Canadian immigrant family, and that is something we need to be proud of.

My hon. colleagues can taunt and tease, but the family has built something they are proud of and they worked hard doing it. I do not think that is a laughing matter, nor should my colleagues taunt and tease, especially from the opposition side. I tell my kids who are six and eight to grow up sometimes, and sometimes I think the opposition members need to grow up.

[Translation]

The combined federal-provincial small-business tax rate is 12.2%, which is by far the lowest rate among G7 countries. The results speak for themselves. The Canadian economy is strong and is growing rapidly. Its performance ranks highest among G7 countries. There are more good, high-paying jobs for Canadians. Over the past three years, Canadians have created more than 800,000 new jobs, which brought the unemployment rate down to its lowest in more than 40 years.

[English]

Canadian companies are doing well and Canadian workers are doing well, but we want to make sure that anyone who is looking for work in Canada can find that job. We are investing in skills training and better data collection. I understand that the Conservative Party cut Stats Canada, cut the long-form census, but we brought it back.

Why? It is because we want to ensure we have the information Canadians need when they are looking for work. We want to make sure that the programs the government enters into with the provinces are working well. It is too bad that the Conservatives do not believe in science, data collection and information.

• (1240)

[Translation]

Consumer confidence remains strong and corporate profit margins are good, which opens the door to other investments that could lead to the creation of more good, better-paying jobs for Canadians.

[English]

We know that we cannot take Canada's economic strength for granted, and 2018 was a challenging year for Canadian businesses with regard to the recent tax changes in the United States and the ongoing global trade disputes.

Last summer, the government heard from a number of business owners and business leaders that there is strong interest in making investments, the kind that can position businesses for long-term growth and create good, well-paying jobs for Canadian workers. We heard many businesses express relief when we announced our new trade deal with the United States and Mexico, because securing that deal does help when it comes to confidence to invest in the future.

[Translation]

Co-operation between Canada and the United States is nothing new. We have a longstanding productive relationship that is the envy of the world. The connections between our peoples, governments and economies have been yielding positive results for both countries for more than 150 years. We know that if we work together, we can continue to deliver real results for Canadians in the coming years.

The agreement we recently signed with the United States and Mexico reaffirms that our trade relations with our North American neighbours are very important.

[English]

We welcome this new modernized trade agreement because we know it will help support good, well-paying middle-class jobs right across the country. At the same time, we know that we need to do more to protect and maintain Canada's competitive advantage. We did that in the fall economic statement with accelerated investment incentives, a measure that will now allow firms to make investments in Canada at a lower marginal tax rate than firms investing in the United States. Yes, call it the Canadian advantage, but it is there.

It is four points lower. It is going to encourage more investment and more creation of good, middle-class jobs in this country. We have created 800,000 jobs since we came into power in October 2015. The majority are full time and in the private sector. We are going to continue doing the job that Canadians sent us here to do.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member talked about so many different issues, and there is so much I could pick up on.

Business of Supply

Does the member believe that the budget should be balanced at some point? It need not necessarily be this year, like he promised in the last election, but does the member think it should be balanced at some point, and if so, when?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, the debt-to-GDP ratio and the deficit-to-GDP ratio are both on a declining trend. That is what is important. As long as we continue to reduce that deficit over time, we continue to grow the economy, and we continue to invest in Canadians, we are on the right path.

As someone who worked in the financial markets for 23 years of my career, I know that path is sustainable and fiscally prudent. That is why both Standard and Poor's and Moody's recently reaffirmed our AAA credit rating. I have read these reports and they are quite glowing in terms of our government's record, the strong financial figures, and the path we are taking this country on.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated hearing the speech about how everything is just hunky-dory and everybody is doing great.

Unfortunately, from what we are seeing, big city mayors are not in agreement with what the Prime Minister reported to us yesterday. In fact, they are very dissatisfied. The big city mayors caucus chair, Mayor Don Iveson is from my city. He advised the Prime Minister of a number of things.

One of the things the municipalities want is delivery of money now to deal with housing and homelessness. They are not happy with the delivery of the monies on housing. They want permanent funding for public transit, because it is an ongoing issue. The Liberals promised they were going to resolve climate change by investment in public transit, but where is the long-term commitment? They want more money for municipalities, because they are dealing with the major impacts of climate change, and they want a new intergovernmental forum that would give them a voice in federal decision-making.

I am wondering if the member could respond to what the big city mayors actually asked for.

• (1245)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, we are at the table with the municipalities. We have been at the table since 2015, rolling out PTIF 1, which was our first plan for infrastructure, and PTIF 2, which was our second plan for infrastructure. There is money on the table for cities. It is being invested in thousands of projects across the country.

In terms of the agreements, as the hon. member knows, the federal government is there in partnership with the provinces and the cities. We need full co-operation on that front. The hon. member also knows that constitutionally, the cities in Canada do not have a role. It is between the provinces and the cities.

We are not going to do what the Province of Ontario did, when it jammed through changes to the Toronto city council without consultation. We are not going to do any of those things.

We are at the table. We are working co-operatively with our provincial partners and with our municipal folks, and we will continue to do that. The money is there, there is funding, programs

are laid out, and we should be proud of the amount of infrastructure that is happening in Canada. That will continue to happen under our \$180-billion plan over 12 years.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there were a couple of things that really interested me in the member's speech. Number one was about listening to his residents. I would suggest that the member indeed listen to his residents, because in the last provincial election, Michael Tibollo was elected as a Conservative MPP in his riding, where the Liberal cabinet minister was running on the very same things that the federal Liberal government is running on: higher debts, higher deficits and structural deficits that were going to impact the economy.

However, it is what the member said at the beginning that really piqued my curiosity. He said he felt that this motion today, which calls for reducing deficits and balancing the budget, was a useless exercise. Does the member actually believe that lowering taxes for Canadians, balancing budgets and lowering deficits is a useless exercise?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to thank the hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil for acknowledging the fact that we have reduced taxes for nine million Canadians. I thank him very much for acknowledging in his comments the fact that the deficit is going down on an absolute basis year after year. It is also going down in percentage on a relative basis year after year in terms of debt to GDP or deficit to GDP, whichever number you want to look at. The United States is running on about a 5% deficit-to-GDP basis. We are well below 1%. We are trending lower. We are going in the right direction, and we are making the right investments in Vaughan—Woodbridge and in the member's riding.

I would ask the member what services he would cut. What taxes would he increase? He is saying he wants to balance the budget right away. You have to cut something or raise something. What is it? What choice would you make?

The Deputy Speaker: We are getting a lot of the “you” word in play. I would ask hon. members to direct their speech to the Chair and keep it in the third person.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my hon. colleague's speech. I want to ask him a question, because I realize that, when investments are made, it is important that they eventually produce results. One does not invest money to see it wasted. Ideally, it should result in something concrete.

One measure that I find very concrete, and my hon. colleague mentioned it in his speech, is the Canada child benefit. Once again, it is a remarkable, unprecedented Canadian program that helped reduce Canada's child poverty rate by more than 30% in one historic year. That is amazing.

Business of Supply

Does my colleague think that is a good outcome for a government program?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

[*English*]

How many kids in Barrie—Innisfil receive the Canada child benefit? It is around 10,000 to 11,000 families every month. Does he want to cut that? That Canada child benefit is tax-free and simple, and they receive it every month. They depend on it. It helps them enjoy a good quality of life. That is what our government is about: lifting children out of poverty, helping families and helping middle-class Canadians. That is why we have created 800,000 jobs, ensuring good services for families. It is why our unemployment rate is at a 44-year low. That is the record, and that is what we need to speak about.

We will continue to reduce and maintain a strong fiscal situation as our debt-to-GDP ratio declines. We will do it in a prudent manner that ensures our services are kept and that we continue to maintain a low tax jurisdiction both on the personal side and on the business side. That is what Canadians expect of us.

• (1250)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to commend my colleague for giving part of his speech in French. I greatly appreciate it.

I would also like to remind members that the Bloc Québécois believes it is important to have a plan to quickly eliminate the deficit. We agree with the principle of the motion being debated today. There is no justification for spending more than we take in, given the economic climate.

We are concerned that the government solution to reducing the deficit is to again cut transfers to Quebec and the other provinces, in such sectors as health, even though the needs are real.

However, we cannot accept the part stating that the government should commit to never raising taxes of any kind. For example, we want the richest 1% to pay more taxes. We also agree with the whole issue of fighting tax havens. We want the government to look for more money in tax havens.

I would like to ask my colleague about that. Does he agree with the idea of doing more to recover money from tax havens?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I would like to answer him in French, but I am sorry, I find it very difficult.

[*English*]

We will not do what the Conservatives did and undertake austerity measures where we cut. That is not something any government wants to do or should do. However, the Conservatives decided to do that, and it hurt our economy in 2014-15. Job growth was very anemic and very weak.

On the question of tax evasion and tax avoidance, our government has invested \$1 billion into the CRA. We have invested a lot of funds in beefing up measures. Another measure we have undertaken is on

base erosion and profit shifting, and we agree with our international partners. Obviously, that is a big issue for us. It has been a big issue since we came to power.

It is very important, because we want to ensure that hard-working Canadians who are paying their taxes receive the services they deserve, and that any high-net-worth individuals or corporations that are avoiding paying their fair share do pay their fair share. That is what Canadians expect us to do, and everyday, hard-working Canadians demand that.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a real pleasure to rise today in this new interim House of Commons, representing the good people of Barrie—Innisfil. History will certainly be made in this place over the course of the next 10 years or more. It is nice to know that we will get back to Centre Block before a balanced budget is even expected in this country.

Last year, on December 21, four days before Christmas, the finance department released a report, from which we learned that the budget will not be balanced until at least the year 2040. Let us think about that. My son, who is now 14 years old, will be 35 years old before the budget is balanced. I do not even want to begin to think how much he and those his age will have to pay in taxes.

Like many Canadians, I am worried about my children and their children. With the current government's record on spending, I want to know what tomorrow's Canadians are going to have to pay. I want to know whether they will be able to buy houses and have a good quality of life in spite of the government's spending.

I am also worried, quite frankly, for the residents in Barrie—Innisfil who are heading into retirement, seniors who will be profoundly affected by this fiscally irresponsible government. That is why I am happy to speak today to this motion by the member for Carleton. I will again remind the House what the motion says. It states:

That, given the Prime Minister broke his promise to eliminate the deficit this year and that perpetual and growing deficits lead to massive tax increases, the House call on the Prime Minister to table a plan in Budget 2019—

That is in a few short months.

—to eliminate the deficit quickly with a written commitment that he will never raise taxes of any kind.

It stands to reason that when a country is faced with debt and deficits, the inevitability of raising taxes is going to happen. There is no question about that. Canadians should not be questioning that. The government ran on the fact that the budget would be balanced this year. We are finding out that the deficit this year will be \$20 billion, and in fact the budget will not be balanced until the year 2040.

Think about the impact that is going to have on everyday working Canadians who quite simply cannot afford it. A report came out last week that said that 46% of Canadians are \$200 away from insolvency: \$200. It is a very fine line that Canadians are walking right now with respect to the level of debt and deficit they are facing, not to mention the fact that the government is putting it on.

I am also very pleased and honoured to be sharing my time today with the member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

Business of Supply

The Prime Minister does not have to worry about household debt or incurring deficits. In fact, he has inherited a family fortune, so he has no worries at all, unlike the families in Barrie and Innisfil who have to worry on a day in, day out basis about their financial situations.

The other thing is that the Prime Minister got caught trying to impose tax hikes. He tried to put a 73% tax hike on small businesses. It was not until the opposition brought that forward and spoke to businesses across the country that the backlash occurred and the Prime Minister and the Liberal government backed down on those tax hikes.

Do not think for a second that those tax hikes will not come if the Prime Minister is re-elected. He also tried to impose a tax on health and dental benefits and employee discounts. Waitresses and waiters who get free meals as part of their working conditions were going to be taxed on those things. Again, the opposition brought that forward. He also tried to impose taxes on a disability tax credit for diabetics. These tax hikes, make no mistake, will be on the table again if the Prime Minister is re-elected.

As I mentioned earlier, he has also broken his promise on higher deficits. Higher deficits today mean higher taxes tomorrow. Somebody has to pay for this.

• (1255)

Those living in Ontario saw 15 years of Liberal mismanagement. The Liberal structural debt was the largest sub-sovereign nation debt in the world. It was billions of dollars of debt. Billions of dollars were being paid toward interest payments that could have gone to government services to help those who were vulnerable and in need. Instead, the provincial Liberal government ended up incurring debt and deficits.

We are on the same path. In fact, during the last election, I spoke often in all candidates debates and I toured around, talking to my constituents. I spoke about the fact that we were on the same path federally as we were provincially in Ontario. That path was one of structural debt and deficits from which it would be very difficult to recover.

That is why the election in 2019 has become one of the most critical elections in the country's history. We cannot allow the federal Liberal government to do what the Ontario Liberal government did in Ontario. We have to stop it now. As we have seen from finance department reports, the budget will not be balanced for another 31 years.

We know this is the Prime Minister's plan. There is no reason to believe him on a lot of things he promises. He promised that the deficit would be low. He promised that he budget would be balanced this year. The only thing that is sure, as a result of what the government's fiscal policy has shown, is that taxes will rise after the 2019 election once he is given that further mandate. Canadians cannot afford that.

They cannot afford a carbon tax either. We have heard that the carbon tax will cost \$20 a tonne. Some finance department projections say that it could cost upwards of \$300 a tonne. What would that mean for families in Ontario? It would mean \$3,000 extra a year in carbon taxes when they are already struggling. When they

are already on a razor-thin line of insolvency, how will this help them meet their economic needs? It will not.

We also heard that families in Saskatchewan will be spending up to \$5,000 with the carbon tax. It is really interesting. When the Liberals are talking about taking from one pocket and giving to another, they are talking about giving a rebate. If the purpose of a carbon tax is to change people's habits, what incentive and motivation is there when the government taxes them and then gives them a rebate?

How is that going to help families in Barrie—Innisfil that are required to drive up and down Highway 400 every day to get to Mississauga or Vaughan to go to work? What about those soccer moms who have to drive their kids to soccer? What about those hockey families that drive all over Ontario? My family was one of them. We would drive from Barrie to Peterborough to Kingston so our kids could play hockey. Why are those families going to be penalized with a carbon tax that the Prime Minister even admitted on a Quebec television show would have no difference in the country at all in reducing greenhouse gas emissions?

The government's own documents say that it has to raise that carbon tax by \$300 a tonne. That is 15 times more than what it is going to cost now. The only way the Liberals are going to do that is if they raise it after the election, if they are elected again.

Just as in Ontario, we cannot let this take root. We as Canadians have to stop this now. If we allow the Liberal government four more years or more, we will be in a structural deficit and debt situation that will profoundly impact the lives of Canadians in a negative way.

We as an opposition are here to stand up for Canadians. We are here to stand up for them and their dreams, not what the government wants to impose on them. We and our leader will continue to fight. We will continue to stand up for what is right for Canadians. We will ensure that we balance the budget and that Canadians pay lower taxes so they can achieve their dreams for their families.

• (1300)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to my colleague from Barrie—Innisfil, whose speech was very interesting.

I would like to know what they would promise voters. I would also like to know if my hon. colleague is aware that his constituents received 11,610 tax-free Canada child benefit payments, which helped 20,870 children. At an average of \$7,080 per family, those payments are among the highest in Ontario.

Supposing the Conservatives were to be in office in 2020, would my hon. colleague scrap the Canada child benefit?

*Business of Supply**[English]*

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, we will cut the things that are most important to the Prime Minister but not necessarily important to Canadians. The Prime Minister has spent billions of dollars to send money outside the country when he should spend that money inside our country. Therefore, we will find ways to cut without affecting and impacting the lives of people in a negative way.

The hon. member brought up the Canada child benefit. The other side forgets that it is income tested. In Barrie—Innisfil, the median average household income for families is roughly \$80,000. Those families were receiving a universal benefit before to help their children. Now, in many cases, they are receiving less. In fact, I had a phone call last week from a family that was quite concerned. It was making \$47 a month on the Canada child benefit when it was making more before. Why? Because it is income tested. That is why the Canada child benefit is a lot less than what the Liberals purport it to be.

• (1305)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are here to debate a Conservative motion on balancing budgets, and part of the motion is about no new taxes. I think what Canadians want is a fair tax system. We hear every year that inequality in Canada is growing. The rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Most Canadians do not feel they are getting ahead. We hear stories such as the mining company in Vancouver that has a mine in Mongolia. It is supposed to pay \$600 million in Canadian taxes and \$200 million in Mongolian taxes. However, because it opened a post box in Luxembourg, it pays no tax at all here or in Mongolia. Mongolia is taking it to court, fighting back. In Canada, the CRA has said it is okay. It even got a letter from CRA to say it was fine. Could he comment on that?

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, one of the important points within the motion is that we get a written commitment that the Prime Minister will never raise taxes of any kind.

I spoke specifically about the carbon tax issue. The government's own documents show that the carbon tax has to increase to \$300 per tonne. That is a tax. We are trying to get the Prime Minister to commit not only to balance the budget and reduce the deficit, but also to ensure he does not commit to any new taxes.

Therefore, let the Prime Minister and the Liberal government tell Canadians that they will not raise taxes. Let them say that so Canadian can be sure as we head toward the 2019 election. As I said earlier, the one thing that will happen as a result of the debt and deficit situation is taxes will have to go up. Let the government tell us they will not.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, let me try to explain carbon taxes for the member for Barrie—Innisfil. We had five serious national experts before the environment committee yesterday who explained it. The reason a carbon tax works, even if a consumer gets a rebate, is as the price goes up, people try to avoid paying it. Therefore, they will economize within their own home and then they benefit even more when they get a rebate.

This is the essence of what the Green Party has been proposing, which is carbon fee and dividend, which has recently been endorsed

by two prominent Republicans in the United States, George Shultz and James Baker. Does the hon. member recognize that carbon taxation was developed by Republicans?

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, the problem with the carbon tax in the area I represent is that if it is intended to change people's habits, as the hon. member says, there is no way that will happen. They have to heat their homes. They have to drive their cars. They are involved in all kinds of things. Therefore, this carbon tax represents a tax on the necessities of life.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first off, I want to thank my colleague from Barrie—Innisfil for giving a speech that reflects our philosophy as Conservatives.

Since this is my first time speaking in the new House, I also want to take this opportunity to thank the people who built it, the craftspeople who succeeded in melding the modern with the historical. I think they did an incredible job.

I invite all Canadians to come and visit this place to meet us and discover the new House, because we will be here for at least 10 years.

I rise today because the current government is not keeping its promises. Back in 2015, it got elected by saying it would start by running a modest \$10-billion deficit in 2016 and balance the budget by 2019. It is therefore perfectly fair for every Canadian to have questions today about our country's future. I think that the motion tabled by our party is very timely. I will read it out:

That, given the Prime Minister broke his promise to eliminate the deficit this year and that perpetual and growing deficits lead to massive tax increases, the House call on the Prime Minister to table a plan in Budget 2019 [which will come out in a few weeks, in April at the latest, or maybe in March, depending on the Liberals' agenda] to eliminate the deficit quickly with a written commitment that he will never raise taxes of any kind.

That is what the motion says, and I think it is responsible. I simply want to remind the House that, during the 2015 election campaign, the Liberals made a lot of promises that they did not keep. I would like to mention a few of them. There is an extremely long list and I only have 10 minutes, so I will not be able to talk about all of them.

I represent the beautiful riding of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier in the Quebec City region. The Liberals promised to have the Quebec Bridge painted or to find a solution before June 2016. No one forced them to make that promise. It is now January 29, 2019, so people can reach their own conclusions. Of course, on a national scale, that is a very small promise.

Business of Supply

The Liberals also promised Canada Post letter carriers that they would send them back out to do home mail delivery. Did the Liberals do that? Unfortunately, the answer is no. Furthermore, in 2015, the Liberals said that the 2015 election would be the last under the existing voting system. This is an election year. Has anyone heard anything about a new voting system? I do not think so. Elections Canada is giving training sessions, but no one has told the organizers or those involved in the election anything about a new voting system. That is another promise the Liberals did not keep.

The Liberals also said they would change the House of Commons Standing Orders to put an end to omnibus bills, which interfere with proper debate in the House. We all know what happened in December. They bundled a bunch of bills and muzzled us.

Now I want to remind everyone about the most important promise the Liberal government made in 2015, the one about running small deficits early in its mandate and balancing the budget. Today the Liberals are accusing us of moving a ridiculous motion. How absurd. The deficit is \$80 billion. It is unbelievable.

We just want the government to behave responsibly and take real action. How can Liberals travel across this country, look Canadians in the eye and tell them they should put their trust in them and vote for them? How can they tell Canadians that they are meeting expectations and keeping their promises? Seriously. We are giving them an opportunity to table a plan to balance the budget, an opportunity to promise they will not make our children and grandchildren pay the price, because that would be irresponsible.

Speaking of children, I would like to talk about a fable by Jean de la Fontaine, *The Cicada and the Ant*. It is not very long, so I would like to read it now:

● (1310)

Cicada, having sung her song
All summer long,
Found herself without a crumb
When winter winds did come.
When winter winds did come.
Not a scrap was there to find
Of fly or earthworm, any kind.
Hungry, she ran off to cry
To neighbor Ant, and specify:
Asking for a loan of grist,
A seed or two so she'd subsist
Just until the coming spring.
She said, "I'll pay you everything
Before fall, my word as animal,
Interest and principal."
Well, no hasty lender is the Ant;
It's her finest virtue by a lot.
"And what did you do when it was hot?"
She then asked this mendicant.
"To all comers, night and day,
I sang. I hope you don't mind."
"You sang? Why, my joy is unconfined.
Now dance the winter away."

Obviously, the cicada is our current Prime Minister, and the ant represents workers, people who are responsible and hard working, our leader, and the entire team at the Conservative Party, which is currently in the official opposition. We are a government in waiting.

The moral of this story is that hard work always pays off and that we must work instead of dreaming. The ant worked hard to collect

provisions for the winter, while the cicada was singing and lounging around, and then found herself in a difficult situation.

It is unfortunate, but that seems to be the situation in Canada. We have been in a period of economic prosperity for the last three years. Any good manager would take this time to fill the coffers. It is only logical. If we look back through history, there are always recessions and periods of lower prosperity. I do not want to be alarmist, but we have to be responsible. We do not know what the future holds, but we know that we have been prosperous for the last three years.

What did the current government do? It spent money like crazy without keeping its promises, without meeting expectations, and without improving life for hard-working Canadians. Canadians are paying higher taxes, and more tax increases are coming. Their children and grandchildren will also be left paying the price for this Liberal government's irresponsibility.

I am not a prophet or an economist, but we have resources, and I am smart enough to do my research. Many economists are saying that an economic slowdown is on the horizon. When heading into a period of uncertainty, it is important to have a plan and to be prepared.

The members opposite are accusing us of having run up deficits, but we have to consider the circumstances. The worst economic crisis took place when the Conservatives were in power. We invested in infrastructure, we took steps to keep the economy going, and we were applauded by the international community. We were told that we did a good job in Canada, under the circumstances. We took charge, and we were responsible.

Since April 26, 2018, my riding has had a pilot project to provide labour to private businesses and to work on economic development in the regions. We have not asked for any money. These are initiatives driven by entrepreneurs. Today is January 29, 2019. I am not asking for money. I am only asking that we do what we have to so we can look after the regions.

Can the members opposite govern, think about what is in Canadians' best interests, and commit to balancing the budget and not passing the bill on to future generations?

● (1315)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a question. I am very pleased to hear him talk about our grandchildren. I am also hearing the Conservative members talk about the price on pollution, a measure they oppose.

When I think about our grandchildren, I think about the future we are leaving to them. Thinking about climate change is very important. My kids play soccer and do synchronized swimming, and like all mothers, I have to drive them to their activities. We always hear that "soccer moms" do not want a price on pollution, but that is not true. In my community, people are always saying that we need to take care of our children and grandchildren and that climate change is an important issue.

Business of Supply

My colleague said we need to cut all spending, but when it comes to climate change, will it not cost more to do nothing? Insurance costs will rise, and there will be more costs associated with the natural disasters that will destroy our infrastructure. Inaction will cost us even more.

What is my colleague's plan for fighting climate change?

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Toronto—Danforth for her great question. I am glad she is asking me this kind of question, because just yesterday, I was at a meeting of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, of which I am a member. I am happy to reiterate that we, the Conservatives, do not get up in the morning planning to destroy the planet. We are responsible people. We do not agree with the carbon tax, but we are interested in finding solutions.

At the end of yesterday's committee meeting, I asked five witnesses if the carbon tax is the only possible solution. The answer was no.

We need to be responsible. We need to stop taking money out of taxpayers' pockets to mortgage our workers' future and place an even greater burden on our children and grandchildren.

I would like to close by saying that we do have a plan for the environment. The Prime Minister is going to call an election. Right now, he is the one in office. Until we form government, we do not have to release a plan. We will release our plan for the environment once the campaign gets under way, and Canadians will be able to trust us to protect the environment, our children and our grandchildren.

• (1320)

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier gave a very interesting speech.

I did some research on La Fontaine's fable, *The Fox and the Crow*. The moral of that fable is this:

The flatterer
lives at the expense of those who will listen to him.

The Conservatives should be careful about what they are proposing.

Does my colleague know that his riding received 12,780 tax-free child benefit payments and that the average payment was \$5,760?

We created 800,000 new jobs in Canada. The unemployment rate is the lowest it has been in 40 years. Our debt-to-GDP ratio is on a downward track. We are in the right place.

My colleague said earlier that he did not want to say what his party's plan will be. Will the Conservatives make a commitment? All they do is criticize the government. What is their plan?

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking my colleague from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles.

The fact remains that the past is the foundation of the future. Our government left a budgetary surplus.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: With help from the EI fund.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Speaker, I would answer my colleague's question by saying that we left the house in order. The Liberals have been wasting money for three years. It has been ridiculous and irresponsible. We already know that the next government will have to be a responsible government. We know that the current Liberal government has not kept its promises.

I am sure that Canadians will make the right choice on October 21, 2019.

[*English*]

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Kingston and the Islands.

[*Translation*]

I often wonder what newspaper my colleague from Carleton, who moved today's motion, reads. He clearly does not read all the news and wants to breed uncertainty among the Canadians watching us today.

Canadians made a choice in 2015. They chose a plan to invest in the economy, strengthen and grow the middle class, and provide real support for those who are working hard to join the middle class.

Since 2015, the government has continued to focus on the middle class and on helping make life more affordable for hard-working Canadian families.

The government lowered taxes for the middle class and increased taxes on the wealthiest Canadians in order to allow Canadians to save more money, invest and help grow the economy.

To help families with the cost of raising children, the government created the tax-free Canada child benefit, or CCB, in 2016, and we indexed it to increases in the cost of living as of 2018, which was two years earlier than planned. In the riding of Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, 10,270 CCB payments have been made, totalling nearly \$6 million a year, for an average of \$6,840 per family. This makes a big difference for all families.

I would like to tell you about the Boisbriand family. The mom, Sabrina, has three wonderful little girls aged three, six and nine. She works for the Government of Quebec, and her husband is a retail sales director. Every month, they get \$1,350, which makes a big difference when it comes to paying for their children's activities and school supplies and making the investments they want to make for their family.

I would also like to emphasize that our government recognizes the importance of fiscal responsibility and a strong fiscal position.

I would like to remind the member that, before we took office, the Canadian economy was struggling. When I was knocking on doors in 2015, the economy was sluggish. That is what people were saying. Half of the jobs in my riding were precarious. In late 2015 and early 2016, national and international economic conditions pointed to Canada slipping into yet another general recession. Canadians were apprehensive about their future.

That is why the government took immediate and decisive action to address the growth problems and respond to Canadians' concerns by doing what needed to be done, which meant investing in Canadians, in communities, in the economy and in Canada's future.

In 2016, in our first budget, the government took a head-on approach to tackling the challenges faced by Canadians and the Canadian economy. We focused on a certain number of key principles with a view to strengthening the middle class and Canada's economy.

First, we took advantage of record low interest rates to make responsible, targeted investments that will stimulate the economy over the long term. These investments were intended to stimulate robust growth, increase employment and create more opportunities for Canadians across the country.

Our efforts yielded real results. For instance, over the past three years, thanks to their hard work, Canadians have created more than 800,000 new jobs, bringing the unemployment rate to its lowest level in over 40 years. This year, we expect Canada to have one of the fastest-growing economies in the G7 once again. The government is also committed to advancing gender quality, which will support growth in Canadian businesses.

We lowered the small business tax rate to 10% as of January 1, 2018, and we reduced it again to 9% as of January 1, 2019.

We signed new, modern trade agreements, namely the CPTPP, CETA and the USMCA, which will create more economic opportunities for Canadians.

Canada is making historic investments in infrastructure, innovation, science, research, and training and skills development.

However, to maintain that momentum and remain competitive in a complex global economy, Canada needs to become even more innovative.

•(1325)

We need to be more open to the world of science, technology, engineering and math. Today, we need to work together to achieve even better results than we thought possible.

In budget 2017, the government launched the innovation and skills plan to build an economy that benefits everyone, an economy where Canadians have access to good quality jobs and Canadian businesses are well placed to compete in a rapidly evolving global market.

Over the past 18 months, the innovation and skills plan has made it possible to launch the pan-Canadian artificial intelligence strategy to ensure that Canada remains a global leader in that field.

Montreal is home to the artificial intelligence supercluster. Many businesses in my riding benefit from that supercluster. Take, for example, Kinova, which manufactures robotic arms. Those are really good jobs that attract a lot of people to my region.

The global skills strategy was also launched under that plan, ensuring that companies can have more predictable access to top talent.

Business of Supply

Our innovation and skills plan also helped create six new economic strategy tables that serve as a new model for industry-government collaboration, and five new innovation superclusters around the country that have created tens of thousands of middle-class jobs.

To make the most of this plan, we need to focus more on the foundation of innovation, namely, science. That sector was completely ignored by the previous government.

A strong science sector is the pillar for the discoveries and innovations that improve our world, such as new medical therapies, quantum computing technologies and new agricultural practices, to name just a few.

We expect these investments to lead to greater benefits for all Canadians.

In closing, all of these policies correspond to promises we made to Canadians during our mandate. We made these investments because it was the right thing to do for Canadians, to create jobs for the middle class and build a stronger economy.

As we have seen, when we invest in Canadians, when we give them the tools they need to succeed, they contribute by working hard and generate economic outcomes that are among the best we have seen in a generation.

Together, we are strengthening the middle class, ensuring its growth and helping those working hard to join it. We are giving Canadians the help they need to succeed by making targeted investments to grow our economy for the long term, while keeping the debt-to-GDP ratio on a downward track.

That is what Canadians expect from us, that is what we promised and that is exactly what we are doing.

•(1330)

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is not a great deal of specific information about the Liberals' plans for Canadians, so I am hoping that the member will respond to my question with details in regard to the actual motion put forward today.

Could she tell me specifically what the Liberal plan was in regard to deficits and balancing the budget?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, our plan is working. We have created 800,000 new jobs, pushing unemployment to its lowest level in 40 years and giving Canada one of the highest economic growth rates in the G7.

Our debt relative to the size of our economy is clearly on a downward track. Recent reports have shown that our plan is working. Last year's positive economic results have a significant impact on our long-term projections.

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech.

Business of Supply

Today, the Conservatives are asking the government whether it will make a commitment to not create new taxes. For my part, I will be speaking about existing taxes.

The member opposite is very familiar with the retail sector. She knows full well that merchants and SMEs must collect the HST on their clients' transactions. It is not money taken from their account, but it is their job to collect this tax.

Speaking of an existing tax, why is the government intent on being one of the last lax governments not to charge a "destination" tax, such as the GST, on over-the-top television services of web giants such as Netflix?

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, I know what my colleague is referring to, but since we are talking about SMEs, I would remind members that we lowered their tax rate to 10% on January 1, 2018, and lowered again to 9% on January 1, 2019. Yes, we are working for SMEs.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague from Longueuil would have appreciated an answer about Netflix collecting tax.

We agree with the principle of the motion, which is about having a realistic plan to balance the budget as quickly as possible. However, the Bloc Québécois is against the last part of the motion about a commitment to never raise taxes of any kind. We are for the carbon tax or something similar, which would give Quebec a relative advantage.

We would also like to see tax hikes for the wealthiest 1% of the population as a way of reducing the middle class's tax burden. We also want the government to go after all businesses, beginning with Canadian banks, that report the bulk of their earnings in tax havens and do not pay tax. We think that would be a good way to balance the budget. Things that are immoral should be illegal.

I would like my colleague to comment on that. Why not make things that are immoral illegal and tax the profits that banks declare in tax havens?

• (1335)

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, we have a plan, and we have presented budgets. The Bloc Québécois opposed these budgets. I have to wonder how my colleague opposite, who, like me, lives in Quebec, feels about having voted against the Canada child benefit. This is a tax-free benefit that has significantly helping families in my riding and in his.

[English]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hear the Conservatives continue to talk about investments as if everything happens on the general ledger and everything has to have an immediate response, where really, the investments are coming from Canada's balance sheet, looking at investing in our economy to create growth and show the positive results we are seeing.

Could the hon. member comment, as a small business person, on how investments from the balance sheet help to create growth within the general ledger?

[Translation]

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

Like me, he strongly believes in investing in science. He believes that innovation brings change, which is absolutely the case. We have created 800,000 jobs since 2015. That is a lot. The unemployment rate is at its lowest in 40 years. Yes, this is working. We must invest in small business, in innovation, in training and in superclusters.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak to this opposition motion presented by the hon. member for Carleton and to provide some insight and my perspective on it.

I will start by saying that, as usual, I am perplexed by the fact that the Conservatives somehow have this moral high ground to stand on to judge this side of the House when it comes to fiscal responsibility. For some reason there is a notion out there, and I would say it goes far beyond just our borders, that Conservative and alt-right governments are fiscally responsible.

In reality, when we actually stop and look at it, what we see, in looking back at the last 19 budgets introduced by Conservative governments in the House of Commons of Canada, 16 ran deficits. This is really easy to prove. Anyone can go on Google and see this. As a matter of fact, and this one takes a little more work, but with help from the Library of Parliament I was able to do it, if we actually dig and look at the debt that has been created by governments over the past 151 years, we actually find that the Conservatives have been in power for 36% of the time yet have racked up well over 50% of the debt.

For some reason, there is a perception out there that Conservatives are somehow fiscally responsible. However, the proof, in the last 151 years of this experiment that we call Canada, has not produced any results that actually substantiate that claim.

We come to today's motion, presented by the hon. member for Carleton. He is specifically trying to drill down in various rhetorical ways, as he has done many times in the past in this House, on commitments made by the government.

What we have been able to see, the results from the government over the last three years plus, is the lowest rate of unemployment since we started recording it over 40 years ago. We are now sitting at the lowest rate. That is what the government has produced.

The debt-to-GDP ratio, which is extremely relevant, but of course, the Conservatives never want to talk about it, because it is pretty amazing as well, is at the lowest rate it has been in Canada, and more importantly, is among the lowest rates among the G7 countries. We currently have among the best, especially when we compare ourselves to our neighbour to the south, debt-to-GDP ratios.

We are also one of the national leaders among the G7 countries when it comes to growth. This is as a result of investing. This is as a result of investing in Canadians. This is as a result of investing in their potential. This is as a result of investing in businesses in Canada. That is what this government is doing, and that is why we are seeing the results we are.

Business of Supply

Let us talk about the first thing the government did when it came into power. The first thing it did was reduce taxes for the middle class and raise them on the 1%. We recognized, unlike the Conservatives, that to have a successful economy, we need to have people out there in the marketplace engaging in the marketplace. We are not going to have a successful economy if all the wealth and all the income is among the top 1%.

One would think, from a business perspective, that the Conservatives would get this. We need people to spend money. How are people going to make money in their businesses if we do not have people spending money? That is exactly what the tax cut for the middle class is all about.

It is also about creating equality and equal opportunities. It is about seeing the potential in marginalized segments of our population and how they can contribute to our economy. That includes an issue that I am extremely passionate about as it relates to gender equality and putting more women in the workforce in less traditional jobs in this country. This is about creating opportunities and putting the necessary pieces of the puzzle in place so that we can see the success that continues to see our country grow. That is exactly what we have done.

We also recognize that we have to take care of some of the most vulnerable in our community. That is why the government put in place a \$40-billion, 10-year plan with respect to a national affordable housing strategy to assist people. If people do not have the most basic requirement of housing, if they do not have their most basic need, how can they possibly be expected to perform and work in our society and generate wealth and opportunities? That is what we saw, and that is why we are delivering on that.

● (1340)

At the same time that we made sure to put the social elements in place, we also looked at strengthening the private sector and the business sector. That is why this government decided to reduce the small business corporate tax rate from 11% to 9%.

I will note that this was introduced in the budget last year, and the Conservatives voted against it. I challenged them on this many times, asking why they would vote against a reduction from 11% to 9%, and the answer, to be fair, was that they had to vote against the entire budget, so they could not vote for that.

Fair enough, but not once did I hear a Conservative member stand to say, "Despite the fact that I am going to be voting against the budget, I would like to say that I am really happy with seeing the corporate tax rate for small businesses reduced from 11% to 9%." I may stand corrected and I would love to see the excerpt from Hansard to confirm that I am wrong, but I spend a lot of time in the House through the various debates, and whether from this side of the House or from the opposition putting forward motions, I have yet to hear that.

As we put these different mechanisms in place to strengthen the social aspects of our communities and to strengthen businesses, we are seeing the results coming out on the other end of it. We have 14 new free trade agreements covering 26 countries. We are the only G7 nation with free trade access to the Americas, Europe and the Asia-Pacific region. This government understands the benefits of putting

policy in place that gives us the opportunity to start trading and working collaboratively with other economies so that we can see the win-win scenarios that come out of those. We are going to continue doing that.

We will continue to work to make sure that we strengthen our economy and, more importantly than just the economy, the people who contribute to that economy and who make the economy a reality. We are going to do this by making sure that we put those elements in place.

When I listen to the debate from the other side of the House, as I have this morning and into the afternoon, I wonder about exactly what the Conservatives would cut.

The Conservatives talk about austerity and the need to cut, cut, cut, and one of the things that has come up a number of times in this debate is the Canada child benefit. The member who introduced this motion might be interested to know that 16,400 children in Carleton receive the Canada child benefit, which equates an average of \$5,400 per month per family. The member for Carleton might want to start having a conversation with those members of his community as to what he plans to do with the CCB should he ever be put in a position to have the ability to do something with it.

Because the Conservatives refuse to tell us what austerity measures they will take, the only reference point we have is to see what Doug Ford has done in Ontario. We know that the Leader of the Opposition and Doug Ford are pretty tight, since we have seen pictures of them hanging out and they have had several meetings. I can only assume that the Leader of the Opposition is taking his direction from Doug Ford. If that is the case, Ontarians and Canadians should be extremely worried.

Let us look at what Doug Ford has done. He is stripping education, removing free education for the poorest of families in Ontario. He has eliminated repairs to school buildings. He has removed the youth pharmacare plan. Doug Ford eliminated the indigenous culture fund. He scrapped social assistance increases. He scrapped the minimum wage and he put an end to the round table on violence against women.

Who would do that? How much could that possibly have cost? However, Doug Ford did that.

Since the opposition refuses to say what it plans to do in terms of austerity, Canada should look to Doug Ford, who is the Leader of the Opposition's best friend these days, to see what direction it will head in, because that is the direction this country would head in if the people of Canada gave the Leader of the Opposition the opportunity to do so.

● (1345)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member likes to go on and on about the things that Conservatives cut, but what he has failed to mention is that the Liberal government severely cut back the environmental measures in its new trade deal with Mexico and the United States. Why do I know that? I worked for the secretariat under the former trade deal. It was a very strong entity that gave citizens the right to file petitions alleging failed enforcement. Liberals took all of that away.

Business of Supply

So much for Liberals saying they work hard to make sure they balance economic development and environmental protection. They do the absolute opposite when they get to the bargaining table.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I would disagree with what the member said. Liberals, and this government in particular, recognize the fact that there is a balance. Nothing was more telling than the debate we had yesterday on the bill that came back from the Senate, when the Conservatives talked only about the economy as if that were the only thing that mattered. They never mentioned the environment. If we jump over to New Democrats, they only talk about the environment and never mention the economy.

We have to respect the fact that in order for us to be prosperous, in order for us to promote, encourage and ensure strong environmental protection, we have to have a strong economy. That is probably the thing that puts New Democrats in the position they are in. It is because they have never been able to comprehend this fact. Unfortunately, it has led to their current status in the House.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebecers are lucky because we can use green energy to grow our economy. We are perfectly positioned to combine the two. Here, by buying a pipeline, this government is promoting oil sands development even as it claims to be an environmental crusader. That does not work for us at all.

We are in favour of eliminating the deficit quickly. One way to do that would be to increase taxes on Bay Street banks that post record profits every quarter.

Why is the Liberal government not looking at that option? Why is it not considering making things that are immoral illegal and taxing the profits that banks squirrel away in tax havens to legally avoid paying taxes here? Why not just make that illegal? That would go a long way toward eliminating the deficit.

● (1350)

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, one has to look at the options. If it is not the Liberals in government, it will be the Conservatives. Let us look at what the Conservatives do when it comes to, in particular, renewable energy and green energy. They will copy the playbook of Doug Ford, who ripped electric vehicle charging stations out of the GO stations, and for what purpose? Spite could be the only reason. They cancelled renewable energy contracts throughout the province of Ontario. That is what we are going to get if, God forbid, this country ever goes down the road of having the Conservatives in power.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be sharing my time with the hon. member for Durham.

Our Conservative Party of Canada official opposition motion of the day states:

That, given the Prime Minister broke his promise to eliminate the deficit this year and that perpetual and growing deficits lead to massive tax increases, the House call on the Prime Minister to table a plan in Budget 2019 to eliminate the deficit quickly with a written commitment that he will never raise taxes of any kind.

Today's official opposition motion contains two facts, followed by two requirements. I know the facts resonate with Canadians across the country and reflect the frustration and anger of Saskatchewan constituents, who can hardly sleep because they are so motivated to see this be a “won and it's done” disastrous blip in our country's history.

As for the two requirements, we are simply asking the Prime Minister today to table a plan to eliminate the deficit, as he promised, without any tax increases. The government has one more opportunity before the door hits them on the way out to stop spending foolishly—while insisting that veterans are asking for more than they can give—and live within their means instead of crippling the life out of our economy.

When the election is over and Canadians breathe a common sigh of relief, there will be no rewriting of this history of the Liberal damage done. The ghost of Pierre Elliott Trudeau still haunts this country, and now the son who thought he could follow in his father's footsteps will be making his own footprints in the snow, contemplating with incredulity that budgets actually do not balance themselves after all.

The first fact is that the Prime Minister broke his promise to eliminate the deficit this year. Canadians laughed when he said the budget will balance itself. They are no longer amused. He promised he would balance the budget in 2019. Instead, he continues to spend. The PBO confirmed that the deficit is more than \$21 billion this year alone. The Prime Minister clearly thinks he can borrow his way out of debt. According to Finance Canada, the budget will not be balanced until at least 2040, by then racking up an additional \$271 billion of debt.

When trying desperately to change the channel, the Prime Minister sings the praises of his only two claims to fame. He claims to have lowered taxes for the middle class while raising them on the wealthiest 1% of Canadians. He claimed that the loss of revenue to the government from the temporary gift of tax relief to middle-class Canadians would be offset by the increase on the wealthy.

On December 8, 2015, just weeks after the Liberals won the election, the Financial Post recorded that although the Prime Minister claimed during the campaign that the increased taxes on the wealthiest 1% of Canadians would raise \$2.8 billion in fiscal 2016, the Liberals had already had to change their prediction—i.e., break their promise. It would only raise \$2 billion.

The artificial stimulus to rejuvenate the middle class was forecast in their platform to cost \$2.9 billion in fiscal 2016. That prediction also fell short. The new forecasted cost, weeks into governing, was \$3.4 billion. The Financial Post article on December 8, 2015, stated that “In other words, the middle class tax cut and corresponding increase on high earners was pitched as roughly revenue-neutral and will now cost \$1.4 billion.” We know it is not costing the wealthy, because in fact they are actually paying over \$4 billion less in taxes.

Here is the thing: Somehow the costing was not accurate. Whether it was due to poor fiscal advisement or simply a devious spin to win votes at any cost, lo and behold, the scheme was not revenue neutral but instead left a gaping hole of \$1.4 billion. I think we can safely say that the trend of a \$1.4-billion gap continues on at the very least annually to the current day.

Clearly, right from the get-go, the Prime Minister had no understanding or capability to cost or administer anything with the term “revenue neutral” attached. Do members need more proof? I will get to the carbon tax in a minute.

• (1355)

The Prime Minister's second claim to fame is the Canada child benefit, which he says is putting more money in the pockets of nine out of 10 Canadians. I was speaking with a young father of four children last week who was really concerned and represents what I hear throughout my riding. He and his wife are both full-time students. He is working full time and his wife is home schooling their children. Yes, of course, they can always use the extra money. It helps out. However, he said that every month he cannot help but think about how his kids are going to suffer in the future, because by 2040 they will start to pay this debt off while starting to raise their families and will continue to be burdened with this huge debt they did not agree to.

It is not right to do this on the backs of the next generation. Every year that the Prime Minister runs deficits, he is borrowing money from future generations, maybe not from his kids and grandkids, but definitely from the children and grandchildren of today's middle-class parents. Today's deficits are tomorrow's tax hikes. The failure of the Prime Minister to balance the budget means higher taxes down the road and less protection against the next economic downturn.

Let us examine tomorrow's taxes, with the fake revenue-neutral spin attached to the current government's carbon tax. For New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, the Liberal carbon tax will increase the cost of gas, home heating and everyday essentials. This will impact the everyday lives of families in those provinces. It will do nothing for the planet, other than continue to destroy Canada's economy and force us to use resources from lesser environmentally concerned countries. It is compounding the uncertainty that is sending investment, bright leaders and capable, competent workers out of Canada, thus devastating businesses all over this country.

Worst still, it is going to get even more expensive. In 2019, the federal carbon tax starts at \$20 a tonne, going up to \$50 a tonne in three years. However, internal government documents confirm the Liberals are already planning for a carbon tax of \$300 a tonne. That is 15 times larger than it will be on April 1, when it kicks in. This is no April fool's joke. A special carbon tax side deal with Canada's largest emitters means they will not be impacted, while families and small business owners get hit with the full force of this tax. For wealthy Liberals, like our Prime Minister, an extra \$100 a month for groceries or an electrical bill may not be a big deal, but it matters a lot to a family trying to make their household budget last to the end of the month.

Then there is the silent killer, the additional GST being charged on the carbon tax. There's nothing to see here, right? It was intended all

Business of Supply

along as another way to make up for the poor fiscal management of the current Liberal government, a government that thinks it knows better and could provide better from a postnational ideology that destroys the rights of individuals to create their own wealth, grow their own families and enjoy a life where government does not dictate values, make demands or punish the very people it is there to serve.

In 2019, Canadians will have a clear choice between a leader who knows their challenges because he has lived the same challenges and his family is his plumb line, and a leader who has never known what it feels like to go without so that his kids could have more, or work every day to earn what he has. Canadians deserve a government made up of talented, passionate, motivated men and women, who fight every day to help Canadians realize their dreams. That is what our Conservative team is offering. We will lower taxes, put people first and enable Canadians to be proud on the world stage once again.

The Conservatives will continue to expose the Prime Minister's many failures and expose how Canadians will be paying for more of those failures if he is re-elected, while presenting our own vision for creating opportunity to help Canadians get ahead.

I can imagine the Prime Minister would love to get his hands on our Conservative platform for the 2019 election. He has asked for it almost every day: “What's your plan? What's your plan? What's your plan?” He is going to have to be patient. We want to show it to Canadians first.

* * *

• (1400)

[*Translation*]

VACANCY

SAINT-LÉONARD—SAINT-MICHEL

The Speaker: Order.

It is my duty to inform the House that a vacancy has occurred in the representation, namely Nicola Di Iorio, member for the electoral district of Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, by resignation effective earlier today.

Pursuant to paragraph 25(1)(b) of the Parliament of Canada Act, I have addressed a warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for the election of a member to fill this vacancy.

*Statements by Members***STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS***[Translation]***RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today, we remember that, two years ago, six people were killed and 19 others were injured because of their religion.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I would like to once again offer my condolences to the family and friends of the victims of the Quebec City mosque shooting. Today, let us come together to honour the memory of the six Quebecers who lost their lives to hate on January 29, 2017.

It bears repeating that there is no place for hatred of Muslims in Quebec, and all Quebecers, if they so choose, must be able to practice their religion without fear.

I would also like to tell the survivors, the families, the orphans and the entire Muslim community of Quebec City that they have our unwavering support. All those whose lives were changed that night and for whom life goes on should know that we stand behind them now and forever.

* * *

*[English]***540 GOLDEN HAWKS SQUADRON**

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, named after the world famous Golden Hawks precision flight team of the Royal Canadian Air Force, Oakville's 540 Golden Hawks squadron has been serving the youth of Oakville since 1951. With 240 cadets, it is one of the largest air cadets squadrons in Canada.

Cadets are encouraged to become active, responsible members of our community and contribute to society in terms of environmental, citizenship and community activities. Their band has been a staple at the Oakville Santa Claus parade for years. Cadets are trained in drills, first aid, instructional techniques, leadership, marksmanship, meteorology, navigation, principles of flight, survival training and much more.

Recently, the 540 Golden Hawks invited me to tour and inspect their squadron. It was inspiring to speak with these young leaders about why they chose to become cadets and what they are doing to make Canada a better place for us all.

* * *

CANADIAN JUNIOR CURLING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, the 2019 New Holland Canadian Junior Curling Championships took place in the city of Prince Albert. At the tournament, Alberta's Selena Sturmay guided her undefeated team to a 9-6 win over B.C.'s Sarah Daniels in the women's gold medal game. Only six other women's teams have run the table since the inaugural event in 1971.

On the men's side, British Columbia's Tyler Tardi won a record-setting third straight junior title. The B.C. skip defeated Manitoba's

JT Ryan 7-5 in the men's final. In junior curling history, this has never been done before.

Both winning teams will represent Canada at the world junior championships in Liverpool, Nova Scotia, in February of this year. I say to both teams, good luck.

I would like to personally congratulate chair, Bryan Rindal, the over 300 event volunteers and all event sponsors who devoted so much of their persona! time, effort and money to make this event a great success. Well done, Prince Albert.

* * *

● (1405)

LINCOLN ALEXANDER DAY

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, January 21 was Lincoln Alexander Day in Canada. The first black member of Parliament, federal cabinet minister and Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, I covered Linc's first election victory in 1968 as a young radio reporter, and he became a good friend and mentor.

When I first ran for public office his advice to me was "don't spend any of your own money" and "campaign in elevators" because nobody stays too long and there are always new faces.

After the 9/11 attack, Hamilton suffered a retaliatory hate crime when arsonists burned our Hindu Samaj Temple. The community rallied to assist and arranged a fundraising gala highlighted by an address by Lincoln Alexander. Few of us could have delivered Linc's message with the conviction he had when he told the Hindu community in his remarkable voice with a tear in his eye, "I feel your pain".

Those of us who knew the hon. Lincoln Alexander will never forget him.

* * *

MILTON ORRIS AND MURRAY SWALES

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay tribute today to two men who truly made a difference in their communities and this country.

Milton Orris grew up in Grand Forks where his family owned the Grand Forks Gazette. He began his working career at that newspaper and then went on to teach health care administration at the University of Toronto. As a dean at Ryerson College, he helped define what continuing education could be in an urban environment. He retired back to the B.C. interior and was totally involved in his community through his passions for peace, education, youth and the environment.

Statements by Members

Murray Swales was another pillar of the south Okanagan community who helped many local groups through his expertise in financial organization. He was that busy person you could always count on to do more. I particularly appreciated his role in creating the Dream Café Co-op, which allowed Canada's best live music venue to go on and thrive.

Both Milton and Murray passed away before Christmas. They will be missed by their families, their friends and their communities.

* * *

CANADA-MEXICO RELATIONS

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark the 75th anniversary of Canada-Mexico bilateral relations.

Relations between Canada and Mexico began as allies in World War II. Since then, Canada and Mexico have made major strides to increase trade and strengthen diplomatic relations, including the signing of the NAFTA agreement in 1994 as well as the updated version, CUSMA, late last year.

Canada and Mexico are each other's third largest trading partner and we are working hard and creatively to increase our trade moving forward to our mutual benefit.

In late 2016, our government lifted the visa requirement for Mexican visitors to Canada. This has increased the flow of travellers, ideas and businesses between both countries.

We also co-operate in the areas of environmental, indigenous, immigration and bilateral security and defence.

[Member spoke in Spanish]

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[Translation]

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 50th anniversary of the Official Languages Act.

As everyone knows, it is no ordinary act or simple guideline for the development of our public policy. On the contrary, not only does this act reflect the history of our Canadian identity, but it should also reflect our current society, specifically by meeting the present-day needs of minority language communities.

That is why anglophones and francophones across the country expect their legislators, everyone in this place, to commit to modernizing the act immediately.

The Official Languages Act will guarantee the continuity of what has defined us as Canadians since 1867. In doing so, the act will undoubtedly ensure the peaceful coexistence of our founding peoples and unite our great federation. That is why the Conservative Party of Canada and our leader are firmly committed to modernizing the act.

● (1410)

[English]

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, two years ago today, Canada witnessed one of its deadliest mass shootings, a terrorist attack at a mosque in Ste. Foy, Quebec that killed six Canadians as they worshipped. Make no mistake, this was an attack not only on those gathered at CCIQ that evening, but on our values and the very ideals that have shaped our country, the values of pluralism, friendship and diversity.

Martin Luther King once said, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

It is in that spirit that a Pickering resident, Ryan Slobojan, began "Push Back the Darkness", an initiative meant to combat Islamophobia. Tonight, people across Canada will be placing a light in their windows to symbolize their commitment to pushing back the darkness.

Ryan is here today with his daughter Elizabeth and members of the Muslim community across Durham Region to remember the lives lost and to encourage us all to fight back against hatred and intolerance.

* * *

CANADA-PERU RELATIONS

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 75th anniversary of Canada's official bilateral relationship with Peru. Canada and Peru have a long-standing commitment to multilateral co-operation and democratic institutions, most recently, our country's leadership on the crisis in Venezuela through the Lima Group.

Throughout the years, Canada maintained a very close relationship with Peru. In 2017, over \$250 million was invested in strong development assistance programming, focused on support for women and girls, indigenous youth and girls and supporting small agribusiness.

[Translation]

Peru is Canada's third-largest bilateral trading partner in Central and South America. Canadian merchandise exports to Peru reached nearly \$710 million in 2017, while Canadian merchandise imports from Peru reached \$1.8 billion.

Canadian direct investment in Peru totalled \$11.1 billion in 2017, mainly in mining, oil and gas, and financial services. Canada also promotes educational and scholarship opportunities in tandem with Peruvian institutions.

Together, let us celebrate the 75th anniversary of bilateral relations with this key player in South America.

Statements by Members

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one thing is for certain. The Liberals will raise taxes and make life more expensive for everyone.

The Liberals love to laud the B.C. carbon tax, but let me tell a different story. It was designed to be revenue neutral, but with the stroke of a pen, the NDP government betrayed British Columbians by turning it into just another tax grab.

I suspect that the federal carbon rebate cheques will also quickly disappear in order to pay for the Prime Minister's out-of-control spending. Experts agree that if it is going to work, it has to be 15 times larger. Therefore, the carbon tax is not an environmental plan; it is a tax plan.

The results for rural communities is that families will pay at every turn. They have no alternative. They will be unfairly punished when they are driving their kids to hockey, commuting to work, buying groceries and heating their homes. Everyday Canadians cannot afford another four years of the Liberal government's spending and mismanagement.

* * *

[Translation]

MONTREAL NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION FOR REFUGEES

Mr. Marc Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this month, the Action réfugiés Montréal organization is celebrating its 25th anniversary. This is the perfect occasion to recognize the important work of this association, which strives tirelessly for more social justice for asylum seekers and refugees. With its three awareness programs, Action réfugiés Montréal has become indispensable in Montreal.

[English]

Over the years, Action Réfugiés Montréal has helped private groups sponsor over 1,200 people from countries such as Afghanistan, Burundi and Syria, just to name a few. Through its twinning program, which matches newly arrived refugee women with women already living in Montreal, it is helping create social support systems to break the isolation many newcomers feel.

When many countries are turning inward and there are a record number of displaced people around the world, the work of organizations like Action Réfugiés Montréal needs to be celebrated and supported more than ever.

[Translation]

Together, let us continue to support these programs that promote inclusion and help our wonderfully diverse Canadian society.

● (1415)

[English]

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark the second anniversary of the attack at Le Centre culturel islamique de Québec. Mamadou Tanou Barry, Azzedine Soufiane, Abdelkrim Hassane, Ibrahima Barry, Aboubaker Thabti, Khaled Belkacemi, these fathers, husbands, brothers and sons were killed while praying at a mosque.

Today is a day to recommit to fighting islamophobia and all other forms of hate and discrimination in Canada and around the world. We are truly enriched by the diversity of our country, but in order to preserve this way of life, we must challenge those who divide us. We must work toward building a more inclusive society, one in which we treat each and every person with respect, dignity and equality. In doing so, we will forever remember and honour these men, their family and their friends.

* * *

[Translation]

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Azzedine Soufiane, Khaled Belkacemi, Aboubaker Thabti, Abdelkrim Hassane, Mamadou Tanou Barry, and Ibrahima Barry are names that the people of Quebec City and all Canadians will forever keep in their memory.

On January 29, 2017, exactly two years ago, a criminal killed them in cold blood. These men, these fathers and brothers, were gathered at the Quebec City mosque. Brought together in faith, they were the victims of human cruelty. The entire country knows that the freedom to practice religion is sacred and that intolerance must be condemned at all levels.

Let us never turn a blind eye to actions that can lead to such tragedies.

January 29 should become a national day of solidarity with victims of intolerance and anti-religious violence. These six men will live forever in our hearts and minds.

[The member spoke in Arabic]

[Translation]

We will remember them.

* * *

[English]

MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to be the first to rise in this new chamber to speak to the issue of mental health in Canada.

This afternoon, I was pleased to welcome Samuel Breau from the Bell Let's Talk initiative to discuss how members of Parliament could be a part of the conversation, to raise their voices and fight to end stigma around mental illness. This initiative effort has raised nearly \$100 million for the cause. Seeing him speak on this issue in person and from the heart never fails to inspire and impress.

Each year on Bell Let's Talk day, Canadians can use #BellLetsTalk to support mental health initiatives across the country. Awareness of the impact of mental health and illness has never been higher, and we must all continue to raise awareness and learn to be open and accepting of our struggles.

Tomorrow, I invite all of my colleagues and neighbours in my community to do their part and join the conversation.

* * *

[Translation]

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on the night of January 29, 2017, 17 children were orphaned because their fathers were targeted for their beliefs. Hatred struck, and these 17 children were orphaned. Since that freezing winter evening, six families and an entire community have lived each day with the repercussions of this act of terror.

Our thoughts are also with the first responders affected by what they saw and experienced. All too often, these unsung heroes suffer in the shadows.

[English]

Today is a painful day for the Muslim community in Canada. Two years ago, a gunman opened fire during evening prayers at the Centre Culturel Islamique de Québec. Today, we stand in solidarity with the survivors who are still struggling with the repercussions of this act of terror.

[Translation]

Today, let us help the survivors look to the future.

* * *

[English]

LEEDS—GRENVILLE—THOUSAND ISLANDS AND RIDEAU LAKES

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today humbled and grateful at the mandate given to me by the electors in the greatest riding in Canada, Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

My constituents know that my door is always open to them. I thank them for their trust in me and promise that I will represent them in Ottawa and fight for what is important to them each and every day: standing up for our farmers, reducing the burdens on small businesses, advocating for infrastructure money, fighting the backdoor gun registry and the ineffective carbon tax.

My election comes out of sad events: the passing of my mentor and friend, Gord Brown. He worked hard for his constituents and he was a great Canadian. I will continue that legacy of hard work.

Oral Questions

One final note is to acknowledge and thank my wonderful family, my wife Amanda and my children Luke, Ama, Michaela and James.

* * *

• (1420)

[Translation]

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. Frank Baylis (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, two years ago today, six men who were praying in a Quebec mosque lost their lives.

Ibrahima Barry, Mamadou Tanou Barry, Khaled Belkacemi, Aboubaker Thabti, Abdelkrim Hassane and Azzedine Soufiane were all killed. A father, a son, a brother, a husband, a friend, and a colleague were all victims of hate.

After the massacre, vigils were organized across Quebec and Canada. Many people gathered and were united.

[English]

Today we stand in solidarity with our Muslim brothers and sisters. We condemn this hateful act as an attack on all Canadians. Together we remember the victims, and we strive to see the humanity in our fellow citizens. No matter our race, the colour of our skin or our religion, we are all Canadians.

[Translation]

The Speaker: There have been discussions among representatives of all the parties in the House, and I understand that there is consent to observe a moment of silence in memory of the victims of the attack at the Centre culturel islamique de Québec, which took place two years ago.

I invite hon. members to rise.

[A moment of silence observed]

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

ETHICS

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Vice-Admiral Mark Norman served his country with distinction and deserves every opportunity to defend himself, and the Liberals have done everything they can to deny this right. The Prime Minister has refused to release documents needed for the defence case. Now we know that code names were being used to evade access to information laws within the ministry. Today we have learned that the former president of the Treasury Board has withheld personal emails from Mr. Norman's lawyers. When did the Prime Minister know that the minister was withholding personal emails in this case?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, it would be inappropriate to comment on this matter before the courts. The *sub judice* convention indicates that MPs should refrain from discussing ongoing legal proceedings. Courts are dealing with the handling of evidence, and we respect the judicial independence and the House of Commons rules.

• (1425)

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a minister of this Prime Minister's government is withholding personal emails from the lawyers of Mark Norman. In October, the former minister said that the only contact he had with Irving was being copied on a letter, but there would appear to be copious documents that are relevant, and as a result, he has lawyered up to try to work his way out of this cover-up. This is all very concerning, and it lies at the feet of this Prime Minister.

Once again, when did the Prime Minister learn that his minister was withholding personal documents relevant to the Mark Norman case?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we all know, these are matters before the court right now. The court is engaged in it. We know that in Canada, the independence of our judicial system is something that must be a bedrock of our society and indeed of our functioning as a society and as a parliament. We respect the independence of those courts. We will allow the courts to do the job they need to do.

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FINANCE

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is the end of the month, and in the normal world, families are taking a look at their personal budgets and trying to figure out how they are going to balance their own, because they know, unlike the Prime Minister, that budgets do not balance themselves. They also know that if they are short this month, they cannot just borrow their way out of debt, unlike the Prime Minister, who thinks that the country can. Finally, Canadians know that they will be the ones paying for the mistakes of the government and this Prime Minister.

Therefore, at the very least, Canadians deserve a clear answer before the election. Will the Prime Minister impose massive tax hikes on these Canadian citizens?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the very beginning, our plan has been to lower taxes for the middle class and raise them on the wealthiest 1%. That has been an issue for the Conservatives, because we know that they prefer to give tax breaks and advantages to the wealthiest. Unfortunately, that approach for 10 years under Stephen Harper did not work to create any more than anemic growth. What we have been able to do, by investing in Canadians and investing in their communities, is have the lowest unemployment rate in 40 years and see Canadians create 800,000 new jobs. We are going to continue to invest in our communities, because our plan is working to grow the economy for the middle class and those working hard to join it.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the former Conservative government was so good at fiscal management that this government inherited a balanced budget.

Now, 80% of Canadian families are paying more in taxes to make up for this Prime Minister's out-of-control spending.

However, during the last election campaign, he made a formal promise that they would rebalance the budget before the end of their first term.

Will he table a plan to rebalance the budget without forcing Canadian taxpayers to foot the bill through increased taxes?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2015, we presented a plan to invest in Canadians and in their communities and to stimulate economic growth, after 10 years of failures under the Harper Conservatives.

We have created a strong and growing economy. Canadians have created 800,000 good jobs in the past three years. We continue to see the lowest unemployment rates in decades.

We will continue to invest in Canadians to create more prosperity for the middle class and those who are working hard to join it.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that this government is spending uncontrollably at the expense of our children and grandchildren. Who will have to pay for that? Who will have to pay for the Prime Minister's failures, mistakes and out-of-control spending? Workers, business owners and families across Canada, that's who.

I will therefore repeat my question to the Prime Minister. Will he table a plan to balance the budget without raising taxes for Canadians, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have not and will not raise taxes for Canadians. On the contrary, we have lowered taxes. We lowered taxes for the middle class by asking the wealthiest Canadians to pay a little more.

That is precisely what upsets the Conservatives because they would rather grow the economy by making investments that benefit the wealthy and giving them bigger tax breaks. That does not work. The trickle down effect does not work in Canada or anywhere else. That is what the Conservatives do not understand.

We created economic growth by investing in the middle class and we will continue—

• (1430)

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Oral Questions

[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister misled Parliament and all Canadians when he said in this House that he has already “helped more than one million Canadians find affordable housing”. We checked the CMHC record, and it says that only 14,703 new units have been or are even being built, so the government gave away \$14 billion in corporate tax writeoffs in the mini-budget but has only built a few new housing units.

Why is the Prime Minister deliberately misstating the facts? When will the government find new affordable housing for Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve housing that is safe, affordable and accessible. That is why we have made unprecedented investments in housing across this country since day one, including with our national housing strategy. We have already helped more than almost one million Canadians access homes. Our plan is for stable housing and financing now and for the next decade. We know that quality of life, that better opportunities for kids, for families, for everyone, relies on housing. That is why we are investing in a national housing strategy.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. Doing routine repairs and maintenance is not finding new housing for Canadians. That answer shows appalling disrespect for Canadians in Burnaby and everywhere else who are suffering through the worst housing crisis we have ever had. Canadian families are struggling under the worst family debt crisis in our history and in all the industrialized world. Forty-six per cent of Canadians are \$200 away from financial insolvency in any given month.

Why does the government not build affordable housing? Why does the Prime Minister not start to care as much about Canadians as he does about Bay Street billionaires?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the NDP be careful about maligning the idea of repairing or refurbishing existing housing stock. Far too many Canadians live in housing that is unacceptable, and the investments we have made that have helped rebuild, refurbish, renovate, improve housing for Canadians right across this country are making a real difference. That is part of the money we are flowing to communities and to Canadians to make sure they have safe and affordable places to live. Yes, there is much more work to do, but we are doing it with unprecedented investments in housing.

* * *

[Translation]

POVERTY

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a study has shown that nearly half of Canadians are \$200 away from not being able to pay their monthly bills.

Sophie, one my constituents, was telling me how difficult it is for her and her mother to make ends meet at the end of the month. People are struggling under crushing levels of personal debt, and the Liberals' priority is to give billions of dollars in gifts to big business.

When will the Liberals really help people instead of choosing to help the richest companies?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, our priority from the beginning has been to invest in the middle class and those working hard to join it. That is why we lowered taxes for the middle class. That is why we created the Canada child benefit, which is lifting hundreds of thousands of children across the country out of poverty.

We invested in a national housing strategy, which has already helped nearly one million people find housing, and we will continue to invest in our communities and in Canadians to help them build a better world for themselves and their families.

* * *

SENIORS

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister left out Canadian seniors who are in a lot of debt.

Paul, a senior in my riding, told me that he and his wife have a hard time making ends meet with their small pension despite having worked their whole lives.

I should also mention the lack of affordable housing for seniors across the country.

When will the Liberals choose to give our seniors a real helping hand instead of spending billions on pipelines and corporate welfare?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to talk about everything we have done for seniors, starting with the national housing strategy, which includes a significant investment in housing for seniors.

The Harper Conservatives raised the retirement age to 67, but we brought it back down to 65. We increased the guaranteed income supplement by nearly \$1,000 for the most vulnerable seniors.

We will keep investing to address the challenges facing seniors. We will help them. We are here for them.

* * *

● (1435)

FINANCE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have been waiting at least three years for the Liberals to keep their promise to return to a balanced budget in 2019. Unfortunately, the reality is altogether different. In 2019, we have a \$30-billion deficit.

Oral Questions

The Prime Minister is quite likely the only person in the world who believes that budgets balance themselves. Canadians know that budgets do not balance themselves. On the contrary, when we run deficits we have to pay them off one day.

What is the government's plan to return to a balanced budget?

[English]

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Youth Economic Opportunity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2015, Canadians had a choice between the Conservatives and the NDP who promised austerity and cuts at all costs.

We knew that after a decade of failed economic policies under the Harper Conservatives, we had to make the right kinds of investments for Canadians. By doing so, Canadians have created over 800,000 new jobs. We have the lowest unemployment rate in 40 years. A typical Canadian family is \$2,000 better off.

We know how to grow the economy. We are not going to take the same approach as the failed Conservative economic plan.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should tell that to 80% of Canadian families who are paying \$800 more since the Liberals came to power. I look forward to hearing Liberal candidates say that they keep their promises in a few months. It is not true. The Liberals do not keep their promises.

Canadians want to know how the government plans to return to a balanced budget. Is there even a plan?

[English]

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Youth Economic Opportunity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we committed and kept our promise to grow and invest in Canadians, to grow the economy for the middle class and those working hard to join it.

We did not take on the same economic plan as the Conservatives, because they could not manage the economy to help create a more prosperous economy for everyone. All they did was focus on their millionaire friends. We are focused on Canadians and we know our plan is working. When we invest in Canadians, they create the economic success that—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I would ask members to listen to both the questions and the answers.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what millionaire friends? There is the millionaire friend, right in the front row, who inherited a big, multi-million dollar family fortune, as he likes to call it. He says, "You have never had it so great, fellow Canadians."

For those with family fortunes, that is true. For people who are struggling to pay their bills, who have lost their children's fitness tax credit, their transit tax credit and their textbook and education tax credit, the costs have never been so high.

Why will the Liberals not admit that if given another chance, they will raise taxes, just like they have already done?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Youth Economic Opportunity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives continue to relay fake information. The fact is that we actually lowered taxes for middle-class Canadians. We lowered taxes for small businesses and we increased benefits like the Canada child benefit.

When will the Conservatives finally tell the truth and say that they are taking their marching orders from Premier Ford and that we are going to see more and more cuts across this country, cuts to education, cuts to Franco-Ontarian language rights? Why will the Conservatives not be honest and tell Canadians about the cuts they plan on making?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is the Liberal election platform: Do to all of Canada what Kathleen Wynne did to Ontario. She doubled the debt, she doubled power rates, driving the poorest people to the food banks, and she lied about her plans to raise taxes after every single election that she won.

Does that remind us of anyone? Someone sitting right there in the front. He knows that he will do exactly what the Wynne Liberals did. He will hide his plan and he will raise taxes massively and it will cost Canadians a fortune. Why will the member not admit it?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Youth Economic Opportunity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, look at our record. Over the last number of years we have actually cut taxes. The member is talking about hypotheticals, but the record shows that we reduced taxes. We reduced taxes on middle-class Canadians. We have reduced taxes for small businesses.

It is clear from the fact that the member for Carleton is speaking about Ontario that he just wants to create a nationalized plan of the Premier Ford cuts. That is what the Conservatives' platform is. When are the Conservatives going to be honest with Canadians and tell us what they plan on—

• (1440)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is the latest defence. Now their plans for higher taxes are hypothetical. In other words, we get to find out about it after the election when the Prime Minister no longer needs voters but still needs their money.

Canadians without trust funds and family fortunes know what he has failed to realize, that never-ending and ever-growing deficits lead to higher taxes down the road. Why will he not tell the truth about that now instead of hiding it until after the election?

Oral Questions

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Youth Economic Opportunity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is simply not true. A typical Canadian family is \$2,000 better off under our plan than under the Harper Conservatives. That is real money in the pockets of everyday Canadians that need it. The Conservatives talk about their austerity and cuts. Let me talk about the Canada child benefit. Over 16,410 children are benefiting in the member's riding alone. Is he going to look those children in the face and take that money from them just to prove a point? We believe in investment. Conservatives believe in—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to the contrary, when we created the child care benefit, we did so with a balanced budget and we lowered taxes. By contrast, when the Liberals brought in their changes, they did so by raising taxes on those children's parents and building up more and more debt for those children to pay down the road. We on this side of the House will create a financial environment that is secure for Canadians so that we can keep taxes low. We have a motion before the House. It simply asks the Prime Minister to commit in writing that he will not raise taxes. Will he?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Youth Economic Opportunity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have already cut taxes and the member opposite talks about the Canada child care benefit, which they taxed. We, on the other hand, made it tax free. We continue to make the right kinds of investments. We are focused on Canadians. At the end of the day a typical Canadian family is \$2,000 better off. With a decade under the Harper Conservatives, we know what Conservative cuts look like and Canadians voted against them.

* * *

PHARMACARE

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are in year four since the Prime Minister issued a mandate letter to the health minister directing her to lower prescription drug prices for Canadians. This was important because Canadians pay among the highest drug prices in the world and millions cannot afford their medicine.

Now officials at the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board admit that they have abandoned their plan to reduce the prices that drug companies can charge Canadians.

Will the Liberals admit that they have folded and betrayed Canadian patients because of pressure from the pharmaceutical industry?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that Canadians should not have to choose between buying groceries and paying for medication. That is why this government has taken action. As a government we have joined the pan-Canadian pharmaceutical alliance, which is able to bulk purchase drugs with all provinces and territories. As a result, we have saved billions of dollars.

Also in budget 2018, we were pleased to launch the advisory council on the implementation of a national pharmacare program. We expect that report in the spring of this year.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that Canadians are choosing between medicine and their rent. The Liberals promised these reforms in 2016 and said they would be in place last year. This is a straight betrayal of a clear promise. The Liberals also said these changes were essential to bring in universal pharmacare and that we could not have it until prices were reduced. That is not happening.

With Eric Hoskins soon to release his study on pharmacare, can Canadians expect to see the Liberals once again cave in to the drug lobby and refuse to bring in universal, comprehensive and public pharmacare?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the NDP, this side of the House wants to have a plan. That is why we have introduced the launch of the advisory council for the national pharmacare program. We are pleased that this council is being led by Dr. Eric Hoskins and a group of stellar Canadians to really look at this issue.

I am looking forward to receiving that report in the spring of this year, with its recommended options and also a path forward.

* * *

● (1445)

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government has had no control over the issue of illegal migrants in Canada from the very beginning. The influx of illegal migrants at our borders is costing another \$115 million. Why? This is the fault of the Prime Minister, who tweeted out a welcome to everyone in January 2017. When will the Prime Minister secure our borders and stop making Canadians pay for his mistakes?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental and Northern Affairs and Internal Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no matter how loud my colleague gets, his alarmist statements are not based on fact. Although the number of border crossings continues to go down, we understand that, in partnership with the federal government, the Province of Quebec and the City of Montreal play a key role in providing temporary housing. Our partnership with the Government of Quebec is very important to us, as is the issue of border security. We will continue to work with our partners to ensure that we maintain both at the same time.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Liberal government announced another \$114 million for illegal border crossers. Yesterday, the Liberals also closed the application window to sponsor parents and grandparents in just 10 minutes. Under the current Prime Minister, if people are illegally entering the country, they get immediate entry into Canada and free hotel rooms, yet if one's grandmother is trying to legally enter the country, she would get the door shut in her face.

Why is the Prime Minister making Canadians pay for his mistakes?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is amusing to watch the Conservatives pretend to care about family reunification because, under their watch, parents and grandparents were stuck in a backlog of 167,000 people and had to wait seven to eight years to reunite with their family members.

We have slashed the wait times down. We have ended the backlog. We have quadrupled the number available for Canadians and permanent residents to reunite with their families. While the Conservatives are busy dividing Canadians, we are focused on reuniting families.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is shameful to watch is the government allowing over 40,000 people to illegally enter our country and abuse our asylum system. What is shameful to watch is the government using language to divide Canadians as opposed to using strong policy to restore order and compassion to our immigration system. It shut the door on parents and grandparents who were trying to legally enter the country yesterday.

Why is the Prime Minister trying to make Canadians pay for his immigration mistakes?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the facts speak for themselves. This is the Conservative position on parents and grandparents. The Conservatives described parents and grandparents as a “burden” on the federal government in terms of financial support. They have described parents and grandparents as a drain on the provinces. That is their position. They can run, but they cannot hide from that position.

We are responsible for quadrupling the number of spaces that parents and grandparents have to come to Canada. We will continue to reunite more families. I am amused by the Conservatives' newfound passion for reuniting families. However, when they had the chance they failed.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the government announced \$114 million for people who are illegally entering the country, hotel rooms, immediate work permits and social welfare payments. At the same time, it shut the door in seven minutes on people who were trying to legally enter the country. There are over 9,000 angry comments on the immigration website from people who are saying this is not fair, because it is not. It is not right.

Why is the Prime Minister trying to make people pay for his immigration mistakes?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am really amused that suddenly the member opposite has found some sort of light in her enthusiasm for family reunification. However, family reunification was never the Conservatives' priority. Families had to wait between seven to eight years to join their loved ones. They only had 5,000 spaces to reunite family members. They had a backlog of 167,000 people stuck in that program. They even tried to hit the delete button where, for two years under their watch, Canadians could not be sponsors.

We are focused on getting the job done. The Conservatives will continue to—

• (1450)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Jonquière.

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*[Translation]***INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have not mentioned the U.S. steel and aluminum tariffs for a long time.

A Russian aluminum company recently managed to be taken off the list of U.S. sanctioned entities. They no longer pay the tariff.

What are the Liberals going to say to the people back home, the people of Jonquière? Thousands of families and good jobs are affected. They have the right to know.

What are the Liberals going to do to have these steel and aluminum tariffs lifted?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague that the U.S. tariffs on steel and aluminum are unfair and illegal. Canada is working on these tariffs at the NAFTA and WTO round tables.

I spoke to Ambassador Robert Lighthizer about this issue yesterday and today. We continue to work on it.

[English]

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is not enough to talk to them. We have to do something now.

On Sunday, the U.S. administration lifted sanctions on the Russian aluminum giant, Rusal. Meanwhile, Canada is still slapped with Trump's tariffs that are hurting Canadian businesses and workers. Let me get this straight. Trump is saying that Canada is a national security threat, but Russia is not?

Canada is the closest trade and security partner the U.S. has. Canadian workers are tired of paying the heavy price of losing their jobs because the Liberal government will not stand up for them. What is the plan to remove these devastating tariffs?

Oral Questions

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member for Essex knows very well, we are not just talking when it comes to the illegal and unjust U.S. tariffs on steel and aluminum. We acted decisively on July 1 by imposing retaliatory tariffs, the highest, strongest retaliatory trade action in Canadian history. This action is having results. In fact, just this week, Kevin Brady said in the U.S. that he did not see how the U.S. could ratify NAFTA while these tariffs were still in place.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we can all agree that every first nations child deserves the best start in life. We know that the path forward includes first nations control of first nations education and long-term sustainable funding.

Could the Minister of Indigenous Services please share with the House the great news from B.C. that advances this important priority?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week I joined the first nations education steering committee in the province of British Columbia to celebrate the new BC tripartite education agreement. It will benefit more than 12,000 first nations students. It will provide important changes, including a more sufficient and sustained funding model for new first nations education, and a new \$20 million investment for first nations schools, including for language and culture. It reflects the commitment of all parties to work together and strengthen first nations control of first nations education.

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CARBON PRICING

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when one has inherited a family fortune like the Prime Minister, one never has to worry about paying for anything, including the carbon tax. However, as families and seniors struggle every month just to get by, government documents show the carbon tax will be 15 times higher if the Liberals are re-elected. That's up to \$5,000 per year for a family of four. Canadian families are already paying for the Prime Minister's mistakes.

Why will the Prime Minister not tell Canadians the truth about his plan to raise the carbon tax if he is re-elected?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is really unfortunate that Conservative politicians continue to peddle misinformation. We have been clear that we are going to tackle climate change. We are going to do it in a way that it is effective and also affordable.

I am very proud to tell the member opposite that a family of four will get \$307 in Ontario more than they will pay. That has been our approach.

However, the question is this. Does the party opposite understand that climate inaction is a huge cost and that the Conservatives are passing that cost to their kids, that climate change is real and that Canadians deserve a plan?

We are going to continue moving forward on our plan to make—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lethbridge.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister keeps telling Canadians “Don't worry; it's okay”, but okay for who? It is okay for him because he inherited a family fortune of course, so he is fine. Meanwhile, a government document just revealed that the carbon tax would increase by 15 times after the next election.

The Prime Minister will not be honest about this because it is before the election. However, it is the Canadians after the election who we are concerned about.

Why is the Prime Minister deceiving Canadians by covering up the true cost of the Liberal carbon tax until after the election?

● (1455)

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the misinformation that is being spread by Conservative politicians, from Premier Ford to the leader of the opposition, is appalling. In fact, I am happy to point to the legislation that we passed, which the Conservatives voted against because they wanted to be free to pollute. It shows that we are giving all the money back. Guess what. A family of four in Ontario will get \$307 more than they will pay.

We are focused on making life affordable. We are also focused on protecting the environment. The party opposite wants to take us back to the Harper days when the Conservatives did not protect—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Niagara West.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been seven months since the Prime Minister backed down to Donald Trump and agreed to a trade deal that would keep steel and aluminum tariffs in place and continue to hurt our manufacturers.

The Liberals have already collected over \$839 million dollars in retaliatory tariffs. They promised to give this money back to our struggling steel and aluminum producers, but almost none has gone out.

Why are Canadian businesses continuing to be forced to pay for the Prime Minister's mistakes?

Oral Questions

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been very clear about supporting the steel sector and steel workers. We put forward a \$2-billion support package for those steel workers. To be specific, \$664 million of financial support has been provided to the steelworkers and the steel sector. We have invested in Algoma. We have invested in ArcelorMittal. We have provided financing through EDC and BDC.

We will continue to support the steelworkers and the steel sector.
[Translation]

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has collected nearly \$1 billion in retaliatory tariffs.

However, the Liberals have allocated only a fraction of the \$2 billion they promised in support for the steel and aluminum industry. On top of that, everyone knows that we produce the greenest steel and aluminum in the world. That is another broken promise.

Why should businesses in Saguenay and across Canada continue to pay for the Prime Minister's failures in trade negotiations?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been very clear. The steel sector is very important to our economy.

[English]

That is why we have invested \$2 billion worth of support for this sector.

As I have highlighted, we have provided that support in a meaningful way, particularly to the small and medium-sized businesses that need the financing in terms of being able to compete going forward. We provided \$255 million through BDC, \$169 million through EDC and \$140 million through the strategic innovation fund.

We will continue to defend the steelworkers and the steel sector.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are now three weeks into the state of emergency at Cat Lake and the minister has yet to meet with the leadership or visit the community. I am not sure if he fully understands the seriousness on the ground: the need for ground heaters, holding tanks, stand-by generators, 120 emergency units that have to be moved up before the winter road goes out.

Yesterday, he told the House that his officials, who have not yet visited the community, were expecting a community-based solution. This is a community facing a total and complete breakdown of social infrastructure. What on earth is he talking about?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have spoken to the leadership to affirm our commitment to working with them and indeed we do want it to be a community-led solution because we know that is a solution that will be lasting.

I did tell the House that officials would be meeting with the community yesterday or today, but they were unable to make it in due to bad weather. However, they will be meeting with them, and they are in constant contact with them.

We are committed to developing not only an interim but a long-term plan of action to take on the housing challenges that we know they face.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I spoke with the chief this morning. He said the government has done “squat”. We have houses that are so toxic that 75% of this community needs to be demolished. We just had a child medevacked out to London because of mould contamination.

The officials in his department have ignored the crisis at Cat Lake for years, so sending him up to put on a Band-Aid solution is not going to cut it.

What is it going to be? Are we going to see leadership from the minister, more jargon from Indian Affairs or an admission that his department has failed the people of Cat Lake, that he is going to take responsibility and he is going to make sure that action happens, yes or no?

● (1500)

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the health and safety of the people in Cat Lake is immensely important. I have spoken to the chief on this issue. I have spoken to members of council on this issue. We will be meeting with leadership to develop an interim and long-term solution.

We have made immense progress in partnership with the community. We know there is a long way to go, and we will continue forward in a spirit of partnership.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a new year and we are in a new House of Commons, but the Liberals are still playing the same old broken record.

The Liberals are showing their true colours when it comes to Quebec. They pretend to listen, but Quebec's requests fall on deaf ears. The Prime Minister remains firmly opposed to the idea of making the lives of Quebecers easier and ignores the consensus in Quebec regarding the single tax return, claiming that it would lead to more tax evasion.

What is the real reason for the Prime Minister's refusal to listen to Quebec, for once?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Conservatives are stooping to petty politics by making empty promises they have absolutely no intention of keeping.

The Canada Revenue Agency employs over 5,500 people in Quebec. It is an economic driver in places like Shawinigan, Gaspé, Rimouski, Quebec City and Montreal.

Our employees are bilingual and capable of serving all Canadians. We will be here and we will keep working—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, was the minister trying to scare people just now?

This is about an administrative agreement, about one form instead of two, about making it easier for Quebeckers to complete their tax returns.

Only Quebeckers have to send in two tax returns. Quebeckers do not have two pockets. They do not have one pocket for the federal government and another for the provincial government. They get only one paycheque, but two governments try to get their hands on it. Enough already.

When will the Prime Minister understand that Quebeckers are not a threat and that they can handle a single tax return?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is quite something to listen to the Conservatives, who were in power for 10 years and unable to figure out how the Canada Revenue Agency works.

I can say that we have put in place programs to address tax evasion, unlike the Conservatives who do not want to get in the way of their rich friends.

We have invested \$1 billion and hired 1,300 auditors. We have put everything in place to deal with tax evasion and we will continue to work—

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is important to trust Quebeckers. Instead, the government insists on making life more expensive for Quebeckers. It insists on making their life more difficult.

The Prime Minister is tuning out the consensus in Quebec calling for a single tax return. I know that the Prime Minister has never had to file his own taxes, but not all Quebeckers can afford to pay an accountant for that.

Why will the Prime Minister not make life easier for Quebeckers and allow them to file a single tax return?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the Conservatives are making unrealistic promises, I am pleased to tell my colleague and any Canadians who may be listening to us what the Canada Revenue Agency is doing to make life easier for Quebeckers and Canadians.

We have invested in our call centres, we have simplified tax returns, we have invested in volunteer community programs, we have encouraged low-income non-filers to file their returns, all so that more Canadians can get the money they are owed.

Oral Questions

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member for Vimy, I am fortunate to have many members of the Canadian Armed Forces living in my riding as well as a reserve unit of the Royal 22e Régiment. Every year, many recruits receive basic and other training there.

[English]

Many of them join the reserves to get good-paying summer jobs and hone their leadership skills.

Could the Minister of National Defence inform the House how our government is investing in young Canadians and the Canadian army reserves?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Vimy for her important question and her hard work for her constituents.

I was proud to be in Quebec a few weeks ago to talk about our new full-time summer employment program for members of the reserves. Through this initiative, new recruits will receive guaranteed summer employment and competitive pay and will gain valuable military experience, all of this guaranteed for the first four years.

Our government is committed to supporting the reserve members of our Canadian Armed Forces.

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• (1505)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are paying for the Prime Minister's failures on China and national security.

Chinese law requires any Chinese company to spy for the government, and Huawei is no exception. The U.S., Australia, New Zealand and Japan have banned Huawei. The U.S. has threatened to withdraw intelligence sharing if Canada does not do the same.

Cyber-intelligence is the new arm's race, and it is escalating. The U.S. has now brought 13 criminal charges against Huawei and is unwavering in its extradition request.

When will the Prime Minister ban Huawei?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member should know, the issue of safety and security in the supply chains for new technologies are under very careful examination by the Government of Canada.

All Canadians want to take advantage of the world of improvements that can come from the application of 5G technology. At the same time, we want to be absolutely certain that our systems are safe and secure. Canadians can be confident that the decisions made by the Government of Canada will not in any measure sacrifice safety and security.

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

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government continues to devalue the contributions of parents and grandparents. First it was family reunification based on the luck of the draw. After scrapping that colossal failure, it was right back to the Conservative plan to make families race, at breakneck speed, just to submit an application before an arbitrary cap was reached. It took all of 11 minutes yesterday before the door was slammed shut. Now families have to wait another year to even have a shot at submitting an application.

Will the Liberal government do what is right and cancel the cap?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians asked us for a more fair system, a system that would treat everyone on a first-come, first-served basis.

We have quadrupled the number of spots available for permanent residents and Canadians to sponsor parents and grandparents, from 5,000 to 20,000. We have slashed the wait times. It used to take seven to eight years to sponsor parents and grandparents.

We have listened to Canadians, and we continue to improve the program. We are proud of our record, and we will continue to reunite families.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Kent Hehr (Calgary Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is investing in renewable energy technologies to reduce carbon emissions and create good middle-class jobs for Canadians.

Could the Minister of Natural Resources provide the House with an update on the solar energy project he recently announced in Suffield, Alberta?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Calgary Centre for his hard work.

Last week we announced \$15 billion of investment our government is making in the Suffield solar project in Alberta. This project will create 250 well-paying middle-class jobs during construction and power over 7,000 homes every year.

We are delivering on our plan to grow the economy and at the same time protect the environment.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I encourage members to hold their opinions until it is their time to speak, not to speak, like the member for Calgary Signal Hill, for example. He could do that.

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[Translation]

RIDING OF SAINT-LÉONARD—SAINT-MICHEL

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, constituents of Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel have been waiting seven months for an answer about the special status of the Liberal member.

On June 22, he announced that he was resigning. On September 27, he changed his mind. On November 14, he announced on his Facebook page that he would resign on January 22. We were just officially notified that he is resigning.

Unfortunately, the constituents of Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel are suffering because of the member's seven-month absence and soon the lack of representation for several more months.

The question I would like to ask the Prime Minister is simple: does he intend to call a by-election before the end of the term, or will the constituents be without an MP for more than 17 months?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as members know, the member announced his resignation only today. We will examine the situation and proceed accordingly.

* * *

● (1510)

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in Quebec, we want to integrate our newcomers. We want people who choose Quebec to participate in Quebec life. We want them to take on our culture. For this to happen, we have to be able to speak to each other. Quebec has one official language, and that is French.

Does the minister agree that to become a citizen through Quebec, a newcomer must have adequate knowledge of French?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize the traditional discourse of the Bloc Québécois, which seeks to divide and create barriers on the basis of language, culture and colour. The Bloc Québécois has not changed, but Quebecers and all Canadians have continued to progress and move forward. The Bloc Québécois is the only one that has not and never will move forward.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I had the honour of introducing a bill to require that residents of Quebec have an adequate knowledge of French in order to obtain citizenship.

Knowledge of French is needed to integrate those who decide to join us, who want to be part of us and who want to be us. The Government of Quebec understands this.

Is this government in favour of a law that requires residents of Quebec to have an adequate knowledge of French in order to obtain citizenship?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that “us” is the problem here. Their “us” seeks to divide people based on language. For the Liberals, “us” includes francophones, anglophones and people from all over the world who come to Quebec and Canada to work together to build a better future for themselves and their children. We on this side of the House do not seek to divide, but to unite.

* * *

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Darshan Singh Kang (Calgary Skyview, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, despite selling our oil at discounted prices, the oil and gas industry last year contributed \$117 billion to the Canadian economy. That is lots of money, but the number could have been even higher had we had the pipeline capacity to deliver our oil to other markets. We need the Trans Mountain pipeline now more than ever. CNRL is warning that it will have to lay off workers, and how many other companies will be following suit?

My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. What is the timeline for getting construction under way on the Trans Mountain pipeline? Are we close?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians understand that in order to continue to grow the economy and get our resources to non-U.S. markets, pipeline capacity is very, very important. We are moving forward on the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion in a responsible way, in the right way, with meaningful consultation with indigenous communities and at the same time making sure that we are dealing with the impact of tanker traffic on the marine environment. We have eight teams currently consulting with indigenous communities, and the NEB is on track to provide a report on February 22. We are moving forward in the right way on this project.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the recipients of the 2018 Governor General's History Awards. It is a long list, so bear with me, please, and stand as I call the names: Jonathan Chassé, Kaira Picard, Leah Baptiste, Pat Watson, Eric Chassé, Temma Frecker, Jean-François Gosselin, Lisl Gunderman, Maxine Hildebrandt, Paul Paterson, Sarah Pashagumskun, Deborah Dobbins, Jean-Paul Guiard, Sergio Gutiérrez, Elsbeth Heaman and Bill Waiser.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

●(1515)

[Translation]

USE OF IMAGES OF THE LAC-MÉGANTIC TRAGEDY BY NETFLIX

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek it you will find unanimous consent of the House for the following motion:

That the House of Commons:

Privilege

- (a) condemn the use of images of the Lac-Mégantic tragedy in works of fiction;
- (b) demand that Netflix Inc. remove all images of the Lac-Mégantic tragedy, which took 47 lives, from its fiction catalogue; and
- (c) demand that Netflix Inc. financially compensate the community of Lac-Mégantic for using those images for entertainment purposes, without concern for the trauma of citizens, survivors, and the victims' families.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for me to table in this House a document entitled “Modelling of Pricing and Emissions Reductions”. This document from Environment Canada shows the government's plan is to increase the tax to \$300 a tonne, not the \$50 it admits to, which will mean much higher taxes for Canadians.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find unanimous consent of the House to table the official Liberal Party platform. On page 76, it states that the budget would be balanced in 2019-20.

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

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the House that Thursday, January 31, 2019, shall be an allotted day.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

MEMBER FOR SAINT-LÉONARD—SAINT-MICHEL

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there have been many interventions, as you know, regarding the now former member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel. I wish to point out two brief but important facts after having read through the Hansard records of our former colleague's intervention.

Speaker's Ruling

The first point is that the former member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel made many accusations during that speech, many of the ad hominem nature, against my personal character. Those I will leave aside, but very importantly he accused me of having relied upon the interpretation of a speech he had made previously. He said I relied upon that interpretation to present my facts before the House.

It is fine to go after members of Parliament for different points of view on the topics of the day, even sometimes character assassination, as in this case, but we must leave aside at all times the excellent, non-partisan and highest-quality nature of the interpretation services that happen for all of us here. We must not suggest there is any defence made available to members of Parliament because those interpreters do not do an excellent job on behalf of us all in what are oftentimes very difficult circumstances.

The second point is that despite the insinuations that were made by our now former colleague against me, this was never a personal issue for me. I have no actual personal interactions with the former MP.

This was personal for me, though, with respect to the House of Commons and the reputations of members of Parliament, which we must jealously guard because they are constantly under siege. Raising the issue of members of Parliament who claimed to be leaving their office and then did not for a number of months is an attempt to hold up and try to maintain what we can of the esteem of Canadians, on whose behalf we seek to speak.

Now that the former member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel has resigned his seat, I can do nothing but wish him health in his future. The people in Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel will finally have representation again because they, like all Canadians, deserve no less.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley for his additional arguments. In particular, I thank him for recognizing the wonderful work of our interpreters. I know all members agree with him because I heard the applause, as we often do, though not often enough.

• (1520)

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on December 13, 2018, by the hon. member for Skeena-Bulkley Valley concerning an allegedly misleading statement made in the House by the former member for Saint-Leonard-Saint-Michel.

[*Translation*]

I want to thank the member for having raised the question, as well as the former member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel and the member for Grande Prairie—Mackenzie for their interventions.

[*English*]

In raising his question of privilege, the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley stated that, on December 11, 2018, in response to another question of privilege, the former member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel had misled the House when he said he was not collecting his salary as a member of Parliament. He concluded that

that statement had to have been incorrect given that, pursuant to the Parliament of Canada Act, the House of Commons administration has an obligation to pay a salary to all sitting members and that the former member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel was still a member when he made that statement.

[*Translation*]

Earlier today, the former member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel reaffirmed that he had no intention of ever “pocketing” his salary and, in fact, had donated it to a cause of his choosing. He also explained that his statement was made in French but the English translation, used by the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley as a basis for the current question of privilege, did not accurately represent his views and led to a misinterpretation of his remarks.

I have carefully reviewed the statement made on December 11, 2018, by the former member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel in which he stated, indeed several times, that he was not “collecting” a salary. The words spoken at the time, or at least what one could easily understand them to mean, appeared to contradict the established facts, specifically the House of Commons administration’s legal obligation to pay a salary to all members until such time as they are no longer members of Parliament. Today’s statement clarifies what the former member intended to say.

[*English*]

The charge of misleading the House is always regarded by the Chair as a most serious one for it touches not only on the technical aspects of the charge but also the integrity of the member. The Chair, of course, is bound to respect the established conventions accepted by the House on such matters; this does not include assuming a role in the interpretation of what members intended to say. As Speaker Parent reminds us at page 9247 of the Debates on October 19, 2000:

What I am required to rule on is a more narrow procedural issue: whether a wilful attempt has been made to mislead the House....Only on the strongest and clearest evidence can the House or the Speaker take steps to deal with cases of attempts to mislead members.

After a careful review of the precedents and the current case before the House, the Chair cannot find that there is sufficient evidence to establish a prima facie question of privilege.

[*Translation*]

Before I conclude, I would once again encourage members to be more mindful of the need to choose their words carefully to help minimize any confusion, however inadvertent, that could lead to a serious misunderstanding. Of course, this is even more important when the ambiguous statement cannot be readily clarified as happened in this case. At the same time, I would urge members to be cautious in considering a charge against a fellow member.

[*English*]

I thank all hon. members for their attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—FEDERAL DEFICIT

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am always happy to take the floor, particularly in this brand new West Block Commons. To start, I want to echo the comments of many of my colleagues and our leader in thanking all the people who have been part of this historic move and the renovation of this amazing space. Our Parliament is in session when Canadians send their representatives and we meet to debate the issues of the day, with you, Mr. Speaker, moderating the debate, and with the mace.

While the room may change, the institution is core to our country, and the success we have had as one of the leading countries of the world is rooted in our democracy. I will speak about that in depth, because there has actually been an erosion in responsible government under the current government. In fact, when it comes to debt, deficit and taxation, the Liberals are deviating from the historic responsible-government model that Canada's parliamentary democracy enjoys.

I will get to that later, but the member for Carleton brought a good motion today, because the government has no plan. There is no plan to balance the budget and no plan to withhold more and future tax increases on top of the ones that are already in place, and there have been broken promises by the Liberal government with respect to its core economic agenda. Therefore, this opposition day motion raises this as an important national issue, and the House is calling upon the government to do a simple thing: table a plan to get back to balance, and do it with a pledge of no future tax increases.

Why is that plan a good one, and why should it be simple? The Harper government did that amid the worst economic recession since the Great Depression, when we were the only country of stability within the G7 and we had a balanced budget that was maintained while we lowered taxes on families, seniors and employers. That was tough to do, particularly when there was global stagnation. We had positive growth, we had a balanced budget, and we had lower taxes. We had to have a plan to do that.

Before I speak about the plan, let us talk about the promise, because Canadians were misled by the Prime Minister. I have said a few times in the House that what should scare Canadians is that midway through an election, the current Prime Minister, then the third party leader, changed his core economic plan in the middle of the election to win votes away from the NDP. He was willing to throw out the Liberals' economic plan, the most important thing a government does, in order to curry votes.

At the beginning of the election, the Liberals were the party of Paul Martin, of balanced budgets. They quoted David Dodge and all these things about prudent and sound economic management. Midway through, the Liberals lied to Canadians. They said we were in a recession, which was not true, so they were going to run modest deficits, which we know is not true, in order to stimulate the

Business of Supply

economy with infrastructure spending. That, as the Parliamentary Budget Officer has shown, is not true either.

Therefore, the Liberals lied to Canadians about the crisis, that we were in a recession, and they suggested they were going to have short-term, modest deficits based on infrastructure to get the economy moving. All of that has proven to be untrue.

We recall the Liberals' election pledge to Canadians. We have seen it online. We just have to scroll to see the Prime Minister's comments from various speeches and debates. He said the Liberal government would run modest deficits, never larger than \$10 billion, and that it would be back into balance by 2019. All of that, again, was false. Despite having the best economic times in 25 years because of a booming U.S. economy, we have seen deficits that have been double or more what he promised. Rather than balancing the budget this year, in 2019, the Prime Minister and his finance minister refuse to even give a future date for balance.

We have seen that money has not gone out to infrastructure in the GTA, in Whitby, in Pickering or in Brampton. The Liberals are waiting. There has actually been a slowdown, and when it comes to spending on affordable housing and other forms of social infrastructure, they have back-end loaded all the funding announcements. Therefore, they announce big numbers but the money will not flow until the mid-2020s.

● (1525)

Why have we moved this motion today? We want the government to stop its shell game on the economy and stop relying on Canadian families, seniors and small businesses as the people it can squeeze and squeeze again for its overspending.

How can I say that? It is because this current government, by its third budget, had increased spending by over 20%. It increased spending across the board, including spending for the hiring of personnel, which is the largest expense for most departments. There is a 20% increase in spending by the government. There are increased revenues, but revenue forecasts are out by \$5 billion and \$10 billion. The government is bringing in more money because the economy has been doing well, but it is spending even more than it is bringing in. It has increased spending by the federal government by 20%, and most Canadians families could not tell us about any positive development from that. As we see more growth in the office towers in Ottawa, we hear reports in the last week of a majority of Canadians being \$200 away from bankruptcy, or almost a majority, I believe.

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These are challenging times. In manufacturing in Ontario, the Oshawa area had the GM announcement. Our resource sector in western Canada, for years now, has been feeling it. The Prime Minister and the finance minister, who live in gilded cages, do not understand the needs of families, seniors and small businesses in my area in Durham. It is why they say there is no problem and that we do not need to ever balance the budget, because in their world budgets do balance themselves. They hire someone to do that. They hire someone to manage the affairs of their trusts or their family fortune, as the Prime Minister puts it. They need to do a reality check with Canadians. Life is not 20% better from the government's 20% overspending. Canadians are being squeezed, and we all know that the deficits of today, be they \$18 billion or \$28 billion, which are the numbers we have had in the last few years, are the higher taxes of tomorrow. My daughter, who is 12 now, will be in university before the current government can balance the budget at the current rate. She can guarantee herself that she will have to pay higher taxes than because of the Liberals' mismanagement now.

The deficit and the spending are out of control. In the last budget, the Liberals used the word "investment" more than 450 times in the budget document. Do members know what "investment" is in Liberal language? It is spending. They can frame it in more positive-sounding language, but it just shows reckless and wanton spending, because they always feel they can squeeze Canadians. They can squeeze farmers in terms of transitioning the family farm in succession planning. They can squeeze small businesses, physicians and other people who have retained earnings to try to make sure they can plan for the uncertainties in life, such as unemployment, maternity leave and retirement. The government is even talking about re-auctioning wireless spectrum, which is essentially expropriating resources so that it can squeeze more money out of it.

• (1530)

The Liberals actually have Crown agencies right now that have been tasked with trying to raise more revenue. They have both a spending and a revenue problem. They have raised taxes on people and small businesses. They are bringing in a nationalized carbon tax. They brought in a payroll tax on small businesses. They cut tax-free savings accounts, which hurt seniors in particular. They have raised new taxes on ride-sharing and on Saturday night, as they say, because they have raised taxes on alcohol and the Uber ride home. The Liberals love the cannabis change, because they can tax that too.

Do members know what the Liberals tried to do, contrary to representative government? They tried to put an escalator clause on the alcohol tax raises, meaning they were not even going to come back to the legislature before they raised taxes yet again.

Dozens of tax increases on Canadians and reckless spending: these are the reasons we are asking the Prime Minister today for a plan to get back to balance and to lower taxes.

• (1535)

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we saw what the previous government did. The Conservatives thought they could cut their way to growth and very quickly realized that this is not how things work. We need to invest, as any person who has been in business knows. I ran a small business for 25 years, and in order to grow that business, I invested in it, and it grew. As my income increased, I was able to increase the

level of debt to invest in that business and bring about even further growth in that business.

We cannot cut our way to growth. We have invested in Canadians, and that has seen a record 800,000 jobs created in the country and the lowest unemployment rate in over 40 years.

To the member opposite, what are you going to cut? What is your plan? Are you going to cut the tax-free Canada child benefit?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the member that he is to address questions to the Chair and not to the individual members.

The hon. member for Durham.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Madam Speaker, I do not think the member from Hastings would be going back to his riding and talking to many of his small business friends, because his government's attempt to tax retained earnings, to tax dividends, to tax the small businesses he claims to come from caused almost a tax revolt from small business, including those throughout Prince Edward, Hastings, Durham and Northumberland.

All of those members are very worried, and they should be, because small businesses are seeing less growth. They are seeing higher taxes and more regulation. They are seeing a government whose plan, after a bad deal on NAFTA, is to tax them with Canadian tariffs.

In fact, when I go by the member's area or through southern Ontario, I see that small businesses have had enough with this government. It sees them as a piggy bank it can keep using to fuel the overspending of the Prime Minister on issues that are not a priority.

It is about a plan. What is wrong with having a plan?

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, when the Conservative government was in power, it upheld a tax system that was not working for everyday Canadians. It supported tax havens that we saw benefited the wealthy and it supported CEO stock option loopholes. In the meantime, that Conservative government ran a deficit of \$160 billion. On its pathway to balancing the budget, it upheld a tax system that benefited the rich. Its cuts were on the backs of everyday Canadians and those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice, our veterans.

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I have a lot of respect for the member because he has stood up for veterans. He has called for support for veterans and he was the veterans affairs minister. Under the Conservative watch, a thousand staff at Veterans Affairs were fired. That has resulted in a backlog that has affected veterans, whose disability applications are unopened and are waiting to be addressed in a timely fashion. Of course, this Liberal government promised to fix that.

Does the member regret cutting the thousand staff at Veterans Affairs, which has created this enormous backlog and has inhibited veterans from getting the services they rightfully deserve?

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Madam Speaker, I will correct the member on both his tax claims and his veteran claims.

Specifically, he talked about the pathway the Harper government took to get back to balance. We did; after the global recession, we had a very difficult but planned path to get back to balance, and we did not raise taxes. In fact, our cuts to the GST and raising the basic personal exemption helped low-income Canadians the most. We helped lower middle-class incomes across the board and we helped small businesses, which are the hirers.

On the veterans front, we actually removed most of the paperwork. We created the My VAC Account, which the member knows. I had veterans actually say how they wanted to be served as Afghan veterans. They did not want to go to the offices like the World War II veterans did. By the end, we knew where resources needed to be put, so we put about 300 employees back in to some of the claims processing for mental health. That got the backlog down under my watch, and the member knows that.

The current government has allowed the backlog to rise back up because there has been no effective hand who understood veterans. The Liberals broke their promise on pensions. They were just placating people. I am hopeful that the new minister, who is much more substantive than the previous two, will bring some truth and a plan as well to veterans, because the government has there are enough resources to keep the backlog down. They just need to apply it to the employees.

• (1540)

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it has been a very interesting debate today and, I think, a very productive one.

The numbers have been very clear. Our government was elected in 2015 on a plan to grow the economy, and what we have heard here today is that this is happening. The economy has been growing. Unemployment is at all-time record lows.

The opposition really wants to talk about the deficits and the debt and their fiscal picture. In the last 10 years, the Conservatives left us with a 7.1% unemployment rate. We have now brought it down to 5.6%. Does that sound like an economy that is not growing? All the businesses in my area have been having a hard time meeting the needs and demands and hiring more people because of the growth that they have been sharing.

I forgot to mention at the beginning of my speech that I will be sharing my time with the member for Winnipeg North, and we all know that the member for Winnipeg North will add much-needed facts and figures to this debate to shed more light on the debt issue.

Our debt-to-GDP ratio is continuing to decline. That is our plan, and it is a plan that has been working, as we have seen since 2015 through the investments we have been making. The member for Durham mentioned investments several times, and that has been our key focus. Every budget that we as a government have put out has been thinking about what investments we can make in our country, what investments we can make in Canadians, and that is exactly what Canadians in my area, Bramptonians, want to see.

They have been devastated by the cuts of the Doug Ford government. Every time I have a meeting in my constituency, I see an angry commuter because of the cuts to GO transit or an angry student from my youth council because of the cuts to OSAP. That is probably what we can expect from the Conservatives if they come to power, because that is what they like to talk about. They want to try to balance the budget at any cost on the backs of Canadians. They will do it by taking away from health care or by taking away from students.

What have we done as a government? As we have heard, the average Canadian has \$2,000 more in their pocket because of the middle-class tax cut that we have provided and because of the Canada child benefit, which is tax-free. The former Conservative government taxed that benefit. We have made it tax-free.

That is not to mention 50% more in student grants and making sure that students do not have to repay their loans until they make at least \$25,000. These are measures that help and benefit the average Canadian, the middle class and those who are working hard to join it. If we want to talk in particular of those who are working hard to join it, our Canada workers benefit will benefit those people who have a job and will incentivize them to keep working by giving them a little bit more so that they can make ends meet.

Those are the types of plans that we have put in place and those are the plans that have been benefiting this country from coast to coast to coast. That is why we are seeing record-breaking job numbers. We are seeing 800,000 jobs created by Canadians in this country. That does not happen without investments. We made the right investments at the right time, and Canadians have been taking that opportunity to grow their businesses.

Do members know what else helps Canadians grow their business? It is the tax cuts that we have provided to small businesses. We have provided many measures that have been helping to alleviate the burdens that have been placed on small businesses.

Business of Supply

Along with the tax cuts are the services that have been provided by this government. Innovation Canada has provided an excellent tool to serve small business so that they can find grants. They can find money through various levels of government and through various different programs. We are making sure that we are listening to people, not just debating them every step of the way. We are listening to their needs.

● (1545)

What I am hearing from businesses is that they find it very hard to navigate government. That is why we put those types of measures in place, so that they can access the capital and the help that they need to continue to grow. I believe that is why we are seeing the success that we are seeing in our economy.

Canadians do not have to take my word for it. Our federal debt-to-GDP ratio is amongst the lowest in the G7 countries. That is what keeps our economy growing. The International Monetary Fund commended Canada last year for our AAA rating and for our debt-to-GDP ratio. We are looking good. We are in a good financial situation. Despite the Conservatives painting a fake gloom-and-doom picture, it is quite the contrary. We are seeing that in the actual numbers.

In Brampton North alone, the CCB has helped 14,470 families. Over 14,000 families. They are better off under our government. I know the Conservatives like to talk about their boutique tax cuts, but that is not the best way to help all Canadians. With these measures, making the Canada child benefit accessible to anybody and making it tax free, we are allowing families to be able to save for university, to pay for those sporting activities and to pay for tutoring and extracurriculars.

The city of Brampton also saw a major investment in transit by our government. Over \$32 million was invested in transit projects, like replacing and fixing buses and having storage facilities for these buses. That has been a tremendous help to the city of Brampton. Our transit system, for those who do not know, is one of the fastest growing at 18%. On average, in the country, we see a 1% growth. It is remarkable. We have one of the youngest cities in the country, one of the fastest-growing cities in the country, and because of that we have a fast-growing transit system.

These investments are needed more than ever. My fear is that the plan the Conservatives have been tossing around would take away a lot of those measures that Bramptonians so desperately need. Bramptonians have seen major benefits through all of the trade agreements that have been signed by our government.

Through the hard work of the foreign affairs minister and her team, and the trade minister, we have now secured access to over 1.5 billion people through CETA, CPTPP and the USMCA. All of that gives us larger market shares, and that helps grow our economy and helps businesses to be able to export more efficiently. That is a plan that cares about Canadians and cares about growing the economy.

I have visited many businesses in my area, and I would like to talk about one. HRWARE is a local, family-owned business that sells innovative technology services and HR software across the globe.

It is agreements like these that have opened up markets for them, so that they can hire on more young students coming out of Sheridan

College. Hopefully, one day, Brampton will be able to say that it has its very own university, but unfortunately, very recently we just heard from the Doug Ford government that this was a cut it was going to put in place. It cut a Brampton university from our city, a city that, as I just mentioned, has one of the youngest populations and has a great need. It is the ninth largest city in the country.

That is what worries me about the Conservatives. They try to hide their plan but we know what it really is. It is austerity. It is going to be cuts, just like Doug Ford. That is going to hurt Bramptonians. It is going to hurt Canadians. We will not see the type growth that is needed in this country when those cuts are made.

● (1550)

In conclusion, I would like to say this. We need to make sure that we continue investing, that we keep down this path and that we re-elect this government so we can see even more growth for years to come.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member knows that I also spend a lot of time in Brampton North. The people in Brampton North are telling me that they are paying for the mistakes of the current Prime Minister.

The member spoke about the Doug Ford government. I think she knows that Ontario is struggling under the crushing debt and deficit that are the legacy of the Kathleen Wynne government. We want to make sure things do not get that bad at the national level. We cannot let the Prime Minister do to Canada what Kathleen Wynne has done to Ontario. We cannot get into a situation where people have to pay so much for those major mistakes. That means limiting the growth of government spending. That means not spending money on things like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which is building pipelines in Azerbaijan. That means not giving money to a Texas-based oil company to buy a pipeline here in Canada with no plan to build it. That is what a responsible plan allowing Canadians to get ahead would look like.

I want to ask the member for Brampton North a question that I know is important to her constituents. We know that the application window for parents and grandparents was only open for seven minutes. While the government is accommodating illegal immigrants, it has no plan to address the crisis at the border. Does she think that seven minutes is fair to those people in Brampton North who are trying to sponsor people to come to Canada?

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to answer my colleague's question. I know he spends a lot of time in Brampton. Therefore, he would know that the immigration needs are great.

Business of Supply

Bramptonians have been excited ever since this government has come into place because they finally have a government that has been listening to their immigration concerns. The people who walk through my door are people who have had the door shut in their faces. They were waiting over eight to nine years for their parents to come. Some have even waited 10 years. We have cut that backlog. We have made it so that our system is efficient. Spousal sponsorship is within a year, and much less in most circumstances. When I was elected, there were spouses who had been waiting over three years to be reunited with each other. They had children. I saw the sorrow and tears in their eyes. I no longer have those people walking through my door because that just does not happen anymore.

It is the same thing with parent and grandparent sponsorship. It is fantastic. We have quadrupled the number of people we are taking in. The Conservatives took in 5,000 and we took in—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I want to allow time for other questions.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for North Island—Powell River.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, when I talk to constituents in my riding, some of the biggest challenges are with respect to housing. We are a small, rural, remote, community-based riding, but the housing crisis continues to grow every day. It is quite traumatizing for so many seniors, families and young people in our riding and region.

I would ask the member to talk about why we cannot have a discussion about a more fair tax process. Right now, the extremely wealthy in this country are not being taxed anywhere near the same amount that a hard-working Canadian is. Therefore, if we are to address these big issues, like finding a house so that people have somewhere to live and can look forward to prosperity in the future, then we better make sure we are doing that.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Madam Speaker, this gives me a wonderful opportunity to be able to address something that was left out of my speech.

When we came into power, the very first measure we took when it came to taxes was to increase taxes on the top 1%. That is a government that is concerned that all people in Canada need to pay their fair share. That is why we took that measure. Right after increasing it on the top 1%, we decreased it on the middle class.

We have a very competitive tax rate in this country compared with other G7 nations. A family of four in Canada is paying less in tax than all our comparable G7 countries. Therefore, we believe that the measures that have been put in place have been good for Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

Also, housing is a very important issue. That is why we have invested so much in the national housing strategy.

• (1555)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I go to resuming debate, I want to remind members that there are a lot of individuals who want to ask questions on this, so I would ask people to be mindful of their preamble. Given that there are only five minutes for questions and comments, when members give a speech, each question and comment should last one minute to allow for at

least three questions to be posed. The same thing goes for those who are answering the question.

Resuming debate, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I know there was maybe a little disappointment on the other side when members heard that I was going to be splitting the speech. I suspect it is because they were hoping I was going to be delivering a 20-minute speech as opposed to just a 10-minute speech. I thank them for that vote of confidence.

The Conservatives have a plan. I figured out their plan and we have seen it today when the introducer of the motion stood and started to personally attack the Prime Minister. That is the Conservative plan. If we review some of the comments from question period and review the Conservative member's comments who introduced the motion, it was all personal attacks on Canada's Prime Minister.

As the Conservative Party, the official opposition, wants to focus its attention on personal attacks, this Prime Minister and this government will continue to work diligently to support Canada and the programs that are essential in advancing our communities in every region of our nation.

We are not going to lose focus on what is important to Canadians. The days in which I was in opposition when our Prime Minister entered the Liberal Party leadership race, he indicated that he wanted to emphasize and work on improving the conditions of Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it. From day one that has been a mission of the Prime Minister.

I believe in our policy initiatives that have been announced since the last election by minister after minister and supported on this side of the House, because time and time again we get resistance from all political parties of the opposition. These initiatives have done everything to focus on enhancing Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it.

We have seen significant results with 800,000 jobs. It took Stephen Harper almost 10 years to achieve that. That is by working with Canadians, other levels of government and small and large businesses alike. We understand that if we want to see the economy doing better, we need to invest in Canadians and in our infrastructure.

My Conservative colleagues said that at some point that we were going to have to go and knock on doors and look in Canadians' eyes and asked what were we going to tell them that our government had actually achieved. I would like to pick up on that point because I am very grateful to the residents of Winnipeg North and what they have entrusted me with over the last number of years.

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To give a sense of what I will be telling my constituents in 2019 during the next election, I will tell them that the first priority was to give tax breaks to Canada's middle class. That was bill number two. That gave hundreds of millions of dollars to Canada's middle class while at the same time we increased taxes for Canada's one per cent, the wealthiest Canadians, to ask them to pay their fair share. The Conservatives voted against both the tax increase on Canada's one per cent and the tax break for Canada's middle class.

Shortly thereafter we saw the enhancement of the Canada child benefit program, something that I have talked about on numerous occasions in the House. That is something that I am going to be telling the residents of Winnipeg North because every month we receive approximately \$9 million-plus that goes into the community of Winnipeg North to support our children. That same principle applies to every member of Parliament in the House.

That is why it is going to be interesting when we hear the Conservative Party talk about cuts. That is what is going to happen. Just like Stephen Harper and Doug Ford, we are going to see cuts.

• (1600)

Are the Conservatives going to be telling their constituents who are receiving those benefits that we are going to be taking away a portion or all of them? I would hope not.

We also increased the guaranteed income supplement for constituents. Again, the poorest of all seniors in all regions of Canada have received significant increases in their annual income as a direct result of that increase. Much like the Canada child benefit is lifting tens of thousands of children out of poverty, the increase in the guaranteed income supplement is lifting tens of thousands of seniors out of poverty, the poorest seniors.

Winnipeg North has benefited greatly from many of the announcements this government has put forward. If we look at summer students, we have virtually doubled that program. We are hiring tens of thousands more summer students throughout Canada as a direct result of this Prime Minister and the government recognizing the value of giving young people the opportunity to gain employment experience while attending school and between years. Now the program has even been expanded to go beyond that.

That is the type of progressive financing we have seen from the Minister of Finance to support Canadians, not only in Winnipeg North but in every riding throughout this country. We recognize that by putting money into the pockets of the middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it, the working class, they are spending that money. By spending that money, they are adding more value to the economy. It is why the Prime Minister, and anyone else on the government benches, says that if we invest in the middle class, we are also investing in the economy. The healthier the middle class, the healthier the economy.

Those are some of the policy initiatives we are seeing locally that deal with finances. If we look at the last few years and the social planning side, there are things such as the health accord. Now we have a Minister of Health who is diligently trying to put together something that will hopefully lead to some form of pharmacare program.

By working with the provinces and territories, the government has enhanced the CPP so that people in the future will have more money to retire with, something Stephen Harper refused to do.

What about the billions of dollars that have been allocated for a housing strategy? The NDP like to talk housing, but at the end of the day, what we announced is tenfold what they talked about in the last federal election. This brings me back to the last federal election, when only one party in this House generally believed that we needed to invest in Canadians and infrastructure. New Democrats and Conservatives were focused on not having any form of deficit. It begs the question: What programs would they be cutting? That is a legitimate question.

The Conservatives talk about the price on pollution. Whether it has come from ideas from Paris or across Canada, it is amazing that people recognize that we need to have a plan. The only party that does not seem to believe that we need to have a plan is the Conservative Party. This leader is no better than Stephen Harper. There is no plan on the environment. Conservatives are very eager to stand and criticize the plan we have put in place, a plan that has already been acted on by many provincial governments. Many governments around the world have actually acted, but the Conservatives do not have a plan. They do not feel that they should have to share a plan with Canadians.

• (1605)

On all of those issues, I would argue that we have seen more tangible action to support Canadians in all regions of this country in the last three years than we saw in 10 years under Stephen Harper. I genuinely believe that to be the case. I would challenge members opposite to list off those so-called accomplishments of Stephen Harper.

I sat in opposition, and there was nothing new coming. In fact, members will recall that some of the worst days under Harper were toward the end, when the Conservatives started to cut things like veterans services. They had just one intent.

I see that my time has already expired. I have not yet talked about the deficit. Hopefully I will get a chance to in a question and answer.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is funny to listen to the hypocrisy of a Liberal complaining about our side attacking the Prime Minister. This is from a party that cannot say a single sentence without attacking Stephen Harper. It is quite fascinating. I think perhaps the member should change the name of his riding from Winnipeg North to the member for the riding of "pot calling the kettle black".

He rants on and on about all the great work the Liberals have done for seniors with the increase in the GIS and so on, yet the Library of Parliament report shows that the poverty rate for seniors has increased every single year under the government.

Why has the government failed seniors so badly? Why does it continue to mislead Canadians on the issue?

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Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, if the Conservatives want to continue to talk about personal attacks on the Prime Minister, they can do that. We will continue to focus our attention, as the government, on Canadians first and foremost and on making sure that the policies we are bringing in will have positive outcomes. As I pointed out at the very beginning, we have seen that in things such as the 800,000 plus jobs that have been generated. That is not to mention the enhancement of many different social programs, which goes straight to the core of the question that was posed when the member asked about seniors.

I talked about the increase to the guaranteed income supplement. That actually lifted seniors out of poverty. I should also have made reference to the fact that we reduced the age of retirement for old age supplements from 67 to 65. We actually worked with the provinces to enhance the CPP, something the former government did not want anything to do with. That will enhance salaries for those who are going to be retiring in the future.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary did not answer the question posed by my colleague from Edmonton West, and I would not want to let him off the hook.

In his speech, he stated that the guaranteed income supplement was substantially and significantly increased. He also said that hundreds of thousands of seniors were lifted out of poverty. I am not quoting him exactly, but that is roughly what he said. However, seniors in my riding are coming to my office to tell me that their income is stagnating and that they struggle year after year.

Just now, the parliamentary secretary spoke only in generalities and mentioned hundreds of thousands of seniors.

Could my colleague provide specific numbers concerning the increase in the guaranteed income supplement and how many seniors they have helped, and could he tell us how they have helped them?

• (1610)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I will use the residents of Winnipeg North as an example. Through the guaranteed income supplement increase the government put in place, the poorest seniors in Winnipeg North will in fact have received a \$900 increase in one year. That is a significant percentage of an increase.

That very same principle in Winnipeg North applies to every constituency in every region of Canada. The government understands the pressures on our seniors. That is one of the reasons we work toward dealing with issues like prescribed medications and many others that also affect our seniors.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, I cannot ask my question without first telling the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government that I really admire him, even though I may not always agree with what he says. He is a great parliamentarian. There should be a documentary about him. He seems to be in this House 24/7. He is a key part of this parliamentary democracy, I must say.

Now, we are talking about balancing the budget, and therefore about taxing and spending. I would like to know how the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government can look taxpayers in the eye, without any shame, when his government is allowing Canada's big banks to continue engaging in tax avoidance. They send their money to Barbados, which means it cannot be put to good use here. They make billions of dollars in profits every quarter. That could help a lot of people, particularly in the health care system.

How could my colleague vote against our motion, which would have made that illegal?

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would first thank my friend and colleague for his kind words. They were very thoughtful.

One issue we could look at is that in two consecutive budgets, we have seen substantial increases in money allocated, \$900 million, maybe a bit more than that, to Revenue Canada to go after individuals who are trying to avoid paying taxes. There is no doubt that there is always room for improvement, but in the last few years, we have spent almost a billion dollars in total to try to ensure that people are paying their fair share. It is one of the reasons we put that tax increase on Canada's 1% wealthiest. Between that and going after tax evaders, that has been a high priority of this government.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Beauport—Limoilou.

The motion before us today reads as follows:

That, given the Prime Minister broke his promise to eliminate the deficit this year and that perpetual and growing deficits lead to massive tax increases, the House call on the Prime Minister to table a plan in Budget 2019 to eliminate the deficit quickly with a written commitment that he will never raise taxes of any kind.

This is a very reasonable motion put forward by the Conservative Party's shadow minister of finance. It speaks to the responsibility that we have as parliamentarians to be wise stewards of taxpayer dollars.

I want to briefly outline why the Prime Minister's broken promise on deficits is so important to Canadians, why they should be concerned about it, why these deficits will undoubtedly lead to higher taxes and why it is so important for my colleagues across the way to look away from the Prime Minister and say what is in the best interests of their constituents, which is to bring the deficit down significantly, work back to balance and to not raise taxes on Canadians.

First, I will talk about the Prime Minister's broken promise. In 2015, the Prime Minister made the following promise to Canadians, a balanced budget in 2019, and from the Liberal platform, "modest short-term deficits of less than \$10 billion in each of the next two fiscal years" and a balance sheet with a debt to GDP ratio of 27%. Where are we today on those promises after the Prime Minister famously said that the budget would will balance itself?

The Liberals made these three promises in the 2015 campaign. Their management approach was that the budget would balance itself. My colleague has asked many times when the budget will balance itself and we have not heard an answer.

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This is where we are at today. The finance department itself, the government's own public servant, has said that there will be no balanced budget until at least 2040, 21 years from now. That is really irresponsible to not even have a target on when we can get back to balance.

The amount of debt just on the current course that we are on, never mind having to deal with future issues or whatever, is that the Prime Minister will have added an additional \$271 billion of debt on our country. This comes on the fact that the Prime Minister, when he came into government in 2015, inherited a balanced budget from the former Conservative government.

In October of this year, in time for the 2019 election, or it might be earlier we never know with the Liberals, the Liberals have added over \$75 billion of debt in that short period of time. They have clearly broken their promise and the debt to GDP ratio will be around 30.5% in October, so they have increased that as well.

Why is this so important? First, we notice that when a lot of Liberal cabinet ministers or parliamentary secretaries stand in question period, they use something of a success metric that no small business owner or anybody in a household would use as a success metric. They say that the Liberals have spent x amount of money. When we ask how they are going to solve this problem, they say that they have spent x amount of money. They do not talk about actually fixing the problem. They just talk about spending money. That is because the Liberals do not understand that spending money is not a metric of success in government, that we need to be very wise about when we spend money.

The problem with this deficit is that Canadians do not really have anything to show for all that debt the Liberals have incurred on their behalf. I do not see the green line in Calgary that our former government committed to under the context of a balanced budget bill. The only infrastructure that really has been filled under the present government was the then minister of infrastructure and communities office renovations, which was about \$1 million.

What the Liberal government has done is expanded the size of government just for the sake of expanding it, not to help Canadians. That is a problem.

● (1615)

Canadians are spending money and not getting anything out of it. However, someone has to pay for this at some point, which is why the government will absolutely raise taxes on Canadians. They are seeing this massive debt increase. The Liberals are expanding government. They have ever-increasing costs of so many different things without results, but the economy will not be resilient. It is not going to be competitive. Therefore, when the economy retracts, we start seeing a decrease in government revenue.

We have the Liberals increasing expenses for no reason and racking up massive deficits, putting in place very negative scenarios for economic growth over time, which means there is a high probability that government revenue will decrease. Therefore, how do we get more money? If we are not going to decrease expenses and not increase revenue through economy growth, what is left? It is taxes. People should be concerned about the deficit because every Canadian will have to pay through increased taxes for the Prime

Minister's mistakes. The mistake is the deficit, a promise he broke to Canadians.

Let us talk about competitiveness. While our major trading partners in other parts of the world have been trying to put in place competitiveness aspects by reducing red tape and reducing unnecessary regulatory burdens or lowering taxes, we have been increasing those things. What do we see in Canada? We see talent and capital leaving Canada to invest in more competitive jurisdictions. That is a problem for the revenue side, which is going to precipitate a need for more taxes. Again, it is paying for the Prime Minister's failures.

Over time, that lack of competitiveness makes increased deficits. They make the government less able to withstand shock if we have a major economic incident as we saw in 2008, which we were able to weather with targeted short-term infrastructure investments and then a return back to balance in 2015.

The Prime Minister inherited a balanced budget, a very strong performing economy, and the campaign narrative was now was a good time to borrow money. The Liberals did not talk about why or the need to go into deficit. We are going to be less resilient and the government is going to be less able to spend in the future if we have these massive debts. Why? Because the more debt we have, and people who have a credit card bill understand this, the more interest payments we have. The Government of Canada has to pay interest on its debt. The more taxes that the Prime Minister has to collect to pay down the interest on his deficits means that we cannot spend money on things like infrastructure, like the green line in my riding of Calgary.

The government has created a massive problem by its deficits for no-reason policy, by adding all of this debt to the Canadian government and the Canadian people and it is going to result in higher taxes. That is why we put forward the motion today. It is for government members to have an opportunity to say, "You're right, we need to stop this." Canadians should not be in a position where they have to pay for the Prime Minister's mistakes.

Also, we have ample evidence now that the budget will not balance itself.

● (1620)

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Whitby, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague mentioned that we did not have anything to show for the investments we had made in Canadians and that Canadians were not going to get anything out of it. What Canadians have seen, and will see, is that we have the lowest unemployment rate in 40 years and the strongest growth in G7 countries. Through our investments, we have been able to create conditions where 800,000 new jobs have been created by Canadians. This helps to build resiliency.

In addition to that, to help our businesses grow, expand and export, we are the only G7 country with trade agreements with each of the other G7 countries. In fact, we have 14 trade agreements. In terms of competitiveness, we have the LNG, a mega project, the largest investment of \$40 billion, and we have decreased red tape for small businesses. Canadians can clearly see that our investments are working on their behalf, and this government is working on their behalf as well.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Madam Speaker, it is kind of brave for my colleague opposite to stand and talk about unemployment for a member from Calgary because of the environmental policies and the regulatory policies, which do nothing to improve the environment of Canada but just kill jobs in my riding. In my riding, we went from about the natural rate of unemployment to nearly double-digit unemployment under the government. Therefore, she should spare me on unemployment figures and job growth.

With respect to any of the investments she talked about, there was nothing material there. Kinder Morgan was prepared to invest \$7 billion into the Canadian economy and the government went and used tax dollars to pay for something that private industry was prepared to invest in, which still is likely not going to see grow. This has to stop. There is nothing to show for this outside of increased taxes. The Liberals have spent hundreds of millions of dollars on people who are illegally crossing the border in upstate New York.

One of my colleagues, who was here, made a good point. How many more government positions have been padded on those employment figures? The government does not—

• (1625)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, I do have to allow for other questions. I did mentioned a while ago that we needed to keep it a little short during the questions and comments.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kootenay—Columbia.

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Madam Speaker, first, I would like to thank the member for visiting my riding last week. I hope she spent lots of money during her time there, supporting small businesses.

The opposition day notice says “a written commitment” that the government will never raise taxes of any kind. As the member knows, there is a growing disparity between the really rich in Canada and the rest of us. Is she saying that this means we should never raise taxes on the wealthiest Canadians or wealthy corporations and what would that do for the middle class?

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Madam Speaker, tax records show that the wealthiest Canadians, the ones who have revenue higher than \$140,000, pay \$4.6 billion less in taxes under the government. I am looking at it from the perspective of my riding and the people who ask me to fight for them on a daily basis. They know that under both the Liberals and the NDP they are going to see increased carbon taxes, small business tax increases, payroll taxes and EI premium increases. Everything is tax, tax, tax.

Nobody in this place outside of the Conservative Party ever stops to ask why we are spending this money. Why are we forcing

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Canadians to bear the brunt of our spending here? That is a principle we need to get back to. It is fair for Parliament to consider that request, to say that we should have a written commitment to not raise taxes. That would create certainty. It would create an investment climate for growth. Frankly, Canadians need some good news for once. They are tired of the tax and spend politics under both of those leftist parties.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Essex, International Trade; the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, Health, the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Foreign Affairs.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise here in the new House of Commons. Looking down, it feels like we are in the old chamber, but looking up, that is clearly not the case. It is certainly a lot brighter here than in the old chamber, so bright that it is difficult to look up at the sky.

I am honoured to rise on behalf of the 100,000 people of my riding, Beauport—Limoilou. Now that it is 2019, we are slowly but surely gearing up for an election campaign. Personally, I intend to be re-elected, if my constituents would once again do me the honour, but since we can neither know what fate has in store nor determine the outcome, I will, of course, work very hard. For that reason, I am savouring this honour and this opportunity to speak here for yet another parliamentary session.

Today, I would like to clarify something very important for the people of my riding. This morning, the member for Carleton moved a motion in the House of Commons, a fairly simple motion that reads as follows:

That, given the Prime Minister broke his promise to eliminate the deficit this year and that perpetual and growing deficits lead to massive tax increases, the House call on the Prime Minister to table a plan in Budget 2019 to eliminate the deficit quickly with a written commitment that he will never raise taxes of any kind.

My constituents may find it rather strange to ask a Prime Minister to promise not to raise taxes after the next election, if he is re-elected. He might even raise taxes before the election. After all, the Liberals tried to raise taxes many times over the past three years. I will say more about that in my speech. However, we are asking the Prime Minister to make this promise because we see that public finances are in total disarray.

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In addition, the Prime Minister has broken several of the key promises he made to Canadians and Quebecers. Some of them were national in scope. For example, he promised to return to a balanced budget by 2019, which did not happen. Instead, our deficit is nearly \$30 billion. The budget the Liberals presented a few months ago forecast an \$18-billion deficit, but according to the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer—an institution that forces the government to be more transparent to Canadians and that was created by Mr. Harper, a great Prime Minister—the deficit would actually be around \$29 billion instead of \$18 billion.

The Prime Minister quite shamelessly broke his promise to rebalance the budget, since this is the first time in the history of Canada that a government has racked up a deficit outside of a war or serious economic crisis. There was a big economic recession when the Conservatives were in power between 2008 and 2012.

I like to remind Canadians who may be listening to us that accountability is a key part of the Westminster system. That is why we talk about the notion of government accountability and why we have question period every day. It is not all about the theatrics, I might add. We ask the same ministers, although sometimes other ministers, questions every day because one day they are going to slip up and tell us the truth. Then we can talk about responsibility and accountability.

In short, the Prime Minister broke his promise to balance the budget by 2019. He also broke his promise to change our electoral system, which was very important to a huge segment of the Canadian left and Canadian youth.

He also broke his promise about the Canada Post community mailboxes. Although we believe that Canada Post's five-point action plan was important for ensuring the corporation's survival in the long term, the Prime Minister nevertheless promised the return of community mailboxes. I travelled across the country with my colleague from Edmonton and other members of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates. All Canadians told Liberal members of the committee that they hoped the government would restore community mailboxes. However, the Liberals only put in place a moratorium.

● (1630)

The member from Quebec City and Minister of Families, Children and Social Development said that the state of the Quebec Bridge was deplorable, that the bridge was covered in rust and that some citizens were concerned about security and public safety.

I would like to reassure them. Our engineers' reports states that the bridge is not dangerous. That said, it is a disgrace that this historic bridge is completely rusty. The Liberals promised that this would be taken care of by June 30, 2016. That was over two years ago.

They also promised to help the middle class. In fact, to some extent, they followed in the footsteps of Mr. Harper's Conservative government, which also focused on helping Canadian families as much as possible. I held three public consultations in 2018. It is already 2019. Time flies. I called those public consultations, "Alupa à l'écoute".

I will table my report in a month and a half. It will express my willingness to suggest to my leader to either table a bill or include in

his election platform measures to address the labour shortage and to help seniors return to the labour market without being further penalized. I go door to door every month. What is more, during my public consultations, what I heard most often from my constituents, who I thank for coming, is that they are surviving. Their lives have not improved at all in three and a half years. On the contrary, they are facing challenges as a result of the Prime Minister's repeated failures.

I said we needed the Prime Minister to promise not to raise taxes either before the election or, if he wins, after. We all know what he has done over the past three years. He tried to tax dental benefits. He tried to tax employee benefits and bonuses. For example, some restaurant owners give their servers free meals. That is what happened when I was a server. The Liberals wanted to tax that benefit. They tried to tax small and medium-sized businesses by taxing their revenue as capital gains, and that was a total disaster. They wanted to tax every source of income businesses could use to prepare for bad times or retirement so they would eventually be less of a burden on the state.

The Liberals also significantly increased taxes. Studies show that 81% of Canadians have to pay more than \$800 a year in taxes because the Liberals got rid of almost all of the tax credits the Conservatives had implemented, such as those for textbooks or public transit. They got rid of the tax credits for sports and for families. The Prime Minister and his Liberal team got rid of all kinds of family credits, which significantly increased taxes. Furthermore, they tried many times to significantly increase other taxes. They also tried payroll deductions, like the increase to the Canada pension plan. If we really take a look at the various benefits or income streams Canadians receive, we can see that their taxes have increased.

We do not trust the Prime Minister when he says he will not raise taxes after the next election if he is re-elected. We know he will have to raise taxes because of his repeated failures. In economic terms, there is an additional \$60 billion in deficits on top of the debt. His deficits now total \$80 billion after three and a half years. I am also thinking of his failures on immigration and on managing border crossings. Quebec is asking for \$300 million to make up for the shortfall it has suffered because of illegal refugees. I am also thinking of all the problems related to international relations. I am also thinking of infrastructure.

How is it possible that the Prime Minister, still to this day, refuses to tell the people of Beauport—Limoilou and Quebec City that he will agree to go ahead and help the CAQ government build the third link? All around the world, huge infrastructure projects are under way, yet over the past three years, the Liberal government has been incapable of allocating more than a few billion dollars of the \$187 billion infrastructure fund.

• (1635)

Canadians are going to pay for the Prime Minister's mistakes. We want him to commit in writing that he will not raise taxes if he is re-elected.

[English]

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in my riding I have knocked on thousands of doors and I have seen the adverse impacts of the cuts that happened under the last government on so many residents and constituents in my riding. After the election, I continued to knock on thousands of doors and to keep in touch with my constituents, and I have seen the incredible differences that the tax-free Canada child benefit has made, as well as the increase to the guaranteed income supplement and the reductions in taxes to the middle class and to small businesses. This money is benefiting not only them: it is money in their pockets that is now being spent locally in our small rural communities, making such a huge impact in our rural communities.

What is the Conservatives' plan, and what would they cut? Would they cut the Canada child benefit, which is making such a big difference?

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Madam Speaker, it is quite simple. We will do as we did before: We will have responsible management of our finances here in Canada.

We will never cut services to Canadians; we will cut and stop the increase of money flowing to the bureaucrats. We have never seen in the history of Canada so much money being spent on deficits by a government, with so little result for Canadians individually. We gave the Liberals a surplus of \$3 billion while having child benefit measures and one of the best OECD numbers of economic development and while being the first country to get out of the financial crisis of 2008.

• (1640)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague seemed to be implying that the motion is asking the government not to raise taxes. However, what is written in black and white is that the government, or those who vote for this motion, would be prohibited from raising taxes indefinitely.

Does my colleague believe that, in 2019, voting for a motion that would forever prohibit tax increases in Canada, no matter who is involved, whether the rich, major corporations or others, is a responsible thing to do?

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Madam Speaker, I go door-knocking every month and I can tell you that Quebecers have no appetite to see their tax bill constantly go up and their quality of life go down.

I would like us to focus on more important things. When we look at the state of international relations, whether with China, Southeast

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Asia, South America, Africa, Asia or Europe, we see countries that have plans to address the great challenges of the 21st century. Here, the government is barely capable of drafting a plan to balance the budget.

How will this government prepare for the great challenges of the 21st century when it cannot even come up with a plan to balance the budget?

If my NDP colleague conducted a survey in his riding, I am sure that everyone would tell him that the government has to stop raising taxes. That is what is important.

[English]

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is funny that the member wants to find out what people in our ridings think. In my riding, the Conservatives have been an abysmal failure on their financial record. Lowering corporate tax rates did nothing. They caused dead money to be invested elsewhere. They created unemployment. Austerity is directly linked to increasing austerity. The Conservatives have a fundamentally flawed economic record.

Instead of talking just about austerity, why do we not ever hear how you would increase revenues? We know what happened, especially with seniors and veterans, when they were cut severely. Are you going to—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry, but I did allow the member more time than what was allotted. She did take a whole minute, and we did not have that much time left. I will allow the member to respond.

The hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou.

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Madam Speaker, I do not know what world the member lives in, but maybe she should cross the floor, because she seems to be attracted to the way they manage the economy on the Liberal benches.

I want to speak about the veterans file. To the contrary, my colleague was the minister before the last election and did an amazing job making sure that we had new benefits. There were dozens of new benefits given to veterans under the Conservative government, and that is the truth. It is just outrageous to see the Liberals lying like that on the backs of veterans.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would caution members to be careful with some of the words they are using. The words “lying”, “fibbing” and “traitors” are not words that should be used here in the House. We know that members have different opinions, and we have to be respectful of those opinions.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Sherbrooke.

Business of Supply

I would like to begin by acknowledging that this new chamber stands on unceded Algonquin territory. It is an honour that carries the heavy responsibility of working toward reconciliation with the indigenous peoples to whom this land was originally entrusted and to whom it still belongs. I would also like to thank my colleague, the MP for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, for his heroic and tireless efforts in fighting for the right to speak and hear indigenous languages in this House. We are so grateful for him, his courageous spirit and all he has accomplished in the House.

Today we are debating the Conservative motion calling on the Prime Minister to table a budget focused on eliminating the deficit and to not ever raise taxes again. It probably comes as no surprise that New Democrats will not be voting in favour of this motion.

Before the members opposite begin screaming about the tax-and-spend policies of the NDP, I would like to remind the House that New Democrat governments across this country have consistently delivered balanced budgets more often than any other party. New Democrats understand the value of taxation as the means to provide equal access to services for Canadians from coast to coast to coast. New Democrats understand that taxes fuel social democracy, the values upon which this nation was founded.

Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. said that taxes are the way we pay for civilization. As Canadians For Tax Fairness points out:

2. Taxes put out fires, keep our streets safe, provide our children with education, provide our families with health care, ensure our food and water are safe, create legal safeguards for businesses and employees, provide parks—in other words, provide us benefits every hour of the day, every day of the year.

3. The average Canadian household receives about \$41,000 in public services each year., a tremendous bargain for the vast majority of Canadians.

4. Past generations paid taxes for what we have today—schools, hospitals, courts of law, roads, public transit, parks. Our taxes today allow us to pass along those benefits to future generations—our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

5. If we ignore, shortchange or postpone funding for social, economic and environmental problems today, the solutions become more expensive in the future.

6. Public sector employees work hard, often in difficult circumstances, to keep government running and provide the public services we need. We need to attract and retain hard-working public employees and pay them fair compensation.

7. ...Taxes provide a counter-balance [to the power elite], by softening extreme disparities in wealth, power and benefits.

8. Taxes ensure that Canada can build and maintain the necessary infrastructure—[safe water supplies and sanitation,] education, health care and transportation systems—to attract investment and businesses, and thrive in a competitive global economy.

All businesses have benefited and prospered because of the infrastructure provided by civil society. Rather than trying to force a promise from the current or any other government to never raise taxes again, we would do better to discuss the ways in which the tax dollars entrusted to us can be spent wisely, with the needs of Canadians at the forefront. Neither Conservatives nor Liberals have been able to accomplish that. In fact, I would say that neither party has had any real interest in accomplishing that.

New Democrats understand that this Conservative motion is nothing more than posturing in advance of the next federal election. Conservatives under Stephen Harper ran six deficits between 2008 and 2014. In fact, the Conservatives slashed the corporate income tax rate by one-third, from 22% to 15%, over a six-year period, but only corporate taxes. Individual citizens paid dearly for this corporate tax break, and they continue to pay so corporations like General Motors can reap huge profits without any responsibility to

the community and people who made those profits possible. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has said that these corporate tax giveaways cost the government \$12 billion annually, but these drastic cuts have not boosted investment or led to promised job creation. The NDP is convinced that if the government made the wealthy pay their fair share, it could tackle inequality and build an economy that would benefit all Canadians.

● (1645)

The Liberals refuse to reverse Harper's corporate tax cuts, and so do the Conservatives, whose so-called efficiencies created an austerity plan that included reductions in health transfers and cuts in food and transportation safety, imperative safety measures. Certainly they have done this kind of cutting when in government.

History shows us that neither the Conservatives nor the Liberals have the best interests of Canadians at heart. If they did, women would not have to continue to fight for pay equity after decades of being paid less than men doing equivalent work.

If they cared to make it a priority, they would have a fully funded, comprehensive health care system that included pharmacare and fully funded home care, with wage parity for health care workers.

If they cared, we would have universal and accessible child care programs.

If they cared, we would have legislation that protected workers when factories moved offshore or that prevented companies that go bankrupt from stealing workers' wages, invested as pension dollars, to pay corporate bonuses to those who already have more than their fair share.

If they cared, we would have a national housing strategy that actually provided affordable housing for every Canadian who needed it.

If they truly cared, we would have a strategy for poverty elimination and would have met campaign 2000's goal to raise every child out of poverty by the year 2000. However, here we are. It is 2019, and food bank use is higher than it has ever been, because families must make choices between paying the rent and buying groceries. It is our shame in a country as rich as this.

Business of Supply

The tragic irony is that we know from the experience of other governments that if we were to provide these public services for Canadians, the country would prosper. Just as a rising tide raises all ships, every Canadian, rich or poor, would benefit, because we would not have to pay poverty's tab in increased costs in health care, education and the justice system.

In 2011, the cost of poverty to our economy was \$24 billion. Members can be assured that this cost has increased in the eight years since. By contrast, Quebec's universal daycare program has resulted in an increased GDP for the province, because more women have been able to enter the workforce and contribute their tax dollars to the public good.

February 2 is Groundhog Day, and in that same theme as the famous Bill Murray movie, we find ourselves recycling the same old bogus arguments over and over again in this House. Whether it is the white cats or the black cats in power, the story always ends the same, and Canadians end up losing.

Are our memories so short in this House that we forget Paul Martin's slashing of health care transfers to the provinces to pay his deficit? Our health care system has yet to recover. Canadians have suffered for it. Canadians are paying out-of-pocket expenses for life-saving drugs and medical procedures that used to be covered. Of course, we are plagued with creeping P3 agreements that erode the democracy of a fully funded public health care system.

The Prime Minister has stated that Paul Martin made the right decision, but he would have us believe that he would not do the same thing. However, he has done nothing to restore funding slashed by his Liberal predecessors to health care, employment insurance, and our public broadcaster.

The solution is obvious, if only there was political will. If the government ensured that super-wealthy corporations and individuals paid their fair share of taxes, we could tackle inequality and build an economy that would benefit all Canadians. Instead of recovering this lost tax revenue and applying it to better health care, community infrastructure, and other urgent priorities, such as veterans, seniors care and housing, the Liberals refuse to close tax loopholes.

This Conservative motion is about the deficit, and New Democrats are asking this: What does a \$19-billion deficit buy? It buys billions in gifts to Bay Street, such as the tax incentive to purchase corporate jets and limousines. Let us not delude ourselves that the Conservatives are any different. Stephen Harper implemented the G7's lowest corporate tax rate, but the promised community investment spinoffs have never materialized. Instead, Canadian corporations have stashed away \$200 billion in offshore tax havens. They close factories and lay off workers, claiming lost profits at the same time as they pay bonuses to executives and shareholders.

•(1650)

It would be refreshing if we could focus on what is really important for Canadians, rather than this ridiculous race to the bottom that always ends up with cuts to services and Canadians who continue to lose and pay with their hard-earned dollars and their hard-earned—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am sure there must be some regret on the other side of the House. We have seen very progressive measures by our government over the last three years and the New Democratic Party has consistently voted against some of those progressive measures. Many of my colleagues have talked about those already today. They are issues like the Canada child benefit, the increases to the guaranteed income supplement and the national housing strategy, which is tenfold what the New Democrats talked about in the last election. They continuously stand up and vote against these. I am sure there has to be some remorse, just by listening to her speech.

The NDP answer to all problems seems to be to tax corporations. I was in the Manitoba legislature for a number of years. In 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009, every one of those NDP budgets actually had a reduction in the corporate tax. Seven times they actually decreased corporate tax, and that is a NDP administration. One would think that would be absolutely taboo if one listened to members of the national NDP caucus. I wonder if she could explain why the NDP at one level, where the NDP is in government, has no problem cutting corporate taxes, and at the same time perhaps explain—

•(1655)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am going to stop the member there. I know he could go on, but I have others who want to ask questions.

The hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Madam Speaker, I am sure there are a lot of regrets over there, regrets about broken promises in regard to postal services, promises to seniors who still live in poverty, to all of those people waiting for that promised “after the next election” housing strategy. There is lots of regret.

In terms of corporations, I am talking about the tax havens. I am talking about the Bronfmans, who have a cozy relationship with the government and have not paid their fair share of taxes. What about those loopholes? What about those tax havens? What about bringing that money home so that there can be money for veterans, for children and for families that need it? Yes, I am sure they are filled with remorse over there.

Business of Supply

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have heard the member for Winnipeg North allude a couple of times to 10 times the number the NDP announced in the election. The thing about the number for the national housing strategy that he does not say when he mentions the number is that it is a speculative number. It is contingent upon investment by provincial governments that have not committed to making that investment and private sector investment that also has not committed. The member is keen to take credit, as is his government, for spending by other people who have not announced they are going to do that.

I am wondering, because the debate is about budgeting and deficits, what kind of sense does it make to have a government claiming credit for money that other people are purportedly going to spend when they have not committed to spending it.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Madam Speaker, the Liberals take credit for a lot of things they never did and do not intend to do. Housing is most definitely one of them.

I remember in 1993 when Paul Martin cut funding for the national housing strategy and we have never recovered. We are years and years later and this bunch is talking about maybe having some housing after the next election, maybe having housing if we get buy-in from some of the provinces. We have a Doug Ford government in Ontario and I do not expect to see any housing anytime soon, unless there is a NDP government in the country in 2019.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to join the debate and rise for the first time in this temporary House to give a speech.

Unfortunately, we are once again debating a Conservative motion. Whether in the permanent House or here in the temporary one, they have fixated on two things: the carbon tax and balanced budgets.

As I was saying to a colleague earlier, we are being asked to vote on a motion that would indefinitely tie our hands with respect to taxes in Canada. If the members of the House pass this motion, the government and the House will never be able to increase taxes under any circumstances. This is a rather restrictive motion that would tie our hands indefinitely. The motion does not have a time limit, even though my colleague seemed to be saying that it would only apply to the Liberals' next term. The motion clearly states, in black and white, that the government must never raise taxes of any kind.

My colleague may have had good intentions when addressing fiscal responsibility. The NDP is a very responsible party when it comes to taxation. Members need only look at the record of the numerous NDP governments in many provinces over the years. By examining the record of other major Canadian political parties, we come to realize that the NDP has the best record on fiscal responsibility in Canada.

Naturally it makes sense to talk about taxation, responsibility and a balanced budget in the House. These are important themes for those listening to the debates, for several observers of Canadian politics and for people in the financial and business sectors concerned with these issues.

Every government must manage public finances responsibly and must have a credible plan for returning to a balanced budget when it makes investments and accumulates deficits. This is probably the biggest shortcoming of the current Liberal government. It has no plan for balancing the budget. That is what the Conservatives' motion condemns.

If that was all, we would be having a different discussion. Unfortunately, the Conservatives go much further. They want perhaps to divide the House by asking us to indefinitely prohibit tax increases in Canada. As I stated earlier in a question addressed to my colleague, it is totally irresponsible today, in 2019, to support such a motion that would forever tie our hands.

On this file, the Conservatives are big talkers. They act as though they were perfect and never ran any deficits. They keep talking about balanced budgets, but recent history shows that they do the opposite of what they say.

Earlier, my Conservative colleague said that running deficits inevitably leads to raising taxes and paying more in interest every year. It is true that the interest rates are high and that they increase over time, according to forecasts. If interest rates go up, so does the cost of the public debt. That is money that goes directly in the pockets of Canadian and global high finance. Major financiers are lining their pockets and giving bonuses to bank executives.

My colleague said that interest rates would inevitably go up, but she failed to mention that the Conservatives added \$150 billion to the public debt over the last decade they were in power. The Conservatives themselves increased the public debt by \$150 billion. I would therefore like to ask my colleague how much that represents in higher taxes and higher interest charges.

• (1700)

The Conservatives are all talk and no action. When it comes time to walk the talk, unfortunately, that is when we see the Conservatives' true colours, for they do not do as they say. They tell others to do as they say, but will not do so themselves, unfortunately.

What can we say about the Liberals in all that?

The first item in the Minister of Finance's mandate letter is a plan to balance the budget in 2019-20. Lucky for us, that is this year. Perhaps in the upcoming budget we will have our answer to that promise and that mandate letter, which puts balancing the budget at the top of the list. At that point we will see whether that promise can be added to the very long list of broken Liberal promises. Unfortunately, that is the reality. The Liberals make promises during the election campaign but then do the opposite once they are elected. That is what awaits Canadians during the next election campaign. Canadians will have to be vigilant and keenly aware of what the Liberals are all about—not just this Liberal government, but Liberals in general. Indeed, time after time, the Liberals have said one thing during an election campaign only to do the opposite afterwards or simply deny saying what they did to get elected.

Business of Supply

That promise to balance the budget hints at the kind of political tactics the Liberals are likely to redeploy during the upcoming election campaign.

One thing the motion does not mention is what is in store for Canadians if the Conservatives win the next election: Stephen Harper-style austerity. I remember it well. Conservative austerity measures really hit hard in 2011. Soon after winning their majority in 2011, the Conservatives began cutting in every department. If I remember correctly, they instructed departments to cut nearly 5% of their budget.

That Conservative approach is what lies in wait for Canadians. Let us not fool ourselves. When the election rolls around, Canadians will have a choice to make. Voting for the Conservatives will mean voting for the kind of cuts we saw in my riding, Sherbrooke, where services to the public were reduced.

The Conservatives are already trying to convince people that their plan to balance the budget will not affect services to Canadians. That is totally false. Canadians must not allow themselves to be misled by such appealing promises. The truth is that it will be 2011 all over again.

Cuts were made to services in Sherbrooke between 2011 and 2015. There is no longer an Immigration Canada office in Sherbrooke. People no longer have in-person access to the services offered by Immigration Canada, they can rarely attend their citizenship ceremony in Sherbrooke, and they can no longer or rarely ever take citizenship tests there. People have to travel to Montreal to have access to those services. That is the reality created by the Conservative cuts. The impact of those cuts is still being felt in 2019 since the Liberals did nothing to remedy the situation.

The same thing goes for the Canada Revenue Agency. Before the Conservatives' 2011 austerity measures, the people of Sherbrooke had access to in-person services at the Canada Revenue Agency. When the Conservatives took office, they put an end to all in-person services there. They simply posted the telephone number to call for services on the door of the CRA office. That is the reality created by the Conservative cuts and austerity measures. With all due respect to the Conservatives, Canadians will be warned that cuts to services are hiding behind all this talk of balancing the budget.

Although I will not repeat what she said, I believe my colleague from London—Fanshawe pointed out just now that taxes are important. With all due respect to the Conservatives, taxes do serve a purpose. Throughout this debate, members seem to have forgotten that taxes serve a purpose: they make a fairer and more just society possible. As my colleague said, those who pay the least tax are also those who receive the most services. That is the kind of society we want to live in, a society where the least fortunate still have access to quality services so they can overcome their difficulties, succeed in life, and have a shot at a better future. Conservatives need to realize that taxes serve a purpose even if that offends their Conservative ideology.

• (1705)

[English]

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened very carefully to the hon. member, and I agree with some of

the observations he made about the Conservatives. However, he mentioned that we did not have a plan in place. In fact, when our Prime Minister, our leader, ran for the leadership, Canadians gave him a mandate, and we had a plan to help the middle class and low-income families. Through our plan, there are over 900,000 seniors who receive benefits. In my riding alone, there is \$8 million going to child care benefits that help low-income and middle-class families. We have reduced the taxes for small businesses. All of these plans are helping middle-class families.

The last time I noticed the NDP supporting the Conservatives to bring a Liberal government down, the Kyoto agreement was gone, child care benefits were gone and the Kelowna accord was gone. I wonder if the hon. member will support the Conservatives now on this motion.

• (1710)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind members again to keep their preambles short enough to allow for other questions.

The hon. member for Sherbrooke.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Madam Speaker, I am surprised to hear my colleague raise that issue yet again. The Liberals seem to be forgetting that it was not the opposition that voted against them in 2006, but rather Canadians. No one member of this House decides who forms the government. Canadians decided the Liberal reign was over because of Liberal corruption.

I would like the member to correct the talking points he receives from the Prime Minister's Office. It was not the NDP that tossed the Liberals out; it was Canadians. I hope he realizes that one day.

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is interesting in following this debate to hear the Liberals try to hide from how much the Prime Minister's failures are costing Canadians. People know, and the member for Winnipeg North in particular knows, that Canadians are paying for the government's mistakes.

I wonder if the hon. member can comment on an issue that he and I agree on. Perhaps there are not many, but I think we both agree that the government should not have spent \$4.5 billion buying a pipeline. We think it should have built it without buying it. The member probably thinks differently about the building piece, but certainly the government has no plan to get it built.

The government has been asking our members where we think spending should not have been made and what areas we would cut. I say that the government should not be spending money by giving it to private business. It should not be giving money to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

Business of Supply

Would the member agree with me that these are areas where expenditure should not happen, and does he think that we could get to a balanced budget much more quickly if we were willing to take on some of these issues?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Madam Speaker, if my colleague wants me to list all the Liberal government's bad spending choices, I would not know where to begin. Of course buying a pipeline for \$4.5 billion U.S. is an outrageous expenditure by the government. It also shows that the government is completely making things up as it goes along on this file.

When it comes to investing in pipelines, the government is able to scrape together \$4.5 billion U.S. However, when it comes to social housing, there is no money available and we have to wait until there is some wiggle room for investing, even though there is a housing crisis across the country.

It is a matter of priority. When it comes to supporting oil pipelines, the money is readily available. When it comes to resolving Canadians' real problems, the government asks Canadians to wait until after the election. In 2019, I think that Canadians will be able to see that the government could not care less about Canadians and their well-being.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I acknowledge the next speaker, I want to advise him that I will have to cut him off. He has only a couple of minutes.

The hon. member for Edmonton West.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak on the motion from the member for Carleton today with respect to the Liberal government's failure to balance the budget, which asks that it commit to balancing the budget and to not raising new taxes.

I want to look at the promise made by the Prime Minister in 2015. He said that the budget would balance itself. Members probably think that is hilarious. People laughed about it. However, I think he was being serious. Why? It is because this is a Prime Minister who has never had to balance a household budget himself, so of course budgets just balance themselves.

If only the rest of us could take advantage of such logic. When I go home this Friday and my wife tells me to make sure I go out and shovel the walk, I could just sit and say that the walk will shovel itself. If I ask my kids to clean up their room, they could look back and say that the room will clean itself. Unfortunately, in reality, the budget does not balance itself.

What are the consequences of the unbalanced budget and the massive runaway deficits? I want to quote from Kevin Page, the former Parliamentary Budget Officer, who is now with the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy. He stated, "As a result, the current federal deficits are entirely structural in nature."

They're not needed to address the economy and they haven't been used for infrastructure or for the Liberals' fake housing initiative.

An entirely structural nature means there was no business cycle justification for running these deficits. This points to higher inflation and higher interest rates that would not have happened otherwise.

Higher interest rates are going to punish Canadians. Finance Canada itself said that younger middle-class Canadians will be hurt most by the rising interest rates.

Again and again the current government states it is for the middle class, yet its actions show the exact opposite. The government needs to commit to balancing the budget and not raising taxes.

● (1715)

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

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 nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

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

● (1745)

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

(*Division No. 985*)

YEAS

Members

Abouttaif
Allison
Arnold
Barrett
Bernier
Bezan
Block
Brassard
Carrie
Clarke
Diotte
Eglinski
Falk (Provencher)
Finley
Généreux
Gladu
Gourde
Hoback
Kelly

Alleslev
Anderson
Barlow
Bergen
Berthold
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Boucher
Calkins
Chong
Cooper
Doherty
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Gallant
Genius
Godin
Harder
Jeneroux
Kent

Kitchen
Kusie
Liepert
Lobb
MacKenzie
Martel
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Motz
Nicholson
Poilievre
Rayes
Rempel
Saroya
Shipley
Sorenson
Strahl
Tilson
Van Kesteren
Wagantall
Warkentin
Webber
Yurdiga

Kmiec
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Lloyd
Lukiwski
Maguire
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Nater
O'Toole
Raitt
Reid
Richards
Shields
Sopuck
Stanton
Sweet
Trost
Viersen
Warawa
Waugh
Wong
Zimmer — 82

NAYS

Members

Aldag
Amos
Angus
Arya
Badawey
Bains
Baylis
Bennett
Bibeau
Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Bossio
Boulerice
Bratina
Brosseau
Cannings
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chen
Christopherson
Cullen
Dabrusin
Davies
Dhaliwal
Donnelly
Dubé
Duguid
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Easter
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson
Fillmore
Fisher
Fortier
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fuhr
Garrison
Gill
Goodale
Graham
Hardcastle
Harvey
Hehr
Holland
Hughes
Iacono
Jolibois
Jordan
Julian
Khera
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc

Alghabra
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ayoub
Bagnell
Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu
Benson
Bittle
Blair
Boissonnault
Boudrias
Boutin-Sweet
Breton
Caesar-Chavannes
Carr
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Choquette
Cormier
Cuzner
Damoff
DeCoursey
Dhillon
Drouin
Dubourg
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseau
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyking
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fortin
Fraser (West Nova)
Freeland
Gameau
Gerretsen
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Grewal
Hardie
Hébert
Hogg
Housefather
Hussen
Johns
Joly
Jowhari
Khalid
Kwan
Lametti
Lapointe
Laverdière
Lebouthillier

Business of Supply

Leslie
Lockhart
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Masse (Windsor West)
Mathysen
May (Saarnich—Gulf Islands)
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Soeurs)
Monsef
Murray
Nassif
Ng
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Peschosolido
Petitpas Taylor
Picard
Poissant
Qualtrough
Rankin
Rioux
Rodriguez
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Saini
Sangha
Sarai
Schiefke
Serré
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sorbara
Ste-Marie
Tan
Thériault
Trudel
Vandenbeld
Virani
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Young

Levitt
Long
Ludwig
MacGregor
Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-
Morrissey
Nantel
Nault
O'Connell
Oliver
Ouellette
Pauzé
Peterson
Philpott
Plamondon
Quach
Ramsey
Ratansi
Robillard
Rogers
Rota
Ruimy
Sahota
Sajjan
Sansoucy
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sohi
Spengemann
Stetski
Tassi
Trudeau
Vandal
Vaughan
Weir
Wilson-Raybould
Yip
Zahid — 212

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

* * *

[Translation]

FEDERAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ACT

The House resumed consideration from January 28 of the motion in relation to the amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-57, An Act to amend the Federal Sustainable Development Act.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the Senate amendments to Bill C-57.

● (1755)

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

(Division No. 986)

YEAS

Members

Aldag

Alghabra

Business of Supply

Amos
 Arseneault
 Ayoub
 Bagnell
 Baylis
 Bibeau
 Blair
 Bossio
 Breton
 Carr
 Casey (Charlottetown)
 Champagne
 Cormier
 Dabrusin
 DeCoursey
 Dhillon
 Dubourg
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Easter
 El-Khoury
 Erskine-Smith
 Eyolfson
 Fillmore
 Fisher
 Fortier
 Fraser (West Nova)
 Freeland
 Garneau
 Goldsmith-Jones
 Gould
 Hardie
 Hébert
 Hogg
 Housefather
 Iacono
 Jordan
 Khalid
 Lambropoulos
 Lamoureux
 Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
 Lebouthillier
 Levitt
 Long
 Ludwig
 MacKinnon (Gatineau)
 Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
 May (Cambridge)
 McCrimmon
 McGuinity
 McKenna
 McLeod (Northwest Territories)
 Mendicino
 Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
 Monsef
 Morrissey
 Nassif
 Ng
 Oliphant
 O'Regan
 Paradis
 Peterson
 Philpott
 Poissant
 Ratansi
 Robillard
 Rogers
 Rota
 Ruimy
 Sahota
 Sajjan
 Sarai
 Schiefke
 Serré
 Sheehan
 Sidhu (Brampton South)
 Simms
 Sorbara
 Tan
 Trudeau
 Vandenberg
 Virani
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PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

POINT OF ORDER

VOTE ON THE DESIGNATION OF AN ITEM—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the point of order raised earlier today by the hon. member for Montcalm concerning the secret ballot on the designation of Bill C-421.

I want to thank the hon. member for Montcalm for having raised this question.

During his intervention, the member asked that the result of the secret ballot on the designation of Bill C-421, an act to amend the Citizenship Act in regard to the adequate knowledge of French in Quebec, be revealed at the same time as the result of the vote itself. In his opinion, the Chair cannot simply announce whether Bill C-421 is votable, because it is essential that the number of votes for and against be announced to thwart the government's desire to muzzle members.

● (1800)

[English]

As the member himself remarked, I issued a ruling on the same question on November 28, 2017. At the time, it was claimed that the procedure for designating a bill did not have to be the same as the procedure for electing the Speaker. Members will recall that in response I stated, at page 15677 of the Debates:

Standing Order 92 does not provide any direction to the Chair which would cause it to depart from that now established practice.

[Translation]

I also invited the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to consider the matter, if it deemed it necessary. Until such time as the House decides to provide new direction on this matter, the Chair will continue to follow the only similar practice that exists in our Standing Orders, that of the election of the Speaker.

Therefore, once the voting is completed at the end of tomorrow's sitting, I will be provided only with and announce to the House the final outcome of the vote, and nothing more. The table officers will in no way reveal to the Chair, or anyone else, the number of ballots cast on the designation of Bill C-421.

I want to thank the hon. members for their attention.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CREDIT CARD FAIRNESS ACT

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC) moved that Bill C-419, An Act to amend the Bank Act, the Trust and Loan Companies Act, the Insurance Companies Act and the Cooperative Credit Associations Act (credit cards), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Private Members' Business

She said: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister keeps telling Canadians that everything is okay, that it is all right, that we are growing and that we are prospering as a country. We have to ask the question: For whom is it okay? The answer to that is him. Right now, Canada's economy, Canada's situation, is okay for the Prime Minister. Why is that? It is because he inherited a family fortune.

Since being elected in 2015, I have had the opportunity to talk with thousands of Canadians from coast to coast and from every way of life. What they are telling me is that life is actually getting more and more expensive. It is difficult to make ends meet. It is impossible to get ahead.

At the end of the month, we know that nearly half of all Canadians are within \$200 of not being able to make their bill payments. I am not talking about fancy things. I am talking about food on the table or shelter over their heads, and they are within \$200 a month of not being able to make those payments. The margins are tight. Canadians are feeling crunched and they are asking that those of us on this side of the House advocate on their behalf, which is exactly what we will do.

While the Liberals are focused on making life more expensive for Canadians by imposing new taxes, such as the carbon tax, we on this side of the House will advocate for Canadians to be able to get ahead. That is really what the proposed credit card fairness act is all about. We have taken the time to listen to Canadians and we know that they deserve better. Canadians deserve fairness and they deserve transparency surrounding the use of their credit cards so that they can make financial decisions that will empower their households and help them get ahead. Being able to enjoy financial stability and security starts with having access to information so that households can make the decisions that are in fact right for them as individuals. The proposed credit card fairness act would assist.

As Conservatives, we want to find ourselves on the side of those who dream for a better tomorrow, those who work hard, those who stretch their limits, those who are trying to build a new life, those who dream of home ownership, those who call Canada their home. While the Prime Minister is concerned with protecting his family wealth and imposing more taxes on everyday Canadians, those of us on this side of the House will continue advocating on behalf of Canadians and protecting their wealth.

Conservatives understand that the federal government, regardless of the party in power, has two primary responsibilities. One is to look out for the safety and security of Canadians and the second is to make decisions and put policies in place that will help advance our economic state as a nation and lead to economic prosperity for individual households. Sadly, the current government has not done either of these points well, but it is on the second that I will focus my attention today, which is economic prosperity and well-being.

The Prime Minister has proven to Canadians over and over again that he is in fact a hypocrite. He ran on an election promise that he would only take a very small deficit over the course of three years and then in the fourth year he would balance the budget. He promised Canadians that he would balance it by 2019, which is this year.

Private Members' Business

However, year through year, the Liberal government has taken on one deficit after another, and this year alone it took on \$21 billion. According to Finance Canada, the budget will not be balanced until at least 2040, which is a long time away. Let us not forget that this debt load does not just sit there stagnant. It actually incurs further debt because of interest rates. We, Canadians, pay that interest. Everyday, hard-working Canadians pay that interest rate.

Every year that the Prime Minister runs deficits, he is not just spending our money, but he is borrowing money from the next generation, those who come after us, those who are children right now and who are innocent in this decision-making process of the current Prime Minister. That is not just irresponsible but it is cruel. It is cruel to the next generation that has to take that credit card bill from the current Prime Minister and pay it off.

Today, my colleagues and I on this side of the House put forward a motion that said:

That, given the Prime Minister broke his promise to eliminate the deficit this year and that perpetual and growing deficits lead to massive tax increases, the House call on the Prime Minister to table a plan in Budget 2019 to eliminate the deficit quickly with a written commitment that he will never raise taxes of any kind.

We just voted on this motion and the current government voted no. What the Liberals are communicating to the Canadian public in making that statement is that they will not eliminate the deficit and that they do in fact plan to raise taxes.

• (1805)

It is important to highlight this because we are going into a very important year: 2019. It is an election year and Canadians will have an opportunity to make a choice, to exercise their decision-making process at the ballot box. Here is what we know. We know that should the Liberals get another term in government they will not balance the budget and we know they will increase taxes. Therefore, we can be assured that the cost of living for every single Canadian across the country will go up.

The Prime Minister continues to tell Canadians everything is fine, but we have to stop and ask ourselves the very basic question, "For whom is it fine?" When I talk to Canadians from coast to coast, they sure are not fine, but the Prime Minister is fine because he is cushioned by his family wealth. He would like us all to believe him, so he will continuously repeat his statement, as if the more times he says it the more it will become true. However, the reality is that is not how things work. The only way things will get better is with a better government in place.

Thirty-seven million Canadians deserve better. For them, life is becoming more and more expensive. Thirty-three per cent of Canadians have no money left at the end of the month and are unable to cover their payments. That is atrocious. Things are clearly not getting better. The unfortunate thing is that under the current government things are only going to get worse, as they admitted just moments ago, because they are going to impose a carbon tax. The carbon tax starts off small, but grows very quickly. In fact, government documents show us that after the election, which is convenient, the carbon tax will increase by 15 times. That is huge. For a family of four, that could result in an additional cost of \$5,000 per year. I do not know about others but for the majority of Canadians I talk to, particularly those in my riding but in other parts

of the country, \$5,000 a year is a lot of money. That is a lot to put out of their pocketbooks. It is a lot to spend on what exactly?

The Prime Minister continuously tells people that the carbon tax is somehow taking emissions out of the environment, that it is somehow taxing pollution and, therefore, preventing it from becoming a bigger problem, yet at the same time he is allowing the largest emitters in the country to go free. He is letting them off the hook. They will not pay a cent. Meanwhile, shame on those individuals who are driving their children to soccer games or running small businesses or heating their homes in the middle of winter. How dare they? Those individuals are going to be paying a massive carbon tax. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister continues to sit with a smirk on his face because he is cushioned by his family wealth.

I was recently out door knocking and I had the opportunity to knock at one house where an elderly woman came to her door. When she saw the button on my jacket that identified who I was, she smiled a little and invited me in. I came into the front entrance of her home. She ran into the kitchen and I could hear her shuffling through some papers, and then she returned to the door. She had her utility bill in her hand.

In the province of Alberta, we already face the carbon tax, so it is only an indication of what is to come for the rest of the country. In her utility bill is a line that says the amount she is paying for her carbon tax. She circled it for me and she began to share her story. This is an elderly woman, living on a fixed income. She said she has a choice to make, because that line she circled is the same amount that she budgets per month to go out on a weekly lunch date with her friends from the community. She faces the choice of letting that go or not being able to fully pay off her bill. At the end of the day, she is going to choose to let go of those lunch opportunities.

The members of the party opposite are kind of laughing at that. They do not think it is a big deal, but here is why it is a big deal. This is an everyday Canadian. This woman is 76 years old, living on a fixed income and she is forced now to stay in her home. She has become a shut-in, not because she is immobile but because a carbon tax has been imposed on her and no longer can she afford to go out and enjoy a coffee and a bowl of soup with her friends. That is not a laughing matter. That is real life. That is Canadian life.

• (1810)

I understand that those on that side of the House might not understand that, particularly the Prime Minister, with his trust account. I understand that there are others over there who are in a similar situation and have wealth tucked away, but that is not the story of those in my riding, and it is not the story of millions of Canadians across this country.

I would ask that the government do more to support everyday Canadians. Chances are that the Liberals are not going to do that. In fact, they just voted to say that they will not, so it is up to us on this side of the House, and this is where I come in.

Private Members' Business

I have put forward a private member's bill called the credit card fairness act. Since being elected in 2015, I have had the opportunity to travel across this country and talk to Canadians. They are the ones who are telling me that life is more expensive. They are telling me that fairness and transparency around credit card use matters. They are the ones who are telling me that their household debt load is significant, and they are the ones who are telling me that they want to be treated fairly. Therefore, I am advocating on their behalf. That is what this bill is all about.

Unfortunately, banks engage in a number of deceptive practices that create a debt trap that many Canadians find it difficult to get out of. Sometimes Canadians make unfortunate decisions, and some of that debt is their own doing. I understand that. However, for others, that is not the case. For others, there are changes that can be made to assist them so that they are better served and more empowered to make good decisions that are the right decisions for them.

If passed, the credit card fairness act would do seven things.

Number one, those who make a payment on a bill but do not quite pay it in full would not have to pay interest on the entire thing. It would just be on the amount that was not paid. Right now, that is not the case, and it is not fair. If individuals have a bill for \$3,000 but have missed the full payment by two cents, they do not just pay the interest they missed at the end of the billing period; they pay the interest on the entire amount of \$3,000 they were originally charged. I do not think that is fair. Canadians do not think that is fair. It needs to be changed.

Number two, if people have a high-interest debt and a low-interest debt, the amount they pay would first go toward the high-interest debt. That is fair.

Number three, the bill would require banks to disclose exactly how much interest the cardholder was being charged in a 12-month cycle. This would help create transparency, it would help create information and it would help people make empowered decisions.

Number four, further transparency is created when marketing materials are giving all the information up front rather than withholding it and blinding people to it and then surprising them at the end. Right now, that is often case. We want to stop that.

Number five, we want to prohibit banks from being able to increase interest rates retroactively. In other words, if an individual spends money on his or her card at an interest rate of 15%, because that is what was signed off on, it is not okay for the bank to then hike the interest rate and send a bill at 21% interest. Right now, that happens, and it is not fair to Canadians, and I will advocate on their behalf.

Number six, this private member's bill would require banks to provide an online mechanism by which individuals who hold cards can cancel their cards. This is common sense. Most of us do our banking online. It is just the way things are nowadays. Most of us have a credit card, because we need it for Uber, we need it for Amazon purchases and we need it to book a hotel room. Therefore, we have a credit card. Sometimes we want to cancel that credit card. We used to be able to do that online. Right now, that is not the case. Credit card companies and banks make people go in and do it. That is not fair. We would change that.

Number seven, and my final one, is to legislate that banks must obtain consent before increasing a cardholder's limit. Again, this simply comes down to basic human decency. If they are going to change the terms of an agreement, they had better tell the individual holding the card, because it is the right thing to do.

I am asking my colleagues on the opposite side of this House to support this bill, but I am going to guess that they probably are not going to. On this side of the House, we will advocate for everyday, average, hard-working Canadians every single day of the week. On that side of the House, they will shelter their wealth, and they will punish Canadians every single day of the week. They just voted on it. They said they were going to hike taxes. They said they have no intention of balancing the budget. That is not okay. We are going to fight for Canadians. They are going to fight against Canadians. We are going to win the next election.

● (1815)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Youth Economic Opportunity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to point out the fact that the government in BIA 2 introduced consumer protections. It was the largest package of new measures since the FCAC's creation.

If the member opposite was so concerned about these things, did she involve herself in that process done with consultation and why in the last 10 years under the Harper Conservatives was consumer protection not important? How are we supposed to believe the Conservatives think that consumer protection in banks is important now when they had 10 years to do something about it and did nothing?

Ms. Rachael Harder: Mr. Speaker, if only that question carried weight and was a good question. In 2009, the late Minister Jim Flaherty, who was the finance minister at the time under Prime Minister Stephen Harper, put forward some of the greatest transformations the country had seen since the beginning of the Bank Act.

I would encourage the member opposite to do her research. She can look at those changes that were created in 2009, which advocated on behalf of credit card holders, that advocated on behalf of Canadian consumers, that advocated on behalf of everyday Canadians. The former government did that and that is what this side of the House will always do.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for putting the bill forward. This clearly is an admission by the Conservative Party that the state is required to intervene in the private sector with regard to the banks. They have not been in the best interests of Canadian consumers and they cannot be trusted to do this unilaterally. They need regulation, oversight and they need the state to intervene on their market system because they have not been able to complete the job fairly for Canadians and for businesses across the country.

Private Members' Business

Is state intervention also necessary for the insurance industries or is it just the banks and this one credit card issue that requires the intervention to ensure the free market system is operating with some accountability, which is not taking place? Is this what the member has heard from Canadians and is this why she has asked for state intervention in the private sector for this model?

• (1820)

Ms. Rachael Harder: Mr. Speaker, I have travelled to every province across Canada and to Nunavut. Insurance has not come up. Household debt has come up. The cost of living has come up. The expense of the government has come up. The carbon tax has come up. Being able to afford a house has come up. Those are the things that Canadians are worried about. Being able to pay for their retirement has come up. Living on a fixed income within those limitations has come up.

Canadians are concerned about making their next bill payment. That is what they are concerned about. Canadians are concerned about the well-being of their families. They are also concerned about the well-being of their children and the nation they will inherit. That is what Canadians are concerned about.

This side of the House will continue to advocate for those Canadians to ensure that they are empowered to achieve their dreams, that they are given all the tools necessary and the environment necessary for them to steward their talents, their abilities and gifts in order to generate wealth and take care of their families, without being punished by the government.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I am surprised the subject of insurance did not come up, but again—

The Deputy Speaker: We will get back to the hon. member momentarily. We are having a problem with interpretation.

It is working now.

The hon. member for Windsor West.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I applaud the member for listening to Canadians about the cost and hearing from the banks and credit cards. I am surprised she did not hear about insurance costs, especially if we talk to young people, with regard—

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member again. I did switch over to French. I am wondering if keeping it on the French channel that members are using now we have French interpretation.

We will see if we can get that operational in the next few minutes, hopefully before that. I would ask the hon. member for Windsor West to put those thoughts on hold momentarily. We will suspend until we can get the interpretation working. I appreciate hon. members' patience.

(The House was suspended at 6:24 p.m.)

• (1825)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 6:26 p.m.)

The Deputy Speaker: I am asking members who are listening on the French channel to let me know if they are getting the French interpretation.

An hon. member: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: When this happens we can pick up where we left off in terms of the time on the clock. Under Private Members' Business, for example, there is one hour for debate, so this interruption will not take that time away from hon. members in terms of debate on the question.

We will resume with the hon. member for Windsor West, who is in the process of posing the last question in this five-minute round to the hon. member for Lethbridge.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, there is great interest in making sure this is translated in both official languages. It is important, because this private member's bill is about two things. The first is economic justice, credibility and accountability for consumers. The second is the mere fact that at different times, private sector institutions, like banks in this case, require regulatory oversight by the state.

I would ask the member if she heard in any of her deliberations whether auto insurance for young people was a concern. I hear that quite a bit. I am wondering if she and her party would agree that if auto insurance is not adjusted by companies, state intervention is necessary in order to make sure there is accountability for consumers in Canada.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Mr. Speaker, I have made quite clear the concerns that Canadians shared with me as I travelled across the country. They largely have to do with affordability and making ends meet.

As I said before, we on this side of the House are committed to helping Canadians, empowering them, and making sure we create an environment of economic prosperity in which they are able to get ahead.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Before resuming debate, I would like to thank the interpreters and everyone who helped resolve the technical difficulties with the system.

[*English*]

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Youth Economic Opportunity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today's legislation, Bill C-419 proposes a number of amendments to the financial institutions statutes in relation to credit cards. These amendments would modify business practices and disclosure requirements for credit cards issued by federally regulated financial institutions, including the way in which interest rates are calculated and applied to balances.

This bill is well-intended and our government shares its aim of improving financial protection for hard-working Canadians who use credit cards. In budget 2018, the government announced its intention to introduce legislation that would strengthen the tools and mandate of the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada, while advancing consumers' rights and interests in dealing with their financial institutions. With BIA 2, the government did exactly that.

Private Members' Business

These amendments that have been adopted with the most recent budget implementation act will lead to better outcomes for Canadians when dealing with their banks. Might I point out that, again, this was one of the most significant consumer protection packages since the FCAC's creation. Together, they will help ensure that banks have internal business practices that further strengthen outcomes for consumers, including ensuring consumers' financial needs are assessed when selling them products and services. They will ensure that the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada has the necessary tools to implement supervisory best practices, including directing banks to comply with their legal obligations and ordering restitution when charges have been improperly collected, and that consumers are further empowered and better protected, including ensuring that banks provide timely electronic alerts to consumers when they are at risk of incurring fees.

We are confident that these amendments to the framework will improve outcomes for Canadians because we grounded the legislation in evidence.

The Financial Consumer Agency of Canada, or FCAC, is the federal regulator dedicated to protecting bank consumers. As part of its ongoing work, the agency undertook broad reviews of banks' sales practices and of the best practices for consumer protection in Canada and abroad. Our government's action has also been informed by an important study from the Standing Committee of Finance on consumer protection and bank practices. The consumer protection changes we did respond to issues that were identified as part of these reviews.

In contrast to the member opposite's suggested bill, the amendments we brought forward were developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including consumer groups, financial institutions and officials from the provinces and territories. As colleagues know, consumer protection is an area in which both provincial and territorial governments and the federal government are active. Several provinces, including Quebec, have comprehensive financial consumer protection rules. As such, consulting provinces and territories is crucial before introducing new measures to avoid conflict and duplication.

Considering that BIA 2 contained a wide range of important amendments, I would like to at least highlight a few of the major changes. To start, our government has proposed a series of measures to improve the way financial institutions handle consumer complaints. Under our proposals, these institutions will be required to keep a record of all complaints and will be required to make this information available to the commissioner of the FCAC to help improve monitoring and oversight. In addition, the commissioner will assess the complaints-handling procedures of banks and ensure banks follow the rules.

We know that when Canadians have disputes with their banks, they deserve to have access to a resolution process that is fair and impartial. That is why bank consumers can take any complaint they cannot resolve with their bank to an independent body, free of charge. With these changes we will require these bodies to publish a summary of each final recommendation regarding a complaint, including the reasons for the recommendations. We will also require these bodies to report annually to the commissioner and to the public on their performance. These new reporting requirements will help

the agency in its work and ensure that consumers are better protected.

• (1830)

Beyond complaints resolution, in cases where it has been found that banks have violated their obligations to consumers, we have proposed to increase the maximum penalty that can be imposed. Under our proposals, if the commissioner determines that a bank has breached its legal obligations, the maximum penalty that can be imposed will rise from \$500,000 per violation to \$10 million per violation. Furthermore, when the commissioner publishes a decision regarding a violation, those notices will include the name of the financial institution. We believe that higher penalties and publicly naming banks would create a stronger incentive for banks to comply.

We also introduced a new requirement for institutions to establish and implement policies and procedures to ensure products and services offered or sold are appropriate for customers' circumstances, including their financial needs; we have introduced a new definition of the term "undue pressure" and an enhanced prohibition on institutions; we have an enhanced requirement to provide cancellation periods for most ongoing products and services; we have enhanced the requirement that an institution may not impose a charge or penalty on a person unless the institution obtained the person's express consent for the provision of the product or service; and there is a new requirement that the maximum liability for an unauthorized credit card transaction be \$50, unless the borrower was grossly negligent in safeguarding the credit card or specified information about the credit card.

There are also measures in our recent fall economic statement designed to empower and protect consumers as well.

First, we committed to developing a code of conduct for how banks should deliver their services to better meet the needs of seniors. To ensure that seniors can bank with confidence and to respond to the unique needs of Canada's aging population, the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada, with support from the Minister of Seniors, will work with financial institutions and seniors groups to create a code of conduct for banks to guide their delivery of services to Canadian seniors.

Once the code is developed, the agency will take steps to ensure that banks comply with this code of conduct and that seniors, as well as all Canadians, are aware of the rights and obligations under the code.

In addition, the agency will undertake a review of the way banks handle complaints, including an assessment of how effective the existing external complaint bodies are at resolving consumer complaints. The results of this review will help our government consider whether further changes to the consumer protection framework are needed.

Private Members' Business

Consumers want to know that financial products and services offered by banks meet the highest standards and that the fees they are paying for products and services are fair. For our part, our government is committed to supporting a financial sector that promotes competition and consumer choice and continues to deliver financial stability and economic growth. BIA 2 helps to fulfill this commitment, and we will continue to work with all stakeholders, including consumer groups, to further refine and improve consumer protection in Canada.

We know that Canadians work hard every day to build a better life for themselves and their families. In return for that hard work, they expect and deserve a stable financial system that safeguards their savings and investments. As a government, we take the protection of financial consumers very seriously, and that is why we are continuing our work to increase fairness and transparency and ensure that all Canadians benefit from strong consumer protection standards.

• (1835)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak on Bill C-419, an act to amend the Bank Act, the Trust and Loan Companies Act, the Insurance Companies Act and the Cooperative Credit Associations Act. This is important for consumers and Canadians. It is long overdue in this chamber.

It is an interesting debate, because we have a bill introduced by the Conservatives that is really about state intervention on the banking system, the financial sector of Canada, and Bay Street in particular, state intervention that is required because of their behaviour. There are many economists who would agree that they need to be reined in.

The Conservatives are advocating for higher regulations in order to have a greater leash on the banking sector, as well as some oversight that is different from what we have now.

I will outline the measures that are found in the bill. They are quite good in many respects and mirror some of the other states around the world that have also intervened on the banking sector.

I applaud the Conservatives for coming to the realization that the free market economy, if left to itself, is not adequate to police itself in many states. I would argue that the banks in particular require this state intervention, because consumer treatment over credit cards is unbelievably bad in this country. I would argue as well that insurance companies also need greater oversight, and there are other issues. However, this one in particular is low-hanging fruit. Other democracies are also saying that a correction to the free market is required and is very important not only for the good of consumers but also for the overall health of our economy and for other businesses, whether they are small or medium-sized businesses or larger institutions. The financial sector itself cannot be trusted to govern itself, which the Liberals are now advocating here, ironically.

Time after time, we have seen this nightmare emerge in the House of Commons. Having been in the House over a number of different election periods, at times I have heard the Liberals get up and criticize Jim Flaherty for bringing in the weak regulatory process that we have at this moment, and now, ironically, they are defending the Conservative position.

Over here, we have the Conservatives, who have come full circle and have realized that the state they had control of and had the reins on did not have our best interests at heart when they basically abandoned all accountability for the financial sector. They have agreed with what we have said many times, which is part of the foundation of democratic socialism: that there needs to be accountability, oversight and justice when it comes to the environment, financial matters and business. We cannot let free capitalism go wandering about, because there will be winners and losers. The vast majority of them will be losers, while a fairly small group, in this case the banking and financial sectors, will be the winners. Therefore, I applaud the Conservatives for coming full circle on this issue.

Unfortunately, what we have seen is the typical dance that we have here in this hall, which is that the Liberals are now on the other side, explaining why they cannot do anything and leaving it to somebody else to try to figure out. In the meantime, we have Canadians that are continually victimized.

Ironically, this was supposed to be an activist government, but it has turned into an apologist government. What we just heard was an apology to Canadians. We are being asked to support a private member's bill that is quite basic in many respects in terms of transparency and accountability and in terms of being good for consumers and small and medium-sized businesses. Why can we not come to grips with that?

In fact, it lets the Liberals off the hook in many respects. The Conservatives are saying that we need to intervene with the levers of government because the financial sector in Canada is not capable of controlling itself. That is what we are after here. The Conservatives are saying we need the minister, the cabinet, the government and eventually the Senate to send as strong a signal as possible to the banks that their time is up, that the free rein they had has expired, and that they need to provide what we have seen with other nations, which is a record of accountability for consumers, because some of the things that they do are quite egregious. It is not only the policies they have put in place for consumers and what is taking place; it is because we are a society that has become quite dependent on some of the services they provide.

• (1840)

I will throw out a couple of things to show how important this is for our economy, our consumer society and other businesses. Right now, there are 75.3 million credit cards in circulation in Canada, and 36.4 million of those credit cards have a balance. Of those, \$200 is the average unpaid balance, and people are paying interests rates anywhere from 17% to 40%. Households spent an average of almost \$550 in interest charges in 2017 on some of these cards, and 42% of Canadians do not pay their balance off every month.

Private Members' Business

The United States has acknowledged this and is bringing in new regulations and laws, which ironically we cannot get in Canada. We can harmonize our automobiles, which is very complex, and our computer systems and technology, but we cannot harmonize a piece of plastic for the benefit of consumers. We cannot harmonize the banking regulatory sector, which has been done in the United States. We have faced some of the consequences of a financial sector gone wild, and even though we have this opportunity, the government is taking a pass on it.

I do not understand that, especially because the government has all of the political coverage it needs given that the Conservatives are saying that Bay Street and the financial sector need to be reined in because they are incapable of controlling their greed.

That is what this is about. When we look at the bill from the member for Lethbridge, we can see that it identifies some of the most egregious things in the credit card policies.

One of the things it calls for is a cushioning of the interest rate. A lot of Canadians can probably relate to this. Let us say a person has to pay a credit card balance of \$400.35. People who pay \$400 can be charged interest on the whole thing. It could be just a simple accident a person makes with the click of a button when paying online or from getting bills mixed up, whatever it might be. Others might be like me, someone who always pays a little bit extra just to avoid that. Banks actually then get a bump in their revenue, when it is all collected up. It is quite a Ponzi scheme in many respects because of all that additional revenue they get for the next month to themselves. When we start to add that up across the board, it is quite significant.

That is one of the things this bill addresses. It would ensure Canadians just pay the interest on what is actually owed. That is a balanced approach.

Again, having to actually bring the levers of government in on this is appropriate at this point in time. I have talked about the fact that so many Canadians are dependent upon using this and are missing out on many interest payments. Life is tough enough with the rising cost of energy, rent, housing and so on. Interest payments from a simple a mistake that a person might make during a busy life are not fair and just, in terms of what banks charge people compared with what their actual bill should be.

The bill calls for transparency, which is really important. I would argue that is not only important as a social justice element, which is nice to see coming from the Conservatives in this place as they have endorsed social justice for consumers. There is also accountability, as credit card companies actually have to report what people paid in interest over a year. They have to put that on people's monthly statements, which is another good idea.

Let us move to interest rates. Credit card companies cannot retroactively raise interest rates. Another part of justice is that the interest rate at the time of a person's purchase becomes what a person actually pays out, so that later on, if there are adjustments on a card, a consumer does not get weaselled a second time around by having to pay more. That is a good and fair idea. This is not a back street, loan shark type of thing in which people show up at a second meeting and all of a sudden their interest rates are higher. This is

something that can actually be done, and it should be done because it is a good business practice for everything.

There is also the notification that the bill calls for. This is interesting. The bill calls for another set of legislation to increase awareness and accountability when increasing people's credit card rates so that people do not get into further financial debt.

I want to applaud this. It has every opportunity for the light of day for consumers and a better economy, and it has all the political coverage the Liberals could dream about, because the Conservatives are asking for this and are telling us that Bay Street's and the financial sector's greed has gone wild, and that this needs intervention, needs some assistance and needs self-correction. That is what we should do here. The Liberals have all that cover, so why are they not taking it? I do not understand.

● (1845)

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am extremely proud to have the opportunity to speak to this bill today, Bill C-419, the credit card fairness act, which would amend the Bank Act, Insurance Companies Act, Cooperative Credit Associations Act and the Trust and Loan Companies Act. I want to thank the member of Parliament for Lethbridge for bringing this private member's bill forward.

Why am I so proud to speak to this today? Ultimately, government has a responsibility in protecting the consumer. Once upon a time, from 1967 to 1995, this House and our federal government had a minister of consumer and corporate affairs. Then, unfortunately, under the government of Jean Chrétien, the Liberal government, that position was eliminated.

What is the role of a minister of consumer and corporate affairs? The role of government, or governing, is to balance the interests of the individual citizen with the interests of corporations and to ensure society is protected and looks after the well-being of not only the citizens of today but of tomorrow.

The government has a responsibility to protect citizens when they are not necessarily able to protect themselves. That is what consumer protection is about. This is why we have a bank act, an insurance act and a co-operative credit act. It is to ensure that financial institutions holding citizens' money, and therefore a significant amount of power and influence, are not able to take advantage of individual citizens.

Unfortunately, we no longer have that voice at the cabinet table. We no longer have a minister whose sole responsibility is to keep tabs on those kinds of things and ensure individual citizens who are not able to go up against these great corporations, or institutions like a bank, have their voices heard. Therefore, because these individuals are not able to defend themselves in this manner, we have a member of Parliament who needs to bring a private member's bill forward simply to address some of the punitive and monopolistic practices of banks around the terms and conditions of credit cards.

Private Members' Business

This bill is about fairness and transparency, but what exactly is in this bill? This bill has seven key elements. The first would mandate that if a cardholder pays more than 95% of his or her outstanding balance before the payment due date, the bank could not charge interest on the whole amount. This means that I can be charged after the due date, not for the balance that I have not paid after the due date, but for the entire outstanding balance that was on that bill. I can honestly say that I did not know that could actually happen. I thought credit card companies could only charge interest on the balance, the amount I did not pay, not on the amount of the bill and, therefore, the amount I did not pay plus the amount I did pay. This is a critical change because it would mean that the credit card company would only be able to charge interest on the balance that is outstanding after the due date.

The second would ensure that if different rates apply to different amounts owing in a billing cycle, the companies would have to apply the payments to the highest interest rate balances first. Therefore, if I have a number of balances, each of which can be at a different interest rate and I pay off the credit card, right now they do not have to say that it goes against the highest rate first. They can charge me the highest rate on the entire outstanding balance. This would fix that. It would mean that when a balance is paid, it would go against the highest interest rate first. That sounds reasonable and fair.

• (1850)

Number three, it would require credit card companies to disclose, on the monthly statement, how much interest the cardholder has paid in the previous 12 months. That just seems like transparency in labelling. Absolutely, the credit card companies should be required to tell people how much interest they have paid in the last 12 months.

Number four, it would require credit card advertisements and marketing materials to prominently communicate the annual fee, the annual interest rate, the period of time until the introductory rate ended and the interest rate that would apply following that period. It also seems obvious that a credit card company would have to tell people what the interest rate would be when the introductory rate ended and what rate would apply in the following period. I did not know that this was not the case today. Absolutely, that is something that every consumer should have the right to know.

Number five, it would prohibit credit card companies from increasing interest rates retroactively on a cardholder's outstanding balance. Again, I am shocked to say that I did not think it was even legal that I could buy something 12 months ago and carry a balance on that, and the credit company could change the interest rate today and charge me the new interest rate on the balance of the amount I incurred at that time under the terms and conditions at a lower rate. That seems unreasonable and absolutely should immediately be changed.

Number six, it would require credit card companies to provide cardholders with an online mechanism to cancel their credit cards and decrease their credit limit. To communicate with credit card companies, people have no choice but to phone them, yet it is very difficult to get through. They do that, one could assume, on purpose. People pay their bills online. Most of us send emails. Most of us do most of our communication over the Internet, yet to cancel a credit card or decrease a credit limit to manage our finances more

effectively, we can only do that in person. This would have it be applicable online. Brilliant.

Number seven, last but not least, the bill would legislate that credit card companies could not automatically increase a cardholder's credit limit. Wow. Again, how are they legally able to without telling cardholders? Clearly this is something we should support.

Why does this matter? There are 73 million credit cards, and 42% of Canadians do not pay off their debt, and many of them have \$200 in balance. We have found that many people are within \$200 each month of insolvency.

This bill would not jeopardize the free market. It would not have far-sweeping and exclusive principles. It would not completely address all the things that need to be changed in consumer protection. It would just address something critical, finite and long overdue.

My compliments to the member for Lethbridge. A private member's bill is a great deal of work, and often members of Parliament are not given due credit. These are things governments should do. These are things ministers of corporate and consumer affairs should address. However, in the absence of that, this member of Parliament from Lethbridge went above and beyond to do this very important work on things that, in my personal opinion, should already not be legal to stand up not only for the consumers in her riding but for the citizens of this entire nation.

Many of us do not have a choice not to have a credit card, because our society is structured so that many have no choice but to have a credit card. We are held hostage by the banks until such time as federal government legislation protects us.

I call on all the members in this House to support this very important private member's bill. Once again, I thank the member of Parliament for Lethbridge for putting this private member's bill forward on behalf of all of us.

• (1855)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-419, an act to amend the Bank Act, the Trust and Loan Companies Act, the Insurance Companies Act and the Cooperative Credit Associations Act. My colleagues may not know this, but I have studied the issue of credit cards extensively. Today's subject definitely interests me.

I would like to point out that many of the measures included in the bill before us today already appear in the budget implementation act. However, since this is very serious subject, a lot of consultation with the provinces and territories is needed.

As I said, certain specific measures are already included as part of the consumer protection measures in the Bank Act, as they were introduced as part of the package of measures included in Bill C-86, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 27, 2018 and other measures, which received royal assent on December 13, 2018.

Private Members' Business

For example, Bill C-419 proposes that a bank must obtain the consumer's consent before increasing the credit limit on a credit card and provide written confirmation if consent is given verbally. That is important. They must not increase the limit on a credit card without the consent of the consumer. The written consent is important, and we have already added this requirement to existing protections.

The bill also proposes to require the disclosure of specific information in credit card advertising, including annual interest rates. This requirement is a duplication of existing requirements, including the obligation to disclose the annual interest rate and other interest expenses in advertising.

I will go back to what my colleague said at the outset. This text amends the Bank Act, the Trust and Loan Companies Act, and all other legislation I mentioned earlier. When Canadians deal with their financial institutions, they want their information to be protected, the goods and services to meet the highest standards and the fees they pay to be fair. First and foremost, people must know what they are getting themselves into with their credit card.

For more than a decade, the previous Conservative government failed to make any significant changes to Canada's consumer protection standards despite the major technological changes that would have made them possible.

In the wake of an extensive review of bank sales practices and broad consultations with the provinces and territories, our government took significant measures to promote Canadians' rights and interests. That is important. We always talk about the middle class. Credit cards are a method of payment and it is important that they be subject to the same rules and that people know how to use them.

Our government's decision to implement a new set of rules to protect Canadians when they use their financial institution represents the most significant change since the creation of the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada in 2001.

Conservative MPs refused to defend Canadian consumers when they formed the government. They have no real plan to defend them now.

The bill that our colleague introduced proposes two sets of amendments to federal legislation regarding financial institutions and credit cards. The first would limit credit card interest rates for consumers by reducing the amount of interest to be paid when a borrower pays 95% of his or her outstanding balance; by applying the lowest interest rate on purchases when interest rates change during a billing cycle; and by requiring lenders to apply all payments to the portion of the balance with the highest interest rate. This is an important part of the proposal. The Banking Act already requires banks to apply payments either to the balance with the highest interest rate or to prorate it to each unpaid balance.

● (1900)

The second set of amendments imposes new disclosure and business practice requirements. The bill would require that lenders disclose the total of all amounts of interest paid by a borrower for the previous 12 billing cycles and that credit card advertisements clearly indicate the interest rate, fees and any applicable discounts. Other amendments would require that cardholders give their consent before their credit limit can be increased. I spoke about that earlier. It is a

very important measure. There are also amendments that would require that cardholders have an electronic means to decrease the credit limit on their card if a bank provides online banking.

Our government is working hard to protect consumers. As part of our ongoing efforts to improve the consumer protection framework, our government recently completed an important review and update of the consumer protection framework under the Bank Act and the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada Act. It is important to remember that this had not been done since 2001 and that we have been working on this since we took office.

The measures to be added to the previous Bank Act will be based on the information in two reports prepared by the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada, the FCAC. The first report consisted of an exhaustive review of bank sales practices, and the second reviewed the best practices in financial consumer protection. Our government was also guided by an important study carried out by the Standing Committee on Finance on consumer protection and bank practices.

The Standing Committee on Finance works very hard. Ten parliamentarians meet at least twice a week and work on reports. These people come to an agreement before making recommendations. They meet with many witnesses. When the Standing Committee on Finance, or any House committee, prepares a report, 10 parliamentarians study everything in the report to ensure that the recommendations made to the minister will improve legislation. This is done by mutual agreement.

Consultations are also needed with the provinces and territories to update the consumer protection rules. Bill C-419 introduced by our colleague across the aisle has not been the subject of extensive consultations with stakeholders, including provincial and territorial governments. This is in contrast to what was done to prepare for the most recent measure we put in place. Consultations with the provinces and territories are essential. I cannot stress that enough. These are not things that are easily changed. Consultations, witnesses and experts are needed. It is important to ensure that everything complies with all the previous rules, as well as the laws already in force. Every possible impact of amending legislation as complex as the Bank Act must be considered, as it governs banking institutions.

● (1905)

The Deputy Speaker: If the hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles wants, she can have another minute when the House resumes debate on this motion.

The time provided for consideration of private members' business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

*Adjournment Proceedings***ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS**

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

[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to address a question that I had for the Prime Minister months ago about the new NAFTA and whether we would see a debate inside the House to have transparency and be open about what Canadians were signing onto through the Liberals in the renegotiation of the new NAFTA. What we know now is that great uncertainty surrounds the ratification.

The New Democrats were pleased to see Democrats in the U.S. have success in the new Congress. I have visited Washington and there is a significant change in tone and conversations taking place around the new NAFTA. It is quite clear at this time that Democrats in the U.S. are looking to reopen the deal to renegotiate some of the portions around the environment, labour, the high cost of pharmaceuticals and the drug patent extension in the new deal.

It will come as no surprise that the New Democrats will welcome the work of Democrats in the United States in an effort to improve the deal and see some progressive elements come to fruition in it. Unfortunately, what we have signed onto in the new USMCA is a concessionary deal. Therefore, we are hopeful that those efforts will be successful and that the Liberal government in Canada will be open to improving labour standards, environmental standards and, of course, to seeing the cost of drugs being reduced for Canadians and for all people across all three countries who will be impacted by this deal.

The future right now of the deal is quite uncertain, but there is a positive path forward that will see improvements made to this deal. I am hopeful the Liberal government will have wide open arms to them on behalf of Canadians. It is an opportunity not just for us to improve the deal on those three areas I mentioned, but also to address the still lingering and very harmful steel and aluminum tariffs. We now know that somehow Russia has been able to have aluminum tariffs removed, yet Canada has not. Therefore, we need to take every opportunity at this time to improve our trading relationship with the United States. Again, I hope we will welcome these additions and look for improvements in the lives of Canadians.

At the heart of the new NAFTA are millions of people who work every day for a decent life for their families and communities. Twenty-three years ago when NAFTA was being originally negotiated by Mulroney Conservatives, they tried desperately to sell Canadian workers on the idea that it was more than just a trade deal. They tried to make the case that the trilateral deal would bring prosperity to everyone across the continent. They claimed it was going to be an equalizer for all.

Working people studied NAFTA carefully and began to raise the alarm bells that it would not work. Labour and civil society brought their concerns to the streets over the weak side agreements that they rightly claimed would do nothing to change the inequalities. We have seen this play out across our country as well.

The Conservatives pressed on in the original NAFTA and now, in 2019, we can see the impact this idea, which was promoted by them, has had on working-class people. Successive governments have neglected to address the alarming reality that the NAFTA promise of 1988 has not led to an increased standard of living for all. The only benefit has been for those who already hold the power and the influence.

Income and wealth inequality in Canada today is at a crisis level. As my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby rightly pointed out today, 46% of Canadians are \$200 away from financial trouble. Working people, like those in Oshawa who are fighting for their jobs, will be impacted by the new NAFTA. Despite the fact that Liberals are saying everything has been solved in the new trade agreement, that again is not reaching working people.

Today I rise with my question for the Liberals. If trade deals like the new NAFTA are so good for working people, why are the auto workers in Oshawa out fighting for their lives right now, and I would note with no Liberal representation in sight? All of those workers have noted that as well. If these deals are so good for working people, then why, after signing this deal, does the harm continue to impact working people who are losing their jobs while Mexico is growing?

• (1910)

Ms. Pamela Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, throughout negotiations, our government has been committed to transparency, inclusiveness and openness. We engaged and consulted with a variety of stakeholders from all economic sectors, with labour organizations, women, youth, indigenous peoples, civil society organizations and academics. We also worked very closely with our provincial and territorial colleagues and delivered a whole-of-Canada approach to advancing Canadian interests across the table.

There has been a lot of praise given to this government for negotiating this deal and it is thanks to many stakeholders and industries across the country, including the Canadian Labour Congress and Unifor.

As the Prime Minister said, we are very grateful to Canadian stakeholders who took part in these consultations. The views provided were very helpful in informing Canada's position at the negotiation table and in finding creative solutions to address the unconventional proposals at the table.

Jerry Dias and Hassan Yussuff have worked closely with us every step of the way to ensure that this deal would be the best possible one for workers, for labour and for Canadians. This close co-operation with stakeholders and labourers is why this deal is great for Canadian workers.

The member opposite will be happy to know that the enforceable provisions in the new NAFTA that protect labour are the strongest in any Canadian trade agreement to date. The new auto rules of origin will directly secure the future for auto workers in cities such as Windsor and Oshawa. Jerry Dias, of Unifor, has said that this is a much better deal than the deal that was signed 24 years ago.

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The new agreement also reinforces the strong economic ties between Canada, Mexico and the United States while recognizing the importance of inclusive trade by including key outcomes in areas such as labour and the environment as well as on gender and indigenous peoples.

It preserves Canada's preferential access to the U.S. market while updating and modernizing the old NAFTA agreement in areas such as digital trade, telecommunications and anti-corruption. Importantly, it means that Canadian workers and their families will enjoy greater opportunities than ever before.

The member opposite will also be happy to know that with the new agreement, we have sought the strongest labour chapter of any trade agreement Canada is party to. The agreement's labour chapter aims to level the playing field on labour standards and working conditions in North America and contains commitments to ensure that national laws and policies provide protection for fundamental principles and rights at work.

The new agreement also contains enforceable provisions that protect women's rights, minority rights and indigenous rights and environmental protections that are the strongest in any Canadian trade agreement to date.

For the first time in a Canadian trade agreement, the outcome incorporates a general exception that clearly confirms that the government can adopt or maintain measures it deems necessary to fulfill its legal obligations to indigenous peoples. As Perry Bellegarde said in a statement, "The provisions addressing Indigenous Peoples in [the deal] make it the most inclusive international trade agreement for Indigenous Peoples to date."

Through the ratification process, we look forward to bringing the agreement to Parliament, and this includes the Standing Committee on International Trade, which it was my honour to serve on for two years with the member opposite. I look forward to the future of this agreement.

•(1915)

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: Mr. Speaker, I am sure that while the Liberals love to invoke Jerry Dias, the president of Unifor, and my former president, right now the Liberal government has abandoned auto workers in Oshawa. It is not helping them to keep their jobs.

While the Liberals like to stand in the House and invoke labour and act as though they are the party that is standing with labour in the negotiation of this deal, I can tell the House clearly that Unifor members are contacting me every day, that Jerry Dias and I are speaking, and Colin James, who is the president of Unifor Local 222 in Oshawa, where one of her members sits. Jenn Cowie, who is an incredible activist, is out there every single day.

Once again, governments of Canada, Liberal and Conservative alike, but the Liberal government today, have left working people to fend for themselves. There are no workers out there in the cold today at GM fighting for their jobs in Oshawa who believe that the Liberal government will ever stand with them.

This trade agreement has done nothing to prevent the loss of jobs, and the Liberals have shown that they will not stand with working people when push comes to shove.

New Democrats will continue to stand with working people and with auto workers in our country. No one is fooled by the Liberal government.

Ms. Pamela Goldsmith-Jones: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to stand in the House and state that the Canada-United States-Mexico agreement preserves key elements of the North American trading relationship and allows for continued regional prosperity and stability.

It is most unfortunate that the NDP is opposed to this trade deal and the progress we have made for Canada. What we have moved forward with in North America is historic in terms of labour standards and protecting the rights of workers.

The government engaged proactively with over 1,200 Canadian stakeholders in modernizing NAFTA. We will continue to engage directly with a wide array of stakeholders as we move toward ratification and implementation.

Canadians know and are largely supportive of our new agreement and have underscored the importance of securing stability and predictability in our commercial relationships with the United States and with Mexico. The new NAFTA deal is good for Canada's economic prosperity and good for middle-class Canadians. We look forward to bringing this agreement to Parliament.

[*Translation*]

HEALTH

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, seniors play an active role in their communities. They make a valuable contribution to society. However, too many of them are falling through the cracks, and families are having a hard time supporting their aging loved ones.

Poverty among seniors is on the rise. Too many seniors are being forced to choose between buying food and buying medicine. In the not-too-distant future, one in four Canadians will be 65 or older. That is a quarter of our population, which is why a feasible plan for the future is crucial. We need a plan that includes free universal pharmacare because our seniors cannot wait any longer.

Seniors have worked hard to build our country, but the rising cost of living is making it impossible for many of them to make ends meet.

The lack of affordable housing, expensive prescription drugs and inadequate support measures are making life more difficult for seniors. Today, over 250,000 seniors are living below the poverty line. In a country as rich and prosperous as Canada, that is unacceptable.

That is why the NDP is championing a national seniors strategy. We believe that seniors should be able to live with dignity.

When will this Prime Minister commit to a national seniors strategy, a strategy that includes a universal pharmacare program?

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When will this government take real action? When will this government stop resorting to half measures to help our seniors instead of adopting a comprehensive approach? We need this strategy for our seniors.

In July, my office was inundated with calls. I am very pleased that seniors in my riding know that they can call me when there is a problem and we are here to listen. Those seniors were distressed because this government abandoned them yet again.

One of my constituents, who is 70 years old, came to see us because his old age security benefit was much lower than usual and he did not receive his guaranteed income supplement.

We looked into it to ensure that he received those benefits quickly, but in the meantime he could not afford his medication and had barely enough money for groceries. It is terrible.

Last week, I was talking to one of the seniors in my riding who said that he and his wife worked their entire lives and now, with such a small pension, they are having real trouble making ends meet.

Mr. Paul is 75 years old. He told me that he does not understand why the drugs he has to take cost so much. The Prime Minister rose in the House to tell me that the government was working hard for seniors, but in reality, our seniors are now visiting soup kitchens because they cannot make ends meet. Some must make the difficult choice between paying rent or paying for medication. That is shameful.

I also heard from Ms. Sénécal, who told me that seniors need a decent income, and she is absolutely right. She also asked me to make sure that everyone aged 60 to 64 receive a pension without discrimination.

Ms. Lafleur told me that creating a national pharmacare plan and increasing pensions was a priority.

Ms. Leclair and Mr. Breton both told me that the pension amounts should be higher. They are absolutely right.

Mr. Desmarais, a constituent of mine, told me that his drugs are abnormally expensive. He said that he pays \$75 for exactly 5 millilitres of medication. Is this normal? He needs this medication, but why is it so expensive?

This government needs to listen to our seniors. I am listening, that is for sure.

• (1920)

[*English*]

Ms. Pamela Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to contribute to tonight's debate on pharmacare and prescription drugs, which play such a vital role in our health care system and the well-being of seniors. I am pleased to address the question from the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot regarding this issue.

Prescription drugs are an increasingly important part of our health care system, helping to prevent and cure disease and save lives. However, Canada's drug spending is not producing all of the benefits that it should. Drug spending in Canada has increased significantly

since medicare was first established. Drugs are now the second largest category of spending in health care, ahead of physician services. Canada is paying higher prices for prescription drugs than most other developed countries and these prices limit access to innovative medicines, place a financial burden on patients and mean fewer resources for other areas of the health care system.

Since 2000, drug spending has increased faster in Canada than in all other of the comparator countries, seven other countries against which the Government of Canada benchmarks its prices. At the same time, research and development investment has fallen even further behind. Not only does Canada receive less pharmaceutical research and development investment than any other comparator country, but Canada receives less investment today than it did 30 years ago.

Our government is firmly committed to taking action to lower the cost of prescription drugs. However, before we can turn our attention to the idea of a national pharmacare program, we need to get the foundations in place to support the effective management of pharmaceuticals in this country. That is why our government is showing leadership and a real commitment to engaging provinces and territories on making significant improvements to address the issue. This includes reducing the cost of patented drugs through the modernization of the regulations governing the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board. Amendments to the regulations will give the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board the tools and information needed to protect all Canadians from excessive patented drug prices.

We have also worked to lower drug costs by forming a united front with our provincial and territorial partners to negotiate with the makers of patented drugs to reduce the price of their products. Federal participation in the pan-Canadian pharmaceutical alliance produced savings for provincial and federal governments of over \$1 billion in 2017. Health Canada has also launched the regulatory review of drugs and devices initiative. This initiative represents the most significant effort in many years to improve the availability of prescription drugs for Canadians, particularly for drugs used to treat rare diseases. As we know, the availability of medications to treat rare diseases was recently studied by the Standing Committee on Health.

On the topic of a national pharmacare program, the House is aware of the Parliamentary Budget Officer's recent report on this issue, as well as the study completed by the Standing Committee on Health, which was presented to the House in April 2018. We welcome this work, and in response, have followed up by committing, through budget 2018, to the creation of an advisory council on the implementation of national pharmacare, which is chaired by Dr. Eric Hoskins. The council is engaging with Canadians and provincial, territorial and indigenous leaders, as well as experts, stakeholders and patients. It is also conducting a fiscal, economic and social assessment of domestic and international pharmacare models, with the aim of reporting back to the federal government this spring on how best to implement a national pharmacare program.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1925)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary is saying that we are paying more. That is why the government needs to take action. As we speak, the Canadian Health Coalition is on Parliament Hill to tell us that Canada is the only country in the world with a public health care system that does not cover prescription drugs. As a result, one in 10 Canadians are unable to afford the drugs that have been prescribed to them.

The parliamentary secretary said that the Standing Committee on Health and the Parliamentary Budget Officer have done studies. Studies are not enough. The government needs to take immediate action. The time for consultation is over. This problem is well documented. We need a universal, public pharmacare program right now.

When will the government take action?

[*English*]

Ms. Pamela Goldsmith-Jones: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her advocacy.

Canadians are proud of our universal health care system and we all recognize that the system can be improved. For too many Canadians, our existing patchwork of drug coverage is not working well enough, leading to poorer health for some and higher costs for us all. In response to this, in budget 2018, our government announced the creation of an advisory council on the implementation of national pharmacare, chaired by Dr. Eric Hoskins. Our government looks forward to receiving the results of the council's work this spring.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am speaking tonight as part of what we call adjournment debate. This is where we have an opportunity to ask a follow-up question, going into greater detail about a question that we asked earlier in question period. Today, I am following up on a question I asked on November 5, 2018, a question about Asia Bibi. The question was as follows:

Mr. Speaker, Asia Bibi spent eight years in solitary confinement in Pakistan in the world's most high-profile blasphemy case. We are excited about her acquittal, but she and her family remain in grave danger. Ministerial permits have been used in the past to help vulnerable victims of false blasphemy charges in Pakistan, such as in the case of Rimsha Masih, under the previous government.

Will the minister continue this proud Canadian tradition and offer asylum to Asia Bibi and her family?

Around the same time, I co-signed a letter to the Minister of Immigration and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, highlighting the same issue and calling for Asia to be given asylum. I want to recognize the leadership of the member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek who organized the letter. I note that the letter was also co-signed by the members for Peace River—Westlock, Yorkton—Melville, Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, Scarborough—Guildwood, Humber River—Black Creek, Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Saskatoon—University, Langley—Aldergrove, Edmonton Manning, Lethbridge and Kitchener—Conestoga.

However, the more important advocacy for Asia has come from the community. The strong, vocal and active Pakistani Canadian community and Pakistani Christian community in particular.

In the years that the Asia Bibi case has been going on, she has also had very strong advocates in Pakistan, people who courageously fought and continue to fight for tolerance, pluralism, freedom and justice. Two prominent politicians, Shahbaz Bhatti and Salman Taseer, gave their lives advocating for freedom and justice. We salute their memory and their courage. Members of both the Bhatti and Taseer family live in Canada. Shahbaz Bhatti's nephew actually works in my office. Clearly, politics runs in the family.

A great deal more work needs to be done to advance tolerance in Pakistan and to reform the blasphemy law, but the acquittal and release of Asia Bibi is a powerful step forward that gives all of us great hope. It gives tolerant freedom-loving Pakistanis hope that their country will move forward. It gives them hope for the realization of Muhammad Ali Jinnah's vision. Jinnah was the founder of Pakistan. He said in 1947:

You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place or worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed — that has nothing to do with the business of the State...We are starting in the days where there is no discrimination, no distinction between one community and another, no discrimination between one caste or creed and another. We are starting with this fundamental principle: that we are all citizens, and equal citizens, of one State

The release of Asia Bibi is one important step toward the realization of that reality.

Media reports suggest that the government may have some information to share with respect to this case. As an update to my original question, could the government share with us any new details about Asia Bibi receiving asylum in Canada?

• (1930)

Ms. Pamela Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government is seized with the case of Asia Bibi. Together with like-minded countries, we have been and continue to be extremely engaged on this issue. I can assure my hon. colleague that the core priority for this government in the present situation is ensuring the safety of Asia Bibi and her family.

It is disappointing that the member opposite has decided to introduce this debate and possibly jeopardize those ongoing efforts. The House should be aware that my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, has spoken personally to the member opposite about the delicate discussions that are presently under way on this case. That is why it is unfortunate that the member opposite has decided to bring this matter forward in this manner, as both the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs have consistently stated that the Government of Canada is deeply engaged on this issue.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs has spoke directly to her counterpart and we are working closely with like-minded friends and allies on this issue. As the Minister of Foreign Affairs has said, Canada is prepared to do everything we can to ensure the safety of Asia Bibi.

Adjournment Proceedings

The case of Asia Bibi has caught the attention of the world. In 2009, she became the first woman to be convicted under Pakistan's blasphemy laws and was sentenced to death. In 2014, she appealed the sentence to the Supreme Court of Pakistan. The Supreme Court heard her case, and on October 31 of last year she was acquitted. A review of her case by the Supreme Court of Pakistan took place today, January 29, 2019. We are gratified that the Supreme Court has upheld her acquittal and that she has been cleared of all charges. We have urged the Government of Pakistan to take all necessary steps to keep her safe and are confident that it will do so.

The protection and promotion of human rights, including freedom of religion or belief, is a core priority of this government's foreign policy. Internationally, Canada always advocates strongly for the respect of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including article 18, which guarantees the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. We share the concerns of all Canadians regarding any limits on the fundamental human right to freedom of religion or belief. We have raised these concerns with Pakistan and we will continue to do so.

The Government of Canada will maintain its broad engagement with Pakistan on a wide variety of important topics, including human rights and the protection of religious minorities. We will continue to encourage and assist the Government of Pakistan in taking concrete steps to improve the situation for all religious minorities. This government will always stand up for the protection of religious minorities around the world.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for her words. However, I will say that I am surprised by the critical comments she started off with. All I asked was if the

government has any updates to share based on media reports. If the answer is no, then fair enough. Those media reports are out there, but if the government does not wish to comment on them, that is up to the government.

Again, all of us wish this family the best, and we wish the people of Pakistan the best. I hope that the outcome will be positive.

• (1935)

Ms. Pamela Goldsmith-Jones: Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague has said, the government is extremely engaged on the case of Asia Bibi. To that end, the Minister of Foreign Affairs has spoken directly to her counterpart in Pakistan. We are working closely with like-minded friends and allies towards our common goal, which is, of course, to ensure the safety of Asia Bibi and her family.

As the Minister of Foreign Affairs has said, Canada is prepared to do everything we can to ensure the safety of Asia Bibi. However, it remains a very delicate situation. I would urge all members of the House to remember that we are talking about a woman whom I think we all look up to. We appreciate the genuine concern and compassion of each and every member of the House of Commons, and we should conduct ourselves in accordance with her best interests.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:36 p.m.)

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