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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, June 7, 2011

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, June 7, 2011

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

● (1000)

[*English*]

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the following members have been appointed as members of the Board of Internal Economy for the purposes and under the provisions of the Parliament of Canada Act, subsection 50(2).

[*Translation*]

They are: the Hon. Peter Van Loan and the Hon. Gordon O'Connor, members of the Queen's Privy Council; the Hon. Rob Merrifield, representative of the government caucus; Mr. Thomas Mulcair and Ms. Chris Charlton, representatives of the New Democratic caucus; and Ms. Judy Foote, representative of the Liberal caucus.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the reports of the Canadian delegation of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union concerning its participation at: the meeting of the Steering Committee of the Twelve Plus Group, London, United Kingdom, September 25, 2009; the Annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations, New York, New York, United States of America, November 19-20, 2009; the meeting of the Steering Committee of the Twelve Plus Group, London, United Kingdom, March 1, 2010; the meeting of the Steering Committee of the Twelve Plus Group, Paris, France, September 3, 2010; the Annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations, New York, New York, United States of America, December 2-3, 2010; the Parliamentary meeting on the occasion of the 55th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women: the Role of Parliaments in Promoting Access and Participation of Women and Girls to Education, Training, Science and Technology, New York, New York, United States of America, February 23, 2011;

and the meeting of the Steering Committee of the Twelve Plus Group in Paris, France, March 14, 2011.

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PETITIONS

ASBESTOS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition that has been signed by literally thousands of Canadians from all over Canada drawing the attention of the House of Commons that asbestos is the greatest industrial killer the world has ever known.

In fact, more Canadians die from asbestos than from all other industrial causes combined. Yet, the petitioners point out that Canada remains one of the largest producers and exporters of asbestos in the world, spending millions and millions of dollars subsidizing the asbestos industry, and blocking international efforts to curb its use.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to ban asbestos in all of its forms, institute a just transition program for any worker who may be affected by such a ban, end all government subsidies to asbestos both in Canada and abroad, and stop blocking international health and safety conventions designed to protect workers from asbestos, such as the Rotterdam Convention.

● (1005)

VISITOR VISAS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I present a petition from a number of constituents and others expressing a great deal of concern regarding those individuals who are unable to have their families come to Canada in order to visit. At times this can be very challenging, whether for funerals or celebrations such as weddings, where visiting visas are being denied.

The petitioners are calling upon the government to take more action, so that we can enable some of these family members, who are of good character and in good health, to visit Canada.

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QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*The Budget***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[Translation]***THE BUDGET**

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from June 6 consideration of the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with this budget, the government missed a golden opportunity to reach out and work with others, and to show the majority of Canadians that Ottawa can work for them.

I congratulate the Prime Minister on the new mandate he received from Canadians, but I will continue to remind him that his majority in the House does not represent the majority of the public. Sixty per cent of voters chose another party in the May 2 election. They rejected this budget which is, essentially, identical to the one tabled just before the election.

[English]

I expect the Prime Minister, of course, to make choices that honour his values and his voters. That is what I would do as prime minister myself. But a prime minister also needs to govern on behalf of all Canadians.

The message we heard from voters this election is that they want us to work together to get results that can bring people together across partisan and regional lines. This budget could have moved in that direction by responding to concrete proposals made by other parties, including our party, proposals to help middle-class families, not just the well-connected insiders who all too often get their way here on Parliament Hill, proposals that millions of Canadians voted for in the election, such as hiring more family doctors and nurses; making life more affordable; securing pensions and retirement security for seniors; and lifting all seniors out of poverty. We could have seen proposals to spark full-time job creation.

[Translation]

Millions of Canadians voted for change, but I see very few signs that this government is listening.

I am pleased to see that this budget contains the long-awaited compensation for Quebec's sales tax harmonization. My caucus made this demand several times during the last Parliament. We are pleased to see that the government has made the right decision.

I welcome the return of the eco-energy home retrofit program. We saw how much this program stimulated job creation, reduced greenhouse gas emissions and helped families save on their energy bills.

●(1010)

[English]

It is a program and an approach to economic and energy policy that I have been urging the Prime Minister to adopt since our very first meeting.

I also want to salute the government for its adoption of a non-partisan initiative emerging from this country's building trades called helmets to hardhats. I would like to thank all of the members of Parliament who participated in the informal discussions that we had prior to the last budget that generated the consensus that will allow returning veterans and retiring service personnel to connect with jobs and employment opportunities in the construction field as this program unfolds.

Where is the effort to reach out to the five million Canadians who do not have a family doctor? We have suggested working with the provinces and territories to tackle this critical issue to provide more training spaces or adopt the CMA's ideas in this regard which suggests that we can repatriate doctors who have gone to work abroad and bring them back here. However, this budget will not get more doctors into practice. Therefore, it will cause millions of Canadian families with sick loved ones to experience inevitable anxiety due to the fact they do not have family medicine readily available. It will result in more people going to emergency departments rather than nipping in the bud an illness or a disease within the family. Therefore, at the end of the day it will cost Canadians more money. It is an issue that should have been tackled and we propose must be tackled.

We are also not positioning Ottawa as a leader with concrete proposals and ideas while heading into the health accord renegotiations. Although we should have heard a vision for the future of our health care system in both the Throne Speech and the budget, one was not forthcoming.

We need to reach out to families who need help with their budgets. During the election we talked to countless people who have great difficulty making ends meet at the end of the month. In fact, many of our members of Parliament met with people who were overcome with emotion as they described their situation. As we spoke with them regarding which party to vote for, their main concern was how they would cover their bills at the end of the month. Would they choose to pay the costs of their housing, put food on the table, or afford the medication that their doctor told them they needed?

These are the intense personal stories that people are hoping we will take account of, listen to, and motivate us in our work here. Household debt is at an all-time high. We should regard this as a critical issue. People are working hard. They are working harder than ever. How many members in this chamber have met people who are working two or three jobs just to try to make ends meet at the end of every month?

We suggested some concrete measures to help address these issues. For example, taking the federal tax off the skyrocketing heating bills that people are confronted with. We suggested capping those credit card interest rates which are really tough on families. The budget was a golden opportunity to address these issues. However, we did not see anything about that at all.

The Budget

Regarding our plea for action for the quarter of a million seniors who are living in poverty, the government responded with less than half measures, less than half of the investment needed to pull those seniors out of poverty using the guaranteed income supplement. Accordingly, will the government lift half of all seniors out of poverty or will they lift all seniors halfway out of poverty? It turns out it is neither.

I believe that there is not a Canadian who would disagree with that objective. In fact, in a country as rich as Canada, every Canadian, irrespective of political orientation, background, income or anything else, would agree that no senior should have to live in poverty.

●(1015)

Solving the problem is affordable. It would cost us less to lift every senior out of poverty than the government spent in the last 12 months on new tax breaks for the six chartered banks. I would bet that if we could have a private discussion with the bank CEOs, they would probably say, although I do not know if they would do it publicly but I bet some of them would, that it is actually more important to lift seniors out of poverty than it is to give us another tax break.

Let us look at that issue from the raw standpoint of the economic impact. If we were to give seniors a little more money to spend, what would they do with it? They would spend it within walking distance. Wherever they happen to live, they would spend it at local stores and businesses which would prime the economic pump as well as resulting, hopefully, in a drop in the number of seniors who have to go to food banks.

Is it not a measure of failure when seniors have to go to food banks? I cannot think of very many measures of a failed economic policy that would stand out more dramatically than that, except perhaps when children are going with their parents to food banks, which is an equally dramatic indication of the growing inequality in our society that is certainly not being addressed in the budget at all.

[*Translation*]

This budget does not meet the needs of most Canadians on issues surrounding health care, retirement pensions and the financial burden on families.

It is time to make sure that the 1.4 million people who are unemployed return to work in jobs that will meet their families' needs.

Yesterday, the Minister of Finance said encouraging things about job creation. He said that employment and growth are key to balancing the budget. Unfortunately, he also ignored our practical solutions for stimulating the creation of good-quality jobs, which include reducing taxes for our economy's real job creators, small businesses; instituting job creation tax credits as a reward for each new job created; and investing in infrastructure that will attract good jobs to our communities.

[*English*]

I spoke to municipal leaders at their annual convention this weekend in Halifax. They are ready to partner with Ottawa to renew this country's infrastructure. They are ready to build those modern roads and bridges, transit systems, affordable housing and water

systems that we need if our cities are to be successful into the future. They are ready to modernize Canada's housing stock and transit systems so we can become world leaders instead of falling further and further behind as other countries make investments in these areas, which will position those countries, cities and communities much better for the economic competition that lies before us.

Instead, what we see here is an entrenchment and a withdrawal. The government continues to ignore the calls from the municipalities. It ignores their call to work together to create those jobs in design and construction, and to make our cities more competitive economic engines in the global workplace and marketplace.

This budget talks about jobs but offers essentially the same old failed plan. It contains billions in corporate tax giveaways to Canada's most profitable corporations. Billions are squandered when Canada's corporate rates are already competitive. It contains billions for banks, big oil and other companies that do not need our help, billions that too often just pad the CEO bonuses or the corporate cash reserves.

This is not an economic policy that will generate the jobs that we need. The rate of unemployment in this country is far too high. International observers have suggested that Canada risks being in a situation where we could have structural unemployment, in other words a basic level of unemployment, which is dramatically higher than it should be and could act as a real block to Canadian economic success.

What is worse, in many cases these tax reductions given to companies, which have no conditions attached to them, the companies turn around, take the money and run. Oftentimes the companies will shut down the very factory that was making money in the first place and will move the jobs somewhere else where they will pay half the wage or less, where there are no protections for workers who might want to organize to have health and safety on the job, where the workers cannot speak out for fair wages to feed their families.

With this policy and this budget, we are helping those companies to do exactly that, throw Canadian workers out of work and allow workers elsewhere in the world to be exploited.

How can we identify with a policy like that and say that somehow it is good for the country? The truth is that it is not. I will give concrete examples. Electrolux in Quebec is a case in point. Quite often these companies will leave their head office here so that they can continue to take advantage of the Canadian tax cuts but meanwhile they are shipping the jobs elsewhere. Canadian workers are out of work, which means they are not paying taxes anymore. In fact, those workers must collect employment insurance, if they are able to qualify.

We notice that the government's approach to that, which was picked up from the previous administration, is to make it more difficult for people to qualify. There is a heck of a way to save money. People who need help from government because they have been thrown out of work are unable to get access to the help their family needs. They then end up on welfare and, in many provinces, they must get rid of most of their assets before they can even qualify for welfare.

The Budget

In other words, what we have here is a system where a tax cut given to a corporation here can ultimately result in a Canadian worker being thrown out of work and ending up on welfare. How the heck can anyone say that policy makes any sense whatsoever for the working families of this country? The truth is that it does not and it needs to change.

Another example is John Deere in Welland, a long-standing Canadian firm that generated lots of work over many years. It took the corporate tax cut and shut down its factory. We have Vale that went on the attack against workers' pensions.

• (1020)

What are we doing here? Are we trying to help in the race to the bottom so that workers in any country have less access to a secure retirement? That makes no sense whatsoever. The list includes Merck and Xstrata. I could spend the entire day reading off a list of companies that have taken the money and run. A small business will not do that.

[*Translation*]

Small businesses, which cannot transfer their jobs to China or elsewhere, will use the tax cuts to create jobs in companies here in Canada. That is why we must support our small businesses now. It is their turn.

We have to wonder whether this government has not lost confidence in its employment strategy. We have to wonder whether it is continuing to provide tax breaks for big corporations just to please its privileged friends. If this government really wanted to stimulate growth, it would not make large cuts to balance the budget. Yet that is what is found in this budget—\$17 billion in cuts over the next five years. We are talking about \$17 billion. In what areas will these cuts be made? Health care? Education? Help for seniors? We do not know. There is a certain lack of transparency in this regard. The government hopes that we will not see the effects of its cuts. Will cuts be made to regional development programs? We know who will have to pay the price of these federal cuts. It is families.

I want to say that the official opposition will press the government to balance the budget through growth rather than cuts. Our diverse and talented team will be monitoring this government's actions. We will show in detail the human costs associated with each cut that the government plans to make.

• (1025)

[*English*]

The real test of the government will be its ability to deliver on its own priorities while respecting the majority of Canadians who voted for something else. That takes wisdom and statecraft. On balance, the budget fails that test because it fails the sweeping majority. It helps out the corporations and insiders, to be sure. I do not want to suggest that the budget is not helpful to anybody. However, it leaves millions of families at the back of the line. Too many of them are without family doctors. Many are concerned about their jobs and retirement. Many are struggling to make ends meet and are worried about the spending cuts that are to come and what the impact might be on their families. We all remember Walkerton and we do not want to see the absence of government involvement in protecting Canadians resulting in tragedy.

I choose to remain optimistic about what the House can accomplish. It is not a government known for compromise, and old habits can die hard, but we have seen some glimmers in some areas, as I mentioned: the HST compensation for Quebec, the return of the eco-energy home retrofits and the helmets to hard hats for veterans. Therefore, in good faith, I will reach across the aisle and say to the government that it just needs to try harder.

Canadians of all political stripes have sent us here to work together. They will not let the government forget it. The official opposition will not let the government forget it. This budget, unfortunately, does not come close to delivering enough for Canadian families. However, we are still eager to work with the government to get the job done.

Therefore, I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "that" and substituting the following:

That the House not approve in general the budgetary policy of the government unless the government brings in additional measures to correct the government's poor record of fiscal management, to address adequately the current jobs crisis in the economy, to address the shortage of family doctors and other health professionals, to deal with the need to provide Canadians with a comfortable retirement and a secure vehicle for their retirement savings, to lift every Canadian senior out of poverty, to make life more affordable for low and middle income Canadians and to address the government's failure to substitute a more targeted approach to job creation for its ill-conceived, across-the-board, corporate income tax cuts.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The amendment appears to be in order.

• (1030)

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this moment to welcome the leader of the Opposition and congratulate him on a well played election.

I do have a question for the leader of the Opposition with regard to the GIS increase. He mentioned in his speech that there are number of seniors who are going to be depending on that money. The fact of the matter is that if the budget does not quickly pass, those seniors are truly at risk of not being able to recoup the money that is actually set aside in the budget.

How is the leader going to explain to the seniors, when he votes against this budget, that they are not going to receive that \$600 increase for a single senior or that \$840 increase for a senior couple? How is he going to explain that to Canadians across the country who are counting on this money?

Hon. Jack Layton: Mr. Speaker, let me congratulate the member on her re-election.

We have offered an amendment to the budget that could be accepted by the government that would not only ensure the cheques would be delivered on time but they would actually be sufficient to lift seniors out of poverty instead of—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Budget

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please.

Questions and comments. The hon. member for Papineau.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking the people of Papineau for once again placing their trust in me. I would also like to congratulate the Leader of the Opposition on his new role.

I am concerned because in this budget, there is almost no mention of youth, apart from talking about young offenders, of course. Furthermore, the speech just given by the opposition leader also made no mention of the challenges facing our post-secondary students.

[*English*]

New numbers show that the cumulative student debt in this country has reached more than \$1 billion. The Leader of the Opposition waxed eloquent about workers, seniors, small businesses and families, which are all extremely important.

However, particularly given the youthful caucus that he has around him, would the hon. member please let us know how he is going to ensure that the government invests properly in our young Canadians, our future.

Hon. Jack Layton: Mr. Speaker, let me first congratulate the member for Papineau on his re-election. We look forward to working with him and all members on the issues that he has just now identified.

He will know that the New Democratic Party is the only party that has submitted legislation to the House of Commons that would address the very issues of which he has spoken. I believe that is legislation that would have wide support across the country. Therefore, I would hope he would be supporting our initiatives in that area which would really help to tackle the crisis of student debt and ensure that post-secondary education, working with the provinces and understanding fully the constitutional framework within which we operate in that area, is able to be addressed by our national government in the appropriate fashion.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the other day I met a man at Tim Hortons who told me he was going back to work underground at the mine at age 68 because his pension was not sufficient for him and his wife to live on. He said, "I paid into this system my whole life and I thought the government would be there for me".

I see the budget and I see the government is there for the CEOs. I see the government is there for the big banks.

I would like to ask the leader of our party why he thinks the budget is not there for the millions of working Canadian people who do not have a proper pension so that they can live their lives in dignity?

• (1035)

Hon. Jack Layton: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for Timmins—James Bay on his re-election. His tireless representation of the workers in northern Ontario and the first nations communities there is well known across the country. We are glad that he is back.

I have a short answer to his question and it is that it boils down to blinders on ideology. The economic policy of the government essentially is predicated on the notion of sink or swim. That is too bad for someone who decides to go back to work after having worked all of his or her life in the mine. It is too bad for the individual and his or her co-workers who have to go back to work at age 68. Why not 75? Why not 85? The government's philosophy is that it is a tough world out there and one just has to make his or her own way.

We have a different view. We believe that together we can actually create instruments of policies, programs and strategies that can give us a dignified and secure retirement. Seniors are not looking to live high off the hog. I do not know any senior who wants to be able to live the life of luxury. All they are looking for is to be able to cover their housing and their food costs and be able to enjoy a little recreation and have something left over to give a gift to a grandchild every now and again.

We need to have a properly functioning Canada pension plan so that we are not held for ransom by the gamblers who want to roll the dice and take their bonuses and too bad if we lose money. They win either way.

That is the philosophy that the government is bringing to the issue of retirement security. It is wrong. We should make sure that the Canada pension plan is strengthened. We have a golden opportunity to do that in the next number of months with most provinces onside for this idea. We should make that a top priority for the House of Commons.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to be here for a third term, thanks to the support of my constituents in Lévis—Bellechasse and Les Etchemins. I am pleased that the Leader of the Opposition recognizes the excellent measures in our budget, particularly for our veterans with the helmets to hardhats program, as well as sales tax harmonization, which is an important issue for many Quebecers.

However, he now has the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of 680,000 seniors by increasing the guaranteed income supplement by \$600 per year for single seniors and up to \$840 per year for couples. The people of my riding have been waiting for this measure for weeks and months, if not years. We have seen this budget before. We, the members of this House, have the opportunity today to pass this budget before the summer recess, in order to deliver real change that will help our seniors and to adopt measures that will stimulate our economy.

This budget contains measures concerning energy efficiency. It also contains an important project for the Quebec City region: the National Optics Institute or INO.

Will the Leader of the Opposition support measures to give our most vulnerable seniors extra income, to improve energy efficiency and to support the INO in Quebec City?

Hon. Jack Layton: Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Minister of Veterans Affairs. We will work with him to improve life for our veterans and their families. It is a priority for us.

The Budget

As I was saying in my speech, there are indeed some positive initiatives in this budget. I mentioned in particular the non-partisan helmets to hard hats initiative. It is a fine example of how the various political parties in the House of Commons can come up with positive ideas that are widely supported. We support this program.

We want to help seniors. We have proposed initiatives to help seniors get out of poverty. The measures proposed by this government will not achieve that goal. They will leave quite a large number of seniors in poverty. How can the minister justify that? How will he explain to seniors in his riding that they have to remain in poverty because of the inaction of their government?

We have proposed concrete solutions in our amendment to their budget. I hope the minister and his colleagues will study it and support it in order to achieve concrete results for all Canadians.

• (1040)

[English]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this debate. In doing so I also take the chance to thank the good people of Toronto Centre who have seen the wisdom of returning me to this place once again. This has been my 11th meeting with the voters, both federally and provincially, and I am very proud of the fact that I have managed to achieve this point in my life and have been able to receive the confidence of a great many people.

I think of my own constituency and we all do when we talk about budgets. I think of a constituency that probably has some of the wealthiest people in the country living in it; some of the most successful entrepreneurs, younger couples who are achieving great success, people who are doing very well in their lives and see great opportunities for themselves and for their families.

At the same time, Toronto Centre happens to have the largest amount of social housing in the country, as the Leader of the Opposition will well know because of his work municipally. It has a vast and considerable population of homeless people. It also has a number of people who fall somewhere into the middle of that group. So, we have the richest and the poorest and we have the people in between.

The essential message that I bring to the House and to the people of Canada about this budget is that it is not a budget for everyone. It is not a budget that brings Canadians together. It is not a budget for one Canada. It is a budget that focuses on a certain group of people. It does far more for those who are better off than for those who are not. In that sense, it is a budget that fails our vision in the Liberal Party, of being able to talk out of all sides of our mouth at exactly the same time, when we say that the search for prosperity for Canada is exceptionally important and the success of our businesses is exceptionally important.

We have learned the hard way, as a country, what I call the “Billie Holiday maxim”. When she was asked what was the big lesson she had drawn from her life, she said: “I’ve been rich and I’ve been poor. Rich is better.”

Canada needs to become richer. We need to become more prosperous. In achieving that prosperity, both for individuals and as a country, we become more successful, but we are also more able to

share that prosperity and to ensure that everyone is included. Perhaps as much as any member in the House from my time in politics, I have learned a very simple lesson. That is that the water buffalo look at each other very differently when there is no water. We understand that is what can happen in a recession.

[Translation]

When I look at this budget, not only do I see the elements it contains, but I also see what is missing. The budget contains some measures, but there are measures missing. That is essentially the problem with this budget. I also see that this document is permeated by a sentiment that is not good for Canada at this time: complacency. I see complacency in the attitude of the government, which seems to think that, having won a majority, it no longer needs to talk about the needs of all Canadians and that it can concentrate instead on the interests of a few. That is the problem I see.

• (1045)

[English]

When we look at what is missing, let me mention three words: the first word is “poverty” and the second two words are “climate change”.

When we look around the world, we see a world that is far more unstable than the one the Conservatives are describing. We see a sovereign debt crisis taking place in Europe, a crisis that has now become infectious and threatens the economic balance of the entire world.

We saw just two years ago, and who among us needs to be reminded of it, that because of the degree of integration of the world financial system, a failure of the banking system in the United States from people making loans to people to whom they should not have been lending money created a world economic crisis that we can now all read about.

We are facing the same risk with respect to the failure, not of a few homeowners or a few thousand homeowners or tens of thousands of homeowners, but of entire countries. None of us should be unaware of this. None of us should be unaware of the difficulties facing our neighbour in the United States with respect to its economic growth and the challenges now facing Japan because of the tragedy of the tsunami.

Therefore, I find that the Conservatives are playing a game in this budget of what I call “let us pretend”. Let us pretend there is no continuing instability in the world economy. Let us pretend there is no poverty in Canada and no challenge of a shared prosperity, which we in the Liberal Party believe is the central challenge of our time. Let us pretend, on behalf of the Conservative Party, that we know what we are doing, that we have a plan.

The finance minister is asserting a very false certainty in his deficit projections. He is pretending that he knows what the deficit will be next year. He is pretending that he knows what it will be two years from now, and then he is pretending that he knows what it will be three years from now.

The Budget

The trouble is that we remember the Minister of Finance. We remember that he was the one who came into this House in 2008, after the last election, and told Canadians, “Crisis? What crisis? Deficits? What deficits? Problems? What problems?” thereby causing a political crisis that dominated the affairs of this country for two full months, forcing him to a deathbed conversion of saying, “Aha, now we have to do the economic action plan. Now we have to start putting money into the economy. Now we have to start running deficits”.

I heard the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance talking for a full two years about how vital it was for Canada to run a deficit, how important it was for Canada to take on more debt, that this was a crucial act of national statesmanship. I only wish I had heard those words from the Conservatives around 1990, 1991 and 1992, but I digress.

The only thing missing in the government's statement and its description of the costs and challenges that we will face is the cost of certain key programs, one of which has been covered by the Leader of the Opposition in his comments, but one of which was not.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke a lot about the cost of the corporate tax cuts, which are in fact a significant bleeding of the fiscal capacity of the Canadian federal government to address the financial problems that all of the country faces.

Our view is that further corporate tax cuts at this time are unnecessary to achieve tax competitiveness, which is a very important objective of public policy but which has gone from becoming something that seemed like a wise course in public policy to becoming an indulgence that we can no longer afford.

However, I want to refer to one other item that is not in the list of things, because it relates to a major debate that we will be having in this country in the fall, and that is the cost of prisons. The government is about to take this country on a course with respect to the reform of the criminal justice system that will repeat every significant error made in the United States and made in Europe, particularly in the U.K., for which those countries are now repenting and seeing the folly and unwisdom of their ways.

• (1050)

The government is pretending as if the simple solution to every act of crime and every misdeed in our society is to simply throw the accused into jail and, essentially, to throw away the key.

The cost of that is going to be borne by every Canadian and the provinces and the municipalities. It ignores the fact that our correctional institutions are about to become the largest mental health institutions in the country.

It is a direction for Canada that is completely unnecessary and that is also going to have devastating impact on the overall economic and social health of the country. I can assure the government that we in the Liberal Party intend to fight these measures every step of the way.

The government speaks a lot about its majority. In fact, I think I heard the phrases “majority mandate”, “mandate” and “majority” at least a hundred times yesterday, and I am sure I will hear it a

thousand times before the day is done and before this week or the next three weeks are done.

Let me just remind the House—

Mr. Paul Calandra: Much more than that, for the next four years.

Hon. Bob Rae: I note the heckling. I am not listening to it.

Forty per cent of those who voted have spoken, but that still means that most Canadians are looking elsewhere for leadership.

We simply have to understand that reality.

[*Translation*]

I will come back to that point.

The majority of Canadians do not have the same priorities as the Conservative Party. That is important. We acknowledge the facts: the Conservative Party has a majority in the House, but it does not have a majority in the country. It is difficult for the Conservative Party to accept this reality. In fact, the Conservatives can do as they wish in the House, but they cannot shirk their responsibility to respect public opinion in Canada.

I would like to talk about the options available to Canadians. Throughout the country, a movement that is open to and ready for change recognizes that Canadians want a different kind of politics. This movement believes that the government is there to serve Canadians. It is a popular movement that understands the economic challenges, but that does not believe that the ideologies of the past will help.

[*English*]

We in the Liberal Party believe that public policy should be driven by facts and evidence, not by ideology. Every step of the way we will be challenging those policies coming forward in the House from wherever they come that are not supported by facts and evidence.

We also know that a great majority of Canadians know that poverty and climate change, words that we in this party insist on using, are realities that we want addressed. I would say to the Leader of Opposition that the problem is not just poverty among seniors but among all Canadians. It is poverty among children that is a problem and it is poverty among our aboriginal population that is a problem.

We in the Liberal Party know that Canada's prosperity cannot be taken for granted. We also know that this is no time for smug or self-satisfied complacency.

When we look at health care and at the issues of crime and social justice that I have talked about and at our tax policies, and, particularly, when we look at the importance of aboriginal issues that have still not been faced up to by the House and Canadians, we must recognize the real and present danger that we are dealing not with one Canada but with two, with those who are in and those who are out; with those who are benefiting from the good things in life and those who are not; those who have a stake, a position and security, and those who have none.

The Budget

These things are avoidable. As Canadians, we do not have to accept this fate. We can lead the way as a country by saying that we want to set a standard for our country in the world and that we want to be at our best in the world. Yes, we want prosperity. Yes, we want our businesses to succeed. Yes, we want to create a truly progressive entrepreneurial culture in this country. However, we understand full well that it will mean nothing if there are still millions of people unemployed and millions of people living in poverty, and if there are those who go to bed at night in a room with six or seven people who wonder, as the wind is whistling through the windows of an overcrowded house on Big Trout Lake, in their aspirations if there is not a better world and a better place.

We must recognize that despite all of our successes, Canada has the highest suicide rate in the western world. That principally is because there are far too many young Canadians, young teenagers, young aboriginal people in particular, who do not see a way out, who do not see hope and who do not see opportunity.

As we reflect on our budgets, they are not just about what businesses or the chamber of commerce think. A budget is not just there for taxpayers, even successful taxpayers, but a budget is there for every single Canadian, whether homeless or with a home, whether on the street or in the most comfortable place, whether living in rural Canada or urban Canada.

The definition of a good politics is a politics that brings everyone together. When I look at the budget, I see a consistent politics that tries to divide, that tries to separate, that says the government is there for some but not for all.

One simple fact would demonstrate this, the tax credits the government has given. These tax credits only go to people with taxable income. It is very simple to understand. I was attempting to explain it to the media yesterday, because they were asking what the difference was between a refundable tax credit and a non-refundable tax credit.

Let me provide the simple facts. Last year 24.5 million returns were filed, of which 15.2 million owed net federal tax and 9.3 million owed no federal income tax after all the credits and deductions. The fact is that without net income, one will not get the benefit of the tax credits.

In my riding, who needs piano lessons but does not get access to them? It is the poorest kids in my riding. Who has problems taking care of their loved ones? Who has problems taking care of their mother or their father?

• (1055)

[*Translation*]

Who needs the tax credits provided by the Conservatives? They are not simply tax credits for Canada's middle class. They should be for everyone and not just for some. Quite frankly, that is the difference between the vision of the Liberal Party and that of the Conservative Party.

[*English*]

For those reasons, I will be moving an amendment to the amendment put forward by the Leader of the Opposition. I move:

That the motion be further amended by adding the following:

"and rejects the government's budgetary policy because it does nothing to improve the worsening living conditions and opportunity gaps facing aboriginal people, fails to present any plan that fosters long-term, sustainable prosperity and equal opportunity for all Canadians, deliberately excludes low-income Canadians from qualifying for new tax measures by failing to make them refundable tax credits, abandons the federal government's role in the development and maintenance of affordable housing, continues to display a lack of federal leadership on health care particularly by ignoring the need to begin negotiations with the provinces on the successor to the 2004 health accord and leaves Canadians in the dark as to which programs and services will be cut in order to meet the government's deficit projections".

• (1100)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The amendment to the amendment is in order.

The hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Toronto Centre for his speech and on his re-election to the House. However, I note that, as I look across the House, my colleague has moved considerably to the right.

My colleague indicated in his speech that public policy should be driven by facts. However, it was ironic to me to notice that during his speech he ignored a number of facts. He ignored that more than 80% of Canadians voted against his party. He ignored the 540,000 net new jobs that have been created. He also ignored that on May 2, Canadians chose to elect a national, stable, majority Conservative government.

How can my colleague oppose a budget that has measures, such as providing this hiring credit for small business to encourage hiring? How can he ignore the work-sharing program extension that the budget includes and get the support for the manufacturing and processing sector that is here? All of these measures are key and crucial to increasing job creation. Not only will that increase the ability of families to provide for their needs, but it increases the sense of self-esteem and purpose that is so necessary in our society.

I would like his response as to why he opposes those great measures that are in this budget.

Hon. Bob Rae: Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to say what I said to my friend yesterday, which is that the hearts and thoughts of everyone in the House are with him. We all owe him our respect for the tragedy that he is going through at the moment.

Given the fact that I am standing where I am, I have a pretty good sense of what happened in the last election. I may be slow but I am not that slow, and I can understand what has taken place.

I think it was the poet Kipling who said that triumph and disaster are both imposters. In my life, I have had to deal more with the second than the first, but I am certainly prepared to deal with it. Everyone will see us in good fighting trim in the Liberal caucus. We will continue to be noted for our good humour and our good ideas. I wish I heard more of either on the other side of the House.

Would I say that many of the initiatives that he has described are good ideas? I will mention two. He talked about work-sharing as a good idea. I have more days named after me in the province of Ontario than any other premier in the last 150 years because I pioneered the idea of work-sharing in the public sector at a time when it had to be done.

The Budget

He also talked about tax credits for small business. Again, this is an idea that we championed on our side of the House. We campaigned very hard for it in the last election. The fact that it is in this budget is a good sign. We believe and want all these things. Our concern is that the budget does not go far enough. It does not take into account the precarious situation in which we find ourselves and it certainly does not take into account some of the deeper sources of poverty that continue to trouble the Canadian economy.

• (1105)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for Toronto Centre on his re-election and his appointment as leader of the Liberal Party.

I have a question with regard to corporate tax cuts. For a number of years these tax cuts have been put in place and what is interesting is that the Liberal position on this has shifted in the last six months. I have been here since 2002 arguing for better responsibility for corporate tax cut reductions. In fact, Liberal after Liberal would literally light his or her hair on fire in this place and scream at us about the fact that corporate tax cuts actually create jobs. We never saw that result. We have seen a change of position in the Liberal Party. I would sincerely like to know when that change took place and why.

The Liberals continued to call for corporation tax cuts even when we were borrowing money to do so. The previous Liberal leader actually called for them to be deeper and broader than they are today. Why the change in the Liberal Party position? When did the Liberals actually realize that tax cuts do not actually create jobs? At what point in time and what specific thing changed their position, considering what was driving their ideology prior to that?

Hon. Bob Rae: Mr. Speaker, I am really glad for the question because it is a classic case of ideology on that side of the aisle driving the discussion.

We are very practical people in this party, as is, by the way, the Premier of Manitoba, as was Mr. Romanow when he was premier of Saskatchewan, and Mr. Calvert, the former premier of Saskatchewan. Governments need to make decisions based on the circumstances they face. These circumstances change.

What were the circumstances we faced before? Our tax rates were at risk of becoming uncompetitive, both federally and provincially. We were at risk of losing investment because of that lack of competitiveness. We had surpluses both federally and provincially and significant surpluses federally in order to deal with the issue.

When my hon. friend asks what has changed, I would say that a couple of things have changed. First, the last time I looked we were not in surplus. In fact, we are now in significant deficit, as are most of the provinces. Second, the challenge we face is to ensure that our rates are competitive, but only as competitive, frankly, as they need to be in the circumstances, as competitive as they need to be in order to attract investment and in order to ensure that there is a viable federal capacity to respond to the needs of the people.

We made a decision some years before the last election that the time for cuts was over. We look at it and say that we have come to a number that actually provides us with a reasonable return. There was an entire debate one day when the members of the New Democratic

Party were objecting to that feature of the government's policy and kept on reciting numbers, which failed—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. I am sorry to cut the hon. member off but some of his colleagues would like to ask a question.

The hon. member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor.

• (1110)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was so impressed by my colleague's speech that I wanted to nominate him for an Order of Canada medal but my colleague pointed out that he already has one. I will need to think of something else.

I want to touch on the first part of my colleague's speech concerning climate change. There is no doubt that the facts on climate change drive this debate. On the east coast of this country, specifically Newfoundland and Labrador, we experienced hurricane Igor which devastated hundreds of communities. In the aftermath of that, we realized that climate change is for real and the facts point that way.

The federal government is putting forward regulations for the smallest of communities to get in line with current environmental regulations. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities met over the weekend and discussed climate change. Eighty-four communities in Newfoundland and Labrador need to come up with millions of dollars to fix their systems when it comes to waste water management. Unfortunately, these smaller communities do not have the capacity to do that. Where is the federal government on this? Other than imposing regulations, it is nowhere to be found when it comes to the funding mechanism.

I wonder if my hon. colleague could point out how the current Conservative government has abandoned these smaller communities and how in the future it could help.

Hon. Bob Rae: Mr. Speaker, if anyone doubts the democratic nature of our party, they just need to listen to that question.

I spoke to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities on the weekend, as did the Leader of the Opposition and the minister of infrastructure.

One of the main points in my speech was about how all governments need to be aware of the consequences of their actions and of how they can introduce regulatory change that can have a dramatic effect on costs for municipalities without thinking through how they will pay for it.

The Budget

My view is that there should be a basic rule in Canadian politics that a government, which undertakes major change, whether it is on crime, on the environment or in any field of social or economic policy, should remember that the change will have a dramatic impact on the finances of other orders of government, whether it is an aboriginal order, a municipal order or provincial order of government. There is a direct responsibility on that government to pay up.

It is irresponsible for the federal government to be parading around and telling people to look at all the wonderful changes it has made to regulations on waste water and not be prepared to help the municipalities pay for the cost of these extraordinary changes, which are necessary changes but they need to be paid for.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my very good friend, the Minister of State for Science and Technology.

I am thankful for the opportunity to speak about budget 2011, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan.

Before beginning, Mr. Speaker, congratulations to you on your recent appointment in the House of Commons as the Acting Speaker in the House. I look forward to our time together in the chamber and I trust that you will serve this Parliament with great distinction.

Since this is my very first speech here since the election and since the start of the new Parliament, let me take a moment to thank a few individuals.

First and foremost, I thank the Prime Minister for entrusting me with this role once again. It is a privilege to work with the Minister of Finance and the Minister of State for Finance on things like the budget.

Second, I want to take a moment to thank my family. My family stood by me during the election and I thank them for their love, their support and their patience, as I am away about five days a week.

I also take a moment to thank the people who came out to my campaign during the election. They will never be forgotten. I owe them a tremendous thanks from the bottom of my heart.

Last, but certainly not least, I really want to take a moment to thank the people of Saint Boniface who, once again, have put their trust in me to represent them in Ottawa. I will work very hard to address their needs and I hope never to disappoint them.

During the election campaign, I had the chance to speak with literally thousands of people. One thing I heard again and again, at the doors, was that people wanted their government to remain focused on the economy and jobs.

Budget 2011, introduced yesterday, reflects that priority. Here are a few of its highlights to support job creation.

Our government will be extending the accelerated capital cost allowance to help manufacturers and processors make new investments in machinery and equipment.

We will enhancing or extending programs to help businesses keep workers, like the work-sharing program, the wage-earner protection program and the targeted initiative for older workers. We will be renewing programs to help unemployed workers. We will be

providing a hiring credit for small business. We will be supporting youth entrepreneurs with an investment of \$20 million. We will also be reducing red tape by upgrading the BizPaL service and further consulting Canadians through the Red Tape Reduction Commission.

We will be supporting economic sectors, through hundreds of millions of dollars, in support for innovation, investment and market diversification in the agriculture, energy, mining, manufacturing, tourism and forestry sectors.

We will also be investing in clean energy technology and innovation. We will be legislating permanent gas tax funding for municipalities to support infrastructure priorities.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan will also keep taxes low and make additional targeted investments to support jobs and growth and control government spending to stay on track to eliminate the deficit, while protecting transfer payments for crucial services like health care and education.

Included in those many important measures are tax breaks for hard-working Canadian families, support for our country's most vulnerable seniors, support for family caregivers, help for Canadians looking to make their homes more energy efficient and improvements to our justice system to make our streets safe, among other things.

In short, this is truly a plan to help everyday Canadians.

This is what Doug Northrup of H&R Block told the *Times & Transcript* recently:

The federal budget...is seen as a "people budget"...As a tax professional, I get people coming to me every year asking if there's anything new that will bring them more money back, and now there is. The average family will see a few more dollars coming back to them and seniors will see it in their monthly cheque.

It is clear that the budget reflects a focus on the economy and maintaining and creating jobs. However, there are some important items I would like to mention that should not be missed.

First, I will talk about the helmets to hardhats program introduced in the budget.

As the granddaughter of three World War II Veterans and a huge supporter of our brave men and women in the armed forces, I am very happy to see this initiative in the budget. This program will connect releasing Canadian Forces members and veterans with opportunities and careers in the construction industry.

The Budget

In fact, just last week I mentioned this program to my friend Wendy Hayward, who was here for my swearing-in ceremony. Wendy is the mother of Corporal James Arnal, who was the eighty-eighth Canadian soldier to lose his life while bravely serving in Afghanistan. I had the pleasure of serving in the Winnipeg Police Service with Corporal Arnal's father, Ray Arnal. Wendy and her family have committed to helping Canadian armed force soldiers through the pillows for soldiers charity, among others. She was very pleased to hear of our government's dedication to the helmets to hardhats program.

• (1115)

This is what the Canadian Building Trades had to say:

The Helmets to Hardhats Program has a track record of integrating military professionals into the best paid, most respected technical jobs in the construction industry....This program is a game changer for young veterans—we aim to place as many of the 5,200 transitioning professionals as possible each year. This is a cross promotional venture—good for the Military and good for our trades.

Another important measure of the next phase of Canada's economic plan includes new investments in the areas of public safety, security and justice, including: \$30 million for the first nations policing program; \$26 million to support the federal victims ombudsman to give victims a greater voice in the justice system; \$1.6 million annually to the communities at risk security infrastructure pilot program to support security enhancements for communities victimized by hate-motivated crime; \$20 million for youth crime prevention programs; and, finally, a commitment to scrap the wasteful and useless long gun registry that every elected police officer in the House of Commons voted to eliminate.

Here is what the Canadian Police Association had to say:

The inclusion by the Conservative government of a renewed investment in the Youth Gang Prevention Fund...will help provide police services across Canada with the tools and resources they need to target at-risk youth, and keep them away from the lure of organized crime.

With nearly 19 years of police experience, I have worked with countless victims and their families, and I am proud to be part of the government that is committed to putting the rights of victims before the rights of criminals.

To that end, and as promised in our platform, we will provide enhanced EI benefits to the parents of murdered or missing children and parents of gravely ill children. We will amend the Criminal Code to double the victim surcharge and make it mandatory in every case, without exception.

Our government will also reintroduce comprehensive legislation, including: to crack down on organized drug crime; to end house arrest for serious and violent criminals; to end house arrest for serious personal injury offences, such as sexual assault; to eliminate pardons for serious criminals; to establish tougher sentences and mandatory jail time for sexual offences against our children; to strengthen the handling of violent and repeat young offenders; to give police and courts the tools they need to investigate crimes and prevent acts of terrorism; to allow victims of terrorism to sue perpetrators and supporters of terrorism in Canadian courts; and to streamline long and complex trials to ensure justice is delivered swiftly.

We will also tackle the drug trade and drug use in prisons by ensuring that every federal inmate will undergo drug testing at least

once a year. Prisoners in possession of illicit substances will face appropriate additional charges. Parole applicants who fail drug tests will be denied parole.

As a Métis woman, I would also like to mention how important it is that we put measures in this budget to protect women. Several times women are referred to as the victims of crime. These measures will help us to protect not only the women of Canada, but those very vulnerable aboriginal women who so often are abused or forced into exploitation.

I look forward to a government that will continue to address the needs of those women, both on reserve and off reserve.

This is the platform I ran on and I intend to do my very best to ensure that these commitments come to fruition. I encourage all members of the House to actually read the budget, to see these wonderful measures for our most vulnerable, to actually adopt these measures in a timely fashion so our seniors can get that increase to the guaranteed income supplement, so we can better protect our Canadian people and ensure that we return to a balanced budget and reduce that deficit as quickly as possible.

I look forward to questions.

• (1120)

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it give me great pleasure to rise in the House today and ask my first question.

I enjoyed the speech, but what does the budget specifically do for youth? There does not seem to be any mention at all about the skyrocketing youth unemployment rates in my constituency and right across Canada.

Would the government explain what the budget does specifically for youth and to reduce youth unemployment?

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, I welcome my colleague to the House of Commons and I congratulate him on his election.

I am so glad he asked about youth because I, as the mother of five children, am very concerned about their well-being and future, which is why I am proud to be part of the government that has put in the budget a number of measures to help educate our youth so they can obtain those jobs.

The Budget

When I refer to the budget, I see student loan forgiveness for doctors and nurses who would be working in rural and remote areas. There is an extension of tax relief for skills certification exams. There is support for Canadian students abroad. The in-study income exemption is doubled. There is a reduction in the in-study interest rate for part-time Canadian student loan recipients. There is investment in education in the north, which will help our aboriginal people.

In turn, \$20 million have been invested in this budget for young entrepreneurs. Those are the people who will form the future of our country. They are the people who one day may be sitting in this very House of Commons, acting as our members of Parliament, as our leaders in our country.

I am proud to stand here and represent a budget and a government that is committed to helping our youth move forward.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question for the member of Saint Boniface is fairly straightforward. Over the last number of months I have had the opportunity to meet a lot of people, as we all have, and there is a great deal of concern about crime.

To highlight the importance of the issue, I will make reference to one individual who lives on Pritchard Avenue. She indicated to me that she was afraid to go out in her own front yard because of the amount of crime in the street.

I hear the Conservatives time and again talk about getting tough on crime. My constituents want to see less crime in the streets.

The government had an opportunity, through gang initiatives, to try to put young people in better environments and steer them away from gangs. There was concern that the Conservatives were cutting back on those programs.

To what degree is the government committed to supporting programs that would put youth in an environment that would steer them away from gang activities?

• (1125)

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, I welcome my colleague back to the House.

I was a police officer for many years in the member's riding. It is a riding that, unfortunately, is fraught with crime. However, when he talks about people wanting us to reduce crime, it was his party that voted to make house arrest available to criminals so they could be back in his community. It was his party that ran on a platform that had zero allocated for youth crime prevention programs and had no intention of renewing the gang prevention programs that our government had put forth.

Our platform was very clear. We are renewing those programs. We believe in those programs and we are listening to the police officers, including the Canadian Police Association, who say very clearly that those programs are necessary. They endorse what our government has done. The money has been allocated in budget 2011.

The member should question his own party as to why it insists on putting criminals back on the streets on house arrest and ignore the need, and the budgetary need, of these programs and these children.

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to say how honoured and humbled I am, and thankful to the voters of Cambridge and North Dumfries for choosing once again to have me come to this great place to represent them. I would like to thank my board and all my volunteers, and especially the Prime Minister, who has asked me to continue to serve this country as Minister of State for Science and Technology and Minister of State for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario.

I would also like to congratulate the members opposite, the members for LaSalle—Émard and Kingston and the Islands for having been chosen by their leaders as their party's lead spokesperson on science and technology. I look forward to working with them constructively to move this nation forward.

I am proud to stand here today as the Minister of State for Science and Technology to outline new investments in our science and technology initiatives and innovations that will underscore the government's continued commitment to Canada as a world leader in research, innovation and technology adoption.

In order to succeed in the knowledge economy, Canada must attract and develop the talented people we need, as well as increase our capacity for world-leading research and development, improve the commercialization of that research, and promote education and skills development.

This government has a long-standing, very strong record of commitment to science and technology ever since the release of our national science and technology strategy in 2007. This strategy recognizes the critical and important link between knowledge and the capacity to innovate, and the success in the global economy.

More important than simply having a strategy and talking about it is the implementation of that strategy, that vision. Consequently, our government has made significant investments to attract and develop talented people, strengthen Canada's capacity for world-leading research and development, and improve the commercialization of research in previous budgets, including Canada's economic action plan.

Now, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan builds on these earlier investments and strategies. It provides significant resources to strengthen Canada's global research leadership, supports commercialization of research by fostering business innovation, and advances a digital economy strategy as well.

Science and technology investments included in budget 2011 build upon the more than \$6.3 billion provided under years one and two of the economic action plan. Every single budget that this government has placed on the table, including this year's budget, has increased science and tech investments.

The Budget

I am honoured now to take the House through some of budget 2011 moves to produce the next phase of our science and tech strategy. At a time, I might point out, when other countries are struggling just to maintain their existing commitments to research, science and innovation, Canada is setting the pace and we are moving forward.

We continue to demonstrate with the current budget our commitment to build a research advantage in science and tech. We seek to maintain our leadership, and it is a leadership position in the G7, in terms of research and development performed in the higher education sector as a percentage of our economy.

This budget this year, as others in the past, will see an increase to the federal granting councils' combined annual budgets of \$37 million per year. We will also add \$10 million per year to the indirect costs of research programs for costs such as those related to operating and maintaining facilities at Canada's universities and colleges that receive granting council funding.

Other budget 2011 initiatives aimed at strengthening our research advantage as a nation include \$53.5 million over five years to support the creation of 10 new Canada excellence research chairs. These are the pivotal research chairs on the planet and are highly sought after from around the world. As well, there is up to \$100 million to help establish a Canada brain research fund to support Canada's neuroscience research and accelerate discoveries on some of the most profound neuropathic disorders facing Canadians and their families.

• (1130)

There is \$65 million for Genome Canada to launch a brand new competition in the areas of human health, as well as sustain its operating costs and those of its centres until 2013-14.

Indeed, \$50 million over five years, beginning in 2012-13, to the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics in Waterloo to support its leading-edge research, its education, and its public outreach activities.

Beginning in 2011-12, \$35 million over five years to support excellence in climate and atmospheric research at Canadian post-secondary institutions through our Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada or, as we call it, NSERC.

Over five years, \$12 million for a tri-council competition to establish a Canada-India research centre of excellence. This is part of our government's wider India engagement strategy.

There is \$4 million over three years, beginning in 2011, to support the construction of a cyclotron for production of the next generation medical isotopes. This will be located in Thunder Bay, as a regional research institute.

We have also set up an expert panel of six eminent Canadians announced in last year's budget, led by Mr. Tom Jenkins of Open Text Corporation. It will provide this government with recommendations on maximizing the federal programs that are set out to promote business innovation. In the meantime, budget 2011 includes targeted resources to improve commercialization and support demonstration of new technologies in the marketplace.

Some of these great initiatives include: \$12 million over five years starting in 2011-12 for NSERC's Idea to Innovation program to support joint college and university research and development projects with promising commercialization potential; \$3 million, also in 2011-12, and \$5 million per year ongoing, starting in 2012-13, to the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council or NSERC, to support 30 new industrial research chairs at colleges. This is a great program.

There is \$40 million over two years to support the development and demonstration of new clean technology projects through Sustainable Development Technology Canada.

Budget 2011 also includes initiatives to make Canada a leader in the development, adoption, and use of digital technologies and content, such as: \$80 million over three years for a pilot initiative delivered through the industrial research assistance program or, as we call it, IRAP, to support collaborative projects between colleges and small and medium-size businesses that accelerate the adoption of information and communication technologies.

As well, \$100 million per year in support of Canada media fund which invests in digital content across multiple platforms, including television, leading-edge applications for the Internet, wireless, and other emerging platforms.

Our government has a plan that we set out in 2007. The real test with anything is not just talking about ideas; it is in implementing them and seeing their success grow. We are not just talking, but we are acting and acting in the best interests of this nation. With this budget, yet again, we have demonstrated our willingness and ability to implement that plan. We will continue to make Canada a leader in research, science and innovation.

This budget sustains our commitment to improve the quality of life of Canadians, create high-wage and better-quality jobs, and enable Canadians to compete in the knowledge economy.

I look forward to working with my parliamentary colleagues and all Canadians to building the economy of tomorrow in which Canada realizes its vast potential as a world leader in and through science, technology and innovation.

• (1135)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government talks about creating jobs in small businesses and says that it will encourage investments in this area. But we know very well that there have been some very clear cuts to jobs at border crossings. A border crossing in Franklin, in my riding, has been closed, which will hurt tourism. Tourism jobs have been cut. All this at a time when the United States is looking at increasing the number of border crossings.

The Budget

How can the government justify these cuts, when it claims to want to invest to create new jobs?

[*English*]

Hon. Gary Goodyear: Mr. Speaker, when the nation was facing one of the worst economic downturns since the great depression, this government's overall initiatives under Canada's economic action plan have produced some 540,000 net new jobs. Almost 300,000 of those jobs are in southern Ontario alone. This is a great announcement.

It is great proof of the effectiveness of Canada's economic action plan. The member well knows that it is not just me saying this. Canada is in the best shape of every industrialized nation on the planet. We entered this recession last because of Conservative policies. We suffered the least.

As the member has mentioned, there are still Canadians who need work. There are still Canadians who have work but want better jobs. That is exactly why I encourage the member to support this budget, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. It will produce more work for Canadians and turn this economy even further into the best in the world.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question for the minister is related to Canada's venture capital industry.

A key to commercialization is access to early stage investment and venture capital. Some countries are creating the capacity through their tax system and direct government investment to attract venture capital investment. Israel in particular is focusing on the clean tech electric engine, electric cars, the jobs of the future, and the green economy of the future. In Canada the reality is that the venture capital industry is struggling. It faces a crisis. If we do not get this right there is going to be a dearth of discovery 10 years, 15 years out.

Why has the government not put in this budget some of the recommendations of the Canadian venture capital industry to attract more venture capital to Canada's technology entrepreneurs and to help create the jobs of tomorrow? Since they were not in the budget, does the minister have some ideas perhaps on tax reform policies to attract more venture capital? Perhaps one idea would be eliminating the capital gains tax on early stage investment.

I am disappointed that the government did not incorporate these ideas into the budget, but I would appreciate the minister's input directly for the House to consider his ideas.

• (1140)

Hon. Gary Goodyear: Mr. Speaker, indeed, venture capital around the world has taken quite a hit. This is money used to help start up companies when the banks will not consider them for a loan.

In some ways the member could consider a number of this government's programs and policies as a bit of venture capital. There are a number of programs for new companies to get new technologies into the marketplace to help train the staff who are currently employed, so that they can use new technologies and so forth. The member will know that the government works with the Business Development Bank of Canada to provide that venture capital funding. We have done that.

As well, there is a new program that the member may not be aware of. Since the member is from Ontario, I am happy to share with him a program called the investing in business initiative. This is an opportunity for new businesses to seek out venture capital funding and to help them with angel investment. This is about a \$200 million program. My—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. member for Kings—Hants is rising on a point of order?

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order respectfully to the hon. member. I would be remiss and would greatly disappoint my constituents in the Annapolis Valley of Nova Scotia if I were not to correct the minister and remind him that while I have nothing against the good people of Ontario, I am very proud to have been born and raised in Nova Scotia and representing Nova Scotia.

Hon. Gary Goodyear: Mr. Speaker, my apologies. What I meant was that I was hoping and wishing he was from Ontario, but I can certainly say that is not so. However, there is a program available in the venture capital market. I see some of the numbers in terms of venture capital in this country improving and increasing.

As I said earlier, we are not out of hot water yet. Our economy remains fragile, as the rest of the world's does, and that is exactly why we need to implement the next phase of Canada's economic action plan.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let me say once again how very honoured I am to be back in the House and to represent the constituents of Parkdale—High Park, the people who voted for me and put me here. I am very proud to have earned their trust and honoured to be part of a record-breaking complement of women in the House.

I am also honoured to serve as finance critic in the first ever New Democrat shadow cabinet and look forward to a constructive, energetic and positive relationship with the finance minister.

[*Translation*]

I congratulate my friend on his re-election and on receiving a stronger mandate for his government. But I will commit to regularly reminding him that he must defend the interests of all Canadians.

The reason that the Minister of Finance had all the freedom of his majority government to table his budget yesterday is because there is something wrong with our voting process. A majority of voters—60%—opposed his party and his budget during the election.

Although I respect the government's majority in the House, I hope that he will agree to respect the majority of the citizens of Canada—the real majority.

*The Budget**[English]*

Many of the people who voted for change are still looking to Ottawa for help. They are working harder than ever and their household debt is soaring, student debt is soaring, their retirement has never been less secure and they are tired of being pushed to the back of the line.

Four and a half million Canadians just voted for my party's plan to take practical first steps to make their lives better. They voted for better front line health care, stronger retirement security, a break on their family budget and full-time job creation, good quality jobs that will support them and their families. Those Canadians will clearly feel let down by this budget that once again puts well-connected insiders ahead of their families.

● (1145)

[Translation]

Canadians want us to use a constructive approach in the House of Commons. In that vein, I will take the time to acknowledge the positive aspects of the minister's speech.

We welcome the fact that Quebec is being compensated for harmonizing its sales tax with the GST. It is something our party often requested, and we feel that we have been heard on this issue.

We also welcome the reinstatement of the eco-energy retrofit program, even if it is just for one year. As we have said all spring, that program has created thousands of jobs and leads to billions of dollars in economic spinoffs. It also allows us to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by millions of tonnes a year. Many families have been able to save hundreds of dollars. This program should never have been abolished. It is a very important program. We must now consider adopting a permanent program to retrofit various types of buildings in Canada in order to make them more energy efficient.

[English]

We also welcome in principle the government's commitment to strengthening Canada's fiscal bottom line. As the finance department itself confirms, New Democrats have the best fiscal record, bar none, across all orders of government. We are very proud of that record.

Provincially, by and large, these governments have built their record while investing in families and avoiding destructive program cuts that other parties here have engaged in.

Federally, we will have to wait four more years to try our hand, but Canadians can count on us to share our best practices and advice in the meantime. We look forward to that.

The \$36 billion federal deficit is now \$13 billion lower than the minister projected in the budget of 2010. It is \$13 billion lower. That is quite a change. The deficit is declining largely because of economic growth and our economy has substantial capacity for more growth.

More than 1.4 million Canadians were unemployed on April 1. That is nearly 300,000 more than before the recession took hold. So when my hon. colleagues say that we have recovered all of the jobs lost since the recession, they stand corrected. We are 300,000 jobs behind where we were at the start of the recession.

Hundreds of thousands more find themselves struggling in involuntary part-time work. We all know people who are working two, sometimes three jobs to support themselves and their families. This is the tragedy lurking behind the government's job numbers.

We see a steady shift away from quality jobs to less secure work with uncertain hours, fewer benefits and no pensions, the so-called precarious jobs. Getting these Canadians back to work in family supporting jobs could inject another \$75 billion into our economy in wages alone, before multipliers.

Here is how the official opposition would return Canada to fiscal balance. We would do it by investing in quality jobs, boosting household incomes and GDP, and therefore government revenues. We would create good quality jobs. That is a key priority for Canadians right across this country.

We have also proposed reducing the small business tax rate from 11% to 9%. Why have we done that? This would give a boost to a sector that creates nearly half of all new Canadian jobs, small businesses right across the country. I think of my own riding of Parkdale—High Park where we have small businesses that are really the lifeblood of our local economy.

We have proposed direct job creation tax credits to reward every new hire in small, medium and large businesses. We have proposed investing in vital infrastructure to create jobs that make our cities more competitive hubs in the global economy.

However, this budget picks up on none of these practical suggestions to spark job creation.

● (1150)

[Translation]

The budget continues to bank on a job creation strategy that is not effective, namely the unconditional tax cuts for corporations.

After lowering corporate tax rate to 16.5%, they intend to lower it even more next year to 15%. It is not really necessary to lower taxes even more, and it will cost the public purse another \$3 billion.

The combined tax rate of the federal and provincial governments is currently far below the tax rate in the United States. These cuts are therefore not necessary. The Department of Finance points out that investment in infrastructure creates seven times more economic spinoffs.

The Budget

There is no evidence that corporations are using these tax cuts to create jobs. Instead, they prefer to use the money to pay off their debts, increase their profits, give their CEOs bigger bonuses, or even invest abroad and lay off workers here at home.

[English]

I look at Electrolux which eagerly accepted Ottawa's largesse before shipping 1,300 manufacturing jobs to Memphis. It took the money, put it in its back pocket and then laid off all the workers.

The six big banks just received an additional \$1.1 billion bonus from Canadian taxpayers over the last four quarters. That money is not going toward creating jobs.

Why would the minister expect a job strategy that failed yesterday to succeed tomorrow? We have a job crisis in this country. Why would he plough ahead knowing that finishing his rate cutting experiment will leave an annual \$15 billion hole in the treasury?

[Translation]

After giving big businesses \$15 billion every year, the minister is trying to get that money back by shifting the burden to Canadian taxpayers. First of all, over the next five years, he plans to collect \$17 billion more in EI premiums than he will pay out in benefits. That is completely unacceptable. It is a slap in the face to workers and employers. The Conservatives do not seem serious about their desire to help small businesses and to lead Canada back to recovery.

In addition, now the minister is threatening to cut federal spending by another \$17 billion over the next five years. Focusing on cuts instead of on economic growth is not the right strategy for returning to a balanced budget.

[English]

Let me ask the question my leader asked earlier. Where will the minister find this largely unspecified \$17 billion? Will he cut transfers to health care after a few years? If not now then later on perhaps. Is that why we see no first steps in this budget toward training more doctors and other health care professionals, nurses, midwives? If not health care transfers, will he cut funding to Health Canada, Statistics Canada, Environment Canada or any of the countless departments and agencies that contribute to a stronger, healthier population of Canadians, programs that Canadians count on?

Will the minister make the spectre of deep cuts his constant pretext to ignore calls to invest in Canadian families because the needs are huge? We need to strengthen front line health care. We need to make life more affordable for Canadians. Canadians are stretched. We need to improve pensions for people who are retired or about to retire. We need to invest proactively in job creation. We need to pull seniors not just some of the way but all the way out of poverty. It is unacceptable that we have any senior living in poverty in a country as wealthy as Canada.

These are the priorities that millions of Canadians voted on in the recent election.

The budget deficit is \$13 billion lower than the minister projected in budget 2010. The year before he was off by \$22 billion so I guess he is getting a bit closer. Accurate deficit projections have not been

the forte of the Minister of Finance. Canadians are all too familiar with governments overstating deficits to justify spending cuts. This is no time for deep spending cuts.

We are also hearing credible warnings about the possibility of a double-dip recession. We are hearing it from U.S. economists and from the Governor of the Bank of Canada. This is no time to be pulling \$34 billion out of this economy in combined spending cuts and over-collected EI premiums, not with Canada perched on the edge of a fragile recovery.

• (1155)

[Translation]

Even when things are going well, we know that workers and their families tend to be hit the hardest by budget cuts. These families are already worried about their retirement pensions and the bills they need to pay at the end of the month. These families need high-quality jobs to contribute to Canada's economic recovery. Instead of shifting the burden onto them, we should be making investments that benefit these families, taking affordable and effective action, and creating jobs to stimulate growth and increase income in order to achieve a balanced budget in the long term.

[English]

The government needs to remember that it governs for all Canadians, not just well-connected Conservative insiders, not even just for its own voters, but for all Canadians, and certainly they include the sweeping majority of Canadians who want to see parties work together in the House of Commons. The sweeping majority of Canadians want to see solutions that bring people together across party lines and across regional lines.

We are ready to do our part. However, if the government wants to meet the challenge with us, it is going to have to do much better than it has done in the budget.

[Translation]

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, I would like to welcome my colleague.

I would like to speak about the employment insurance premiums and the SMEs that she mentioned in the same breath. She did not hesitate to criticize our small EI premium increases, but I wonder if she remembers that, in the last Parliament, it was her party that proposed a bill to increase premiums by 35%. Furthermore, SMEs have strongly criticized NDP election promises to double pension benefits.

The Budget

Catherine Swift recently stated that adopting these measures would increase rates by 70% for all SMEs, which would kill them.

I would like to ask my colleague to explain why she is constantly changing her mind about these two issues.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question. The government has abandoned people who are unemployed. At present, 58% of unemployed workers who have paid employment insurance premiums receive no benefits from this government. It is unacceptable that those who paid into the fund do not receive benefits.

We are the ones who want to invest in pension plans for these very employees so that, when they retire, they will have an income allowing them to live decently and will not fall under the poverty line. That is very important for us. We are proud to present this to the House, and we will continue to support it.

• (1200)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, prior to coming to the House of Commons, I served for a number of years inside the Manitoba legislature. It was just a year ago, in fact, that an NDP government budget gave significant corporate tax breaks.

I wonder if the member could explain to me or reconcile an apparent inconsistency, that the only New Democratic party in government is giving corporate tax breaks while, in the opposition, the NDP is opposing corporate tax breaks.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member on his re-election.

I will just correct the record. There is, of course, a New Democratic government elected in Nova Scotia, as well, which we are very proud of.

We have proposed small business tax cuts because we know that small businesses across the country are job creators, and that is something we are very proud of.

We have also proposed a tax credits for small, medium and large businesses that actually create jobs. However, I will insist that our party, under the leadership of the Leader of the Opposition, has been absolutely consistent that across the board, no strings attached tax cuts have not created jobs, and I challenge the government, or the hon. member, to prove otherwise.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise at this time to speak on behalf of the constituents of Newton—North Delta, who tell me each and every day that health care facilities are just not available. They are talking about doctors and nurses, as well as hospitals that are overcrowded.

Right now, there are thousands of doctors in my riding who are credentialed to be doctors in other countries, but in my riding they are driving taxis. That is a very honourable job. However, we are in need of doctors. I see there is recognition in the budget that we have to do something about credentials, but there is no money attached to that.

My question is, what are we going to do to address this dire shortage of doctors and nurses for all citizens in Canada?

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question and I congratulate the hon. member on her election to the House.

In my riding of Parkdale—High Park there is a similar situation. Far too many people are driving taxis when they ought to be practising medicine or some other field for which they are qualified but cannot practise in Canada. My party would dedicate funds toward its commitment to work with the provinces and make sure that foreign credentialed professionals here in Canada get the recognition they need in order to practise.

However, more than that, unlike the Conservative government that moves doctors from south to north and from urban to rural areas and does not train one new doctor or health care professional, my party would invest in training 6,000 new doctors, many more nurses and other health care professionals, because it is unacceptable in a country as rich as Canada that there are Canadians who cannot find family doctors while there are doctors from other countries driving taxis. We in the NDP will fix that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the NDP's finance critic whether, before making their decision, she or the members of her party had the opportunity to speak with Quebec's finance minister, Raymond Bachand, about what is in this budget and what was unfortunately not in the March budget, and that is the \$2.2 billion for sales tax harmonization. Many of the members from Quebec are now NDP. I am wondering whether their caucus or the member herself spoke with these people before making a decision about the final vote. I am also wondering what the NDP is going to do. In Quebec, we are very satisfied that the government has finally listened to the arguments of the Bloc Québécois and granted \$2.2 billion for sales tax harmonization in Quebec. This is very important to Quebec.

• (1205)

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question.

The \$2.2 billion in compensation for sales tax harmonization was proposed by the NDP. We are very happy that the government took our suggestion and modified the budget to include this proposal. It is very important to Quebecers, and it is the NDP members from Quebec who made this suggestion. We are pleased that the government listened to us.

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Madam Speaker, please note that I will be splitting my time with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

As this is my first time rising in the House since the election, let me start with some thanks. First, I would like to thank my constituents of Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont for giving me the honour of serving them once again.

The Budget

I thank my wife Debi and my kids, Jaden and Jenae. I love them and their understanding of the importance of this job that keeps me away from them and away from home 130 nights a year. When we started six years ago, we said this would be our family adventure, and it has been a wonderful one, not always easy, but wonderful, nonetheless.

To my staff in Edmonton and Ottawa, my re-election is really a vote of approval for the service that we perform together for our constituents. I would like to thank them for their hard work in that regard.

Finally, I thank my volunteers. Of course, I cannot name them all, but I know I would not be here without them. They are like an extended family to us and we are truly blessed by their incredible efforts and support. In particular, I would like to publicly acknowledge my campaign co-managers, Bill Witzke and Leigh Johnston, who literally put in countless hours and ran a fantastic campaign.

As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, I welcome the opportunity to outline the government's agenda to support Canadian business, foster innovation and promote competitiveness.

Budget 2011 continues to focus on the task at hand, shepherding our country through the global economic recovery, while at the same time continuing to lay the foundation for long-term, sustainable economic growth.

In the context of the current global economic rebalancing, Canada has stood out among nations as a pillar of economic strength. To date, we have successfully navigated through global economic turbulence, thanks to timely, temporary and targeted interventions.

In response to the global recession, Canada's economic action plan provided \$60 billion in extraordinary stimulus to support jobs and growth. The results speak for themselves: first, seven straight quarters of economic growth. For those of us on this side of the House the most important statistic is this: Canada has created nearly 540,000 net new jobs since July 2009. That speaks to the strength of our economy, the ingenuity of Canada's small and medium size enterprise sector, and the strong economic record of our government.

In the last election, our party said that we would focus on the economy, as we have done in the past and as we will continue to do in the future. That is what Canadians expect of us and that is what this budget delivers. In particular, the budget takes key steps to help businesses, including the thousands of small businesses across the country that are so fundamental to Canada's economy. For example, we are providing \$20 million over two years to the Canadian Youth Business Foundation to help young entrepreneurs become the leaders of tomorrow.

To make it easier for all entrepreneurs to determine the government licences and permits they need, we have also announced measures to upgrade the BizPaL service and expand online capabilities. As we make it easier for Canadians to start new businesses and to build those businesses, we will continue to see new jobs and growth in the Canadian economy.

I would now like to focus on two additional priority areas where we can support jobs and growth, the digital economy strategy and research and development.

Supporting jobs and growth means giving workers and businesses the tools they need to succeed in a competitive global economy, tools which include digital technologies. These technologies power activities in all areas of the economy, from manufacturing and transportation to advanced telecommunications and web-based services. They also provide a platform for all sectors to become more innovative and productive.

This is about setting the stage for the economy of tomorrow, and our plan announces a suite of initiatives that will contribute to this strategy.

Our government is doing its part by announcing measures that will ensure that Canada provides world class infrastructure and a competitive framework to encourage the private sector to create and adopt new information and communications technologies.

Additional initiatives will help Canada develop the digital workforce of tomorrow and create Canada's next generation of digital content by providing \$80 million in new funding over three years through the industrial research assistance program to help small and medium size businesses accelerate their adoption of key information and communications technologies through collaborative projects with colleges; \$60 million over the next three years to promote increased student enrolment in key disciplines related to the digital economy; and \$100 million per year to the Canada media fund for investments in the creation of digital content across multiple platforms.

● (1210)

Our government has also committed to reintroduce and seek passage of copyright legislation that balances the needs of creators and users. The copyright modernization act would bring Canada in line with advances in technology and international standards, as well as provide a framework that is forward-looking, flexible and technologically neutral.

Overall, these measures will help ensure that by 2020 Canada's economy is leading edge, driven by innovation, boosting productivity and sustaining high levels of prosperity.

I am proud that our government is taking the steps necessary to foster long-term growth in the economy and providing young Canadians with as many opportunities to succeed as possible.

Beyond the digital economy, the global economy depends increasingly on knowledge and innovation. In order to be a global leader, Canada must attract and develop talented people, increase our capacity for world-leading research and development and promote education and skills development. Our government measures will help strengthen Canada's leadership position by supporting international research collaboration and world-class research centres in Canada.

The Budget

Specifically, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan announces new resources to support leading edge research, to improve commercialization and support the adoption of new technologies in the marketplace, including: investing an additional \$37 million per year to support the three federal granting research councils and providing an additional \$10 million per year for the indirect costs program to support costs such as those related to operating and maintaining research facilities; investing \$53.5 million over five years to support the creation of 10 new Canada excellence research chairs; investing \$4 million over three years to support the construction of a cyclotron for the production of medical isotopes at the Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute; and providing \$50 million over five years beginning in 2012-13 to the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics to support its leading research, education and public outreach activities.

Research and innovation drive jobs and create opportunities for Canadian companies to succeed all around the world. Our government knows that Canadian students, businesses and workers have the skills to succeed. We know we can compete with anyone in the world. With this budget, Canadians know they have a government that believes in them.

Our plan is supported. Here are just two examples of what Canadians had to say about these measures. Seneca College president, David Agnew, says:

This budget speaks to the role that colleges play in increasing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises. This on-going investment also illustrates the important role that our students and graduates play in today's economic prosperity.

The president of a Toronto company, Darcor Casters & Wheels, Rob Hilborn, says:

These budget measures supporting the link between businesses and polytechnics will increase innovation and entrepreneurship for many Canadian companies. Budget 2011 opens more doors for small and mid-sized firms to access college research facilities and talent.

In conclusion, budget 2011 will position us on a path to a stronger economic recovery. As we move ahead, we will keep taxes low, we will create jobs, we will promote investment and growth, we will encourage innovation and we will deliver on initiatives that improve Canada's business environment.

I am proud to support this plan and I hope all members will join me in passing this budget expeditiously.

• (1215)

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened intently to my colleague and I do not disagree that there is some good stuff in this budget. I know we advocated for a lot of the items that were put in this budget.

However, when we look at the regional economic development, we see that there will be a decrease in funding for regional economic development. How does that help bolster our communities that have been hit hard by the loss of jobs in the forestry sector?

We have FedNor. We see \$4 million over three years to Industry Canada's federal economic development initiative in northern Ontario to buy a cyclotron for the production of medical isotopes at the Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute.

We appreciate some of the money in here but we are seeing a decrease in funding. Maybe the member could explain to me why there would be a decrease in funding when it comes to regional economic development.

Mr. Mike Lake: Madam Speaker, the premise of the question is completely incorrect.

However, let us deal with the big picture of the facts. It is well-known around the world that the Canadian economy is strong relative to other industrialized countries. Of course, organizations, like the International Monetary Fund, the World Economic Forum and the OECD, have praised the Canadian economy and the Government of Canada for the measures that we have taken during the economic downturn. Those measures have led to a strength in the economy that has seen, as I mentioned in my speech, 540,000 net new jobs being created in the economy since July 2009, which is a considerable positive impact. That has a positive impact on all regions across the country. All regions and all Canadians benefit from that increase in jobs due to the steps that the government has taken.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague for coming back to the House and on his fine speech starting out with his family. I wish him and his family all the best.

I will start with the copyright legislation that will be, as the member pointed out, reintroduced. If memory serves me correctly, I believe he was on the special legislative committee that was struck in the last House. If not, my apologies. However, I do want to ask about that because a great deal of input came into the committee about the legislation at that time, which I believe was Bill C-32. A lot of that input was about the balance between the creators and the users.

Specifically, what will be absorbed from that input that will be brought into the reintroduced version of the copyright legislation?

If the member has time, my second question concerns the influence of foreign ownership over telecom. I am wondering what the member's thoughts are about protecting the cultural industries, like broadcasting, from foreign ownership for the sake of Canadian culture.

Mr. Mike Lake: Madam Speaker, I, too, congratulate the hon. member for his re-election.

In regard to the question about the copyright legislation, I was on that special legislative committee. We heard much input and, as a government, we heard much input prior to the committee hearings, before the legislation was drafted, as we did cross country consultations on that legislation.

What we found in the committee was that the testimony reflected the fact that we did have a balanced bill. There obviously were people with several points of view. Copyright legislation is very complex. It is not one of those pieces of legislation where there are two sides. There are 15 or 16 different sides to the legislation.

However, I found that, as we listened to the testimony, it was reflective of the fact that we had done a pretty job balancing all of the different expectations as we went through that process.

The Budget

One of the things we did find through that committee process was that it would have been nice to have moved a little quicker. As we went through the process at the committee, we could have held more hearings and made sure we had listened to more people in a manner that was faster than what we were doing. Of course, the opposition parties had the majority of members on the committee which made it kind of difficult.

I do look forward to getting back into the committee room on the new legislation and hearing from stakeholders. Hopefully, we will get more co-operation from all members of the committee in terms of getting the legislation passed, which, according to all members of the committee, is long overdue.

• (1220)

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Madam Speaker, as this is my first time rising in the House following the election, I will take a moment to thank the people of Oak Ridges—Markham for returning me here. As I said during the campaign, there is not a day that goes by that I am not honoured to serve them in the House and not a day that goes by that I do not thank them for giving me this opportunity to serve our community.

I also want to thank the members of my campaign team for all of the hard work they did to help me get re-elected. I thank my campaign manager, Mathew Ellis, who came back to help me win my second election, and the over 200 volunteers who each and every day knocked on doors and set up signs, not just during the election but in the lead up to the election.

I must say that when I was first elected to this place two and a half years ago, I won by a small plurality of 542 votes. This last time I increased that a bit with a margin of 22,000 votes. While I would like to think that it was my own hard work, I know that it was due to a lot of hard work by the team that surrounds me in both my constituency office and in my Parliament Hill office.

I also want to take the opportunity to thank my constituency team led by Natalie James, Rena Sassano and Owen Macri and, on the Hill, Alli Filleul and my volunteer student Michael Seccareccia. They have done a tremendous amount of work to help me reach the people in my community. My riding is the largest riding in Canada in terms of population. It is twice the size of a normal riding. They have worked very hard to help me secure my re-election.

Of course it goes without saying that I thank my family, my beautiful wife Melanie and my beautiful daughters Natalie and Olivia for their understanding and the sacrifices they make to allow me to be here. They are my best supporters and some of my best advisors. I just wanted to take this opportunity to thank them because without them I would not be able to be here in Ottawa living out my dream each and every day.

When I first came here in 2008, the world was changing. We were in the midst of what is now being called the great recession. It was, of course, a recession that did not start here in Canada but, with a global economy, we felt the effects quickly.

Before I was elected, the government, the Prime Minister and the award-winning Minister of Finance made some changes. They knew something was coming and, as the world economy was heading

toward choppy waters, they decided that the best way to keep our economy going was to reinvest in Canadians. They did that by paying down almost \$40 billion worth of debt. They did that by reducing taxes for families and for businesses. We reduced the GST from 7% to 6% to 5% so that Canadians and businesses would have more money in their pockets to invest in themselves, their families and their communities.

We invested in families. As I said, I have two small children, a five-year-old and a three-year-old and, thanks to some changes that we introduced, my family receives \$100 per child, as do all Canadians with children under six. It has been a big help to Canadians in meeting the everyday needs of their families.

We also invested in infrastructure. In phase one of Canada's economic action plan, we did what Canadians asked us to do. We sat down with our counterparts at the municipal and provincial levels. Canadians were telling us that they wanted us to work together to get us through the economic downturn and that is what we did. The results in communities like mine and the York region were some \$300 million worth of investments in roads, bridges, public transportation and community centres.

We invested in areas that would help us create jobs and also improve infrastructure so that as we emerged from the global economic downturn our small businesses, our communities and our job creators, small, medium and large, could seize on the benefits of the first phase of the economic action plan. The results have been spectacular. We have seen some 540,000 jobs created, as was mentioned by the parliamentary secretary.

In my community, the results are evident across the riding, and it is because of the hard work of this government. It is also because of the hard work of Canadian taxpayers and the fact that we were able to work with our counterparts at the municipal and provincial levels to get the job done for Canadians.

• (1225)

The minister reintroduced his budget, which is the second phase of Canada's economic action plan. I am just as excited about the next phase as I was about the first phase of the economic action plan because the minister has made out a path to a balanced budget. Not only that, we will be doing this a year ahead of time.

As I was out on the campaign trail, Canadians told me that they wanted to see the government back into a balanced budget. They understood the investments that we needed to make in the economy during a recession. They approved of it, but they wanted to see us move toward a balanced budget, and we will do that.

As I said earlier, we will continue to invest in job creation for our small, medium and large job creators. In the last Parliament we introduced the Red Tape Reduction Commission. It is criss-crossing the country, working with small businesses to find out where government is getting in the way and impeding them so we can reduce the red tape and regulation to allow them to meet their potential.

As well, we are introducing a small business hiring tax credit so small businesses in main streets such as in Stouffville, where I live, can hire students, hire individuals and unleash their potential to create jobs.

The Budget

We are extending the accelerated capital cost allowance for manufacturers.

I represent a portion of Markham that is known as one of the high tech capitals of Canada, but the manufacturing industry in Markham was hard hit by the recession and the lead up to the recession. Some of the changes we made to reduce taxation will allow them to invest in new machinery to upgrade facilities and compete, not based on a low dollar but based on productivity. This allows manufacturers to create jobs, expand and compete. They are not only competing with other Canadians; they are competing around the world.

In Markham they are succeeding and it is because of the hard work of this award-winning Minister of Finance and this entire government. We understand that we need to unleash the potential of our economy and our communities.

We are doing more and are again focusing on families.

In this budget we introduced some increases to the GIS for our seniors. On this side of the House, we understand it was our seniors who helped make this the best country in the world in which to live, invest and raise a family. We are going to support our seniors.

We are introducing a children's art tax credit to make it a little easier for families that want their children to participate in their communities.

We are introducing a family caregiver tax credit. As the population ages, we know it will sometimes fall upon the rest of the family to take care of the parents or grandparents. We want to support them as they do that.

We are also introducing the volunteer firefighter tax credit.

I represent four communities: Markham, Stouffville, King City and Richmond Hill. In two of those communities, King City and Stouffville, it is volunteer fire fighters who put their lives on the line each and every day in responding to hundreds of calls for help. I know our communities would not be as successful as they are if it were not for the hard work of these brave community volunteers.

I had an opportunity to meet with some volunteer firefighters before and during the election. They were very excited that a government had finally recognized the hard work and sacrifices they made. I am very pleased this budget will continue those investments.

As I said earlier, I am extraordinarily proud to have the opportunity to represent my community in the House. Over the last two years in government we have helped guide the country through the worst global recession in history. We have done that while providing more money to Canadians. We have done that by providing support for small, medium and large job creators. We are unleashing the potential of our communities across the country so they can compete not only locally but globally with anybody, any time.

I am so excited about the future of our country because of everything that this government has done to help unleash Canada's potential. We should all be proud of what we have done and thank Canadians for the hard work they have done to allow us this success.

I congratulate you, Madam Speaker, on being appointed Deputy Speaker and I congratulate all the members for being elected as well.

• (1230)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Madam Speaker, I congratulate you on taking on the position of Deputy Speaker. I know you will keep us all in line and ensure proper decorum in the House of Commons.

I congratulate the member on being in the House again.

I was very interested in his comments about seniors. We have had a massive series of corporate tax cuts. About \$60 billion has been shovelled off the back of a truck by the Conservative government, but many Conservative members seem to have indicated that they are proud of what would be a \$600 increase for an entire year for seniors living alone and \$840 for seniors living as a couple. Could the member to confirm that for Canadians?

If we did a calculation, it is about \$1.15 a day more for seniors living as a couple. We know the HST that the Conservatives have imposed on British Columbia basically adds about \$2 a day on to the costs of those seniors. Could the member confirm to me that what the Conservatives are offering in the budget is \$1.15 a day for seniors living as a couple at a cost with the HST—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member. I must give the hon. parliamentary secretary time to respond.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Madam Speaker, here is the difference between this side of the House and that side of the House. We are offering Canadians hope. We are offering them a better path than the opposition could ever offer them.

We have invested in seniors. We are increasing the GIS. It is not just about that. We have the new horizons for seniors program, which has been an effective program across my riding. I look at the Markham seniors. I look at the Sanatan Mandir Cultural Centre in my riding, which received a \$25,000 grant so it could educate seniors on how to use the Internet and computers so they could take care of their own banking and become more educated on the new technology. I look across my riding at investments we are making in recreational facilities that seniors use.

Seniors have come to me over the last two and a half years and have said that it is not just about support payments. They enjoy the tax cuts. They approve of the tax cuts for their families that we have made. We listened to seniors with respect to the increase in the GIS. We have done that in co-operation with all sides of the House.

I hope the opposition will join with us in looking forward and work with us in helping to truly unleash the potential of the country. I hope it will look at all the positive things we have accomplished over the last two and a half years and work with us to improve not only the lives of seniors but the lives of all Canadians even more than we have done over the last six years that we have been in office.

The Budget

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Congratulations, Madam Speaker, on your appointment. Congratulations to every member of this Parliament who was elected. My thanks to my campaign team and to the people of Northumberland—Quinte West for sending me here for the third time.

My hon. friend talked about his riding being one of the largest. I am familiar with the Markham area and I know many of the industries.

Would he like to comment upon some of the comments that were made by other representatives of Canadian industries, such as the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses, the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters Association, the chemical industry in Canada, the Canadian Youth Business Foundation, and I could go on, including the Canadian Homebuilders' Association and how he interprets them and his vision of our economy?

• (1235)

Mr. Paul Calandra: Madam Speaker, I congratulate my friend, who does an extraordinary job in representing his communities, somebody who was a mentor to me when I was first elected.

Small, medium and large job creators across the country understand they have a government that is prepared to invest in helping them create jobs. It is prepared to invest to ensure that the economy meets the needs of Canadians. It is helping to ensure that our businesses, no matter how big or how small they are, can compete not only locally but globally.

One of the things we learned during the global recession is that Canadian businesses not only can compete, but they can compete and win when a government gets out of the way when possible, when a government supports them, when a government reduces their taxes, when a government allows them to invest in themselves and in their businesses. When we do that, we succeed.

The heads of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and all the business organizations, including the president of Seneca College, understand that this government will always put the needs of the communities first.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, congratulations on your posting. I know you will serve with honour and distinction in the chamber and hopefully there will be some changes.

First, I want to offer condolences to the member for Kitchener—Conestoga. He continues to work at this time and his commitment to people across Canada is very impressive.

I want to thank the constituents of Windsor West for returning me to the House. I was first elected in 1997 and 2000 as a city councillor and federally in 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2011. Having a break from elections is a good thing for me and my family. I want to thank my spouse Terry, as well as my daughter Alexandria and son Wade for allowing me to do this. They have paid an incredible price and I am truly grateful for all of the small things we are able to treasure because of this opportunity.

I also want to thank my staff. It is very important to recognize Joanne, who filled in for Melanie, as well as Karen Kieran Darlene and Ian, who have been tremendous supporters of mine for many

years and have done great work for the residents of Windsor West. They often put in far too many hours because they love their jobs and I love working with them. It is very special to have them as a support system.

Last, I want to thank all the volunteers, the other candidates who ran in the election and all those who participated in the open democracy. We have a declining vote ratio and it is critically important to get younger people to vote and recognize that our democracy has to change to re-engage people.

When we look at what is happening on the world stage now, people are using cellphones and other types of devices to text and email and are demonstrating on the streets for the right to vote.

It is important to support veterans by recognizing that they have made the ultimate sacrifice in the past, and will in the future, by giving us the opportunity to have a franchise. Despite the misgivings of our democracy, it still is the best in the world and I look forward to improving it.

I want to move now to the budget. The NDP has moved an amendment to the budget related principally to the fact that many Canadians are still falling behind. I find it very interesting that the government often refers to the fact that, measured against the world, Canada is doing much better. It is bragging in a sense about that. However, the reality is that, despite what is happening in Canada, too many people are falling behind and it is no way to measure ourselves.

When we look at the situation in the United States, it is also in a spiral. Just because we are doing modestly better than the U.S. does not mean the decisions we are making are right, principally the continued gutting of the public purse and the increasing expenditures on issues that Canadians do not support.

It is clear the government has delivered a budget that is very similar to the last one, which was not voted on because the government was brought down, for the first time in history, on a non-confidence matter as it did not provide the proper economic information to the chamber related to planes and prisons. It was not due to the budget. It was due to the fact that the House had lost confidence in the government. That is why we had an election, in which New Democrats made history.

It is important to recognize that the vast majority of Canadians do not support the direction in which the government is moving. We are hopeful there will be some amendments and improvements to the budget. What I have heard on the streets of Windsor West and across the country is that planes and prisons are not priorities for Canadians. In fact, people are interested in pensions and pharmaceutical issues related to health care costs.

I had a recent conversation with a veteran at the Windsor Veterans Memorial Services this past Sunday.

I forgot to mention when I started my speech that I will be splitting my time with the member for Burnaby—New Westminster. I apologize for that, but I was anxious to thank the people of Windsor West when I began. However, I am very honoured to share my time with the member for Burnaby—New Westminster.

The Budget

It is important to think about the people who are having a hard time getting by. The government's priority is large corporate tax cut reductions. People are not getting the same type of treatment.

● (1240)

Yes, we do see a modest improvement to the GIS of a few hundred million dollars, which is \$1.15 a day, as has been pointed out by the member for Burnaby—New Westminster, when it is broken down. That will enable seniors to get a cup of coffee a day more. So, perhaps that will lead to a boon at Tim Hortons for a caffeine fix in the morning, but it is certainly not going to take away from the problems that they are facing with regard to paying rent, having a pension that is going to be sustainable and also participating in society. I heard that at the veterans memorial services.

If we look at where the government's priorities are, and I asked this of the Liberal leader, they are under the ideology of large corporate tax cut reductions which supposedly lead to economic development and growth. When we start to look at the real numbers and the real situation we find that this ideology is flawed and is not working.

In fact, when we look at the number of different issues around this since we have had large corporate tax cut reductions, research and development has fallen to 3% in 2008. It is actually the lowest amount since the 1990s. We see deepening trade deficits. Canada's trade deficits, which were in a surplus a number of years ago, are now in a deficit because we have been using the wrong economic policies. Also, we have more foreign control over Canadian companies. We have witnessed a series of takeovers where there were supposed to be undertakings that were going to protect Canadian jobs that never took place or are actually in the courts, one being U.S. Steel right now, where Canadian jobs were usurped.

In fact, we saw those companies actually relocate some of those jobs overseas. They did a vertical integration in the industry where they bought Canadian natural resources and basically either flatlined them or reduced them so that their commodities abroad would actually rise in price. We have seen that with a number of Canadian companies in the mining industry and the steel industry. We have seen other takeovers, like Nortel, where we have lost our place in the world. Where we used to be the cutting edge, we have now basically flatlined in this regard and the government has done nothing to protect those jobs.

There is an issue with regard to productivity. Productivity is stalled in Canada. We have seen that not being the workers' fault but the fact that we have actually had lower investment in research and development and modernization of our plants. Because of the government's policy on the border between Canada and the U.S. where basically 40% of Canada's trade comes through my riding every single day, it has allowed the militarization and the thickening of the border without challenging the U.S. about these issues. It has signed a series of agreements and protocols in the hope that it would get some relief with regard to trade and tourism, but that has not happened. In fact, the exact opposite has happened. Some of those deals that the government has signed have created more problems right now in reduced services and increased problems. It has affected our ability and capability to compete.

In fact when we look at where this has been going, it has also driven the dollar up. The large corporate tax cuts and a petrodollar based upon export of raw resources has driven our dollar up approximately 20%, in terms of overvaluation. So manufacturers in the hotbed of Quebec or Ontario, and even other parts of Canada, are now competing at a disadvantage because we have artificially inflated the dollar and we watched the U.S. devalue its dollar. That makes it difficult when manufacturers with branch plants here are looking at expansion, renewal, a whole series of things, they are also looking at the border and saying that maybe they will invest in the United States, especially given the massive incentives they have had.

Interestingly, the U.S. has done it differently. Instead of large corporate tax cut reductions which is basically the ideology here, in terms of the Conservatives and the Liberals prior to that, the U.S. has done it through targeted initiatives. It has been stealing back its jobs and so forth, and we have done nothing about that. We witnessed this strategy with the softwood lumber industry, in particular, but it is also happening in the manufacturing sector.

Where has the money gone? The money has gone to a series of tax cuts. The tax cuts and subsidies for the oil and gas industry have resulted in the fact that they pay around 10.6% in federal tax. Meanwhile, every other corporation out there playing with value added is actually paying 16.5%.

The result is that the value-added manufacturing sector has been subsidizing the oil and gas industry at a time when people are getting ripped off at the pumps, being gouged by unfair practices that have cost people in their pocketbooks. This has to stop. This is why the budget fails and New Democrats are not going to stand for it.

● (1245)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I certainly appreciate the comments regarding the valuation of our Canadian dollar as it is now at parity or slightly above, not just for manufacturing but certainly for raw resources, such as the fishery on the east coast and the forestry. As we get an appreciation in price of a particular species it seems that many factors negate that value coming back to the fishermen and certainly one of those is the value of the Canadian dollar.

A headline I read this morning said that finding \$4 billion to cut from the federal government's \$80 billion in program expenses is "no big deal", our finance minister said Tuesday.

Of course it is not a big deal because it has not been done yet. I suspect it is going to be a much bigger deal as time goes by and the cuts need to be made.

I would like to specifically ask the member, in light of the large deficit that we have and in order to get to that balanced budget figure by 2014, how he would propose the government do that?

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, I thank my cousin from Windsor for the question.

The Budget

It is really important that when the member looks at this question he knows that it is a big deal. We know that the cuts are going to come on things that are being targeted for ideology at the expense of Canadians. It could be health care, the social services or a series of things.

It is important for Canadians to understand the choices they did not make. The oil and gas industry right now, and the last figures available are from 2008, is getting around \$2 billion worth of subsidies. The industry is getting it from a number of different tax breaks. There is the flow through shares tax break, the Canadian explorer expenses tax break, the Canadian development expense tax break, the Canadian oil and gas property expense tax break, the Canadian capital cost reduction allowance tax break. It goes on and on.

These are specific targeted subsidies. We are actually borrowing money and paying interest on it, because we are in a deficit right now. We are borrowing money from all Canadians, our kids and our future and we are going to pay interest on that until we finally get to a surplus position. It is to provide a tax cut for the oil and gas industry, when people going to the pumps are getting ripped off every single day. That is what needs to change.

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Madam Speaker, does the member for Windsor West, who voted against the last economic action plan and who sounds like he is not happy with this one either, recognize the improvement in employment in the member's own riding?

The member's area used to be have the worst unemployment rate in Canada. It does no longer. Indeed there is still work to do.

Will the member acknowledge that Canada's economic action plan has worked? Would he stop with the rhetoric and admit that it has worked, that it has worked in the member's own riding, and that the member is very happy about some of the announcements in his riding that he voted against?

Can we get an assurance from the member that he recognizes the good work of Canada's economic action plan and that this time he will vote for his riding constituents and not the leader of his party?

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, the reality is there are still far too many people unemployed in my riding. Some of the actual success in my riding is from its own hard work, not necessarily from the government and its policies.

What is really important is that since the Conservative government has been in power, part-time employment has increased 50% in Canada. Yes, there actually are more jobs because people are working several of them just to get by and they are barely doing that.

With regard to the government's programs, it is interesting. We have had federal programs, stimulus programs, and the member would know this as would the member for Essex, where there are announcements for projects in Windsor and what actually happens is the contract is outsourced and people come from other places, like Orangeville where there is a 3% unemployment rate. The workers drive down with their trucks, do the work, sleep in their cabs and then go back home at the end of the day.

That did not help the Windsor area. What we need is specific strategies. When it comes to the border, yes, I have been pushing for work on the border since 2002 when people called it a pipe dream and it is now coming to fruition. The government has done some good work on the border, there is no doubt about that.

We need a local workers' mandate because we are going to witness foreign workers and other types of workers that will not specifically address some of the shortages we have in Windsor. We need to plan this opportunity.

The government refuses to do that and it needs to change because we are going to be spending billions of dollars. Let us make sure it is done right so that we get the value-added employment that is necessary.

● (1250)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am happy to rise today to speak to the budget that has been presented in the House.

I would like to start by thanking the voters of Burnaby—New Westminster, who honoured me by re-electing me for the fourth time to the House of Commons in the election held on May 2. I would also like to thank my family: my partner Limei, my son Stefan, my parents Ruth and Terry Julian, my sister Randi and her family, my brother Patrick and his family. They were all, and continue to be, extremely supportive of the work that I do in the House and my long absences from home in British Columbia.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to my staff in Ottawa, Henri Sader, Mounia Lahbabi, and in my Burnaby office, Sandra Bell, Katrina Chen and Marja Kauppi, all of whom provide excellent services to the constituents of Burnaby—New Westminster. It is because of their work that I am able to do the work in this vastly enlarged NDP caucus that will be playing such a key role in the years to come.

I would like to address the budget and follow up on the comments of my colleague from Windsor West about how the Conservative government has approached what is basically a retread budget.

I do not think it is a secret to any of the Canadians who live across this country who are on the main streets out in the real world in this country that for them, Tory times have been very tough times. If we look at the last five years and look at the erosion of employment in many of our key sectors, we can see just how difficult it has become for Canadians under the mandate of the Conservative government.

No one votes Conservative because they expect a better health care system. Conservatives have not been renowned for building an effective public health care system, for providing access to public education, for providing the kinds of services that Canadians need. Nobody votes Conservative for those reasons, but we would expect the one thing Conservatives would be able to get right would be the economy.

However, we see here that what the budget does is simply enhance the previous measures the Conservatives have taken that have led to what is very clearly an economic decline for ordinary Canadian families, for the middle-class and poor Canadians.

The Budget

As the member for Toronto—Danforth, our leader, said earlier today, it does not mean that there is not anything good in the budget. Corporate CEOs and corporate lobbyists will find this budget very much to their liking, but the reality is on Main Street in this country there is very little that ordinary Canadians will have to be joyful about.

We have seen, and other NDP speakers have raised this issue, \$60 billion doled out in massive corporate tax cuts. These are not targeted tax cuts. These are not tax cuts that are linked to job creation. These are not tax cuts that are actually linked to building viable community economies. This is just money that is shovelled out the back of a truck. After five years of seeing these progressive policies of massive corporate tax cuts, we have to wonder just where Canada has ended up.

The Minister of Finance likes to point to the slight increase in the overall job creation, but the reality is over the last five years, given the growth in labour force, which is 1.5% a year, that the Conservatives have the responsibility of creating 300,000 additional jobs every year. How have they fared? StatsCan gives us the results. The results are that there is a million jobs deficit. Over the last five years since the Conservatives have been in power and where they needed to create about 300,000 new jobs or new people coming into the labour force every year, they needed to create 1.5 million. They have actually created about half a million jobs overall and these jobs have largely been part-time or temporary in nature, certainly not the permanent, family-sustaining jobs that Canadians are calling for from coast to coast to coast.

If we dig even deeper and look at the statistics around where these jobs have been created, they tend to be in the low end, in the temporary, part-time and in the service sector, but what has actually happened with the type of manufacturing and value-added jobs that are the basis, the foundation of the community economy across the country? When we put those figures out, they show a narrative of why it is becoming increasingly difficult for Canadian families.

• (1255)

In manufacturing we have seen, on the Conservative watch, something that started under the Liberals, which is why they are in the penalty box. However, it is has continued under the Conservatives. We have lost 250,000 manufacturing jobs since they came to power.

We have lost jobs in the agricultural sector. As you know, Madam Speaker, being from British Columbia, we have lost tens of thousands of jobs in the softwood lumber sector. That has not been in just British Columbia: it has been right across the prairies, it has been in northern Ontario, it has been in Quebec. It is due to a foolish strategy that was put into place by the Conservative government.

Overall, in manufacturing we have seen a significant decrease in good family-sustaining jobs that have been available in our economy. What we have seen is a growth of part-time, temporary, low-wage jobs in this country. That is the Conservative legacy. The reality is that just to maintain the labour force, they are a million jobs short from when they came to power.

The Conservatives will point to the unemployment rate and say that the unemployment rate is not that bad. We have heard some

Conservatives say that, but the reality is that the only reason the unemployment rate has not gone through the roof is that there are progressively an ever-increasing number of Canadians who have simply opted out. They are not in the labour force. They are not counted as part of the labour force participation rate. That is a singular growth we have seen under the Conservative government: the number of Canadians who simply cannot find work.

Coming from a riding that has been economically challenged by Conservative policies, I can tell members that we have seen the fallout from the softwood lumber sellout that led to the closure of three mills and the direct loss of 2,000 jobs in my riding and my area.

We also see how the other economic policies of the Conservative government have impacted Burnaby—New Westminster. There has not been any overall comprehensive strategy to bring new Canadians, who often come with a wide variety of skills and abilities. There has been no real movement on credential recognition, aside from some ribbon-cutting. As a result, in a lot of cases we are seeing that labour force participation has meant that new Canadians are simply realizing they are not going to be able to provide their skills, their abilities, their experience and their education to Canada.

When we look at the Conservative legacy after five years, what we see is a loss of good jobs, continued sellout and stimulation of exports of raw materials. The Conservatives are renowned for exporting raw bitumen, raw logs and raw minerals, and the manufacturing sector has suffered. Value-added manufacturing has suffered.

What is the net result?

We know the debt load of the average Canadian family has climbed over the past decade. It has doubled, which means that Canadian families are facing the erosion of real income. It is not the corporate lobbyists or corporate CEOs, but the middle class, the ordinary Canadian families. It is the middle class and poor Canadians who are contributing and are the bedrock and foundation of our country. The erosion of that income has led to record levels of debt.

What does this budget do to address their issues, aside from \$60 billion in corporate tax cuts? Not much.

For the average senior and hundreds of thousands of seniors living in poverty, we have seen that if they are a couple, they get \$1.15 more from the Conservative government. It is shameful. It is disgraceful, especially when the HST imposed on B.C. charges \$2 a day for those same seniors.

For students facing record debt levels, particularly in British Columbia, there is nothing in this budget that addresses their problems.

The Budget

• (1300)

[Translation]

The reality is that 4.5 million Canadians voted for the NDP because they wanted to do away with those old policies that only lobbyists benefit from. That is why there are so many of us here now. The 103 NDP members are listening to Canadians, and we will pressure this government to change its policies, which are not good for ordinary families, for middle-class Canadian families or for the poorest Canadians. That is our mission and what we will continue to focus on in the years to come.

[English]

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise in the House once again and to do so as the re-elected representative for Kitchener Centre. I want to thank the electorate there for returning me to the House.

I also want to compliment my colleague across the way on his re-election. It is always interesting to listen to his speeches because of the ideas he presents, and also because I often find myself very entertained by the weird and fantastical stories that I hear from him.

In particular, I was struck by his comments that under the Conservative government we are going to low-paying and part-time jobs. I notice that Statistics Canada and the Department of Finance have said that between July 2009 and April 2011, 90% of the jobs that we have recovered have been in high-wage industries, and that during that same time 84% of the jobs that we have recovered have been full-time jobs.

I wonder if my colleague would agree with our very competent officials in Statistics Canada and the Department of Finance. If he does not—

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

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I will return the compliment to the hon. member.

Statistics Canada gets the real figures out. The reality is that we can understand in budget documents what the Conservatives will do. I can perfectly understand that this cuts a little slice of what is most favourable to them. However, we have to look not at that single tree, but at the overall forest.

The reality is that after five years of Conservative government, we have seen an erosion in real family income. We have seen more people leaving the labour force and not participating, because those good jobs are simply not available. There has been a catastrophic decline in manufacturing jobs, value-added jobs and family-sustaining jobs.

The Conservatives can take credit for massive and bloated corporate tax cuts that they have strewn around everywhere. They can certainly take credit for that. It is a record. It is even worse than the former Liberal government was in that respect. However, they cannot take credit for real economic initiatives that have led to the kind of prosperity we want to see for every Canadian. For seniors, \$1.15 a day is simply disgraceful.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House again representing the

constituents of Vancouver Quadra. I want to thank the very educated, engaged citizenry of my riding for re-electing me and for their continued support.

The member for Burnaby—New Westminster mentioned a wealth of adjectives and types of jobs and industries and labour force issues, all of which are important.

What I did not hear was the word “green”. I heard nothing about the kind of innovation that is so badly needed, innovation that would lead to a greener economy and to jobs in green industries. I did not hear anything about the absence of stimulus funding to alternative energy and other green measures and their importance for our future.

Does it not matter, or was it just an omission by error?

• (1305)

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the raising of this issue by the member for Vancouver Quadra. She is absolutely right. In 10 minutes I addressed more of the macroeconomic issues we are facing as a country.

The member is absolutely right to point out that the Conservative government is not undertaking any sort of environmental or green initiatives. Our environment critic, the member for Halifax, will be raising those issues in the coming days, as will our entire caucus.

Many members of our caucus are environmental activists and are very concerned about the impacts of climate change. The member is right to point out that it is not in the budget. Many Canadians have given up on the Conservatives' ability to even understand the importance of the environmental challenges we face.

There is no doubt that this budget does not in any way reflect that environmental imperative. That too is a shame.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Peace River.

I am very proud to rise here today to speak in favour of the budget presented by my hon. colleague, the Minister of Finance. I am proud of our government's economic management in a time of a financial crisis, management that allowed us to come out ahead of most major industrialized countries.

Indeed, the International Monetary Fund predicts that Canada will be the first G7 country to return to a balanced budget. Our government has chosen a prudent yet rigorous approach to reduce public spending and eliminate the deficit. We are focusing on low taxes, job creation and sustained growth, in order to maintain the social programs that are so important to Canadians, while creating a solid financial foundation to ensure long-term prosperity.

The Budget

Public Works and Government Services Canada is determined to make its activities more efficient and effective, and to save Canadians money. In this regard, the department wholeheartedly supported the Government of Canada's priority to return to a balanced budget through a strategic review of all departmental spending. Public Works and Government Services Canada met all the requirements of this very important exercise. Among other things, PWGSC will continue to support the reallocation of resources under the strategic and operating review announced in the budget in order to meet the government's most important priorities.

Canada's economic action plan has been a great success. As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, I know that this department has played a major role in the economic action plan through its accelerated infrastructure program.

I am very proud of what PWGSC has achieved in terms of revitalizing the government's important capital assets; these achievements are nothing short of exemplary. I am very pleased that we have been allocated an additional \$148 million over five years to preserve PWGSC's engineering assets.

We are fully committed to ensuring that public infrastructure meets the highest safety standards while creating jobs for local economies.

In the Canada first defence strategy, our government promised Canadians that it would provide our men and women in uniform with the equipment they need to do their difficult and dangerous work. We have already begun to make good on this promise, and we have made excellent progress to date, particularly in the area of shipbuilding. The national shipbuilding procurement strategy is a completely new approach to military procurement. We are optimistic that the lessons learned from this initiative will help us to improve procurement strategies in general.

First and foremost, we decided that our ships would be built in Canada by Canadians. This means that, in addition to building the ships that our navy and Coast Guard need to defend our country, we will also be creating permanent, highly skilled jobs across the country. We will support the marine industry, which is one of the key drivers of the economy and the lifeblood of many communities, and we will do so while fully respecting the department's fundamental values of openness, transparency and fairness.

We consulted extensively with the industry, and listened to what it had to say, before implementing the national shipbuilding procurement strategy. Therefore, we know that long-term planning and stable funding are essential to business growth. That is why we are making this commitment.

● (1310)

We also learned that we must work more closely together within the public service. Therefore, we adopted a teamwork approach for the entire government with respect to defence procurement by placing the emphasis on streamlined monitoring and approval processes.

These significant improvements to the military procurement process can guide our approach to procurement in general. Hence, industry will be able to do business with a Government of Canada

that has reduced red tape and the time it takes to sign a contract and start the work.

Public Works and Government Services Canada is pleased, and rightly so, to have reduced the time required to purchase important military goods by more than half. For example, with respect to replacing our aging fleet of Hercules aircraft, the request for proposal for the 17 aircraft was issued in August 2007 and the \$1.4 billion U.S. contract was awarded in December 2007. This procurement process, which was approved in June 2006, was completed in just 18 months, well within the anticipated time frame of 48 months.

My government believes that our procurement spending can and should be used to maximize our aerospace, shipbuilding and defence sectors' global competitiveness, and we will ensure that that is the case. The same goes for procurement in general. It must be in line with all of our economic objectives, and one of the areas we are actively targeting is innovation.

Innovation is an essential economic driver, and governments are in a position to choose to support entrepreneurs and dreamers who create, innovate and invent.

In last year's budget, we introduced the Canadian innovation commercialization program to help launch Canadian innovations. I am pleased to announce that the first round was a huge success and that we will soon be starting a second round. The Canadian innovation commercialization program helps Canadian businesses market their new technologies, products and services. Our work will help strengthen and diversify our economy.

Public Works and Government Services Canada is looking for government partners to test the innovations and to provide feedback to the businesses to help them successfully market their innovative products. In short, our government is doing more than innovate, since, in purchasing goods and services to support employment and our country's key industries, we are reaching out to businesses that create jobs and we are supporting them as they develop new products and profitable services. This is an entirely new approach to working with the private sector to help us build the prosperous and safe Canada that we want and are working so hard to achieve.

● (1315)

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Madam Speaker, it looks like a lot of money will be collected for employment insurance, but many people still do not have access to it. Can the hon. member assure us that not a penny of the EI premiums or any of the money in the EI fund will be used for reducing the debt?

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Madam Speaker, I want thank the hon. member for her question and congratulate her on her election.

The Budget

As the hon. member knows, in the past, through Canada's economic action plan, we have invested money directly into the employment insurance fund in lieu of raising premiums. We have done more than the hon. member is suggesting we have, and we will continue in that direction.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Madam Speaker, I do not think my question was really answered.

I wanted to know whether the government will ensure that none of the money paid into the fund will be allocated to the debt. We are asking the question because the funds collected should be used as employment insurance and people should have access to this or other programs to help them get back to work.

I will repeat the question. Can the hon. member assure us that, with this budget, no EI premiums will be allocated to the debt?

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Madam Speaker, as you know, the employment insurance fund is used to give unemployed people in Canada the benefits they need and to provide training programs to help the unemployed return to the workforce. That has always been and will continue to be the government's objective.

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate you on being chosen as Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons.

I have a question for my colleague, with whom I sat for some time on the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. I see that in the budget, which has not changed a single bit, there was not a single line added concerning agriculture.

I want to know whether the member and parliamentary secretary can tell us why the government did not think to create a specific program for pork producers, who are currently going through an unprecedented crisis in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada. The same goes for the issue of specified risk materials. I think my colleague is familiar with this issue that affects cattle producers. The budget should have renewed the slaughter program.

I would like to know what answer my colleague has for Quebec producers.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

As we know, pork producers in Canada are going through an unprecedented market crisis. Although the price of pork has increased, the input and grain costs have increased as well. They are still in a negative margin. We understand and are very aware of what is going on with pork producers.

As for beef producers and the issue of specified risk materials, we know that we must be innovative to move these products out of the value chain, so that they can regain a value on the market. This way, producers can benefit from this value and at least bring the risk to zero. In other words, we must turn the problem they were having into a value, and perhaps even turn that into revenue. We are happy to be working towards this on behalf of producers.

[English]

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleagues and I want to congratulate you on your re-election and your appointment as Deputy Speaker.

I want to take the opportunity, and I am hoping I will be given the latitude to do this, to give some thanks. This is my first opportunity to speak in the House since my election. It is my third election in five and a half years and there are a lot of people to thank for the time they put in leading up to, during and subsequent to the election campaign. As we know, there are a lot of things that need to be taken care of even after the election is completed.

First and foremost, I want to thank the folks in my riding who supported and voted for me in unprecedented numbers. I recognize it is an incredible responsibility that I have been given for the third time and I want to thank each and every person who supported me. I recognize that 100% of the constituents did not vote for me, but I am here for 100% of them in my riding and I will do my utmost over the next number of years to represent the interests of my community in the long term.

I want to make brief reference to some of the team members who helped me get elected. First and foremost, I want to thank my campaign manager, Alden Harms, who was dedicated throughout the campaign to getting me elected for the third time. He has been my right-hand man through three elections and did an incredible job, as he always does.

I want to thank Lydell Torgerson, my official agent, a leading accountant in the province of Alberta. He has been recognized by his colleagues and dedicated a significant amount of volunteer time to my campaign. I want to thank him in the House for his ongoing dedication in getting all of the necessary paperwork done in order to fulfill the requirements that Elections Canada has.

I want to thank Dena Short, who works day in and day out to manage the office in my constituency. For that, I owe her a great debt of gratitude. I certainly want to recognize her work, as well as that of Lamont Anderson who was in charge of the sign crew. He worked diligently to get the signs up and down and taken care of.

I want to take the opportunity to thank the dedicated staff in my constituency office, as well as my Hill office, who make me a more popular guy, quite frankly. They are the people who continue to work day in and day out to represent my desire for my constituents, which is that they be well represented. Anybody who comes into my constituency office is always well represented because of the staff. I want to thank Trudy, who has been with me for the last five and a half years, and Kim and Crystal, who have also been with me for the last number of years. Their commitment to my constituents is, without question, their number one priority and I want to thank them.

I also want to thank my family, my mom, dad, siblings and their families for their support. Having five siblings is always positive because more people will vote for one and then when they have spouses as well, that increases the base. They went well beyond what they were called on to do during the election campaign in many capacities and I want to thank them.

The Budget

I also want to thank my immediate family, my kids for giving me the luxury of being able to campaign, as well as my wife, who is a remarkable person. She is really the trooper in my family. She is the one who holds everything together during very stressful election campaigns and has given me great latitude in doing my job and serving my constituents. She really is an amazing partner and has dedicated the last five and a half years to working with me to represent the constituents in my riding.

I wanted to extend those thanks before I moved on to the budget.

Today I am talking about the low-tax plan for Canadians that the minister brought forward yesterday. Of course, this was not an entirely unexpected budget. We expected many of the provisions within the budget. Obviously, we had a preview of this budget last March prior to the election campaign and then we fought during the campaign for the opportunity to reinstate the budget and to have it debated in the House and hopefully passed by it. However, we did add a few other things to the budget. We made a number of other commitments in the election campaign and those things are being followed through with.

● (1320)

Our Prime Minister said that we were going to get things done, get back to work, and do a whole host of things in addition to the budget that was put forward before. Those things are included in this budget. I think that is a testament to the commitment of our finance minister and Prime Minister to doing what we said we were going to do during the election campaign. I give them a lot of thanks.

Canadians can be reassured that we are intent on doing what we said. We are seeing the evidence of that in this budget as well as in the Speech from the Throne. My many thanks to the finance minister for including those provisions in the budget. I know my constituents, as well as many of my colleagues' constituents, are depending on those things being carried out.

When I was first elected, my hope was that I would be able to represent my constituents well and build a stronger, more vibrant community. I was a small business owner at that point in time. My wife and I had just recently been married. I had been involved in politics for a number of years. I had been an active member of our association for over 10 years.

I hoped to become an elected member of this House to get a few things done. I was a small business owner and I was increasingly frustrated by the government's response to small business owners. Increasingly, we saw a government, in a previous incarnation, that was hard on small business owners, the engine to our local economies. I was often disappointed with the responses and an increased tax burden that small business owners were expected to bear.

Over the last five and a half years since my election, I have worked to advocate on behalf of small business owners. I believe it is important that we give all of the latitude that is necessary for small business owners to innovate and to create jobs in our local communities.

This budget is an extension of some of the things that we have seen over the last five and a half years in terms of reducing the tax burden for small business owners, for giving more resources to small

business owners, and in paying tribute to small business owners for what they are, the drivers of our national economy.

One of the important measures within this budget, that there has not been a lot of attention drawn to, is the fact that our government has made the commitment to continue along the effort to reduce red tape for small businesses.

I had the opportunity in the last Parliament to sit on the red tape reduction commission. I had the opportunity to travel across this great country. What was remarkable, no matter where I went in this country, were the similarities in the concerns that I heard from people which were incredibly consistent.

We heard of struggles in terms of getting certain things done. Oftentimes it related to unnecessary red tape within the federal sector. We also heard about red tape that was in provincial and municipal jurisdictions as well.

I had the opportunity to sit on that commission with representation from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. Catherine Swift was a representative on that commission. It actually brought forward the information, its analysis, that Canadian businesses bear a cost of approximately \$30 billion on an annual basis in trying to comply with red tape.

That is red tape that comes from the federal government, the provincial governments and the municipal governments. What is distressing is that oftentimes there is a duplication or redundancy in that red tape from the federal level, the provincial level and the municipal level.

I am so excited to see that the federal government is committed to continue on the effort of the red tape reduction commission to continue to see red tape slashed at the federal level. It has made the commitment that it is going to reduce that red tape to a manageable level to help support small businesses.

Unfortunately, red tape disproportionately affects small businesses. Large businesses have large accounting firms and large legal representation, and are able to manage to get through it. Disproportionately small businesses are affected by it.

As a member who comes from the small business sector, I am really pleased and very thankful to see that our government is going to continue to reduce red tape for small businesses across this country.

● (1325)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, congratulations on your appointment as Deputy Speaker.

I do have a question. The member speaks very highly of small businesses and makes reference to the clearing up of red tape. Ultimately, I would look to the member to respond and perhaps provide some clarification.

Priorities are established within a budget. Clearly, it would appear that the priorities of this government are geared toward large corporations.

The Budget

If we take a look at the tax breaks being given to large corporations over small businesses, in essence it is clear that the government believes it will be the large corporations that will provide future opportunities. That contradicts what most economists and others would suggest, that it will be small businesses that will drive the economy into the future.

Why is there a mixed up priority in terms of where the tax breaks are?

● (1330)

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Madam Speaker, I am hoping that my colleague across the way has an opportunity to read the budget.

I know the speech yesterday was truncated. As a result, much of it was a review of the budget that had been presented. However, there are a number of different provisions within the budget that will directly affect and benefit small businesses.

Obviously, I talked about the red tape reduction. I cannot overstate the importance of that.

Also, there is the new hiring credit for small businesses geared directly toward small business owners who want to create jobs in our local communities. We know there will be employers who will create the most jobs during this time as our economy recovers. That is the first initiative. The second is supporting young entrepreneurs through the youth business foundation activities. There is \$20 million going toward that for the upstart of small businesses.

We support community futures organizations across this country that help support small businesses. We also see the extending of work-sharing agreements. I know in my community there are many businesses that have utilized that. These are important provisions. I have several others, but I know my time is up.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, as this is my first time rising in the House, I would like to mention that I am thankful to the good people of New Westminster—Coquitlam and Port Moody for returning me to this House, as well as to my family, my wife Lynda, and the campaign volunteers and supporters who helped in that re-election.

I would also like to offer my congratulations to you as Chair and to my hon. colleague from Peace River on his re-election.

My question to the member relates to action on climate change.

As the member well knows, climate change is certainly being felt in the north. This is an area where he is from and familiar with. I would like to ask the member, what is the government proposing in this budget to mitigate the effects of climate change?

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate the hon. member on his re-election as well.

There are a number of provisions within this budget and I will not get to all of them. However, one that is very important to people who live in my community, especially in the northern communities, is the opportunity to benefit from the home retrofit program. That will help individuals insulate and create more energy-efficient homes. We know that the best energy savings is when we are able to reduce our consumption and create a better home. It helps on the environmental side and also aids in supporting families.

What we know is that energy costs consume a significant portion of the family budget. Therefore, any time there are investments made toward reducing energy costs for family homes, that is a good thing for the environment. It is also a good thing for families in general.

As well, there are several other provisions within the budget providing investments to technologies right from farming to all types of new and emerging technologies. There are investments for that. Obviously, those will play an important role in terms of protecting our environment as well.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl.

My congratulations to you, Madam Speaker, on your appointment as Deputy Speaker and chair of the committee of the whole.

I am pleased to rise in the House as a spokesperson for the constituents of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour. It was an incredible opportunity for me to stand for the New Democratic Party in the last election and to talk with my constituents about its plans and programs. The warmth and receptiveness of the good citizens, whether they voted for me or not, was truly overwhelming and I certainly appreciate it. As has been said, regardless of whether I got their vote, once elected I am the member of Parliament for all constituents of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

Since the election, I have had the opportunity to meet with a number of groups. As can be appreciated, regardless of how hard one worked during the campaign, one's duties commence immediately upon the time of election.

Of the groups I have had the opportunity to meet with one was DASC Industries. This is an organization that provides important work opportunities for women and men who have certain challenges. It is looking for some capital support from the government, which is a proposal that I have indicated my support for.

Some of the groups that I had the opportunity to have some discussion with since the election are: Evergreen House, an important museum in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour; the Cole Harbour Heritage Museum; a group of parents for a local elementary school in Dartmouth North; the Take Action Society; the Supportive Housing for Young Mothers; Dartmouth Learning Centre; Main Street Dartmouth and Area Business Improvement Association; Boys & Girls Club of East Dartmouth; and, of course, my good friends whom I swim and work out with at the Dartmouth YMCA. When I go home to Dartmouth—Cole Harbour on the weekends and once the House rises, I will have the opportunity to do more of that.

As well, on June 5, I had the opportunity to participate in a D-Day parade organized by Branch 31 of the Royal Canadian Legion.

I look forward to seeing my colleague, the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore, continue to stand as our veterans affairs critic and an advocate for seniors. I would urge the government, as I know he would, to take measures toward fixing the clawback on veterans pensions and give these brave men and women the respect and support they deserve.

The Budget

I also look forward to my role in international trade and will work to make sure that we enter into strong agreements that strive to support and protect workers, communities, producers, and the environment both here at home and abroad.

My main priority in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour at this point is to engage in dialogue with non profit and community organizations, police, veterans, families, seniors, businesses, and as many people and groups that I can, to hear their stories, realities, ideas and solutions, and bring those voices to Parliament.

Right now, part of my community is struggling with crime issues and I had the opportunity to meet with the chief of police and HRM. These crime issues cannot be solved by overly simplified approaches such as tougher laws and more prisons. I suggest to members opposite that it requires innovative, responsive community-based approaches.

● (1335)

Many communities that are struggling with inadequate health care services must have their needs and concerns addressed. Many young families are teetering on the brink of financial crisis because the cost of daily living keeps rising but their income, their security and their prospects for good jobs are not.

Indeed, there are issues in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour and in communities across this country that the government is in a position to impact in a significant and positive way if only there were a commitment and a political will to work with and for all the people of Canada who possess a wealth of insight and experience. We would be wise to draw from that fantastic resource.

The people of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour sent me here to do some very important things: to be their voice in the House of Commons; to represent their thoughts and interests; to work as a member of this Parliament to make their lives better, their communities stronger and our country better and stronger; and to help shape our nation into the thriving, sustainable and compassionate global leader we all know we can be.

I am ever mindful of that job and of the commitment and responsibility that accompanies it. I am also deeply grateful to the people of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for the trust they have placed in me. I intend to work very hard to ensure I live up to my end of that bargain.

That is why I feel it is so important to draw attention to the weaknesses in the budget presented before the House yesterday. This is not a budget designed with the Canadian family in mind. It does not acknowledge the reality that the people in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour and across this country are facing.

This budget will see cuts to DFO and to ACOA. It makes no commitments of any substance to the people I am here to represent. It barely even gives a nod to the millions of Canadians who voted for change in this country. For the most part, the budget caters to those who, I would suggest, are already doing quite well and ignores the very real and pressing needs of many of our citizens. It does nothing to create meaningful social or economic progress for Canadians.

To point to job creation numbers as a sign of success when many of those jobs are part-time with no benefits, no security and a

minimum wage that is not a living wage, is not progress. To cut this country's deficit by cutting the very programs and services that many Canadians count on and to not even be up front about where and how deep those cuts will be is not progress. To put the interests of large corporations and the interests of the Prime Minister and his closest allies ahead of the interests of Canadians and citizens who work hard every day to support their families and their communities, the people who are the heart and soul of this country, is not progress.

As the official opposition, we are more than a voice for our constituents. On behalf of our nation, we are also the eyes, the ears and, where needed, the conscience of this House. The budget does not sit particularly well with that conscience because it fails to address or even recognize the needs of Canadian families.

We have been charged with holding the government accountable to all the people of this country. It is a critically important job and we have every intention of living up to our end of the bargain. Will the Government of Canada live up to the bargain that it made with all Canadians, and not just the ones who voted it into power? I say to the members opposite that hope springs eternal.

● (1340)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his election to this House and on his speech.

However, it never ceases to amaze me how he can ignore the facts, and there are a number of facts that he ignored in his speech. One fact is that more than 70% of Canadians voted against his party, so he cannot presume to represent them today. Another fact is the 540,000 net new jobs. He refers to them as part-time, low wage, low sector but he has obviously failed to read the budget. On page 30, it is very clear that 85% are full-time jobs and 90% of them are in the high-wage industries.

Why would my colleague oppose a budget that has many of the initiatives within it that will help to create new jobs, high-paying jobs, such as the extension of the capital cost allowance that will allow businesses to invest in innovation and new technology which will make them more efficient and, therefore, create jobs for Canadians?

● (1345)

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Madam Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his kind words of congratulation.

I want to be clear. Canada is now in a position where there are 300,000 jobs less than there were when the recession started. If the member opposite would like to come to my community of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, he would recognize some of the serious problems associated with unemployment.

The Budget

While the government loves to stand up and preach with numbers about what a great job it has done with the economy, he would see in my community and in many other communities throughout this country that there are considerable numbers of Canadians who, as a result of the government, are not only without jobs, but they are without employment insurance, and that is a shame.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member on his arrival in the House.

I want to discuss the high unemployment numbers that he talked about. I come from a riding that has above average unemployment. We have discussed pilot projects in the House for quite some time. One particular pilot project provides benefits for the best 14 weeks of employment, which calculates the best weeks a person has produced as opposed to the last 14 weeks, which would give them decreased benefits. The government talks about small business but, in rural Canada especially, this is one of the things small business is claiming that it wants and need but it has been extended for only one year.

We have a pilot project that has been going on for approximately five years, so the government should do it or get off the proverbial pot, as it were. In this particular instance, does the member believe that these pilot programs under employment insurance should be made permanent?

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Madam Speaker, I had the opportunity in a former career to spend quite a bit of time in the hon. member's riding, in communities like Gander, Grand Falls and Windsor. It is a fantastic place with unbelievable people. The women and men in those communities are truly the strength of this country. I congratulate him for having the honour of representing those fine people.

What the government has done with the employment insurance system is truly a travesty. In this budget we have seen the government increase premiums while it is continuing to cut benefits.

While the numbers of unemployed are at record levels in this country, people in communities like Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, in communities like those of the member who asked the question, are not eligible for employment insurance or for programs that could be made available to help transition those people into meaningful work and to help those people subsist, pay for the food and the lodging that their families so desperately need while they are looking for work.

We, as the official opposition, will continue to fight for a better, more improved employment insurance system.

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Madam Speaker, not so many weeks ago, in the middle of the federal election campaign, I met a Newfoundland fisherman by the name of Paul Critch. Paul owns a 60-footer and she was tied up at Prosser's Rock boat basin on the south side of St. John's Harbour, the largest fishing port in my home province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Paul is about my age, maybe a couple of years younger, in his early 40s. He is strong and he is capable. We do not see as many such men on the wharfs these days I am sad to report. Paul Critch is also a fifth generation fisherman. We stood there on the wharf on the edge of the North Atlantic Ocean, about as far away from Ottawa as

one can get in this country, a place that many federal bureaucrats, even those with DFO, probably cannot even imagine. We had a conversation about the fishery and where the fishery was headed.

Paul said that he named his boat *Chelsea and Emily* after his two daughters. Upon the birth of his second daughter, Paul said that his father remarked, "Thank God it is not a boy. A grandson would have to go into the fishery, and who wants that?"

This is what Newfoundland and Labrador has come to in terms of our once great fishery, the greatest fishery in the world on the Grand Banks of Newfoundland, the fishery that we presented to Canada in 1949.

Sixty-two years later and our commercial groundfish fishery for species such as cod and flounder are on their knees. They have been managed to annihilation. *History of the Newfoundland Cod Collapse* is the title of a book that was released in 2010. As the title indicates, managed annihilation contends that northern cod were administered into virtual extinction. I give members three guesses as to who did the administering.

We are supposed to run out of oil. We are not supposed to run out of fish. We have hit rock bottom. The time to rebuild is now. Better late than never.

It has been 20 years since the northern cod moratorium and commercial fishing was stopped off the shores of Newfoundland and Labrador for the first time in 500 years. It has been 20 years since the biggest layoff in Canadian history and what has been done? Nothing. Rebuilding is the furthest thing from the mind of the Conservative government. Rebuilding is a foreign concept.

I sat and listened to the Minister of Finance, the member for Whitby—Oshawa, Monday as he tabled his budget. I listened to every word. It is a wonderful thing to be able to hear a member of Parliament when he or she speaks.

I compliment the leader of the New Democrats, the leader of Her Majesty's official opposition, for his no heckling policy. Before this life, I worked as a journalist for almost 20 years. I have sat in the gallery of my home legislature and watched as politicians behaved like insolent children. It is not a pretty sight and it can be an embarrassing sight.

As I read this morning in the *Ottawa Citizen*:

We need passionate, even biting, debate in Parliament. What we don't need are childish insults and grandstanding.

Well done I say to the Leader of the Opposition and member for Toronto—Danforth.

I listened to the Minister of Finance when he spoke so proudly of the budget but I saw more of the same for my province. We have hit rock bottom but the Conservative government sees fit to pound us further into the ground. That will be enough of that.

Statements by Members

Under program review, the Conservative government has seen fit to further cut the budget of Fisheries and Oceans Canada by almost \$85 million. That will be \$9.1 million gone this fiscal year, \$18.9 million gone in 2012-13 and a further \$56.8 million gone in 2013-14. That will be \$84.8 million less for the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans to continue doing what little work it is doing today. On top of that, according to federal budget estimates, DFO's overall budget is almost \$145 million less this fiscal year than last fiscal year, plus, as I have outlined, \$87 million in savings targeted by the Conservative government in cuts to DFO.

• (1350)

To make matters worse, and, yes, they can still get worse, the Minister of Finance spoke in this chamber Monday about finding a further \$4 billion in savings. Where is that \$4 billion going to come from? From fisheries? As they say where I come from, "You can't get blood from a turnip". The people of Newfoundland and Labrador, the fishermen of Newfoundland and Labrador have nothing left to give.

What I so dearly would have loved for the Minister of Finance to announce Monday was an inquiry into the fall of the Newfoundland and Labrador fisheries. The fisheries fell almost 20 years ago and they have yet to rise. The question is, why? The call for an inquiry is supported by my party, the New Democratic Party. Where does the Conservative government stand on an inquiry into the Newfoundland and Labrador fisheries?

John Crosbie once asked, "Who hears the fishes when they cry?" I can answer that: no one.

I have another question, a bigger one. Who hears the fishermen when they cry? The New Democrats hear the cry.

Do the Conservatives hear the fishermen when they cry, the few fishermen who are left?

I will continue to listen when members opposite take to their feet. The fishermen of Newfoundland and Labrador will be listening as well.

Maybe some day we will want our sons to be fishermen again and our sons will want to be fishermen.

• (1355)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I welcome my colleague to the chamber. I have a question for him.

It is very difficult for our sons and daughters to be involved in the fishery these days. We are looking at a situation where most management decisions based on science are going to go through a pattern of quick decisions and last-minute decisions. The people who are serious about the fishery, not only in Newfoundland and Labrador but throughout the rest of the country, will be in a position where there is complete uncertainty, uncertainty for my riding and for his riding. Therefore, the government has to get serious about this. The cuts that the Conservatives talk about proves that this will be a bad situation that will become worse in the very near future.

My colleague has a point. Where is that \$4 billion going to come from?

How badly will this impact the management decisions, particularly in science, in the Department of Fisheries and Oceans?

Mr. Ryan Cleary: Madam Speaker, that is a very good question. Where is the \$4 billion in cuts going to come from?

Until the Conservative government outlines where it plans on saving that \$4 billion, the fishermen of Newfoundland and Labrador, the fishermen of eastern Canada, will all be on pins and needles, waiting for the axe to drop. That is not a way for fishermen to live.

We have a history in the Newfoundland and Labrador fishery of 500 years. Now it is to the point where the sons of fishermen no longer want to do what their fathers did, no longer want to take to the sea.

We need an inquiry for a number of reasons.

We need to investigate science. Where does science stand within the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans?

We need to investigate management, in particular. The management of the Newfoundland and Labrador fisheries has been a complete and utter failure. For proof, we need look no further than to the sea. There are few boats on the water and few fishermen on the sea.

We need to look into quotas. Who holds the rights to quotas of fish off the waters of Newfoundland and Labrador? Who is fishing the quotas? Are the boats that are fishing the quotas registered? If they are registered in Canada, who owns the vessels? Are they owned by Canadians?

We need to look into the marketing of the fish. Is the marketing being done by Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, by Canadians, or is it being done by foreigners?

I ask these questions but I do not expect answers. I do not think the Conservative government knows them. For the questions that I have asked in the past, I have not been given answers. I have been told that the answers may impact negatively on international relations, not Newfoundland and Labrador relations but international relations.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member will have two minutes for questions and comments after question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

NIAGARA REGION CHIEF OF POLICE

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to pay tribute to an outstanding constituent of Niagara West—Glanbrook, the Niagara Regional Police Service Chief of Police, Wendy Southall.

Chief Southall will be at Rideau Hall tomorrow to be invested into the Order of Merit of the Police Forces. Forty-three distinguished men and women from across Canada will be recognized tomorrow by Governor General David Johnston. Chief Southall will be one of only seven to be invested as an Officer of the Order.

Statements by Members

Chief Southall began her policing career in 1970 in Toronto, joining Niagara Regional in 1982 and has risen through the ranks, performing with distinction in each of the many roles she has undertaken.

In her inaugural speech as chief of police in 2005, Wendy placed her number one priority on “keeping our streets safe in a cost effective manner with innovative changes”. She has always worked toward this goal and under her leadership the already low crime rate in the Niagara Region has been further reduced.

I thank Chief Wendy Southall for her service to our community and congratulate her on receiving this exceptional recognition.

* * *

• (1400)

[*Translation*]

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Manon Perreault (Montcalm, NDP): Madam Speaker, I wish to thank my leader and his team for their help and support, which have been so valuable, as well as the people of Montcalm for their support and their great vote of confidence. I can assure them that we will continue to work tirelessly to meet the needs of today's families.

I would especially like to share my election victory with all members of the Handami Association and all Canadians with disabilities. I fully intend to use this opportunity to increase awareness among the members of the House regarding the importance of social programs to combat isolation and to allow people with disabilities to play an active role in our society.

I truly hope that together we will find real solutions to improve the quality of life of all Canadians, including Canadians with disabilities.

* * *

TOBIQUE—MACTAQUAC

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on May 2, the people of Tobique—Mactaquac did me the honour of electing me to represent them as their member of Parliament for the third time. I want to thank them for the confidence they have placed in me.

[*English*]

I want to express my appreciation to the many volunteers who worked hard for our team and the tremendous support from my family.

May was also bittersweet in that, on May 23, we said goodbye to our mother after a long battle with Alzheimer's. I remember back in 2003 when I first told mom I would be offering for political office, her immediately reply was that I was crazier than heck.

However, she stood by me and I know that the values she taught us, of hard work, honesty, integrity and commitment to family, friends and community, have played a major part in my success to date and the many positive relationships built in Tobique—Mactaquac since 2006.

Again, I thank the residents of Tobique—Mactaquac for their support, and I thank mom for all the special training she gave us growing up. There is a hole in our hearts with mom gone. We miss her and we love her.

* * *

ZERO FORCE CYCLING TEAM

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Sunday three extraordinary young men set off on a 7,200 kilometre bike ride across Canada.

Drew Steeves, Mitch Torrens and Laurent Gzaille, the riders of the Zero Force Cycling Team, are graduates of John Abbott College in my riding of Lac-Saint-Louis. They will spend the summer biking from Vancouver to Halifax to raise awareness and funds for Lieutenant-General Roméo Dallaire's child soldier initiative.

[*Translation*]

This is a fine example of young people helping young people. The three cyclists and the volunteers travelling with them are almost all under 20. They decided to do something to help the 250,000 children around the world who are forced to live in unimaginable brutality.

[*English*]

I invite all hon. colleagues to join me in wishing the Zero Force Cycling Team a safe and successful journey across our great land. Please visit www.cyclingwithzeroforce.com to link up with the Zero Force riders and join in their mission to end the child soldier crisis, perhaps by arranging to greet and welcome them as they pass through the members' communities.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last Friday was the Logan Lake High School graduation in my riding of Okanagan—Coquihalla. My thoughts were certainly with those young students. Graduation is a special time with their hopes, dreams and aspirations all before them.

It is not lost on me that the work we will do in this 41st Parliament can have an important role in their future. If we are to succeed, these students will need jobs and a strong economy. However, often the policies that encourage economic growth and investment are opposed.

If we oppose economic growth and investment, are we prepared to accept increased taxes and debt or reduced services? Often we are not.

I ask that in this 41st Parliament we stay mindful of grandparents to be able to retire with dignity, mindful that we cannot leave an unpayable burden of debt to our children and mindful that now is our time as parliamentarians to work together to build a bright future for all Canadians.

•(1405)

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by thanking the people of Beauharnois—Salaberry for the confidence they showed in me on May 2. The people have chosen the NDP, a party that addresses their interests and works for families.

Since 2004, in Beauharnois—Salaberry, five major companies have closed their doors, leaving more than 2,200 people out of work. I am talking about Cleyn & Tinker, Huntingdon Mills, Gildan, Goodyear and Rio Tinto Alcan. What is more, the Lake St. Francis National Wildlife Area has had its budget cut by 60%. With an employment insurance system that is inaccessible to far too many people, making ends meet is not easy for many workers back home.

I am committed to making the creation of high-quality, full-time jobs my priority. The government has to convert its rhetoric into concrete measures for workers—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Mississauga South.

* * *

[English]

MISSISSAUGA SOUTH

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House to tell members about some of the great events that I was privileged to attend this past weekend in my riding of Mississauga South.

After the official opening of the Port Credit Farmers Market, I was delighted to attend a re-enactment of a citizenship swearing-in ceremony at the Canadian Pavilion of Carassauga.

The Mississauga rotary club's annual lobster festival followed, where about 750 guests cracked open thousands of claws and dipped 2,800 pounds of east coast lobster into vats of artery-clogging melted butter.

On Sunday, I attended Canoe the Credit, a fundraiser for the youth corps of the Credit Valley Conservation Authority. Its slogan, "Our Credit is Good", sums up perfectly how we feel about this beautiful river. I would like to thank the young people for caring about water quality in our community.

As we can see, Mississauga South is a vibrant and energetic place to live. I feel immensely fortunate to represent the wonderful people of Mississauga South.

* * *

SLAVE LAKE

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the town of Slave Lake, Alberta has been devastated by wildfires. Much of the town has been burned, including many homes and businesses. The outpouring of support from all over Alberta and the country has been appreciated. I am particularly proud of central Albertans who have volunteered their time and donated needed items.

Statements by Members

Jo Dumont, the owner of Dumont Fitness in Red Deer, along with Shelley Boston and Tom and Jordana Simms helped to organize what they thought would be a small relief effort for Slave Lake. Soon after the word got out, the endeavour became a major project. The Red Deer gym became a hub for central Albertans to donate food, clothing and bottled water, eventually sending five semi-truckloads of goods from Red Deer to the Slave Lake area.

Central Albertans have a great history of helping their neighbours and pulling together when disaster strikes. I witnessed such community spirit first-hand after the Pine Lake tornado and it has been repeated again.

I would like to congratulate Dumont Fitness and all of the donors for helping the people of Slave Lake.

* * *

NEWTON—NORTH DELTA

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am so humbled and honoured to have been given the confidence of the citizens and families of Newton—North Delta to represent their concerns in the House. Although my riding is one of the most diverse ridings in this country, their concerns are exactly the same as the concerns that voters expressed throughout the country.

My riding is made up of families that are diverse culturally, ethnically, linguistically and economically, but every one of these families, when I met them on their doorsteps, expressed a deep concern for the future of their children and our way of life in Canada, from the cost of tuition to the cost of care for their parents and the elderly, from the price of child care and gasoline to the general cost of living. They are very worried. They are worried about their pensions, their jobs and about our public health care system. They are generally worried about their standard of living and the future of our country.

I make a commitment to be their voice—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Mississauga—Brampton South.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Ms. Eve Adams (Mississauga—Brampton South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am humbled to rise for the first time in the House. May I thank my neighbours, the great voters of Mississauga—Brampton South, for their kindness and support. I promise to repay their trust with an immense amount of hard work.

Statements by Members

To start, our Conservative majority government is providing support for families in a number of ways: a new children's art tax credit on up to \$500 in eligible fees; a new family caregiver tax credit on an amount of \$2,000 for caregivers of all types; an enhanced medical expense tax credit removing the limit on the amount of eligible medical expenses that can be claimed on behalf of a financially-dependent relative; an extension on the eco-energy retrofit homes program; and full-time students will now be allowed to earn more money without affecting their loans by doubling the in-study exemption to \$100 per week and giving them a tax break on certification fees.

Our strong, stable national Conservative majority government is delivering for Canadian families.

* * *

● (1410)

[*Translation*]

SOCIAL ECONOMY

Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is no value more Canadian than lending a helping hand to others. There is no better shared ambition than making sure that everyone is happy.

As a result, countless professionals and volunteers devote their talents and energy to building support networks that, each day, transform the lives of Canadians by helping them to maintain their dignity and hope.

However, the government must provide financial support equivalent to the well-recognized generosity of Canadians.

When we see the efforts that stakeholders in the social economy are making to manage their minuscule budgets, it is difficult to understand how the government can “strengthen compliance requirements with respect to certain organizations” and “limit unintended or excessive benefits”, as it proposes in chapter 4.2 of its budget.

Rather than sowing seeds of doubt, the NDP proposes that we provide unfailing support and encouragement to those devoted to working for the common good.

* * *

[*English*]

SENIORS

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am humbled to stand for the first time in the House of Commons to represent the people of Simcoe—Grey, who elected me.

Our strong, stable national Conservative majority government is continuing to support seniors through the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. We are enhancing the GIS. Now, eligible low-income seniors will receive additional annual top-up benefits of \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples, helping more than 680,000 seniors across Canada. We are enhancing the new horizons for seniors program by providing an additional \$10 million to promote volunteerism, mentorship and the social participation of seniors, and to expand awareness of elder abuse.

We are expanding the targeted initiative for older workers through an additional \$50 million to extend that initiative. We are eliminating the mandatory retirement age for federally regulated employees. This gives seniors more choices.

Our strong, stable national Conservative majority government is standing up for seniors.

* * *

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, wilful blindness is evident when there are things we could know and should know but somehow we manage not to know. The human capacity to ignore what is in front of us is staggering. A Harvard study asked subjects watching a basketball game to count the number of passes. No one noticed a woman in a gorilla suit standing at centre court for nine seconds.

The government has been made aware that over 12,500 treatment procedures for CCSVI have now been undertaken worldwide in over 50 countries and that some MS patients report improved quality of life, including reduced brain fog and fatigue and improved circulation and motor skills, following the procedure. We need evidence-based medicine in Canada.

Why then is there the refusal to undertake a nationally funded, multi-centre clinical trial to determine if treating CCSVI will improve the quality of life of MS patients?

Multiple treatment trials are under way in the U.S. It is time for Canada to act.

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan will provide assistance to families and communities.

For example, we are enhancing the guaranteed income supplement for seniors who rely almost exclusively on old age security benefits and on this supplement.

The new annual top-up benefit will improve the financial security of more than 680,000 seniors across the country.

We are creating a tax credit for family caregivers of all types of infirm dependent relatives, including, for the first time, spouses, common-law spouses and minor children.

We will also create a children's arts tax credit to help parents pay for artistic, cultural, recreational and developmental activities for their children.

In good times, as in bad times, the government has always made responsible choices to ensure a better quality of life for all Canadians.

* * *

● (1415)

[English]

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the voters in York South—Weston, who sent me here to advocate for them. I will do my utmost to bring forward their issues in this House, like public transit.

Public transit supports economic activity, improves productivity and, done right, it helps clean the air. In York South—Weston, public transit is an important public service, as it is across Canada.

Unfortunately, public transit is not a priority of the government. Aside from the gas tax rebate negotiated nearly a decade ago by then-FCM president, the hon. member for Toronto—Danforth, the current federal government refuses to support this crucial element of our economic life. This must change if we are to help Canadians in their daily life.

The federal government must develop a national public-transit strategy so that sensible investments in public transit like electric light rail can be made to meet the needs of millions of Canadians.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is focused on the economy, supporting hard-working Canadians and their families and completing the economy recovery.

Yesterday, we introduced the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, a low tax plan for jobs and growth. Here is what is being said about it.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities said:

We applaud the Government of Canada for committing in today's budget to develop a new long-term infrastructure plan in partnership with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), provinces, territories, and the private sector.

The Canadian Association of Retired Persons noted that it was very happy to see the increase in the guaranteed income supplement, an issue that it had raised many times before and that was finally being addressed.

The Certified General Accountants Association of Canada stated:

—we're happy with today's federal budget because many—including families, seniors and small businesses—will benefit from the measures announced today.

We remain focused on supporting hard-working Canadians and their families.

Oral Questions

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what is most disappointing about the throne speech and the budget is that the government refuses to acknowledge the employment crisis. There are 300,000 more unemployed people than there were before the recession. The jobs that the government is boasting that it has created are temporary, precarious and part-time.

Why is the Prime Minister refusing to acknowledge the failure of his job creation policies, which the people need right now?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating the member for Toronto—Danforth for becoming the Leader of the Opposition. This is a historical first for his party. He should be proud.

Creating jobs remains a major priority for this government. We have one of the best records in this regard among developing countries, and we will continue to move in that direction.

[English]

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my congratulations to the Prime Minister as well for his successful election.

The government seems to be pinning its entire solution to the job situation on one response: the reduction of corporate tax rates to big profitable companies. However, the strength of our education system, the skills of the workforce, the reliability of our health care system, the state of our infrastructure, these are all vitally important issues when investors make decisions and, as an economist, I am sure the Prime Minister would know.

Why not—

The Speaker: The Right Hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, the government's emphasis on job creation involves many priorities, not just keeping taxes low, which is critically important, but also, as the throne speech and other government documents have said, critical investments in infrastructure, investments in research and education, investments in trade, making sure we open markets to Canadian businesses.

These priorities explain why Canada has one of the best job creation records among the developed countries in the post-recession period.

* * *

● (1420)

THE BUDGET

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has labelled his \$17 billion in cuts to the budget over the next five years as modest. He said his critics are living in a fantasy world if they think that these will affect essential services.

Oral Questions

What about the unemployed who cannot get the benefits they need? Are they living in a fantasy world? What about the seniors who have seen their pensions disappear? Are they living in a fantasy world? What about families without family doctors? Are they living in a fantasy world?

I have a simple question. What services will Canadians have to do without when the Prime Minister is finished his cuts?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, Canadians expect us to manage their tax dollars wisely. We are looking at budget reductions in the neighbourhood of less than 2% across the entire size of government, 5% in operational expenses over a three-year period. Canadians expect us to cut this kind of fat and find these kinds of efficiencies.

This government has been very clear. We will not cut pensions. We will not cut transfers to the provinces for major programs such as health care.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government is trying to scare people with the deficit issue. However, a year ago, the minister's deficit projections were off by \$13 billion. He has changed his mind three times in six months. He lacks credibility.

Before cutting programs and services, should the Minister of Finance not put his books in order and give the people the real figures?

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are in the process of balancing our budget and eliminating the deficit.

[*English*]

If members do not mind, I would like to quote the IMF, which said very clearly:

—Canada's overall fiscal outlook...stands out as among the best in the G20.

That is proof that our economic action plan did its job. It is proof that the next phase of our economic action plan has some wherewithal to deal with the problems that we see here in Canada.

I would hope that the opposition members would side with us and vote for our budget.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, she should tell that to the millions who are unemployed or underemployed. It is simply not good enough.

The government's plan for billions in corporate tax cuts means only one thing: cuts to programs and services that Canadians rely on, cuts to seniors living in poverty and cuts for struggling families, or is it really cuts to health care? These cuts are not worth the cost.

Will the minister cancel his reckless across-the-board corporate tax giveaways and invest in the things Canadians count on, like health care, infrastructure and the small businesses that create jobs?

Will he do that?

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in March we presented the next

phase of Canada's economic action plan. It was a positive plan to keep taxes low. That is what Canadians were asking for.

This plan is now going to support the creation of jobs. It is going to support Canadians in every effort that they want to push forward. Almost every organization has supported the fact that we want to lower those corporate taxes so that corporations can actually produce those jobs.

If those taxes go up, as proposed by the NDP, consumers will pay and workers will pay.

We will not do that to the Canadian public.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister will be aware that 25 million Canadians file their income taxes. Of those 25 million, 15 million actually pay taxes and 10 million do not.

I have a very simple question for the Prime Minister. In dealing with the tax credits which were announced in the budget for piano lessons and art lessons and for taking care of loved ones, I would like to ask the Prime Minister why 10 million Canadians and more have been cut off and disqualified from being able to receive those tax credits because they have not—

The Speaker: The Right Hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate also the member for Toronto Centre on becoming the interim leader of the Liberal Party of Canada.

The budget has many important programs, many important benefits, some of which the leader of the Liberal Party mentioned, including some of the important tax credits for Canadian families, for caregivers and for children's arts.

I would encourage the Liberal Party, rather than just saying it should be more, to actually look at these things as positive benefits and to support these benefits for Canadians.

● (1425)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact remains that those most in need of programs have been excluded from Conservative programs.

At the same time, does the government realize that the approximate increase of \$1.67 per day in the guaranteed income supplement will not lift low-income seniors out of poverty and, above all, will not show them our respect for the country they have passed on to us?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the increase in the guaranteed income supplement is the largest increase in this benefit in the past 25 years. It is a much larger increase than has been made at any time by any previous government. I encourage the Liberal Party to do something positive and to support this increase, which is so important for our seniors.

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's manufacturing sector is tanking, and we are losing construction jobs. Construction starts are down now. Good full-time jobs are being replaced by part-time work.

Instead of offering short-term band-aids, will the minister extend the eco-energy retrofit program and the accelerated cost program for manufacturers for a full five years? This would allow Canadian employers and families to focus on the long term, to make long-term decisions to create good full-time jobs.

Will the minister do this?

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to congratulate my colleague for once again being elected to the House.

I want to reiterate that in this budget we have in fact extended the eco-energy retrofit program. That will allow Canadian families to make their homes more energy efficient. That will protect our environment.

There are a number of very good budget measures. I would encourage my colleague to read the budget so that he can see them very clearly for himself.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, millions of Canadians have to get by without the medical care they need because they do not have a family doctor. This means more families are turning to emergency rooms just for primary care. Not only is this hurting the health of Canadians, but it also increases the pressure on emergency rooms and costs millions more for everyone.

Will the government finally agree to work with the provinces and the territories to hire more health care professionals?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member is well aware, the health accord expires in 2014, not this year, not next year and not the year after.

In the meantime, our government will continue to work with the provinces and the territories on the present accord and priorities identified, such as encouraging the statutory review of the accord in both the Senate and the House, as well as to be supportive of the provinces and territories in the reduction of wait times.

We have also gained a lot of ground on establishing electronic health records and a number of other initiatives.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after seven years with that health accord, none of it is translated into doctors for Canadian families.

The Conservatives had a second chance to address this in the budget but, incredibly, they let it go. The fact is that Canada needs thousands of new doctors and nurses stat, and the provinces are looking to the federal government to help solve this need.

Oral Questions

Again, will the government work with us to improve these front-line services so that Canadian families get the health care they need and deserve?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government supports the efforts of the provinces and territories to effectively manage their health care providers so that there are adequate numbers of medical practitioners available to their residents.

While the supply of physicians and nurses is a provincial and territorial responsibility, our government has increased health care transfers to the provinces and territories by more than 33% since we formed the government.

As well, I recently announced federal funding to support more than 100 family medicine residents to receive training in provinces to provide medical services to remote and rural communities.

* * *

[Translation]

FOOD SAFETY

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with the E. coli outbreak in Europe, in Germany in particular, Canadians have good reason to be concerned about the safety of their food. This crisis emerged despite the fact that Germany has a better food inspection system than Canada.

Can the government assure Canadians that our food inspection system will protect them from this type of harm?

● (1430)

[English]

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, food safety is of key importance to this government.

We are taking measures to protect Canadians against what is happening in the European Union. CFIA is implementing enhanced border controls on vegetables from the European Union. If affected products are found, CFIA will facilitate recalls to keep Canadian families safe.

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have heard this story before. The government promises \$100 million over five years for food safety, yet the budget delivers \$9 million in the first year, \$8 million in the second year and, of course, nothing after that.

In 2009 the government promised to fix food inspection in this country, yet here we are again with the same old promises. Why should Canadians trust the Conservatives now?

Will the minister commit to increasing and accelerating the funding in the first two years to ensure that food safety is safe for all Canadians?

Oral Questions

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the member that a report on OECD countries recognized that Canada's superior food safety system ranks us the best in the world on food recalls.

Speaking of the budget, our recent budget includes an additional \$100 million over five years to enhance food safety. Will the member who is so concerned about food safety support this budget?

* * *

SENIORS

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today a quarter of a million Canadian seniors live in poverty. Seniors who built this country and cared for us are struggling to afford basics like food, housing and prescription drugs.

Instead of lifting every senior out of poverty, the government chose to give the poorest seniors a mere \$50 a month.

How can the minister possibly explain why corporate tax giveaways are more important than raising all Canadian seniors out of poverty?

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague once again for returning to this House. It is going to be a joy to work with her.

I want to address the very need of seniors. As we all know, seniors are expecting to have this increase in the guaranteed income supplement. I am hopeful that my colleague across the way is prepared to support the measure in the budget to increase the guaranteed income supplement for our seniors, and if not, why not.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in Canada, almost half the women over 65 who live alone have incomes below the poverty line. This government boasts about helping seniors, but it is giving crumbs to only a third of seniors in need.

Why is this government abandoning two-thirds of seniors in need, the majority of whom are women living alone?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we want to help our seniors, who helped build this great and beautiful country. That is why, in yesterday's budget, we included an increase to the GIS in order to help the most vulnerable seniors. I hope the NDP will support this effort to help these people.

* * *

PENSIONS

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last month, the president and CEO of the Canada pension plan explained that public pension funds were ripe for expansion. They will be viable for the next 75 years, and by 2050, they will be worth over one thousand billion dollars. Meanwhile, private pension funds lost billions of dollars during the recession.

Why is this government still asking Canadians to put their savings in private banks and mutual funds, rather than improving public pensions?

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wish to welcome my new colleague across the floor.

We are working hard to improve retirement security for Canadians. Together with the provinces, we have invested in innovative proposals aimed at improving pensions even further. However, like the provinces, we have some concerns about the NDP's proposals. I would like to quote Raymond Bachand:

The proposed changes to the retirement income system must take into account the impact they may have on businesses and households, at a time when the global economic recovery remains hesitant.

• (1435)

[*English*]

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadian families have always been told that if they saved a little and let the market work its magic, they would have enough funds when it came time to retire, but Canadian families who lost billions of dollars during the recession see this for just what it is: smoke and mirrors. Now, instead of expanding a healthy CPP, the government is moving full steam ahead with a risky private pooled pension plan.

Just whose side is the government on, Canadian families or their friends?

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to stand again on behalf of pensioners.

We have been working very hard to improve Canadians' retirement security. For instance, we reformed the framework governing federally regulated pensions to better protect pensioners.

With the provinces, we mentioned the pooled registered pension plan. We are also looking at CPP reforms, but we and many provinces are very concerned about the proposition by the NDP to double the CPP.

I heard Catherine Swift of the CFIB state on CPAC just yesterday that they believe it would be a 60% to 70% increase to all businesses across the way. They are not in support of that.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the people of Moncton are shocked to learn that some very respected members of their community are facing deportation.

The Maeng family have put down firm roots since moving to Canada eight years ago. They have built their own business, and their eldest son is studying to become a dentist.

Oral Questions

However, despite having disclosed their younger son's health problems from the outset, they are now being told that his autism and epilepsy disqualify them from permanent residency.

Will the minister commit to reviewing this troubling decision on humanitarian and compassionate grounds?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all I congratulate the member on his re-election and his appointment as the immigration critic for the official opposition.

The member knows that the minister cannot comment on particular cases because of the Privacy Act. Having said that, there is a very fair process, including access to applications for permanent residency for humanitarian and compassionate reasons by individuals. Those are not considered by elected officials but by highly trained public servants.

I would point out that there is in our law provision for medical inadmissibility for those who the provinces deem would represent an undue burden to our tax-funded public health care system.

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HEALTH

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday's budget shows no leadership on health care.

A 2004 health accord goal to reduce wait times calls for effective community services, including home care. After five years of Conservative government, there is still no national home care, and wait times for acute hospital beds remain unacceptably high.

While it dithers on the 2014 accord, will the government tell us what steps it will take to implement the wait times goal and create a national home care strategy?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in our effort to support the provinces and territories to deliver health care we have increased the transfers by 33% since we formed government. We have also sent additional funding to the provinces and territories to help with a specific wait time guarantee. A number of provinces have made improvements in important wait time areas. Recently I announced over 100 family medicine residencies for rural practice.

As well, our government takes concrete action to support provinces and territories in delivering health care—

The Speaker: The member for Papineau.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the agreement with the provinces on health will come to an end in barely three years. For quite some time now, the premiers of Quebec and Ontario, among others, have been calling on this government to convene a meeting with all the premiers, but to no avail. In fact, in his six years on the job, the Prime Minister has never held any formal meetings with his provincial counterparts on any topic.

When will he take his responsibility as Prime Minister seriously and initiate dialogue to plan the future of our health care system?

[*English*]

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, the health accord expires in 2014; not this year, not next year, and not the year after.

In the meantime, our government has been working with the provinces and territories on the present accord. We have encouraged the statutory review of the 2004 accord in both the Senate and the House. As well, we have been supported by the provinces and territories in the reduction of wait times. Also, we have gained a lot of ground in establishing electronic health records. Provinces and territories continue to deliver the—

● (1440)

The Speaker: The hon. member for York West.

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SENIORS

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after months of talk about the difficulties facing seniors throughout Canada, I am clearly disappointed in budget 2011. The \$1.67 a day for the poorest of the poor and non-refundable tax credits just do not cut it.

Given the increases on gas, hydro, food, et cetera, it is making it very difficult for people to cope on a day-to-day basis and stay in their homes. I heard this on the doorsteps in Toronto, but clearly the Conservatives did not.

Where is the vision, the plan to make a difference in the lives of seniors? Do they not deserve better? Are they just going—

The Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Hon. Alice Wong (Minister of State (Seniors), CPC): Mr. Speaker, since this is my first time to rise in the House, I would like to thank the voters of Richmond for voting me back in with 58.4%.

I would like to correct the member on some facts.

With the next phase of the economic action plan we are enhancing the GIS in the new horizons program. We are also ensuring the strength of the retirement income system and introducing a new family caregiver tax credit. In fact, when asked about these measures, CARP's Vice President of Advocacy said that their members are "happy and thrilled with these issues—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

*Oral Questions***CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD**

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Wheat Board is the largest and most successful grain marketing company in the world. It is a great Canadian institution wholly owned and operated by Canadian farmers. Now the Conservative government wants to legislate it out of existence without even allowing the farmer producers to vote on it.

If there is such great merit in the government's position on the Wheat Board, why does it not follow the legislation and allow Prairie producers to have a democratic vote on it?

The Conservatives' majority does not mean they can run roughshod over democracy.

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. speaker, certainly there was no vote for farmers who were forced into this monopoly in the first place. The real vote took place on May 2 when farmers across western Canada expressed their opinion about the Canadian Wheat Board and its monopoly in electing members on this side of the House to support them virtually right across the Prairies. Those farmers wanted the same freedom that other producers across this country have had for many years.

There appears to be a small group who do not want the Wheat Board to succeed after change. I hope the member opposite is not one of those people and that he will work with us to create a new environment for farmers.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is no business case for abolishing the Canadian Wheat Board. It is an ideological crusade that defies reason, logic and even economics.

Before the Conservatives use the heavy hand of the state to deny farmers their democratic right to vote, will they at least table any cost benefit analysis, any research they might have, any impact study on the Port of Churchill and the Hudson Bay line in northern Manitoba, the rural economic base for rural communities?

Surely the Conservatives would have done this research before they would undermine the Prairie economy by destroying this great Canadian institution. Will they table it here today?

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we can see why the member has been moved off the portfolio that he had before, because he made as much of a fool of himself on that as he is on this issue.

We have a letter—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Jonquière—Alma.

* * *

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Claude Patry (Jonquière—Alma, NDP): Mr. Speaker, despite the Minister of Finance's optimism, there are close to 1.5 million unemployed workers in Canada. That is over 330,000 in Quebec alone.

What is even worse is that nearly 6 out of every 10 unemployed workers who have paid premiums for years are not entitled to receive benefits when they lose their jobs.

How can the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development justify the fact that the budget tabled yesterday does not offer anything to the unemployed workers in my region?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister said today, job creation is a major priority for our government. It is the best way to help unemployed workers. That is why the budget includes incentives for small businesses to hire new employees. In addition, the targeted initiative for older workers is still in place to help unemployed workers prepare for these jobs. I therefore hope that the hon. member will support these initiatives to help these people.

• (1445)

[*English*]

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are learning today that the former parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Defence saw hope that higher unemployment would help recruiting for the Canadian Forces. It is unbelievable.

Would the government tell the House whether it favours higher unemployment for this reason? Does this explain its lack of a proper job creation strategy?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our job creation strategy is far-ranging.

It includes helping small businesses by giving them incentives to hire new people. It gives them incentives to invest in new equipment to make them more productive and more competitive on the world stage.

We are trying to help people get back to work so that Canada can be as strong as it can possibly be competing on the global stage. We need to support workers. We need to support industry so it can grow.

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FINANCE

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has been a world leader as we continue along the path to economic recovery.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance comment on what Canada is doing to ensure our fiscal advantage?

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to thank the member for her hard work on this file.

Oral Questions

Last year we set out a three-point plan to return to budget balance by winding down the temporary stimulus, putting in place targeted spending restraint measures, and reviewing government administrative and overhead costs.

This year we are building on that plan by delivering on the 2010 strategic reviews, closing tax loopholes and launching a one-year government-wide strategic and operating review.

We remain on track to balance our budget by 2015-16.

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[Translation]

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as members know, the Conservatives' slogan throughout the election campaign was "Our region in power". Like many constituents in my region, I am very disappointed.

When we look at the government's plan, we see that the regions of Quebec are not a real priority for the government. In its budget, the government plans on cutting close to a third of the budget of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec.

Can the minister explain how these cuts to economic development agencies can benefit the regions of Quebec?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec is a very important tool for all regions of Quebec. I visited the member's riding a number of times before he came along, and we have always worked for all regions of Quebec. With respect to his claims of cutting one-third of spending, I think he should take out his calculator and do his homework.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, tax cuts for major corporations do not create jobs in the north. FedNor is a real economic driver in northern Ontario, and it would not cost anything to make this agency independent and protected from ministerial interference.

When will the minister make FedNor independent, like the other development agencies in Canada?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as usual, the member for Nickel Belt is in favour of a change that increases bureaucracy and not in favour of measures to lower unemployment.

[English]

On our side of the House, we are focused on making sure that FedNor is doing its job. That means ensuring services are out in northern Ontario helping northern Ontarians and Canadians get new jobs and new opportunity. That is the right way for FedNor to go.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday's budget confirmed the government has no plan for getting people back to work. It gave billions of tax breaks to its Bay Street

buddies, but plans on cutting the western economic diversification fund.

Communities in western Canada need help recovering jobs lost in the recession. Why is the government cutting a program that helps create jobs in western Canada?

● (1450)

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to make the member aware that my department was given the responsibility of delivering key economic plan initiatives for the west. Through the RInC and CAF programs we invest in rinks, athletic parks, community halls, much needed facilities in communities across the four provinces. These were temporary programs designed to create jobs through the economic downturn, and since July 2009 we have created over 460,000 new jobs.

Our government believes in creating jobs and new opportunities. The member might want to know his party voted against that.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday's budget shows the Conservatives have forgotten about Atlantic Canadians.

After cutting ACOA by \$64 million last year, the Minister of Finance, yesterday, promised a further \$15 million in cuts.

With the economic recovery still fragile and the jobless rate unacceptably high in Atlantic Canada, why is the minister choosing to make massive tax breaks for wealthy corporations while cutting regional development programs like ACOA?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency) (La Francophonie), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question and his concern for Atlantic Canadians which we all share on this side of the House.

Canadians have given us a clear mandate to keep taxes low and to balance the budget. ACOA has identified a way to reduce its internal services cost, making it more efficient. What is important for the member to acknowledge and recognize is that all of ACOA's programs to business and to communities are supported—

The Speaker: The hon. member for St. Paul's.

*Oral Questions***ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, sadly budget 2011 is an abdication of the government's responsibilities to aboriginal peoples.

I ask the minister how he thinks that aboriginal youth could prosper without education, a safe home and running water? How can the minister defend that yesterday's budget cuts funding to aboriginal housing by \$127 million below budget 2008, before the EAP? Where is the concerted action that was promised on Friday?

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is building on its impressive record in major investments and unprecedented collaboration with aboriginals to increase the educational outcome for first nations children and to address priority areas such as water and waste water infrastructure. Our current budget builds on those investments and demonstrates our strong commitment.

[Translation]

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I did not hear an answer to the question of the \$127 million being cut in this budget compared to the previous budget. Can the minister answer the question? Common courtesy in this House also means getting answers. It is only natural for the opposition to protest if it does not get an answer. Can he give us an answer regarding the \$127 million in cuts to aboriginal housing?

[English]

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are very good at talking about process and very bad at getting concrete results.

We have invested major dollars during the stimulus spending program. This budget deals with the first nations land management, water, K-12, matrimonial real property and the investment in the major completion of the Dempster Highway. It had good reviews from the national aboriginal leaders. That is good for Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, Quebeckers and Canadians were stunned when Justice James Brunton released about 30 accused people because of the delays expected in their megatrial. The police did their job. The prosecutors did their job. It is time for Parliament to do its job.

Would the Minister of Justice not agree that it is time to introduce a bill in Parliament to put an end to the problems caused by these megatrials?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): First, Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member on his appointment as justice critic for the NDP.

This is certainly the time and it was certainly the time in the last Parliament when we introduced the fair and efficient criminal trials

act that would strengthen case management, reduce duplication and improve criminal procedure. That was a great piece of legislation. We are prepared to re-introduce it. I hope it has the support of the hon. member and his colleagues.

• (1455)

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I can assure him that, in fact, it does have the support of this party and I believe of the Liberal Party as well. It is a welcome development that we move on this. This is a problem that we have known about for several years. In the last Parliament, Bill C-53 was here. We could have passed it at that time if the government had moved on it.

My question to the minister today is this. Will he pledge to the House that we will have the bill before the House and pass it before we leave in the spring?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): That is the easiest pledge I will ever make, Mr. Speaker. We all have an interest in improving the criminal justice system and this, hopefully, portends something new in this Parliament's support for justice legislation. I can assure the hon. member that bill will be tabled forthwith.

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THE BUDGET

Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I understand that members of the cabinet are speaking directly to Canadians from coast to coast on important local issues and key items from yesterday's budget, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan.

I would like to ask the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance to please update the House on what ministers are saying in my riding of Calgary, and Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Toronto, Moncton and St. John's.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome my good friend back to the House.

I would like to tell the House that we have had not just good, positive reaction from ministers but overwhelmingly positive reaction from across Canada. In fact, seniors are happy about our increased income support. Parents appreciate the new children's arts tax credit. Entrepreneurs are actually cheering for the hiring credit for small business.

Let me quote the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. It stated:

[Budget 2011] took some important steps to enhance job creation and recognize the economic contributions of small businesses in Canada.

However, the best reaction—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

*Oral Questions***NATIONAL DEFENCE**

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was much relieved to learn yesterday that the Minister of National Defence and the Minister of Foreign Affairs have patched up their differences over the diplomatic foofaraw that got Canada kicked out of the UAE. The defence minister went on to say that the \$300 million cost of closing Camp Mirage was “completely false”.

In light of the new decorum in the House, would the minister tell the House what is the specific cost of closing the base, what will be the cost of opening the base in Kuwait, and will he table those costs in the House?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate advice from the member opposite in the Liberal Party on how to get along internally within a party. That is something I will keep very much in mind in the future.

However, with respect to the ongoing costs of maintaining a logistic hub in the Middle East, which is very important in supporting our ongoing efforts in Afghanistan and in fact throughout the region, there will be information forthcoming.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about employment. In 2010, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans cut snow crab quotas by more than half. Beforehand, with 20,000 metric tonnes, the plant workers were guaranteed eight weeks of work. Now, because of the reduced quotas, hundreds of people are ending up with less than a month of work and will not be eligible for employment insurance.

Will the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development work with the Government of New Brunswick to establish a community employment program and facilitate access to employment insurance benefits? Let us talk about jobs.

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we certainly want to help the unemployed. That is why yesterday's budget included the initiatives I have already talked about. I can assure hon. members that we are already sending very significant sums to the Government of New Brunswick to help support the unemployed who face constraints specific to that region. I encourage them to take advantage of this.

* * *

[English]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday our government reintroduced the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. This is a positive plan for Canada's future that will keep taxes low, support jobs and growth, improve the quality of life for seniors, families and children, control government spending, and stay on track to eliminate the deficit.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance please inform the House about what the reaction to our next phase of the economic action plan has been?

• (1500)

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to stand again to cheer for this wonderful budget that was presented yesterday by the Minister of Finance. I must admit that there has been such an overwhelming positive response to this budget that I cannot quote every single person who has commented on it. I want to quote in French if the House would allow me.

[Translation]

According to the Conseil du patronat du Québec, “this budget creates an environment favourable to economic development without reducing transfers to individuals, businesses or other levels of government, and without proposing increases in taxes or tariffs...”

The Speaker: The hon. member for Chambly—Borduas.

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FLOODING IN MONTRÉGIE

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, historic floods in Montérégie will have lasting effects on our community, but we are finally beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Unfortunately, with this government, it is too little, too late. After more than 50 days of stress and frustration, flood victims are entitled to clear answers.

Can the minister confirm whether soldiers will stay to help flood victims with the cleanup?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): What I can confirm, Mr. Speaker, is that within 24 hours after predeploying, we had hundreds of Canadian Forces members on the ground in the region supporting the people who were suffering from this flood.

In total, over 844 soldiers helped to protect thousands of acres of farmland. They built two major dikes that needed repair. They put 224,000 sandbags in place and helped community members. They did check visits, went to residences with assistance, water and food. This was an outstanding effort by members of the Canadian Forces.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, over 50 days after the major flooding began in the Haut-Richelieu area, the Prime Minister visited the affected areas and clearly improvised an announcement to calm the rumble of discontent.

Since the fact that the government will assume 50% of the costs under its own cost-sharing program is not new and since the budget does not make any mention of new, additional aid, can the Prime Minister tell us how much money his new mitigation plan will give to flood victims in Montérégie and to those in the Gaspé who are still being ignored?

*The Budget**[English]*

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are pleased to work with the provinces in respect of disaster financial assistance. We have worked well with other provinces in respect of mitigation. New changes have been made to the disaster financial assistance agreement.

I note some of the Prime Minister's comments both during the election and during his well-received tour of the flood areas in Quebec.

I look forward to working on those details with the provinces and with my colleagues in cabinet.

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BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

The Speaker: It is my duty to inform the House that as a result of the order adopted Monday, June 6, two days will be allotted for the supply period ending June 23, 2011.

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POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to apologize for the language I used earlier in the House. I could give an explanation as to why I said it, but I will not choose to do that at this point. I apologize for the language.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS*[English]***THE BUDGET**

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to congratulate you on being elected to the position of Speaker of the House. Congratulations.

I am also pleased to rise this afternoon to discuss our government's 2011 budget and I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Let me first thank my family for the love and support not only during the election campaign but also each and every day that I am asked to serve the people of Canada.

I would also like to thank the people of Red Deer for putting their faith in me once again by re-electing me to represent them in the 41st Parliament. It is an honour to serve and represent them.

It was made clear in the recent election that the people of Canada supported the direction and goals of our government. Canadians

want the economy to continue to be the number one priority and our government has listened.

I would also like to thank the Prime Minister and the finance minister for their invitation last winter to participate in the long and beneficial consultation process of budget 2011.

This budget contains many points that my constituents raised in round table discussions. I am glad to see that the government once again heard the input of my constituents. I appreciate the advice that every constituent has given me, from the Red Deer chamber of commerce to municipal councils and everyone in-between. Every view is important to me.

From the meetings I held in Red Deer and the surrounding area I heard a few recurring themes: continued elimination of red tape in government policies and bureaucratic procedures, continued reductions in personal taxes, and the cost of employment to businesses. The next phase of Canada's economic action plan helps to achieve these goals.

Red Deer is an extraordinary place where small and medium-sized businesses thrive. Its location in the corridor of Alberta provides immense economic advantages and makes it an ideal area to start a business. The people of Red Deer are independent and entrepreneurial, and they understand the impact that our fiscal policies have on them and the economy. They know that lower taxes provide the freedom to be profitable and to create more jobs, and that good social programs come from strong economic fiscal policy.

The economy though is still fragile. I know that the resilience and determination of the hard-working people of Red Deer will continue to prevail and succeed.

Canadians have given us a mandate to stay focused on the economy and to pass measures aimed at strengthening both our economic recovery and our country. We are following through on these commitments.

We are focused on improving the financial security of Canadian workers, seniors and families. I am pleased that budget 2011 proposes programs that will respond to the needs of central Alberta. For example, the hiring credit for small businesses in budget 2011 will be extremely helpful to many people who need jobs and many employers who need more employees.

The hiring credit will have a direct and positive impact on Red Deer by providing incentives to hire and create jobs. This credit addresses many of my constituents' concerns about keeping the cost of employment down to help stimulate more hiring.

We are also supporting job creation by extending the accelerated capital cost allowance, helping manufacturers and processors to make new investments in machinery and equipment.

There are still many Canadians who need to find work, and it is wonderful to see that the government is doing what is necessary to help them by spurring job growth and investment.

Business owners in Red Deer are also pleased with our efforts toward reducing red tape, and this is an issue that has repeatedly been addressed within our business community.

The Budget

Upgrading the BizPal service and engaging business owners by further consulting Canadians through the red tape reduction commission is a welcome initiative to tackle the bureaucratic problems that my constituents face.

From employers to families, we have a strong record of tax relief. Canadian families are benefiting from tax relief measures such as the first-time home buyer's tax credit, the public transit tax credit, and the GST reductions.

Further individual tax relief measures in this budget will provide taxpayers in Alberta with approximately \$310 million more in tax relief over the next six years. This includes a new family caregiver tax credit which will provide almost \$73 million in relief and a new children's arts tax credit which will provide over \$69 million for Alberta families.

I am proud that we are offering a new tax credit for our volunteer firefighters who bravely serve our communities. We can attain these tax cuts while returning to balanced budgets because this is a government that is also focused on eliminating government waste and closing tax loopholes.

• (1505)

A secure and fair tax base allows us to maintain low tax rates.

I want to address central Alberta farmers as they finish seeding their fields. Agriculture is a primary sector of our local economy in central Alberta and so my round table discussions have included farmers who are a unique kind of business people. They face all of the challenges of other business owners and then some, with more risk, uncertainty and variable conditions from year to year.

Alberta is a bit unique as it is one of the few provinces that administers the agristability program for its producers. Therefore, we need to identify what needs to be done at the federal level and work with the Government of Alberta to address producers' needs.

We know that the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food continues to work with all of his provincial counterparts to address gaps and strengthen the income support programs within the federal-provincial framework. We look forward to his continued leadership in this regard.

Budget 2011 provides \$50 million for a two-year agricultural innovation initiative. This new program will support knowledge creation and increase commercialization in agriculture innovations.

Innovation is a key component of farm gate profitability. Whether it is finding new varieties to increase yields or improving livestock genetics, innovation is the driving force for Canada's competitiveness and produces profits. Agriculture-related businesses and producers will all benefit from this important investment in budget 2011.

The support of the government through programs like the agricultural innovation initiative will help Alberta grow.

This budget also provides \$24 million to extend the initiative to control diseases in the hog industry. This new funding will enable the Canadian Swine Health Board to complete its initiatives directed at biosecurity standards and best managerial practices to protect producers' barns. Red Deer is home to western Canada's largest pork

packer. Therefore, this is welcomed news for the entire value chain that is relying on the completion of this strategy.

While we recognize the significant work of our agriculture producers, our government also recognizes the significant contribution that seniors have made to our country. The next phase of Canada's economic action plan builds on the support network already in place for seniors by adding several new measures. This budget will enhance the guaranteed income supplement by providing eligible low income seniors with additional benefits of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples. I often hear from low income seniors in my riding who have trouble making ends meet. This increase to the guaranteed income supplement will be welcomed help. Our seniors deserve a secure and dignified retirement that reflects the contributions that they have made.

We are also ensuring that community level supports exist so that seniors have the opportunity to participate in social activities. The new horizons seniors program is helping seniors be together and active in their communities. In 2010, the government invested an extra \$10 million in this initiative to assist community level programs.

Budget 2011 provides another \$10 million over two years to support the new horizons program. This program has assisted in Red Deer with such things as equipment replacement at the Golden Circle, which is a popular gathering place for central Alberta seniors, and with women's wellness events administered by the Red Deer Family Service Bureau.

The new horizons seniors program raises the quality of life in communities through active living and participation in social activities. It is a responsible way to respond to social needs in our communities.

The next phase of our Conservative government's plan keeps taxes low to promote jobs and economic growth while supporting families and seniors. The previous actions that this government took during the recession kept Canada's economy strong and supported Canadian jobs.

What needs to be done now is to stay the course. I encourage all members to support this budget so Canada can continue to move forward.

• (1510)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my hon. colleague and, like him, I represent a very large rural region. What I find absolutely staggering in this budget is the complete lack of a plan for a digital strategy for rural and northern Canada, specifically the need for a broadband strategy.

The Budget

We hear the government talk about a digital strategy but it is all talk because the money that is needed is not there.

I will give an example. In Australia, under a labour government I might point out, there is the most comprehensive broadband strategy infrastructure plan to ensure that every rural part of Australia is up to speed. The government talks about broadband but its numbers are at 1.5 megabytes. Rural Australia will be 100 times faster than what rural northern Ontario and rural Albertans can have.

Why has the government ignored the broadband needs of rural Canada?

• (1515)

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, the broadband industry has been going through a lot of changes. I think we are looking forward to a lot more in the communities in the future.

I was with the northern development committee last year and we had the opportunity to meet with many different groups and organizations in the territories. They have seen a lot of different action. I believe we will have great co-operation between the provinces, the territories and the federal government in the future.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question for the member is with regard to the whole issue of priorities in government expenditures.

At a time when our seniors are looking to government to demonstrate leadership, to demonstrate it cares about the plight of our seniors and the need to increase their income, the government has seen fit to only give something like \$1.67 a day.

Given the wealth that our country has and given the expectations that Canadians have in the sense that the federal government should be a compassionate government that provides for our seniors, why has the Government of Canada only given our seniors \$1.67 a day in terms of that increase?

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, that is one component of the budget, which is a very significant part, but there are many other things that we are doing.

As I mentioned in my speech, when I talked to seniors, they looked at the fact that we had made that commitment. They were also concerned about the fact that it would have been passed already if there had not been an election at that point in time. Nevertheless, we do have the opportunity right now to continue with it. There have been so many other things that have happened as well.

I mentioned the new horizons program for seniors. We have also talked about targeted initiatives for older workers. We are extending the eco-energy retrofit program to help seniors as well.

The tax measures that are already in place have taken over 85,000 seniors off the tax roll, which is very significant.

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has told us that jobs and growth are the number one priority for our government. We also know that small businesses are a force in the Canadian economy and its continued recovery. I believe three out of every four jobs are created by small business. The administration and paperwork requirements that these businesses go through are often a burden that restricts productivity and growth.

Could the hon. member please explain to us how cutting red tape will benefit his constituents?

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, allowing small businesses to grow and prosper will help the economic recovery that the government has strategically and successfully led Canada through this far.

In my riding of Red Deer, entrepreneurs know the value of time, especially time that is wasted. The red tape that slows down businesses, slows down our economy.

In January 2011, the Red Tape Reduction Commission was created. The commission will identify where the business irritants stem from in the federal regulations and will find effective solutions to enable small and medium-sized businesses to grow.

I will give an example of a small business. We have a 23-year-old entrepreneur who probably has 12 to 15 employees. She has done a great job putting all of this together. She will be able to use this particular initiative. I am extremely impressed with our ability to help people in this regard.

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I speak to the budget, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election as Speaker. Your family is proud of you and your colleagues are proud of you.

I also want to take this opportunity, as it is my first time to speak in the 41st Parliament, to thank the fine people of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound for their overwhelming trust and support given to me in the recent election.

I also congratulate the Minister of Finance, the hon. member for Whitby—Oshawa, on his sixth budget and the second this year. As promised, this government is continuing to focus on the economy. It is our top priority.

Canada's economic recovery is still fragile so we are focusing on creating jobs and economic growth for Canadians. The Speech from the Throne and yesterday's presentation of the 2011 budget outline priorities that are important to residents of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound and certainly all Canadians.

Today I want to discuss what this government is doing for our economy, families, farmers, our seniors, students, our businesses, large and small, our small towns and rural communities, and the actions our government will take to return to balanced budgets in the years ahead.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan will invest in the key drivers of economic growth: innovation, investment, education and training. Canada's economic performance during the recovery stands out among advanced countries having posted the strongest employment growth in the G7 since mid-2009.

The Budget

We are proud to say that we have more Canadians working now than before the recession. Jobs and economic growth are important to the residents of my riding and certainly to all Canadians. Canada's economic action plan is working. This government's investments have been effective in shielding hard-working Canadians from the worst of the global recession. Over 28,500 projects have been completed or are under way, which have generated new jobs in small communities right across Canada. These projects have contributed to the creation of approximately 540,000 jobs since July 2009.

However, this government recognizes that our economic recovery remains fragile and, for this reason, we are continuing to take measures that will foster long-term growth and support job creation.

I spent 12.5 years in municipal government. I worked hard, along with other colleagues at the time, to have the gas tax funding refunded to municipalities. In 2008, our government, a Conservative government, announced that the gas tax fund would become a permanent measure. This measure will provide greater certainty to the provinces, territories and municipalities. The budget proposes a permanent annual investment of \$2 million in municipal infrastructure through the gas tax fund, which will be welcome news to municipalities in my riding.

Budget 2011 also invests more than \$300 million per year to enhance the guaranteed income supplement, GIS, for seniors. This measure will provide a new top-up benefit of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples. This will improve the financial security of seniors in my riding and of the more than 680,000 seniors across Canada.

This government also recognizes the personal sacrifice that many Canadians make to care for their family members with serious illnesses such as MS or ALS. We are proposing a family caregivers tax credit, which will provide a 15% non-refundable credit on an amount of \$2,000. This will help many families in my riding and an estimated 500,000 caregivers across the country.

My sister suffers from MS so I understand the toll that this disease and other diseases can have on victims and on their families. This tax credit can help to ease the financial burden of individuals who provide care for family members who are combatting serious illnesses.

An issue that is currently impacting communities in my riding as well as other rural and remote communities is access to health care. Our government is committed to health care and to strengthening health care in underserved communities. To combat the shortage of doctors and nurses in these communities, the budget proposes to forgive a portion of the Canada student loans for new family doctors and nurses who practice in underserved rural and remote areas. This is good for my riding.

Starting in 2012-13, practising family doctors will be eligible for loan forgiveness of up to \$8,000 per year to a maximum of \$40,000 of their Canadian student loans and nurses will be eligible for loan forgiveness of \$4,000 per year to a maximum of \$20,000.

• (1520)

This government is also committed to enhancing federal financial assistance for students. We will provide financial support to college and university students through the Canada student loans program.

In the 2009-10 academic year, more than 400,000 students benefited from over \$2.5 billion in federal student loan assistance, whether in the form of a loan or a grant. The 2011 budget proposes to enhance and expand the eligibility of part-time and full-time post-secondary students for Canada student loans, with an investment of over \$34 million a year once fully implemented.

This government has also pledged an additional \$37 million per year to the three federal granting councils that support research at Canada's universities, colleges, and research hospitals. We are also proposing to invest \$53 million over five years to support the creation of 10 new Canada Excellence Research Chairs.

Now, on to agriculture, the biggest business in my riding and certainly a major one in Canada's economy. One of our government's priorities is to continue to promote the long-term profitability and global competitiveness of the Canadian agricultural sector. We have announced a two-year, \$50 million agricultural innovation initiative to support knowledge creation and transfer and to increase the commercialization of agricultural innovations. This is on top of the present agricultural programs.

In early 2011, the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food had the opportunity to travel across Canada during its biotech study. One key theme that was top of mind, which we heard everywhere we went from producers and industry stakeholders, was the importance of research to the competitiveness and profitability of Canadian farmers.

Another thing that I am very happy to see the budget is the abolition of the gun registry. This registry has been an anchor around farmers and law-abiding rural people all over this country for 16 years. Thanks to this government, it is going to disappear.

Our government also recognizes that small businesses are job creators and help stimulate our economy, which makes them a crucial part of economic recovery. A lot of people do not realize that small businesses employ more people collectively across this country than big business by far. For this reason, we have created the new hiring credit for small business, which will provide a temporary one-time credit of up to \$1,000 against any potential increases in 2011 EI premiums over those paid in 2010. This new credit will help over 525,000 employers pay the cost of additional hiring.

My riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound relies very heavily on the services of volunteer firefighters. Our government is proud of the nearly 85,000 volunteer firefighters who keep our communities safe. This budget introduces a 15% non-refundable volunteer firefighters tax credit on an amount of \$3,000.

The Budget

This government is also committed to strengthening integrity and accountability in government and political activity. We have announced the phase-out of quarterly allowances for political parties. This government will introduce legislation to gradually reduce the \$2.04 per year per vote subsidy in 51¢ increments, starting on April 1, 2012, until it is completely eliminated by 2015-16. The hard-working taxpayers in Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, in the Yukon, in the Maritimes, or in any other community across Canada should not have to fund political parties they do not support, such as the Bloc Québécois, which wants to pull our great country apart. All Canadians have the opportunity to provide financial contributions to the parties they believe in and support. That is what they should be doing.

This government has a plan in place to balance budgets one year ahead of schedule without raising taxes or cutting transfer payments. Our plan for returning to balanced budgets includes winding down the economic action plan's stimulus as the economy recovers, targeted measures to restrain growth in direct program spending, and a comprehensive review of government administrative functions and overhead costs.

The long and short of it is that this budget is a sensible, realistic budget, and I urge all my colleagues in the House to support it. I look forward to taking some questions.

• (1525)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to take this opportunity to thank the good people of Vancouver Kingsway for once more giving me the privilege of representing them in the House.

During the last election, many people in Vancouver Kingsway, and I think across Vancouver, the Lower Mainland and across the country, told candidates of every party that they were having great difficulty finding affordable housing. Many parents are also telling politicians of all parties that they are having difficulty obtaining accessible, affordable quality child care.

I wonder if my hon. friend would comment and explain why the budget does not really do anything to address those two major concerns by providing affordable housing and affordable child care for the millions of Canadians who need those services.

• (1530)

Mr. Larry Miller: Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome my colleague back to the House.

On the issue of child care, three or four years ago this government brought in the very first child tax credit to allow parents the choice of who would look after their children, not to have the government look after them but to help parents look after them and give them a choice. That credit is still there and I regularly receive comments from young parents on it. It is certainly a strong program and it will continue. I have two young granddaughters who are in day care, as my son and his wife both work. I understand the issue.

On the housing issue, we talk about the price of affordable housing and so on. When a government makes the kind of tax cuts it has done for seniors and others, that goes a long way to addressing the problem the member referred to.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the things the member talked about was the importance of research. As the critic for industry, science and technology, I frequently have the pleasure of meeting with university presidents. The single most important issue they keep bringing up is the need to boost the indirect costs of research program in our universities. They were asking for it to be doubled, and we are talking about hundreds of millions of dollars.

I noticed that in the budget there is an increase of \$10 million for all the universities in this country. We are talking about over 80 universities. If we divided that up equally, it would be about \$120,000 per university for all researchers to take care of their indirect costs, which are very appreciable.

Does the hon. member really think that \$10 million is anything more than just a microscopic sprinkling of pixie dust on this important program?

Mr. Larry Miller: Madam Speaker, it is nice to be congratulated for increasing the money for research. I am glad that the member noticed it in the budget. It is something that this government recognizes, as I said. When I was a member of the agriculture committee in the last Parliament and travelled across the country with the committee for its biotech study last spring, that was a common theme that we heard from every university and every stakeholder.

I thank the member for recognizing that this government has increased the money for research.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to the hon. member's speech, and I am surprised that he did not talk about the \$4 billion in cuts announced in the budget. We have not heard any details on that. Public servants and social and community groups are worried.

Does he not think that giving tax breaks worth over \$1.5 billion to oil companies and large corporations could prevent the \$4 billion in cuts? Cuts could also be made in the area of defence, where the government plans to spend over \$48 billion over the next 20 years.

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Miller: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank with all due respect our senior member in the House of Commons, our dean, for the great job he did in the chair during the election of the Speaker the other day.

Many tough decisions on cuts have to be made in times like these. We have done that and have pledged not to make cuts to health care like the previous government did or cut transfers to the provinces. We have to be prudent. It is that time, and we will be prudent.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with the member for York West.

The Budget

I would like to begin by thanking the people of Kings—Hants, who have given me the honour and privilege of serving as their member of Parliament in this House six times now. Fourteen years ago, June 2, 1997, was my first election. I want to thank them. They have stood by me and I have stood up for them. It is a wonderful constituency and there are wonderful families and friends in Kings—Hants whom I am very proud to serve.

The Conservatives have always blamed their lack of big ideas and plans and vision on having a minority government and the short-term focus of minority parliaments. Therefore, one would have expected with this budget, in their first majority government, the Conservatives to seize the opportunity to provide Canadians with a long-term vision, with some real plans for the future to build a better Canada and to stop focusing on this week's polls and instead focus on the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

Those Canadians who were expecting the Conservatives to seize the moment and the opportunity provided to them by a majority parliament to actually offer long-term vision and bold ideas to build a better Canada will be very disappointed by this budget, which lacks long-term ideas, bold vision and clear direction for the Canadian economy.

I would like to speak first about the whole debt and deficit issue. The Conservatives talk a good line on this but they really have not delivered. It is critically important that we remember that they inherited a \$13 billion surplus. They spent through that surplus, they wracked up record deficits and in fact put Canada into deficit even before the economic downturn in the fall of 2008. They are on track, they say. Yes, they are on track to add \$150 billion to \$200 billion to Canada's national debt. They have no credibility when it comes to controlling spending or deficit reduction. They have missed every deficit target they have set. There is no plan.

In fact, if we look at the previous Conservative government's record, it is one of waste and misuse of tax dollars. The Conservatives increased government advertising by 300%, and increased spending on ministers' personal offices by 14% just last year. Now, with a majority government, what was the Conservatives' first attempt at fiscal restraint? It was to expand their cabinet. The Conservatives are not leading by example.

They have now named an expenditure review committee of cabinet. In fact, it is to replace the expenditure review committee of cabinet the Conservatives eliminated when they formed government. The Liberal government of Paul Martin had an expenditure review committee; we respected every hard-earned tax dollar in that expenditure review committee during a time of surplus. The Conservatives got rid of that committee while in deficit and they went on to add hundreds of billions of dollars to Canada's national debt.

The Conservatives talk about how well Canada is doing in terms of our debt as a per cent of GDP compared to other countries. The reality is that most of the time they are comparing Canada to other countries. They are ignoring the fact that in Canada, with our system of government and provincial governments, if we combine federal and provincial debt as a per cent of GDP and if we recognize that there is only one taxpayer who is responsible for all of the debts of the provincial and federal governments, and if we consider gross

debt numbers and compare them to other countries' gross debt numbers, we get a very different picture.

Our gross debt in Canada, federal and provincial debt combined, is 81.7% of GDP. That is actually almost as bad as the U.S. gross debt figure at 84% of GDP. It is worse than the U.K.'s gross debt figure at 77% and worse than Germany's gross debt figure at 75%.

Thus, I think that part of our dealing with these issues responsibly is actually telling Canadians the truth and accepting that Canadians, when given the truth, will accept measures to restrain and control government spending.

● (1535)

One of the biggest reasons we have had better recovery numbers than some other economies has been our natural resource wealth, oil and gas and mineral wealth. We are blessed with natural resource wealth in Canada. As countries like China, India and other emerging economies have an insatiable appetite and need for natural resources and energy, Canada is in a great position to provide it, not because the Conservatives put the oil and gas under the ground off the Atlantic coast, everyone knows that was Danny Williams, but because we are fortunate.

The reality is the benefit we have from all of the natural resource wealth is a bit of a double-edged sword because it is creating two economies in Canada: a have economy for the provinces and people in the oil and gas and mineral sectors and a have not for the provinces, families and sectors that are not part of the oil and gas and mineral boom. It is creating a balkanized Canadian economy and further dividing the haves and have nots in Canada.

As gas prices rise, so does our dollar. As commodity prices go up, our dollar goes up and value-added manufacturing jobs vanish. They are crowded out. In my part of Nova Scotia, Hants County, Kings County and Annapolis County, since the fall of 2008, 10,700 full-time jobs have been lost, mainly in manufacturing.

Our unemployment rate has gone from 5% to 12.5%. Companies like Canard Poultry, Eastern Protein and Fundy Gypsum have gone out of business. There have been massive layoffs. At the very time families are faced with the challenge of losing full-time jobs and replacing them with part-time jobs, gas prices are going up and it is harder to fill their car tanks, heating oil prices are going up and it is harder to heat their homes and the cost of living and food costs are going up and it is harder to feed their families.

The Budget

The reality we face as a country now is that Canada has what some refer to as the Dutch disease, because Holland went through a similar challenge: a rising dollar fuelled by growth in the demand for our natural resources, but crowding out manufacturing jobs and driving up the cost of living. There is nothing in the budget that addresses this massive challenge, this bifurcation of the Canadian economy, this gap between rich and poor, this gap between have and have not regions that is a reality for our country and Canadian families.

Have not provinces are facing rising health care costs, an aging population and a diminished tax base because young people are going to the have provinces as they need to work. At the same time, families and provinces are facing increased levels of debt load. The situation is actually getting worse.

In Nova Scotia, the provincial government is now slashing funding for public education. What does that do? It creates less of an incentive for young families to stay in Nova Scotia and reduces its capacity to grow and ensure that young families and people are given the skills and education they require to compete and succeed globally.

The gap between rich and poor and the economic growth focused only on petroleum and mineral wealth is leading to a greater inequality of opportunity in Canada. There is nothing more fundamental as a Canadian value than equality of opportunity. It is time the Conservative government start to work with the provinces to address some of these issues and challenges.

The premiers know they have a challenge. They know we are coming up to a 2014 deadline for a health care accord. The last time that accord was negotiated was in 2004. I was part of the Martin government then and the country was in surplus. We were able to provide \$40 billion to the provinces, the largest single investment in health care from a federal government in Canadian history.

• (1540)

We are not in surplus now and neither are the provinces. We need to be working with the provinces to address aging demographics, the health care costs that are rising and the gap between rich and poor regions in our country. This what the government ought to be doing.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I remember 2008 when the government came in at the beginning of the greatest economic collapse since the depression. We heard Mr. Magoo say, as he was walking on the ledge of the building, that there was not a problem, that the world was great and that we were not in a recession. We knew we were in a structural recession. The only plan of the Conservatives was they were going to cut political subsidies for political parties. That was it. They swore we would not spend a dime on the recession. Then within three months they had blown \$50 billion. It was staggering.

When I see this budget, I see the Mr. Magoo factor once again walking out on the ledge saying that the Conservatives can cut \$4 billion and not a single service is going to be hurt and that they can get all this new money based on an economy that is tanking around the world.

Does my colleague feel that it is kind of like déjà vu when the only thing the Conservatives have offered in this budget is to once

again attack political party subsidies? There is no plan for dealing with the ongoing economic crisis and they are not being honest with the Canadian people about from where the cuts will come.

We know the Conservatives are going to put the boots to the public service as soon as the media stops paying attention to the House.

• (1545)

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, in fact it is not just déjà vu, it is déjà vu all over again. I remember in the fall of 2008 when the Minister of Finance presented the budget. In order to balance his budget, theoretically at least, with \$100 million rounding error of a surplus, he pledged to sell \$11 billion worth of government assets.

We kept asking, day after day, for a list of those assets. In fact, there was no list of those assets because there was no plan to sell assets. That was never realized because the Conservatives never intended to do it in the first place. This is very similar to their expenditure review process. Once again, there is no plan.

What I am concerned about, and I expect the hon. member shares my concern, is the Conservative cuts will be ideological. They will not be based on evidence. They will be cutting programs they do not like for ideological reasons in order to preserve ones they like. And they will not be cutting the fat, but they could cut into bone and sinew and muscle with regard to a good government's capacity to help real Canadians.

I have one last point. The government could be working with provincial governments on a shared service agenda to work together to cut the administrative costs of government. That would be part of a good, constructive federal-provincial discussion on how they could work together to cut the cost of government and to respect hard-earned tax dollars from Canadians.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague from Kings—Hants focus on long-term plans. The opposition also talked about when we actually did that. Earlier on there was criticism of how to focus on the long term and reach out for two years or three years because we could not do that.

I want to make a comment about ideological cuts, the ones that they do not like. I remember when there were some recessions, nothing like the global recession we have had. How the party the member is a part of balanced the budget was to cut transfers to the provinces on health care. It cut the transfers to the provinces on education. It decimated our Canadian Forces to where it was an embarrassment to walk down the street in uniform. We will not do that.

How does the member consider that as being an ideological comment with regard to cutting and being responsible in our budget?

The Budget

Hon. Scott Brison: Madam Speaker, my colleague knows the Liberal government inherited a record deficit in Canada of \$42 billion at that time, which held the record until the Conservative government provided Canada with its latest record deficit of \$56 billion, and it had to reign in spending. It had to control spending and make difficult choices in order to get Canada back on track.

There is a reason why the IMF and the international financial community are saying that a government of a country that is having fiscal challenges today that wants the recipe to fix those challenges should look to what the Liberal government of Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin did in Canada during the 1990s. In fact, that is what think tanks within Canada are telling the current government.

Beyond that, when we look at making decisions based on evidence as opposed to ideology, we know that the crime agenda the government is pursuing does not work. We have seen it fail in the U.S.—

• (1550)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Resuming debate, the hon. member for York West.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to rise to speak today. It is my first opportunity since the May 2 election.

Needless to say, I want to thank the wonderful residents of York West. This is my sixth federal election. They were there for me throughout the election, as they had been in previous ones. I am very grateful for the trust and the confidence they have in me and I am thrilled that I represent such a wonderful riding.

It has been often talked about in a negative form, the Jane-Finch corridor. I would not represent any other riding in our country. My riding has all those wonderful, caring people and I am thrilled to represent them.

I also thank my family, my grandchildren and children and my husband Sam for their complete commitment for the 22 years I have had in public office. They are always there and will continue to be there. With the help of my residents, I intend to be there for as long as they want me to be. I look forward to that.

I have a wonderful staff. All of us here know how important our staff is. I thank Greg, Sam, Sonia, Antoinette and others, and my riding president. I thank them all for their continued commitment.

I am pleased to be back. We are in an interesting spot with lots of opportunities for the future and to grow and we are very excited about all of that.

Yesterday the government presented its do-over budget to the House and indeed to all Canadians. There is not much different from what was there, other than taking a shot at political subsidies, but so be it. That is not a problem. We will overcome that. We are very good at dealing with issues that are tough to deal with and finding solutions to all of that.

I say a do-over budget because as we know, this budget is the second such document that the government has presented in just three short months. While this type of second chance typically does not happen, these are clearly extraordinary times.

The government presented its first budget in March and then, as a result of being found in contempt of Parliament, all of us spent the following weeks speaking directly to Canadians. However, at least in theory, candidates were supposed to be asking constituents for their input on the direction of the country, both fiscally and socially.

In my riding of York West, the message I was given was very clear. It is about jobs, more jobs, full-time jobs, not part-time jobs, pension reform and seniors issues. We have heard a lot today about seniors. We heard a lot through the recent campaign. I hope we will hear more in the oncoming years about the importance of supporting our seniors and their quality of life.

Settlement funding for new immigrants is another issue that is very significant in the riding of York West. It happens to be home to many newcomers, most of whom we get to know through our office. The settlement funding cuts have really hurt their ability to settle sooner so they can get themselves into the marketplace, hone up on the language skills and things that are necessary to get the jobs they want, to pay taxes to help our country grow and also to grow with their families. The lack of settlement funding for many of them has clearly hampered those opportunities.

Those were the issues identified in my riding when I was knocking on doors.

However, I would suggest that most Canadians agree the Conservative budget presented in March 2011 was a budget that again failed to address some of the key issues in any real, substantive way.

Again, the Conservatives resorted to their traditional position, first adopted by the former U.S. president, the late Ronald Reagan, of cut taxes, reduce programs, throw it all up in the air and let everything sort itself out. Clearly, it is not the way the Liberals think we should be running the country.

Budget 2011 was, by all accounts, a budget that focused attention on the wealthiest corporations and those individuals on the upper end of the income scale. While I strongly support measures designed to support those outside of the low end of the income scale, I also believe we can and must do more to address poverty and isolation in Canada. Leaving the poorest Canadians to get sorted out by the markets or by large corporations just does not seem right to me. People who need help have every right to expect that their government will stand by them and with them.

• (1555)

The government had an opportunity to take the feedback given during the recent campaign and then apply it to Canada's fiscal course. By implementing and sustaining measures to address the concerns of new Canadians and older Canadians alike, Canada could again boast an inclusive and compassionate approach to problem-solving. The opportunity to end politics of division was very real and I believe it is a missed opportunity.

The Budget

Contrarily, the second Conservative budget included a range of items, everything from tax changes for large corporations to phantom and undefined predictions of impending government program cuts. It could be said that the budget was more newsworthy for what it failed to include.

Real pension reform is a very serious issue facing this country. Many of the seniors we were talking about earlier today did not have a vehicle that would have allowed them to save in a successful way for their retirement days, or they did not have the income to put away because they were new immigrants to Canada and were finding their way. They may end up in poverty once they become 65 if we do not change our retirement system, and we need to start that plan today, not tomorrow.

Affordable housing is a big issue in Canada, as any of us who have been out there in our ridings would have heard in talking with seniors and those suffering from mental illness who have ended up living on the street. That is not the kind of Canada any of us in the House want regardless of what side of the House we sit on. I believe we need to work collaboratively to find solutions for these very important issues.

On refundable tax credits for home care and other areas where people need help, having a non-taxable refundable tax credit would not help as we move forward. For those people we are very much trying to help who do not have any taxes to pay, how would they would get a refund?

Families struggling to make ends meet need help. There are many people that I have met who want to stay in school, but they need child care in order to do that. They want to join the workforce and achieve the same dream that everybody else wants to achieve, but they need child care in order to go to school and they need help with tuition.

That is everybody's dream. I do not believe people want to sit at home and collect a cheque. We need to give them a hand up so they can achieve their goals. However, it does not seem to make any sense to the current government when it comes to giving a hand up rather than just a hand out.

When we do the math on assistance for seniors, as we have talked about in this budget, we find that the \$1.67 is not going to everybody but only to seniors who qualify; the poorest of the poor. It is the equivalent of a good cup of coffee every day.

When it came to pension reform, we put forward proposals for a supplemental Canada pension plan, a revamp of the cost of living calculations used for pensions, and a stranded pension agency, to name a few of our ideas. These were measures that could have made a real difference. Again, I would ask the government to set aside its partisan focus in favour of really helping seniors, really helping Canadians in our country.

The government spent more than \$1 billion on things such as fake lakes, snacks, hand lotion and glow sticks. Just think what we could have done with that \$1 billion for the many who are struggling in our country. CARP tells us that 200,000 seniors are still living in poverty. That \$1 billion could have been put into the hands of seniors to get them out of poverty. We would then not have to say

that we still have Canadians, specifically seniors, living in poverty in this country.

This debate is not just about the budget, it is about our collective priorities for the future. Aside from pensions, Canada faces challenges in areas such as integration of new Canadians, as I referred to earlier. Prior to the election, the government summarily slashed funding for the settlement service agencies throughout Canada, a move which hobbled many community service groups that provide essential roles in countless communities.

In York West, groups such as the Delta Family Resource Centre, Northwood Neighbourhood Services and the Afghan Association of Ontario, just to point out a few, have for years provided language, employment and cultural support to thousands of new Canadians. Because of the government's short-sightedness, these groups have been dealt a blow from which they will never recover. As a result, thousands of new Canadians will be left adrift without the support they need to become productive and prosperous members of society.

Budget 2011 talks about helmets to hardhats, but there is no money. It talks about helping with foreign credentials, but there is no money attached to it. Rhetoric is easy, but we need the actual vision to make a difference.

• (1600)

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Madam Speaker, as was mentioned earlier, we know that the Liberals always have great intentions. They always make a lot of promises but when they are in government they actually never accomplish anything. What they do is live off all of the hard work that has been done before them.

In the nineties they hoisted all their cuts on the provinces and they did all the heavy lifting. Thanks to the provinces we were able to balance the budget. It was also because of the hard work of a Conservative government in the eighties, which brought in the GST and free trade, that the Liberals were able to accomplish many of the balanced budgets that they like to talk about.

I want to ask the member about settlement funding. I come from a part of the country where thousands of immigrants are settling. We have moved immigration settlement funding to where immigrants are settling and we have actually increased settlement funding.

I am wondering if the hon. member is trying to suggest to the new immigrants who are coming to my riding that they are not as valuable as immigrants in other parts of the country and that they should receive less funding for settlement as they would in Toronto.

Hon. Judy Sgro: That is another insult, Madam Speaker. That is simply the same issue that the Conservatives are famous for and that is dividing communities, one against the other. I am very glad that the member has new Canadians moving into his riding and that he has extra support money, but it does not mean you have to take it away from my riding in order to give it to your riding.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I would ask the hon. member to direct her comments through the Chair.

The Budget

Hon. Judy Sgro: Madam Speaker, it is all about building. It is not about taking from one side and giving it to the other or vice versa.

I do appreciate the fact that we are being very strict in the House today and that is a good sign for the future.

I would remind the hon. member that when we were in office in 1993 and had to make those cuts, we had a \$43 billion deficit as a result of the previous Conservative government. The provinces were all awash in money and doing very well. We made the cuts that we needed to make in those years and brought in very well-balanced budgets. We also left a \$13 billion surplus on the table for the Conservative government that has now squandered it.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for raising some important points around poverty. She specifically referenced seniors poverty.

I want to come back to a report in 2007 from the National Council on Welfare wherein it talked about the fact that in 2007 Canada had no long-term vision, no plan, no one accountable for carrying out the plan, no resources in sight, and no accepted measures of results on an anti-poverty strategy. One of its recommendations was that the government take on a national anti-poverty strategy with a long-term vision and measurable targets and timelines.

I wonder if the member could comment on the fact that here we are in 2011 and Canada still does not have a national anti-poverty strategy.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Madam Speaker, if we have not had it up until now, I doubt that we are ever going to see it.

I talked earlier about having a long-term vision and that takes a government that is committed to making a serious difference and eliminating poverty in this country. While we are investing in our businesses and small businesses to make sure they are successful and all of that, we have to invest in the people of the country at the same time.

I recall a young woman I met who was in her second year of college. She was hoping she would have the money to complete it, so that she could join the workforce like everybody else. She said the one thing that she wanted to do was get up in the morning and get dressed, and go to work like everyone else. That was her degree of success.

In order for that to happen for many people, whether they are new immigrants or whether they are suffering from mental illness or a lack of opportunity and encouragement, we need to invest in the people of this country in order for our production to increase.

• (1605)

Mr. Paul Calandra: Madam Speaker, I want to ask a clarification question.

The member said that the provinces were awash in cash in the nineties when there were unilateral cuts. I just want to remind the hon. member that the current leader of the Liberal Party was the departing NDP premier of the province of Ontario when it was awash in a \$11 billion deficit. The province was spending about \$1 million more an hour than it was taking in.

I am wondering if that is the type of leadership that we can expect over the next four and a half years from the Liberal Party. Is that what those members mean when they talk about the provinces being awash in revenue and that is why the Liberals unilaterally cut \$25 billion from health care?

Hon. Judy Sgro: Madam Speaker, they clearly were not as well off as some of the other provinces. I am really pleased with the leadership of our Liberal Party. I look forward to our party coming forward with very fiscally responsible and socially progressive plans for the future. I am very proud of the leader that we have.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin today by thanking the citizens of Kitchener—Conestoga for returning me to Parliament to work on their behalf and by congratulating all members of this House on their election to this chamber.

A special word of thanks to all of those who helped me return to Parliament, my family, children, grandchildren, my campaign team, John, Linda, David, Scott, Beverly, Doug, and many others, and also my EDA board, my president especially.

I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of hundreds of volunteers who made it possible for me to enjoy this great honour and privilege of serving here in the House of Commons.

I would also be remiss if I did not acknowledge the ongoing work between the campaigns of my constituency and Ottawa staff. Certainly, on a day-to-day basis the issues they deal with make it possible for me to represent the area and to address many of the issues that the constituents bring to my office for help.

Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time today with the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley.

I rise today to speak in support of budget 2011, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. I am pleased to note that this budget is very similar to that one tabled on March 22, a budget which the opposition parties chose not to debate in favour of forcing an unnecessary election.

The citizens expressed their contempt with the opposition action through their ballots. I return to this House not only as part of a majority government but with the strongest mandate I have ever enjoyed in three elections. I understand where the voters were coming from. I understand what motivated them. They told me at the doors. I met thousands of them over the five weeks of the campaign.

Canadians are concerned about the economy. They worry about their jobs, the ability of their children to find that first job while saddled with debt, the ability of their parents to access the health care they need, and where their mortgage or rent payment will come from.

When the voters were given a choice between a low tax plan for jobs and growth on one hand and continuing the political games of the opposition on the other, Canadians voted for the leadership that brought them seven straight quarters of economic growth, more than half a million net new jobs since July 2009, and the strongest fiscal position among the world's advanced economies.

The Budget

Members on this side of the House ran on our government's record. We ran on the budget that we proposed on March 22. That budget promised to support job creation through a variety of means, all contained in this budget as well, extending the capital cost allowance, improving the programs that help employers return their skilled workers, renewing programs to help the unemployed, making it easier for small businesses to hire and grow, and support for young entrepreneurs.

In Waterloo region, we heard praise for the March 22 budget. Feridun Hamdullahpur, president of the University of Waterloo, noted that our future prosperity was dependent on innovation and research. Our universities will be on the edge of that, thanks to that same budget.

That budget promised to support families and communities, as does this budget tabled yesterday, through an enhancement of the GIS, tax credits to support children's art programs, volunteer firefighters and family caregivers.

The support for volunteer firefighters is crucial. Many times these are the frontline responders to the emergencies that occur in our communities. I believe they deserve the honour and respect of all of us here in this House and indeed of all Canadians.

There was also support for family caregivers, so that families like the Simpson family in the region of Waterloo, whose son suffers from cerebral palsy and will require care for his entire life, can make ends meet more easily.

When the opposition rejected its chance to debate that budget in March, it missed an opportunity, but thanks to the wisdom of Canadians, it has been given a second chance to offer criticism and amendments, and to adopt a budget that will see Canada maintain its economic leadership on the world stage.

Before I move to the substance of why I believe what is contained in this budget is the best possible course for Canada's economy, I would like to digress for just a moment to discuss what was not contained in this budget and nor was it contained in the throne speech which we heard last week.

• (1610)

As I mentioned, this most recent campaign was my third election. Through each of these campaigns, honourable opponents from some other parties told the voters there was a reason to be afraid of the Conservative Party and afraid of a Conservative majority. My constituents were told most recently that a Conservative majority would veer from the good governance and prudent stewardship we have offered Canadians to instead pursue some secret agenda.

Through three campaigns now, our party has defended itself from similar charges, charges that if we were given a majority, Canada and Canadians would be somehow harmed by nefarious actions our party would undertake. These were the accusations.

A stable, national Conservative majority government now governs this great country, but contrary to the predictions of the doomsayers, this government is delivering exactly what we said it would: a low-tax plan for jobs and growth.

Contrary to the fear-mongering to which Canadians were exposed, this budget demonstrates that this government will deliver on the promises it makes to Canadians. It will continue to focus on creating jobs now and fostering long-term growth going forward.

Canadians saw past the doomsaying. They saw one party fighting the recession and an official opposition fighting the recovery. Canadians saw where our focus was and returned us to government with a decisive majority. That previous official opposition, meanwhile, was found wanting by Canadians and was reduced to third-party status for the first time in its history. More than four in five Canadians voted against the Liberals' self-interested policies. More than 80% of Canadians voted against those policies.

Canadians now enjoy a majority government and a new loyal opposition as well. I extend my congratulations to the member for Toronto—Danforth on his party's success. While I disagree with many of the official opposition's policies, I do not question its belief that it acts in Canada's best interests rather than its own.

However, I digress.

On March 22 the proposed budget, just like the one tabled yesterday by our finance minister, provided a clear path to improving Canadians' lives today while positioning us for future stability and growth. Once again this budget is receiving praise in the Waterloo region. The Greater Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber of Commerce was particularly happy to see our government follow through on a hiring credit for small business to apply against their EI premiums.

The senior vice-president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Dan Kelly, said, "We think that a lot of the provisions are going to help some small firms come out of the recession a bit better than they would have otherwise".

I know it is easy for us to dismiss the endorsement of business groups. However, I am sure members of the third party will recognize the names of former Liberal candidates who have also praised this budget. Carl Zehr, chair of the big cities caucuses of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, and Berry Vrbanovic, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' new president, were both grateful that this government follows through on its commitments.

This government will make the gas transfer permanent. This government will work with municipalities on a long-term infrastructure program that Mayor Zehr notes includes traditional roads, bridges, water, infrastructure and other community needs.

It is true that the document tabled yesterday is not identical to the budget proposed on March 22. By forcing an election, the opposition parties gave this government an opportunity to seek new mandates. Our platform committed to end political subsidies.

Our region's daily paper, the *Waterloo Region Record*, today stated as clearly as possible the case for stopping this political welfare. It says, "The best argument for the change is that political parties should have no automatic right to financial backing from taxpayers".

The Budget

Our platform also committed to returning Canada to surplus a year earlier than forecast. Deficit spending will end in 2014, and we are committed to finding the savings needed to achieve this goal.

We will not repeat the mistakes of the previous Liberal government. Canadians have turned the page and are ready to close the book on that party. We will protect transfer payments for health care and education, but we will return this country to surplus. According to the chamber of commerce, budget 2011 will secure the fiscal flexibility that is crucial to our long-term competitiveness.

Finally, I heard the leader of the third party refer to this budget somewhat derisively as a “déjà-vu budget”. It may be that Canadians elected us to provide exactly that: a low-tax plan for jobs and growth.

● (1615)

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is the first time I have stood in the House, and it is a privilege that has been given to me by voters in Surrey North. I want to take this opportunity to thank the voters in Surrey North for the privilege of allowing me to be their voice in the House of Commons.

The government claims to want to deal with crime, yet again we see that the budget has made very minor commitments to areas in need of serious investment, crime prevention being one of the prime examples. The government has committed only a few million dollars, at a time when it is planning to spend billions of dollars on prisons. Victims' services have also felt these cuts by the government. Proposed spending will not go far enough.

Safety in our communities and across the country is a very serious concern, yet the government prefers to build mega prisons ahead of investing seriously in crime prevention programs for youth at risk and providing the proper resources for the RCMP to fight organized crime.

My question to the member is this. Please explain why the government continues to ignore the real concerns about crime and gang violence in our communities and continues to cut programs for victims and prevention while spending billions of dollars on prisons.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on being elected to the House. I know he will immensely enjoy representing his riding.

I want to point out that the Conservative government believes we need a balanced approach to crime prevention. We agree with, and have supported enthusiastically, many of the crime prevention programs. We have invested heavily in the anti-drug strategy and many other crime prevention programs. I personally have worked with groups in my riding that are active and successful in crime prevention programs.

However, we cannot simply put everything into that arm, the prevention program, without recognizing that we also need to protect victims. When a person who has committed a criminal offence is kept in prison long enough to be rehabilitated in order to protect those in the community, it is important that we support those kinds of initiatives as well.

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have appreciated the discourse so far. However, I have to ask a very simple and straightforward question. Is there a

certain satisfaction that the member and the government get in knowing that they are restricting any increase to the guaranteed income supplement benefits for seniors who make between \$4,000 and \$16,000?

There is something that needs to be made clear. It was made clear during the election campaign in my riding, but not necessarily across the entire country. It is that the current GIS proposal is not for a universal increase for all current GIS recipients, for all seniors who live on annual incomes of \$16,000 or less; the current proposal is strictly limited to those who make \$4,000 to \$7,000 or less. If seniors make \$4,000 a year outside of the OAS and GIS, they do not get the \$1.67; they get only a part of it. If they dare to make \$7,000 a year or more, they get none of it.

Is that a particularly pleasing policy that the government has introduced?

● (1620)

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Madam Speaker, all of us in the House would like to do far more for seniors, especially those who helped build this country and who gave us many of the benefits we currently enjoy. However, the reality is that there has been no adjustment to the GIS for something like 25 years. When the previous Liberal government was in power, it could have changed that. We have at least started to address some of the major shortfalls in this area.

Of course, we want to continue to expand on that. Many of the other initiatives we took in the past to support seniors were welcomed. When I go door to door, it is seniors who embrace the changes this Conservative government has initiated over its past terms. Pension income splitting has been a very popular way to help seniors address this issue.

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Madam Speaker, as this is the first time I have stood in the House since the election, I want to thank all the residents of Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley for once again showing their support for me and returning me to Parliament.

I would also like to congratulate all members of the House and all my parliamentary colleagues on their re-elections, and also congratulate the campaign teams that worked so hard and diligently day and night to send them back here.

The democratic process is something we all value. People who put their names on a ballot, whether they are successful in the election or not, should all be congratulated for the effort they put forward.

I wish to encourage all parliamentarians to support this excellent budget, because I believe it is the right budget for Canada.

The Budget

One major priority that budget 2011 outlines is this government's commitment to lowering taxes. It was Winston Churchill who said, "We contend that for a nation to try to tax itself into prosperity is like a man standing in a bucket and trying to lift himself up by the handle". Canadians know this. They know we have to keep taxes low to grow the economy and to create jobs.

This budget does just that. It lowers taxes on job creators. It lowers taxes on families who enrol their children in artistic activities. It lowers taxes for volunteer firefighters. It lowers taxes for those who stay at home to care for an infirm parent or a disabled child. It also forgives student loans for doctors and nurses who settle in rural areas and provide needed health care service to those struggling in rural communities.

This is a budget that Winston Churchill would have been proud of. It keeps taxes low, invests in projects of national importance and maintains Canada's brand as one of the best places to live in the world. It supports families and communities so that all Canadians can enjoy a high standard of living and our communities can stay vibrant and safe. It invests in innovation and education and training. It promotes research in leading-edge technologies and provides Canadians with the opportunity and the incentives to acquire the skills needed for jobs in today's labour market. It also preserves our fiscal advantage in order to be able to invest in the priorities of Canadians and to keep Canada's economy growing strongly.

For families, it implements a new child arts tax credit worth \$500. That is money in the pocket for people to embrace when they engage their children in artistic and community activities such as Scouts, Cubs, Guides, drama, art. This is a big advantage to the youth of our nation and to their parents, who struggle to pay registration fees. It is something the federal government can do to provide them a little help.

There is a new family caregiver tax credit of \$2,000 for someone who stays home and gives up income to stay home with an infirm parent or a child who is struggling at school or who has a disability. We need to support these people who are willing to give up their employment to stay home and support a family member.

There is an enhanced medical expense tax credit. It is a \$10,000 tax credit for those families who desperately need it when they need it the most.

The budget will also allow full-time students to earn more money without affecting their student loan income. This is a good initiative for young people across this country.

For small business, it establishes a new hiring credit of \$1,000 in EI premium forgiveness. This will help over half a million small businesses defray the costs of hiring a new employee.

I also want to compliment the Minister of Finance in extending the accelerated capital cost allowance for manufacturing and processing, which is something that is very important in my community. This measure will support many manufacturers across Canada and will protect jobs.

There is an additional support of \$10 million for a work-sharing program. This was implemented by companies like Stanfield's in my hometown of Truro. It allows these companies to retain employees

by having the government cover part of the costs for those employees. It will allow industries that have periods of boom and boost, such as the textile industry, to retain employees during these tough times so that they will still be there when the market recovers.

There is help for farmers in rural areas of this country in terms of a \$50 million initiative for agricultural innovation. The budget provides for an increase in funds for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada by \$500 million annually and also establishes a \$1 billion investment in income stabilization programs for farmers.

In this budget, one of the most important planks for rural communities is the \$3,000 tax credit for volunteer firefighters. Our government recognizes that many rural communities across Canada are struggling to maintain their fire protection.

As some of these rural communities become smaller, it is becoming more difficult to attract volunteers to become firefighters in those communities. The issue is a negative spiral, because the fewer young people we have living in a community, the smaller the pool becomes for recruiting volunteers. In some communities, families are finding a challenge in obtaining insurance coverage, as the community does not have adequate fire coverage. If a young family looking for a place to raise children cannot get a homeowner's insurance policy because it cannot find adequate fire coverage, it is not going to move to that small rural community. This is having a devastating effect on many small communities across Canada.

● (1625)

We have 33 fire departments in my riding and, of those 33, 30 are staffed solely by volunteers. In fact, the riding is about 18,000 square kilometres and 98% of that geography is protected solely by volunteer firefighters. These are 600 volunteers who give up their time to train and risk their lives to protect the private property of others. We owe them a great debt.

This budget provides part of the solution by providing a \$3,000 tax cut credit, which will amount to roughly \$450 in the pockets of our volunteers to help reimburse the money that they invest out of their own pocket to support and protect their own communities. We have recognized that the government should not benefit financially from these volunteer activities and this will be a start to rebuild our fire protection in rural communities across this country.

We are investing in key areas like innovation and research at universities and colleges, which is why universities and colleges have spoken out strongly in support of this budget.

There is some other funding in terms of investment in research and development contained in its pages. Over \$50 million over the next five years will be provided to support the creation of 10 new Canada excellence research chairs such as the one at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College in my riding.

There is an additional \$65 million for Genome Canada to continue its work. This was called for by all four political parties in this House before the election.

The Budget

There is another \$60 million over three years to promote increased student enrolment in key disciplines related to the digital economy, one of the fastest growing segments of our economy.

I do not want to ignore seniors because they are an important part of this country. They have made sacrifices in previous generations to build Canada into the great country that it is now. For seniors, the budget puts an additional \$300 million into the GIS program, which will increase money for our lowest earning seniors, those who rely on their old age security and their GIS for their income. It will be a \$600 boost to single seniors who are living alone and an \$840 boost to qualifying seniors who live as couples. As the House knows, this was asked for by the parties and was strongly supported by our caucus. I ask all parties and all members in this House to support it when the budget vote comes up.

As well, I would like to recognize the extension of the eco-energy retrofit program which will allow Canadians, many of them seniors, to reduce their carbon footprint while allowing them to lower their own personal energy costs.

The budget also paves the way to a balanced budget. In addition to lowering taxes and making targeted investments, this budget will allow Canada to eliminate deficits in the future. Our government will complete a strategic view of government spending and find efficiencies so we can balance the budget one year earlier than announced.

Unlike the Liberal Party, which, in the mid-90s, devastated health and education transfers to the provinces, we will not choose that path. That path closed hospitals, closed schools and laid off teachers. We will choose a path to first look within the federal government for efficiencies, and we are committed to that.

In the time remaining in my speech, I will quote a number of organizations that have come out strongly in support of this budget.

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce applauds this low tax budget. It stated:

Canada's low tax plan has created a healthy economic environment for business investment and we applaud the government for staying the course.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business also came out and endorsed this budget. It endorsed the EI hiring tax credit. It stated:

CFIB is extremely pleased to see its top budget priority - an EI Hiring Credit for Small Business - announced in the 2011 budget. As this budget forecasts rising EI premiums in each of the next three years, this credit will be a major help to small firms in growing their workforce.

The Canadian Association of Retired Persons said that it was very happy to see the guaranteed income supplement increase. It said that it has been an issue that it has raised many times before and that it is finally something that is being addressed.

The Canadian Police Association said:

The inclusion by the Conservative government of a renewed investment in the Youth Gang Prevention Fund...will help provide police services across Canada with the tools and resources they need to target at-risk youth, and keep them away from the lure of organized crime.

The Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs said:

The Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs (CAFC) commends the federal government for reintroducing a \$3000 tax credit for volunteer firefighters in the

2011 Federal Budget. We were delighted.... This measure will help with the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters across the country, which will in turn help protect Canadians and our communities.

• (1630)

The Canadian Alliance of Student Associations says:

...(CASA) is pleased to see positive reforms to the Canada Student Loan Program (CSLP), such as an increase to in-study work income exemption, improved access for part-time students—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member. Perhaps he could complete his comments in response to questions.

The hon. member for Vaudreuil-Soulanges.

[Translation]

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to start by thanking the voters of Vaudreuil-Soulanges who sent me here to the House of Commons.

Today, I want to focus on the gas tax and infrastructure. We applaud the government for wanting to make the gas tax permanent. Nonetheless, our party feels that this tax should be indexed to inflation. I also want to ask the government what it is waiting for to address the \$123 billion infrastructure deficit. This is an urgent matter. Immediate action is required and this matter should be addressed in the budget.

[English]

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Madam Speaker, I welcome the hon. member to this House. It is a place of democracy and, at times, we tend to argue and disagree on policy. However, we can all agree that Canada is one country, united from coast to coast to coast. Every member of the House can support that Canada is a united country and we will progress through the next century in that manner.

I totally agree that we must take some strong action to ensure that the infrastructure across this country continues to be rebuilt. That is why we had the economic action plan, which saw millions and millions of dollars placed into the hands of the municipalities, working on projects for provinces and municipalities so that we can have better infrastructure going into the future.

This is supported by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. In its release it stated:

We applaud the Government of Canada for committing in today's budget to develop a new long-term infrastructure plan in partnership with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), provinces, territories, and the private sector.

This government is working for municipalities. It is working for the provinces and the private sector to rebuild the infrastructure that is Canada.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is the first time I have spoken in the House. I first want to thank the people of Abitibi—Témiscamingue for sending me here. It is a great honour for me to represent them.

In its budget, the government talks about a measure for paying off student loans for new nurses working in remote regions, but the entire health care system is suffering from the shortage of medical personnel.

The Budget

What does this government have to offer nurses who have been working for many years, holding the public health care system together, and who work extra, often mandatory 16-hour shifts and do not get to watch their children grow up?

[English]

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Madam Speaker, our government strongly supports the nurses, doctors and other health care professionals who work to deliver excellent health care across this country. We are committed to a strong public health care system in our provinces. We have shown that, not just by talking about it but by action.

We have met the commitments made in the Canada Health Act and the agreements made almost 10 years ago. We have indicated that we will continue the 6% escalator of health care funds that we will be sending to the provinces. We will help them work, develop and continue to deliver excellent health care across the country.

• (1635)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member made reference to home care services. The first thing that came across my mind in terms of home care services is the fact that there is a tax credit as opposed to a refundable tax credit.

Would the member not recognize that, by doing it in that fashion, the government is taking away the opportunity to have a break from those individuals who need it most? Many of those individuals are not eligible to take advantage of the program because it is a tax credit.

Does the member not see the merit in turning this into a refundable tax credit so that more people would be a part of the budget?

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Madam Speaker, if we look back in the history of the Government of Canada, this is the first time the Government of Canada has introduced a tax credit to support people who stay home to take care of a parent or a child with a disability. These people are giving up incomes to remain at home and support their families. This is something we need to support, which is why the government has taken strong action. Of course we always want to do more. There are probably other programs that could have been put in place. However, I think all members of the House can recognize that this is a strong start and the tax credit is the first step in supporting them.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I wish to inform you right away that I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

This is not the first but the second time that I have had the opportunity to rise in this House. However, it is the first time that I have really had the time to thank the people of Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, who honoured me by placing their trust in me on May 2. I want to assure them that I will work extremely hard in the next four years to defend their interests and to defend public services in Quebec and Canada.

I would also like to take this opportunity to say hello to the students in grades four and six at La Mennais elementary school,

who had the good idea of inviting me to visit after my election win on May 2. I went to their school and they asked me questions for an hour and a half. Question period in the House of Commons is tough, but there are some real up-and-comers in our Quebec schools, because the students were really excellent.

I am very proud to represent the people of Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. It is a great, densely populated, urban riding, where people are very involved in their community. There is a plethora of community groups and a very rich civil society. It is truly exemplary. I meet amazing people who give their all to help each other and those around them. I must recognize the work of people like those at the Corporation de développement communautaire de Rosemont and the Corporation de développement économique et communautaire de Rosemont, or CDEC, who do extraordinary things, as well as those at the Regroupement des tables de concertation de la Petite-Patrie, which is located in the western part of the riding.

There are great success stories in Rosemont thanks to people in the community who get involved, like those at Technopôle Angus and the Campus des technologies de la santé. These are the ways of the future, and I am very proud to think that I will be working with these people over the coming years.

Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie is also a riding that faces major challenges, such as poverty. It is a riding where the average income is lower than that on the island of Montreal. This creates problems. People have trouble making ends meet. There are fathers and mothers who are working—they are working—and who still have to get food hampers to feed their families. This is unacceptable. This is a riding that has a high proportion of seniors. Seniors face isolation problems and poverty. The NDP will therefore put forward various proposals to urge the government to act. The riding also has a shortage of family doctors and nurses.

With regard to housing, 75% of people in Rosemont are renters. Affordable housing is thus very important to us. There are also public transit issues. We live in a city. We are therefore focusing on active transportation and biking or walking to get to work or to the grocery store. There are also environmental issues. I will come back to them. Finally, there is a wide variety of particularly vibrant cultures. It is wonderful to meet stimulating and enthusiastic people.

Yesterday, like all of my colleagues, I had the honour of listening to the government's budget presentation, which, I must say, contains some worthwhile measures. I would like to mention two here today. First of all, it promises compensation for Quebec for its sales tax harmonization, which the Leader of the Opposition and the House Leader of the Official Opposition have been calling for for some time. I consider this a victory and a real win, which can be attributed largely to the work of the NDP and the work of the NDP in Quebec. It was very interesting to hear that yesterday. The budget also renews the eco-energy program. This will allow people to renovate their homes to make them more energy efficient. That is a positive thing.

The Budget

Overall, however, the rest of the budget is disappointing. The government did not hear the message sent by Canadians on May 2. I would remind the government that 60% of Canadians did not vote for its agenda and its policies. Yet it is stubbornly sticking to its doctrine.

This budget does not meet the basic needs of the people we represent and stand up for. For instance, the budget contains a series of tax credits. These tax credits can be beneficial for families like mine, but they do absolutely nothing for families that do not earn enough money to pay taxes. Therefore a huge segment of the population is being abandoned by the federal government simply because they are too poor and do not have the means to benefit from or claim these tax credits.

The throne speech and the budget were also very disappointing when it comes to fighting poverty.

• (1640)

I was blown away when I realized that the word “poverty” was nowhere to be found in the government's throne speech. Furthermore, the proposed measures in the budget do absolutely nothing to address poverty. Nothing. It is not on their radar, while there are thousands and thousands of people living in poverty across Canada. This is a shame in a society as rich as ours.

The NDP has a vision. We do not let anyone fall through the cracks. We must all stand together.

The situation with seniors in our country is tragic. We must respect the contribution they have made. They left us something. They worked hard their entire lives so that their children would have a better society than the one they had. By and large, they were successful. Today, I get the impression that they are being abandoned, forgotten.

The government is injecting \$300 million into the guaranteed income supplement. That is a step in the right direction, but it is not nearly enough. Much more is needed. That is not even half of what we need to bring all of our seniors out of poverty. In the meantime, on January 1, 2012, major corporations, banks and oil companies will receive a \$2 billion gift. We do not think that is the direction our country should be headed in.

Access to family doctors is a very dramatic situation. In Rosemont, hundreds of families do not have a family doctor. What are they to do? They often go to the emergency department. They burden the emergency departments unnecessarily because they cannot make an appointment with a doctor who can look after their problem or that of their loved ones. I understand this situation, as I myself do not have a family doctor.

The government is not coming up with any plan to train new doctors and new nurses, but poll after poll suggests that access to a good public health care system is a priority for Quebecers and Canadians. This government is disregarding the public's priorities.

Housing is an essential aspect of everyone's quality of life. In Rosemont, we have 5,500 families who spend more than 50% of their income on housing. There are even 2,000 families who spend more than 80% of their income on their housing. Just imagine that. How do they manage? That leaves 20% of their income for

everything else: transportation, food, clothing. Those people are stuck in deep poverty. The federal government is doing nothing to reinvest in affordable housing.

The government is ignoring this basic issue, which provides quality of life for families. At present, there are people in Rosemont and elsewhere in Montreal who have to settle for housing that is unsanitary or requires significant renovations to become livable.

In an urban area such as Rosemont, public transit is a vital issue. The people of Rosemont are obviously disappointed that the government has not made any provision to relaunch infrastructure programs. They are essential for municipalities.

We want investments in infrastructure, whether bridges or transfers to municipalities for water mains and sewers. It is very important. In Montreal, 30% of treated water is lost because of holes throughout the system.

There must be a vision to modernize our infrastructure and improve public transit. Improving this service would also reduce pollution and dependence on automobiles.

As for the environment, the people of Rosemont are worried about pollution. There are periods of intense smog, especially in the summer, when people with asthma and seniors suffer because of the poor air quality at certain times.

However, in listening to the throne speech, we realized that the Conservatives consider the environment to be a natural resource rather than an essential element that should be considered when any decision is made.

Global warming was mentioned once in the throne speech, but there is no action. There is a void. There is nothing even though the experts informed us this week that greenhouse gas levels are continuing to rise and that we are approaching the point of no return. It will become impossible to prevent global warming. I hope that Canada's performance at the Bonn conference will be better than at the Copenhagen conference.

In closing, it is unfortunate to see this government stubbornly making irresponsible tax cuts that deprive it of revenue it needs. The government is continuing to make bad choices. The NDP believes that we can and must do better.

• (1645)

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie on his exemplary first speech in the House of Commons. Clearly, the future of the NDP is in very good hands. My question is for my colleague, who spoke about seniors and the food banks that they must go to from time to time.

What more could the government have done to help our seniors get out of poverty?

The Budget

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Nickel Belt for his question. For a long time, the NDP has been pushing for the injection of an additional \$700 million into the guaranteed income supplement to help all seniors get out of poverty. This was one of the commitments we made during the election campaign. That is the first thing. The second thing is that we must improve and protect public pension systems in Canada in order to ensure that everyone has enough income after retirement to make ends meet and pay their bills. We must also invest in social housing so that people have the opportunity to live in affordable housing where they can be independent and yet access services adapted to their needs.

Access to health care is also extremely important for seniors. We must therefore stop the slide toward the privatization of our health care system and give people access to health care with their health insurance cards rather than their credit cards.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to congratulate the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie on his election and welcome him to the House.

Earlier, I heard members talk about experiencing déjà vu with this budget. Perhaps the member remembers the movie *Groundhog Day*, in which Bill Murray's character lives the same day over and over, making different mistakes as he tries to charm the character played by Andie MacDowell. We hope that the government will stop making mistakes in its budget and will do things right. I am worried about the budget cuts that were announced in last year's and this year's budget. We do not know how the government will manage to make these cuts, which it is keeping secret. We ask for details, but it refuses to give us any.

Does the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie have anything to say about that?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for that pertinent question. His party said that this budget feels like the movie *Groundhog Day*. We prefer to use the expression "copy and paste". It is as though absolutely nothing happened between March and May, as though this government did not hear the needs and demands expressed by Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

The proposed budget cuts are worrisome, in terms of both their scope and the uncertainty surrounding exactly what is going to happen. The government is throwing around huge, staggering numbers—\$4 billion in savings next year alone—without giving any clue as to who will be hit and where the government is going to cut.

We know we are in a difficult budget situation, and the government needs all of its revenues. Now is not the time to give any gifts to large corporations like oil companies and banks, and then turn around and say that the government can no longer invest because it has no money.

The NDP is proposing that the government stop giving gifts to those who do not need them. Last year, Canada's six major banks made over \$20 billion in profits. If we lower their taxes, they are not going to create jobs. That would be a gift to them, when that money is needed to meet the needs of ordinary Canadians.

If we need to find \$4 billion next year, why not put an end to the tax breaks? That would get us halfway there, since that would mean an extra \$2 billion right away.

• (1650)

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is the first time I have risen in the House. First, I wish to salute all my House of Commons colleagues. I consider it a great responsibility and a great honour to represent the people of my riding of Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine. I would like to thank them today for the trust they placed in me and to say to them that I will defend their interests every day of my term in the coming years.

On May 2, the people of the Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands sent us a clear message: our region deserves to take its rightful place in the Canadian federation. They are ready to contribute to improving their country. The people in my region want change. They rallied around the NDP vision for developing a progressive Canada, a dynamic and enterprising Canada, as the people of the Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands have always been. They also want a Canada where justice and compassion prevail, where families are a priority, and where no one is left behind. I am pleased to be able to contribute, together with the people in my riding, to this wave of change.

With regard to yesterday's budget brought down by my Conservative colleagues in the House, I see that it is more or less the same budget that was brought down in March. Despite the message of non-confidence sent by Quebeckers and current worrisome economic indicators, the government has not changed its line of thinking. This is essentially a minimalist budget that includes very few social measures to help people who are contributing more than their fair share to the Canadian treasury. We see that the government is not acting responsibly toward the people it represents.

Of course we commend its commitment to sales tax harmonization, but we are bitterly disappointed in the lack of support for seniors, people in the middle class and the less fortunate. The average disposable income per capita in the Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine region is \$5,000 less than the Quebec average, at just over \$20,000 a year. Some 20% of the people in our riding are 65 or older. The measly \$600 allocated under the guaranteed income supplement to single seniors will not significantly help seniors living in poverty. The tax credit for family caregivers is also more a symbolic measure than true recognition of the enormous task accomplished by these people, mostly women I should point out.

This budget does not contain any proposals for reducing the financial burden on families. In terms of help from the government, most of my constituents will not see any improvement in their living conditions.

What is more, looming cuts to government agencies are making us fear the worst when it comes to support for small to medium-sized businesses. For a large region like Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, whose economy relies mainly on developing natural resources, yesterday's budget is disastrous and cause for serious concern.

The Budget

The Conservative government announced budgetary cuts to the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec to the tune of \$13.4 million in 2013-14. For Fisheries and Oceans Canada, up to \$56.8 million in budgetary cuts are projected for 2013-14. This is totally unacceptable.

In a region where the labour market remains fragile, where salaries are low and natural resources have often been overexploited, resource preservation, enhancement and research programs are essential. Although the region has been working hard to create jobs and the unemployment rate has been steadily decreasing for three years, the unemployment rate was still 12.5% in 2010. Cutting support for the economy of the Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands will serve only to destroy any hope of maintaining the tentative economic recovery. Rather than continuing the recovery that began several years ago, our region is at risk of regressing and remaining dependent on government support, which will cost more for everyone.

• (1655)

The conscientious exploitation of natural resources belonging to Canadians remains a government responsibility. And, once again, our elected officials are avoiding their responsibilities.

Our analysis of the budget is therefore very pessimistic. We are opposed to the idea of drastically downsizing the government in a context of economic recovery. The repercussions may be even more serious for the Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands, which have aging populations and are far from the services offered in major centres. However, we remain hopeful that the government will quickly realize that it is about to cause a catastrophe and will change its mind on several points. We also hope that it will strengthen the good measures that it plans to put in place.

For example, the eco-energy program that my dear colleague mentioned earlier could be extended for much longer than one year. Help for family caregivers could be increased significantly. The temporary hiring credit against the increase in employment insurance premiums for SMEs could be made more permanent. As a member of Parliament, I will work to convince my counterparts to strengthen such measures that are positive for our region.

I want our region, which has been hit hard by the forestry crisis, to benefit from the \$60 million investment announced to help forestry companies innovate and compete. The government absolutely must extend this investment beyond one year. The government has not done enough for this industry in the past.

Furthermore, subsidies for the oil companies do nothing to help the people in our region. In my riding, known around the world for its beautiful scenery and wonderful natural resources that attract thousands of sports tourists every year, many people are disappointed that Ottawa is subsidizing the major polluters instead of encouraging a green economy. The people of the Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands want assurances that their environment will be protected, and the issue of oil at the Old Harry site will be crucial in this part of Canada.

I hope that I can count on the co-operation of all members in the House in adopting practical solutions that will make a real difference

in our riding. Tax cuts will not make a difference when it comes to job creation or the sound exploitation of our natural resources.

I am counting on the leadership of our Prime Minister to respect the mandate that the public has given us and to allow us to do our job in Parliament. I hope that he will listen to us when we propose solutions to help our economy offer new jobs and a decent future for Canadians. I hope that we will be able to show the people in my region that they have a place in an open and visionary Canada.

I believe that we can choose to work together constructively, respecting those who elected us.

• (1700)

[English]

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Madam Speaker, congratulations on your new role.

During the election I met with thousands of individuals across my riding, Canadians who actually supported the Conservative plan and the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. I would like to remind the Speaker and the member opposite that Canadians actually did not support the opposition. In fact 70% of them did not support the opposition.

My question is with respect to seniors. In the budget we have talked about increasing the GIS, \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples, benefiting over 680,000 Canadian seniors. I would ask the member if he has concerns regarding seniors, whether he and his colleagues will support the 2011 budget that for the first time increases the GIS and whether they intend to support that initiative to support seniors?

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, what has been proposed by the government side regarding supporting seniors, while it is a step forward, is entirely insufficient.

We need to bring seniors out of poverty and a \$600 credit per year is simply inadequate and is not at the right level to help our seniors get to the point where they deserve to be.

They have worked their entire lives to create this beautiful country and quite frankly \$600 a year I suppose is perhaps enough to pay part of their rent for one month, but we are talking about seniors who, by and large, are scraping by and spending their savings in order to pay for their groceries, transportation and to avoid being a burden to their families.

The \$600 credit per year is simply insufficient and we really hope the Conservatives will actually propose something which would be more readily acceptable to Canadian seniors.

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate you on your appointment to the chair.

I would also like to congratulate the hon. member opposite on his election to the House. This is a great place to be and a great place to share our ideas and knowledge.

First of all, I would like to thank the voters of the great riding of Medicine Hat for re-electing me as the member for that constituency.

The Budget

My colleague just mentioned this, but I would like to mention it again because it appears that some of the members opposite do not recognize that over 70% of Canadians did not vote for the NDP.

The other thing I would like to point out is that certainly some of the NDP policies and intentions are to tax Canadians heavily and to spend heavily. I wonder if the NDP has actually looked at those kinds of policies to see what has happened in Europe. In particular I am talking about Greece and Spain which are next to being bankrupt.

The policies the NDP is proposing would have a huge deficit impact on Canadians with regard to jobs and opportunities for companies to build this great country of ours.

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question and congratulate him also on his election in Medicine Hat.

I thank him as well for his comments from the party that was supported by 40% of the Canadian population, which 60% did not support, so I believe 60% of the Canadian population is actually looking for an alternative to the budget that has been proposed.

When it comes to worrying about increasing taxes, when it comes to worrying about crippling the economy and the GNP in general, frankly, if we were to create more employment, if we were to help small business more, the creation of employment, in and of itself, would bring revenues to our fine government and would help to pay for the services that we are providing today.

We are not anywhere near the point of thinking that we must go running to the IMF for help with our budget. We have lots of room. We have many innovative ideas. I am very disappointed that the government side was not able to introduce any of those ideas in its budget yesterday.

• (1705)

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Congratulations, Mr. Speaker. I am going to be splitting my time with my colleague, the member of Parliament for Yukon.

As Canada's labour minister, I am pleased to take part in this important debate on the 2011 budget, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, a low-tax plan for jobs and growth. This budget is a model of sound fiscal management because it is focused on strengthening Canada's economic recovery by improving the ability of businesses and entrepreneurs to respond to emerging growth opportunities and create jobs.

The Canadian economic recovery is well under way and that is thanks to extraordinary measures in the economic action plan and Canada's solid economic fundamentals. Canadians have every reason to be optimistic about the future.

Our country has posted the strongest economic growth among the G7 countries since mid-2009 and we have recouped all the job losses incurred during the global economic recession. As we continue to recover from this economic downturn, it is more important than ever that we encourage a co-operative and productive workplace.

A harmonious workplace lies at the heart of a prosperous economy. Productivity and innovation thrive in places where work can be done safely, in an environment that values quality, fairness and excellence. By providing mediation and conciliation services to federally-regulated industries that are engaged in collective bargain-

ing, the labour program's Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service helps employers and unions to resolve their differences without a work stoppage, strike or lockout and the economy becomes stronger as a result of this labour stability.

In the past five years, 832 collective agreements were finalized and 792 of them were reached without a work stoppage. This represents a success rate of more than 95% when a federal conciliator or mediation officer intervenes in a dispute.

If I could, I would like to mention a notable success that has just been achieved on the west coast of Canada. There is a historic eight-year agreement between the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Canada, representing approximately 4,500 longshore workers, and the British Columbia Maritime Employers Association. This represents the longest collective agreement ever negotiated on the west coast of North America. The parties agreed to it themselves and they did it without any interruption in service at our Pacific ports.

It is a noteworthy achievement because it sends a clear message to the rest of the world. That message is that Canada is open for business and we can be relied upon to meet the import and export demands of the 21st century. That is why the next phase of Canada's economic action plan proposes to expand the delivery of the preventive mediation program with an investment of just over \$1 million over two years. It is a modest investment, but it will pay real dividends in the years to come.

Let me now turn my attention to those who often face the brunt during an economic downturn: the workers. Our economic action plan established the wage earner protection program, or WEPP, as it is known. This program helps workers manage one of the toughest challenges they will ever face: going without hard-earned pay because an employer has gone bankrupt.

As a direct result of the WEPP program, eligible workers who lose their jobs and are owed money in the six months prior to their employer going bankrupt or subject to receivership are now compensated for unpaid wages and vacation pay. This also includes severance and termination pay. Therefore, in total, workers can receive up to a maximum of \$3,400, money which is paid out quickly to ensure that the most vulnerable period of time for workers and their families is covered.

• (1710)

The WEPP has made an important difference to those in need. Since January 2009 over 30,000 WEPP claimants have received almost \$67 million in payments and with all these funds going directly to hard-working Canadians they were really the innocent victims of corporate failures.

Our budget provides even more support for workers caught in this unfortunate situation. We are going to extend WEPP to cover employees who lose their jobs when their employers' attempt at restructuring takes longer than six months and is subsequently unsuccessful. It is an important enhancement to a valuable program.

The Budget

The enhanced protection could provide an estimated \$4.5 million annually to financially assist Canadians affected by the bankruptcy of their employer who would not have had coverage under the program as it was developed. This will ensure that employees are not unfairly penalized if their employer tries but fails to restructure in the face of financial difficulties.

Budget 2011 also announces the government's intention to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Canada Labour Code to eliminate mandatory retirement in the federal jurisdiction. We are taking this step because we believe that forcing an employee to retire by reason of age is a form of discrimination and is unequal treatment. There is no question that Canadians are living longer and they are more active than ever, so people should be able to choose when they retire unless there are compelling reasons like health and safety concerns that prohibit them from doing so.

The budget strikes the right balance between fiscal prudence and targeted investment. It is no surprise that both business and labour groups have reacted favourably to the proposals in the budget. It is a rare occasion when organized labour comes out and publicly endorses a Conservative budget.

When the labour items in the budget were first presented, Mr. Ken Georgetti, president of the Canadian Labour Congress—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay is rising on a point of order?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I think the member should correct the record. It would be very unfair to have in the House that the Canadian Labour Congress supports this budget. Ken Georgetti has written a very clear statement that the Canadian Labour Congress opposes the budget. I would ask the member to strike that and continue on with her friends at the chambers of commerce and other such businesses. The Canadian Labour Congress does not support the budget. She should be accurate with her information.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I think in this circumstance it is a point of debate. We will allow the minister to carry on.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, I stand by my statements.

As I was saying, when the labour items in this budget were first presented, Mr. Ken Georgetti, who is the president of the Canadian Labour Congress, stated that he was “pleased with announcements in the budget about extending work sharing programs, EI pilot projects, support for laid-off older workers, and improving wage protection for laid-off workers”. That is high praise for those elements of the budget.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend my hon. colleague the Minister of Finance for the increase in support for seniors and families in this budget as well.

This government recognizes that Canada's seniors helped build and make this country great. That is why the next phase of Canada's economic action plan is continuing to support seniors by enhancing the GIS, extending the new horizons for seniors program, eliminating mandatory retirement and more.

Since 2006 the government has provided over \$2.3 billion in annual tax relief to seniors and pensioners. Since 2006 the Conservative government has made families a priority.

We reduced the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%. We introduced the children's fitness tax credit, and due to our strong record of tax relief, total savings for a typical family, such as one in my riding of Halton, are over \$3,000.

In budget 2011 we have added a new children's arts tax credit. We have added the extension of the eco-energy retrofit homes program. We are helping full-time students to earn more money without affecting their loans and giving them a break on certification fees.

Our government introduced yesterday the next phase of Canada's economic action plan to ensure that Canada remains one of the world's top performing economies.

Today, with the support of budget 2011, the labour program will continue to focus its priorities on protecting Canadian workers and employers, and on strengthening labour management relations while playing a leadership role in intergovernmental and international labour affairs.

• (1715)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest and some surprise at some of the statements my hon. colleague made, particularly quoting Ken Georgetti. Poor Ken is going to be choking on his coffee back at his office when he finds out that he is being rolled out as a supporter of the Conservative Party because Ken was very clear in his opposition.

It goes to the fundamental issue the member talks about, the human right to work as long as a person wants. Charlie Angus died on the shop floor of the Hollinger Mine when he was 68 years old because there were no pensions. People worked in the mines until they died. My grandmother told me every month that she got her Canada pension, “We fought for this and we need to protect this”.

So, when people in my riding go back to work at 65, 66 and 67, it is not because it is a human rights choice. It is because they do not have a pension plan that protects them.

I want to ask the member, why is the government continuing to walk away on the biggest single crisis facing Canadian families, which is the need for a comprehensive overhaul of the Canada pension plan, so every senior could retire with dignity?

So, do not say it is their human right to work because they do not have enough money to live on. Their real basic right in Canada is to be able to retire when they want to and have a Canada pension plan that is sufficient. The Conservative government has abandoned seniors on that key element.

The Budget

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, I would invite the hon. member to perhaps take a look at my past experience because I do not talk about being from an area that mined coal. I am the daughter of a family of coal miners. I was raised by my grandmother on the GIS. I have full understanding of exactly what the member is saying. However, I choose the Conservative way, which is the way we have adopted in this budget.

That has to do with fundamentally putting the tools in the hands of the people to make their own decisions and make their own investments. That is exactly what we are talking about here.

With respect to the member referencing Mr. Georgetti, who is the head of the Canada Labour Congress, I have great respect for him. However, the fact remains that if the hon. member were to choose to take a look at what is reported in the media and it is there in hard copy for him to see, he would absolutely see that I said nothing more than what Mr. Georgetti has said himself.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as this is the first time that I rise in the House, I would like to thank the great people of Kingston and the Islands for choosing me to be their member in the House of Commons.

The minister stated in her speech, and I heard this many times during the election campaign, that a typical family would save about \$3,000 in taxes per year. What about the lowest quintile of wage earners, the people who really need government's help, the people whom we really should be here looking out for? Does the minister know what a typical family in the lowest quintile would get in tax savings?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, this is the government that introduced tax measures that actually stopped people from having to pay taxes. We are the ones who made it easier for people to be unburdened of taxes. As I mentioned, reducing the GST from 7% to 6% to 5% had a huge impact on those who were at the lowest earning levels.

However, it is also important to note that when we talk about whom we are representing here, and I welcome to the House the member for Kingston and the Islands, we as a Conservative majority government have a strong mandate for a stable enforcement of Canada's action plan. That is what Canadians voted on.

When I represent people in Halton, I represent all people in Halton, not just those whom I pick and choose to represent, every single one of them.

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my colleague, the Minister of Labour, for her words today. I also want to commend her for her actions, particularly with respect to extending the wage earner protection program, something we have worked on in this House, on both sides, for over five years. That is an excellent initiative.

I want to ask her a short question with respect to the role of the federal mediation and conciliation services. Budget 2011 allocates \$1 million over two years. Could she expand on that in her remarks?

• (1720)

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the wage earner protection program, I would be remiss if I did not point out that when I became Minister of Labour, it was Mr. Ken Lewenza from

the CAW, another union person, who indicated how much he enjoyed the program and how beneficial it was for workers as well. So it is another case of organized labour working with the Conservative government.

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your new role in the House. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to our Prime Minister for bestowing upon me the great honour to stand before you today to deliver this my maiden speech in the House of Commons.

I want to say congratulations to all members of Parliament on both sides of this House and, in my co-operative nature, would like to say that I for one am agreeable and committed to working with members sitting on the opposite side of the House.

Finally, I would like to offer profound thanks to the citizens of the great Yukon Territory, the land of the midnight sun, for placing their support in me. I wish to express the tremendous pride I feel as I stand here today representing one of 13 provinces and territories that collectively make up the greatest nation in the world.

This is an exciting time of year for young Canadians. I wish to congratulate Yukon College graduates. I encourage them to embrace the college's guiding brand "Start Here Go Anywhere". I wish to congratulate Yukon High School graduates for their accomplishments and the exciting new chapter in their lives.

I am proud to tell our Yukon students that because of the solid leadership of our Prime Minister and the continuation of Canada's economic action plan, they will have jobs to go to; they will have options to pursue a career; some will have savings to travel and explore this magnificent planet; and others will seek new skills and opportunities through post-secondary education.

It is through the strength of our economy and governance, and the continued implementation of Canada's economic action plan that these options are there for them, where other youth in the free world are not so fortunate. They can look forward to the modernization of the Canada student loans program and grants program. They can enjoy a more vibrant and accessible post-secondary education system through annual support to students and families.

Our government is committed to promoting enrolment in key disciplines related to the digital economy, fields which are important for meeting a range of social and economic challenges in health, the environment, natural resources, and national security.

I am especially proud to state that our government has made Canada's north a cornerstone of our agenda. I firmly believe that the land and the people of the north are, to some degree, a greater image of all Canadians. We are proud of the culture and history that is guarded daily by first nation, aboriginal and northern Canadians. We rest easy knowing they are determined, adventurous, and proud individuals who define the essence of community, co-operation and a true north strong and free.

From that perspective, I say to all members of the House that a budget and a plan that is good for the north is a budget and a plan that is good for all Canadians.

The Budget

Federal support for the territories totals just over \$3 billion in 2011-12, an increase of \$847 million since 2005-06. This long-term growing support helps ensure that the territories have the resources required to provide essential public services and contributes to shared national objectives, including health care, post-secondary education, and other key components of Canada's social programs.

Connecting our country by road, from sea to sea to sea, is one such example of how diverse, yet how Canadians are and must be. The completion of the Dempster Highway from Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk will support the northern communities through better access to public supplies and services, decreased cost of living, promotion of tourism, and reduced costs related to onshore oil and gas exploration.

It is the position of this government that increasing first nations community and government participation in the Canadian economy is the most effective way to improve the socio-economic conditions of first nations people.

I look forward to working with Yukon first nation governments and communities as they pursue emerging economic development at local levels. Opportunities that ensure a balance between the development of the environment and a connection between first nations people and the land, water, fish and wildlife of their traditional territories, so that it remains strong for generations to come.

• (1725)

The protection of the environment across Canada, and indeed Yukon and within first nations' traditional territories, will be supported through promoting the development of clean energy technology through an \$8 million investment in aboriginal and northern communities, technologies and clean energy projects designed to ensure the reduction of greenhouse gases, which have national and regional impacts.

We are providing nearly \$870 million over two years to address climate change and air quality, including the extension of the eco-energy homes program that will help homeowners make their homes more energy efficient and reduce the burden of high energy costs.

The Government of Canada has committed more than \$3.2 million in funding to improve housing conditions for first nations in Yukon. Of this, Tr'ondek Hwech'in First Nation will receive close to \$755,000 to retrofit 67 housing units and \$630,000 toward the construction of 2 new units.

Education is key to the success of individuals, their families and communities and improving educational outcomes for first nations will benefit Canada as a whole. We believe first nations students should have an education that will see them graduate with the skills they need to enter the labour market successfully and participate fully in Canada's economic opportunities.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan invests \$9 million over two years to expand territorial colleges, adult-based education programs, particularly in remote communities, to enhance their ability to take advantage of economic opportunities in the north.

An additional \$1.7 million for labour market training will be added as direct, targeted support for the territories. Families of

children enrolled in artistic, cultural, recreation and development activities will benefit from the introduction of a children's art tax credit, an opportunity for children across Yukon, such as those at Robert Service School in Dawson City, with the School of Visual Arts only a few blocks away.

This tax credit builds on actions to help parents and children, such as the children's fitness tax credit, so energetic youth like the ones I know so well at Hidden Valley School can enjoy the positive benefits of a healthy and active childhood. The tax free savings account, universal child care benefit, the child tax credit and the first-time home buyers tax credit will all translate into assistance specifically for northerners who realize a higher cost of living in remote and isolated regions in Canada.

Eligible seniors across Canada, and indeed in the north, will receive an additional annual benefit of up to \$600 for single seniors and up to \$840 for couples.

Attracting doctors and nurses to remote communities through a loan forgiveness initiative is a critical step forward in improving the lives of family physicians, nurse practitioners and the clients they serve in these regions.

The territories will also benefit from continued direct targeted support in 2011-12, including \$800,000 for the wait time reduction fund as part of the 10-year plan to strengthen health care. They will also benefit from the two year extension to the territorial health system sustainability initiative, which will provide \$60 million over two years to consolidate progress made in reducing the reliance on outside health care systems and medical travel.

I am excited that budget 2011 will allow communities in the territories to benefit from a legislative permanent annual investment in the municipal infrastructure through the gas tax fund. The permanency of this fund will give communities the confidence and stability in their ability to access and utilize long-term infrastructure funding to meet the individual communities' specific needs.

Last but not least, I, along with many other new members of Parliament, may very well be standing in the House today because of the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry. I am pleased to speak to Yukoners especially but to all Canadians, farmers, trappers, sportsmen and women, athletes, aboriginal and first nations peoples who have abided by the rules, contributed to our history, culture and to our economy, citizens like Yukon legend, Alex Van Bibber born on the banks of the Pelly River in 1916, who still lives off the land and at 95 years young still teaches Yukoners essential wilderness skills.

The Budget

For fellow Yukon citizens, fellow Canadians, we will introduce legislative amendments to eliminate the requirement to register non-restricted long guns. In doing so, this government will not allow billions to be wasted or responsible, law-abiding Canadians to be affected, but will rather find more effective ways to keep our communities and neighbourhoods safe, our youth active, healthy and educated, our citizens assisted and employed, our homeless sheltered, our crime prevention strategies focused, criminals accountable and victims of crime supported.

In the words of Yukon's outdoor writer and columnist, Murray Martin, "I'll say Amen to that brother!"

• (1730)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate all of my colleagues, from all political parties, on being elected. I would like to congratulate you on your appointment as Speaker. I would also like to thank all of my constituents and all those who have placed their trust in me. I am also pleased to be part of this very youthful NDP caucus. I am pleased that young people are better represented here in Parliament now, since the May 2 election.

I have a question for my hon. Conservative colleague regarding post-secondary education, which he mentioned in his speech. Given that students make up a large percentage of the people in my riding, I would like to know what the government intends to do to help them, since they often live below the poverty line and have a hard time making ends meet at the end of the month.

[*English*]

Mr. Ryan Leef: Mr. Speaker, that question is one that came up in Yukon while we were talking with our constituents.

The Conservative government has a plan in budget 2011 to offer an equalization on part-time and full-time student loans. We are looking at modernizing the Canadian student loan program to help students realize savings. Tied into health is the forgiveness of loans for doctors and nurses. This would be a tremendous benefit across Canada in attracting people to remote regions, such as our north, and would make it a more attractive career for students to pursue.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Yukon spoke about climate change and the fact that budget 2011 contained hundreds of thousands of dollars for home energy retrofits, which is a good thing. However, is the member prepared to ask his government's ministers for the millions of dollars year after year to deal with the effects of global warming, which, as the member for Yukon knows, will be the most intense in the Arctic?

Mr. Ryan Leef: Mr. Speaker, we first have to start working on identifying some of the root causes of global warming and climate change. Investments in research and development will permit us to understand where we best spend the money and invoke the greatest initiatives to reduce climate change and the effects, which we are certainly aware of across the Arctic and the northern territories.

This is an area of key importance to the citizens of Yukon. I will be working with my riding and climate change experts in the territory to hear solutions and ideas to bring forward to this

government to ensure that climate change remains an important issue.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your appointment and I congratulate my friend on his major speech in this most august of places in this beautiful country of ours.

The member talked at length about many of the items that were in budget 2011. He drew our attention to what it meant to him and his riding of Yukon.

I would like to hear him expand on the issue of the 15% mineral exploration tax credit. I would also like him to talk about what the government's creation of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency means to him and his riding. As well, if he could expand on the hiring credit for small businesses and any other items he may not have had time to tell us about that mean so much to his great riding of Yukon.

• (1735)

Mr. Ryan Leef: Mr. Speaker, I did not mention that the 15% mineral exploration tax credit will be continued for an additional year into 2012. This will help our companies raise capital for mineral exploration.

I am proud to say that the Yukon territory is currently enjoying a 4% unemployment rate because of Conservative government job creation. That is the lowest in our country for consecutive months. We used to have the highest unemployment rate in Canada. The Conservative government's action plan has allowed Yukoners to work.

We will continue to work on poverty issues, but I am very proud of that fact.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Vancouver East.

It is an honour to rise again in the House as part of a much bigger NDP team, now the official opposition. I would like to begin by thanking the people of northern Manitoba who have sent me back to Ottawa to fight for them. I would like to thank people from Sakgeeng to Churchill, from Berens River to Pukatawagan, from The Pas, Flin Flon and Thompson, people from first nations, Métis communities, urban centres and communities all across the north, people who were all part of sending a strong message that they wanted Ottawa to work with them.

People in northern Manitoba recognize that a lot of wealth comes from our area. It comes from the north, from our industries, from traditional territories, from people's hard work. However, we in the north also know that we do not see a federal government that works with us to give back. This is yet another federal budget that fails to give back to our north.

The Budget

With this budget, the government is ignoring first nations and the real struggles they face day to day.

First nations in northern Manitoba face some of the most appalling living conditions in our country. My question is this. Where is the removal of the 2% cap for which first nations have been asking for years? Where is the funding for housing? Not only was there no increase, but there was a reduction when compared to commitments made in previous years. Where is the funding for water and sewer investments?

The Island Lake First Nations have been asking for a federal commitment to water and sewer services as a way of preventing some of the most severe health challenges they face year after year. Yet when I visited Garden Hill First Nation just two months ago, people showed me the latest response of the federal government to their call of action: a big blue water bin and a small grey pail with a seat on it. This is the kind of dignity that Canada's first peoples have been shown by the federal government.

As we sit here today, Tadoule Lake, one of the northern-most communities in Manitoba, is struggling, given the breakdown in water and sewer services in their community. Children have been forced to not attend school on a regular basis. These are the basic needs of first nations in my constituency and this is the reflection of the federal government's neglect of first nations people and the third world conditions in which they live.

Where is the investment in education and post-secondary student sponsorship? Gods Lake Narrows, Gods River and Oxford House have been calling on the need for federal investment, to work with them in building new schools, to meet the demands of an increasingly young population in their communities. Aboriginal people are among the youngest people in Canada. Why is the government failing to invest in their future?

When it comes to urban aboriginal people, the budget shows no commitment to working with urban aboriginal peoples and showing the necessary long-term support for critical services, as provided by the aboriginal friendship centres. The government continues to fail first nations and Métis people in northern Manitoba and across Canada.

With this budget, the government is ignoring Canadian workers. There are corporate tax giveaways to big profitable corporations, but no action to keep jobs here at home. My home community of Thompson is having a fight for its life with a foreign-owned mining company, Vale, whose purchase of Inco was allowed by the federal government. Instead of keeping the wealth of our resources in our hands, the government approved a \$1 billion loan to Vale, the very company that is taking hundreds of jobs away from Manitoba. The government has essentially assisted and given money to Vale to shift jobs away from our province.

Young people working in the refinery and the smelter in Thompson are very worried about their future and that of their young families. People nearing retirement are worried they will be left out in the cold. An entire community that has helped build the wealth of a corporation and a country stands to lose the very wealth that comes from the resources on which we stand.

Where is the commitment to stand by workers in our communities? Where is the government's plan to allow Canadian people, and not foreign companies, to benefit from our resources?

With this budget, the government is taking the west for granted. I stand here as a voice from western Canada, speaking out for the thousands of people who are saying no to the government's plan to dismantle the Canadian Wheat Board.

● (1740)

Why is this government showing such contempt for the democratic rights of farmers to choose? Where is this government's concern for the livelihoods of prairie people and prairie communities?

In our part of the west, the loss of the Canadian Wheat Board would mean the loss of the port of Churchill that depends on CWB shipments. This government is supporting the loss of that port and the livelihoods of people in Churchill, along the bay line and across the north, in addition to ignoring the wishes of farmers across western Canada.

This government is also ignoring the west through its extreme cuts to Western Economic Diversification Canada, a cut of 54.4% to its budget. Our regions have a constant need for diversification in economic development. Yet the rural regions of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia are being left out in the cold when it comes to the cooperation they need from the federal government in order to diversify. What will these cuts translate into? There will be fewer businesses opening up, fewer services emerging and more young people leaving our communities, communities that are struggling to survive. Is this truly the government's vision for western Canada?

With this budget the government is ignoring the number one priority of so many Canadians, the priority of health care. People across northern Manitoba and across Canada do not have the most basic care from a family doctor. In fact, five million Canadians do not have a family doctor, that first line of support when they face health challenges.

I remember going door to door throughout the election, even during the last parliament, in communities such as Flin Flon and hearing in house after house people express to me their anxiety, their worry, that they did not have a family doctor. I heard the stories of northerners about family doctors who came into their communities for one year, or maybe two years if they were lucky, and then leave, leaving their patients to hang, leaving families to worry, leaving people less healthy at the end of the day.

When we look at the leadership that we need to see from the federal government in working with our provinces, in working with our regional health authorities and in working with our first nations in aboriginal communities across the north, what we see is deflection and a real lack of vision when it comes to supporting the universal public health care that Canadians are so proud of.

The Budget

In closing, we in the official opposition are sending the message that the federal government has a duty to stand up for the priorities of all Canadians, from housing to education and health care and for maintaining and creating quality jobs based on our controlling our resources and our livelihoods. Canadians are looking to a federal government to stand up for them.

However, what we see today in the budget is the continuation of a record of failure in standing up for them. Instead, the federal government is looking at the big corporations and at friends who are already doing quite well at the expense of looking at what first nations, Métis, northern people and people across our country are looking for.

What northerners and Canadians have to count on, though, is an official opposition that will fight for them, that will fight for the dignity and social justice that every Canadian deserves.

• (1745)

Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Winnipeg South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to suggest that not all aboriginal people from her riding share her opinion. I am not one of them. Of course, I originally resided in Thompson and I know that many people have a different philosophy.

On the topic of aboriginal issues, though, I would like to ask her a question in relation to property. As an aboriginal person, I can own property anywhere I live. However, first nations people cannot do so within their communities on reserve. I am just wondering if she feels that first nations people should be second-class citizens without the opportunity to purchase property, or if in fact they should have that right.

I am wondering what her opinion is on that topic.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I would welcome the member across actually visiting my constituency and spending some time with some of the first nations people there, who have not only expressed a great deal of support for our party but also a great deal of concern about this member's government's agenda when it comes to the very needs they have. Whether it is the complete lack of funding for them for education, health care, economic development or housing, first nations in Manitoba, and northern Manitoba where this member comes from, arguably see some of the highest rates of neglect in the country.

As far as issues such as matrimonial property rights are concerned, this has been a critical issue in our last Parliament. I would ask the member to hear the loud and clear messages coming from regions like ours where there is a respect for the treaties and a respect for the aboriginal communities' role in self-government, an important debate that will continue in this Parliament.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have known the hon. member's father for in excess of 18 years, a good number of years. He is one of the more articulate individuals in the Manitoba legislature and, in fact, one of the most effective hecklers. It would be interesting to hear what he has to say about the NDP policy on no heckling.

Having said that, my question is with regard to the east side versus west side development of the hydro transmission line. When she makes reference to the importance of federal-provincial relations and

trying to assist the aboriginal population in northern Manitoba, I would point out that there are many east side residents within the aboriginal community, including chiefs, who are saying that the line should be going down the east side.

Does the member feel that the federal government has a role to play in the whole east side-west side issue? Given the importance of the aboriginal community, what role does the federal government have to play in that whole debate?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, there seems to be a great deal of interest in the communities that I represent. I invite the member to visit the east side first nations and hear directly from them, the chiefs and the councils that have signed the memorandums of understanding for road development. Considering the importance of economic development in the region, it is something that the east side grid would not bring to their region.

What is the federal government's role when it comes to east side first nations? It is listening to them for the water and sewer services they need, listening to them for the housing they need, listening to them for the new schools they need. The federal government has a lot of work to do and we hope to see it start work now.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to congratulate you on your new role in the House.

I would like to ask the member about a national child care strategy. Of course, the member ably pointed out the great lack in this budget before us, whether it is housing, health care or first nations. One of the other glaring absences is a national child care strategy. Women and their families across this country have been working since the early 1970s to have a national child care strategy in place.

What would the member have liked to see with regard to quality, affordable, accessible and publicly funded child care?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan on her return to the House.

One of the great proposals put forward by my party is the need for a national child care strategy. I represent one of the youngest regions in Canada and the need for such a strategy is the most acute in my region. The NDP hopes that the federal government will listen to Canadian families and young people and women who are saying that they want a national child care program working in their communities.

• (1750)

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Congratulations to you, Mr. Speaker, for being appointed to the chair.

I am happy to rise in the House today and follow the member for Churchill, hearing what she had to say about the budget. Although we represent very different parts of Canada, she from the north and I from an urban centre in the south on the west coast, it is really quite incredible to know that what she heard on the doorsteps during the election was very similar to what I had heard from my constituents in Vancouver East.

The Budget

I would like to thank the good folks of East Vancouver for re-electing me the sixth time. It is a pretty amazing community of very diverse neighbourhoods. It is a place where immigrants come, where people make their way in Canada. It is a place that has a lot of labour history and social activism. However, it is also a place that is really struggling. People are struggling with the incredibly high housing costs in Vancouver. It is a good place to live, but people are really hurting and are having a hard time.

I feel so incredibly proud to be part of this amazing caucus of New Democrats. So many young people have been elected, it feels like a breath of fresh air has come in. I hope that they turn politics upside down in this place, as we get new perspectives and experience from these young people.

In the election campaign we heard so many people say that young people had to get involved. They asked why young people did not vote, why they were not engaged. Here we see it with some incredible candidates. In my riding of East Vancouver, the engagement of the youth vote was really something that we have never seen so strongly before. We had vote mobs. People were raising the visibility and the awareness of the campaign and the issues. The use of social media, whether it was Facebook or Twitter, was quite wonderful to see. It provided a new way of interacting with voters and constituents. I feel very proud to be part of a caucus that has an historic number of women and also so many young people who are going to give us strength and a sense of hope about what politics will be in the future.

Regarding the budget that we heard yesterday, there are two things that I want to focus on because they are important to folks in my community. One is health care and the other is housing.

I received an email from a young family just a couple of days ago. They have lived in Vancouver for about 14 years. They have a combined income of \$80,000. They are working hard. They talk about saving to buy a house and say it is like running toward a finish line that is moving away from them faster than they can run. They point out that they are currently paying \$1,450 a month for a small one bedroom apartment in a house of three suites in East Vancouver. East Vancouver used to be relatively affordable but now Vancouver overall is a very expensive city in which to live.

Therefore, one of the things I was looking for in the budget was whether or not there would be any commitment by the government to an affordable housing program. I was incredibly disappointed to see there was not even a mention of housing in the budget. It is not just in my community but right across this country, whether it is in the north where people are living in appalling third world conditions, or whether it is in urban centres or among the homeless.

Metro Vancouver just had a recent homeless count and we know that nearly 2,000 people are living in shelters. Part of the count included people who were staying overnight in jail or detox or an addiction facility. We know that the number of people living in shelters is still going up. It is a crisis across the country.

The fact that the Conservative government has turned a complete blind eye to the housing crisis that has developed in this country is quite astounding to me. Maybe the Conservatives believe it is something that government should not worry about.

However, the reality is that in metro Vancouver and the Lower Mainland there is now a rental housing supply coalition. It may surprise some members opposite to know that part of that coalition includes the Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver, the Canadian Homebuilders' Association of B.C., the Co-operative Housing Federation of B.C., the B.C. Non-Profit Housing Association and the Tenants Resource and Advisory Centre. These coalition partners usually do not work together but they are now because the crisis in our city is so severe. The City of Vancouver is doing as much as it can, but the federal government has been absolutely absent.

● (1755)

I heard the minister of HRSD say in question period that the government has put all this money into the economic action plan, et cetera. The fact is that was a one-time infusion. What we need in this country is a long-term national housing strategy. I have fought tooth and nail for that for many years and I know that all of us in the NDP are going to continue to do that. We cannot just continue with a society where some people get more and more wealthy and other people, even middle-class people now, are suffering. Coming back to this young couple that makes \$80,000 a year. Once that was a good enough amount of money to buy a house, a modest house, but no longer. So not only have we people at the very bottom who are more and more vulnerable, but we also have students, seniors and young families who are finding the housing affordability crisis something that is now eating into their food money, their education money, and it is getting harder and harder to make ends meet.

That is something that I know we, as New Democrats, are going to fight tooth and nail for.

The second thing I want to mention is health care because this is obviously a huge issue that is looming before us.

I heard the Minister of Health today, because we raised it in question period, talk about the health accord that is coming up for renegotiation in 2014. She basically said not to worry, that it is three years away. I want to tell her and the Conservative government that we are really worried about what is going to happen with the health accord. The accord that we had in 2004 that came about with Paul Martin's government, basically had no strings attached, but it did make some commitments for a national pharmaceutical program, for long-term care, for home care. It made some commitments that there would be progress on these things, like a renewed phase two of medicare.

This week the Health Council of Canada, which is the monitoring group for the accord, basically said that the national pharmaceutical program has been stalled. Why? Because the federal government has been absent.

The Budget

This is an issue that crosses every political stripe. It crosses every part of society in terms of people's concern about what is going to happen to our public health care system. It is often portrayed and there are myths put forward that somehow medicare, or our public health care system, is not sustainable. This is actually not true. It is something that the Conservatives would like to make us believe because there has been a great lobby from powerful pharmaceutical companies and lobbyists to privatize our system. However, medicare is actually very sustainable. It is actually the private health costs like the costs of drugs, that are driving up the costs of health care. We see a situation where 25% of Canadians do not have any drug coverage. It is astounding that people are digging deeper and deeper into their pockets to pay for basic prescription costs.

I want to put the other side of the House on notice that on the issue of health care members will see an enormous amount of vigour and vigilance from the NDP to hold the government to account and to ensure that the health accord that is renegotiated covers these basic quality of life issues around medicare so that we uphold the five principles of the Canada Health Act.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for Vancouver East for being re-elected, I believe she said for a sixth time. That shows the confidence that the people from Vancouver East have in their member. I can assure them that they are well represented.

I would like to ask the hon. member to explain to the House what a national housing strategy would do for the poor of Canada.

• (1800)

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Speaker, I would certainly like to thank my good colleague on his re-election. I know that he has worked very hard for his constituents. Also, he is one of the members who very much supports the idea of a national housing strategy.

It is very simple. It is the idea that the federal government has a critical role to play in the most basic of human rights, that is, the provision of safe, affordable, appropriate and accessible housing.

In fact, we used to have really good housing programs in this country. The federal government always played a role. But, in the name of cutting the deficit in the 1990s, that was all gone. We should learn from that. It was a former Liberal government. The consequence of that public policy decision has been disastrous in terms of increasing homelessness.

We are absolutely committed to the need for the federal government to be a player, to participate with the provinces, the territories and the municipalities to ensure that there is a national housing strategy so that no Canadian, wherever he or she lives, is homeless or does not have safe, secure and affordable housing.

Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to be here and to represent Okanagan—Coquihalla. I want to applaud my colleague's election win and thank her for bringing up her concerns in the House today.

I have a simple question on health care. Health care is something that we are all concerned about, as Canadians did say at the doorsteps, although it seems that we all must have selective hearing because what I heard at the door is much different than what many of the other members on this side of the House have said.

However, when it comes to health care, we have said we will carry through with our commitments. We have said we are going to continue to fund the 6%. Since it is a provincial responsibility, how does the member propose we carry forward, knowing that? It is not something to be bullied or pushed. It is something the provinces have to work with in conjunction with the federal government. I would just like to hear how the member plans to do that.

Also, how does the member plan to pay for it? We all know we have the best of intentions but there are real issues here as far as where the money goes and where it comes from.

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Speaker, I have not actually heard anyone, and far be it from us, to suggest that there is going to be any bullying that takes place. It is a negotiated agreement and I would agree there has been a commitment by all parties that there should be a 6% increase, even two years after the accord continues.

However, it is not only about the money; it is about where that money goes and what it is used for. One of the real challenges we face is that we now have a patchwork across the country. Some provinces have some drug coverage programs. Some provinces have some long-term care or home care. It is a real patchwork.

Medicare was started by Tommy Douglas in Saskatchewan, and that is really an icon of Canadian value. We believe that phase two of medicare must encompass at least a national drug coverage plan. That is what we have to negotiate. Believe me, the provinces would love to do that, but what has been absent is the federal government.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to follow up on the previous question, health care is a provincial responsibility, but the Canada Health Act ensures and guarantees that the federal government has a role to play, as it should I would ultimately argue.

Does the member believe that the Canada Health Act is something that should be enforced? If so, to what degree? Also, is there a need for any amendments to the Canada Health Act?

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Speaker, the Canada Health Act is the foundation of our health care system and we need to live up to the spirit and the law of what the Canada Health Act is.

I was asked earlier if it is affordable. If we took even some of the \$31 billion in corporate tax cuts that has been taken out of the public purse, we could easily afford what we need to do, whether it is health care, housing, childcare, name it. The pie is there; it is just the way it is divided.

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Selkirk—Interlake.

I am pleased to rise today on behalf of the constituents of Fleetwood—Port Kells to participate in the debate on budget 2011. Before I begin, I would like to thank my constituents for putting their trust in me to again represent them in the House of Commons.

The Budget

The budget we have before us today represents the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. It builds on our government's previous successes. In January 2009, Canada found itself in the midst of a global economic recession, the worst since the Great Depression more than 80 years ago.

Our government responded swiftly with Canada's economic action plan to deal with the crisis. The results speak for themselves. Under the leadership of our Prime Minister, Canada has weathered the recession better than any other country in the world. With Canada's economic action plan, we protected jobs and made long-term investments that are allowing the economy to emerge stronger than ever before and created over half a million jobs since July 2009.

Now it is time for the next phase of our plan. We will be focused on the economy, on creating jobs, reducing the deficit and making key strategic investments.

I spent a lot of time listening to Surrey residents. Their message was loud and very clear. The economy is the number one issue facing Canada and our government. Our Conservative government rightly has a reputation for sound financial management. Prior to the global recession we kept the budget balanced, we paid down the debt and we cut taxes.

In fact, since coming to office in 2006, our government has cut taxes more than 120 times. Over one million Canadians have been removed from the tax rolls. The average Canadian family is paying \$3,000 less in taxes each and every year.

We did all of this while investing new money into social programs and bringing our military out of its dark ages with important investments in modern equipment. Thanks to our prudent management of the nation's books, when the global recession hit we were in the financial position where we used stimulus spending to spark the economy without doing permanent damage to the books.

The stimulus spending has now come to an end and it is time to return to balanced budgets. Budget 2010 contained a three point plan to accomplish this goal, winding down temporary stimulus, putting in place targeted spending, restrained measures and reviewing government administrative and overhead costs.

We will not balance the budget by cutting transfers to the provinces for important social programs, like health care and education. That is the Liberal way, not the Conservative way.

With budget 2011 federal support to provinces and territories will reach an all-time high of over \$56 billion, which is almost \$2.2 billion more than last year. For B.C., this totals over \$5.4 billion in 2011-12, or \$1,182 per capita. There is almost \$3.8 billion through the Canada health transfer, an increase of \$216 million from last year. The health transfers will continue to grow annually through a 6% escalator.

There is over \$1.5 billion through the Canada social transfer. For my province of British Columbia, this payment represents an increase of \$349 million since 2005-06. This long-term growing support helps ensure that British Columbia has the resources required to provide essential public services.

With this budget, we are building on our plan laid out last year to balance the budget. With our government-wide strategic and operating review, we will balance the budget by 2014-15.

• (1805)

Building on the ambitious agenda of continuing tax relief, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan takes additional steps to reduce taxes for Canadians and businesses. These tax measures will provide taxpayers in B.C. with approximately \$270 million in tax relief over the following five years. This includes a new family caregiver tax credit that will provide almost \$103 million in relief, and a new children's arts tax credit that will provide almost \$68 million in relief.

The next phase in Canada's economic action plan also takes steps to improve the fairness, neutrality and integrity of the tax system, closing tax loopholes and limiting tax planning opportunities.

Our government recognizes our seniors as valuable members of our society who contribute a diversity of skills, knowledge and experience to their families and communities. Canada's seniors helped build and make this country a great place for all of us to live. That is why we are supporting our seniors in a number of different ways, including: over \$2.3 billion in annual tax relief; removing over 85,000 seniors from the tax rolls; introducing pension income splitting; doubling the pension income credit to \$2,000; increasing the age credit amount by \$2,000; and establishing the tax free savings account, which is particularly beneficial for seniors.

In this budget, we are taking additional steps to support our seniors. We are enhancing the guaranteed income supplement so that low-income seniors will receive additional annual top-up benefits of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples. This will help more than 680,000 seniors across our great country. We are enhancing the new horizons for seniors program with an additional \$10 million to promote volunteerism, mentorship and the social participation of seniors, and to expand awareness of elder abuse. We are extending the targeted initiative for older workers and eliminating the mandatory retirement age for federally regulated employees to give seniors more choice.

Our Conservative government knows that seniors are a diverse group with different interests and concerns. We are committed to ensuring that policies, programs and services meet the evolving needs of all seniors. Taken together, the initiatives we have introduced will help to ensure that more seniors can live with dignity and security as they grow older.

Another key point of this budget deals with public funding for federal political parties. I am speaking about the annual per-vote subsidy introduced by the former Liberal government in 2004. Governments have a duty to use taxpayer dollars wisely, especially in a time of fiscal restraint when families are struggling to make ends meet. That is why we are now following through on our government's campaign commitment to phase out per-vote subsidies for political parties.

The Budget

The government will introduce legislation to eliminate the subsidy in 51¢ increments starting on April 1 next year until it is completely eliminated by 2015-16. It will generate savings of up to \$30 million. Our government has always opposed direct taxpayer subsidies to political parties and believes that political parties should rely primarily on their supporters for their funding.

When one considers everything that we are proposing, it is no surprise that this budget has been so favourably received all across the country. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities declared that budget 2011 delivered a vital commitment to cities and communities to develop a new, long-term federal infrastructure plan.

Our members appreciate that this budget is focused on ensuring that our officers have the tools and resources necessary to protect our communities effectively and efficiently. This is a good budget that ensures safety, security and prosperity for all Canadians.

• (1815)

[Translation]

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to thank the voters in my magnificent riding, which is unique both in its composition and in the challenges it faces.

Earlier, we were speaking of challenges such as climate change, the development of natural resources—which contribute greatly to the wealth of this country, environmental protection, the future of aboriginal peoples and the future of our relations with aboriginal peoples. Today, there is a lot of talk about a national action plan. Today, I can tell you that there are major challenges to be faced by many of the communities that I will be representing over the next four years. Whether in terms of education or health, one of the issues that has come up time and again in aboriginal communities in recent years is the issue of housing and living conditions in aboriginal communities.

In my riding, there are 14 Inuit, 9 Cree, and 2 Algonquin communities. This problem has been talked about by aboriginal leaders everywhere in Canada for many years.

When will this government give us an action plan to address the crisis that has been going on for years?

[English]

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

This budget is good for Canada. It is good for Canadians. It is good for my constituents of Fleetwood—Port Kells. This budget includes child care. It has something for everyone, including farmers, students, families, seniors, businesses and aboriginals. There is \$97.2 million to support various aboriginal initiatives.

There is a diverse range of organizations, public interest groups, and commentators that are applauding budget 2011 as a positive plan to create jobs and promote economic growth. The Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters said:

The extension of the two-year write-off for investments in manufacturing and processing technologies announced in today's federal budget is critical to sustaining Canada's economic recovery.

This tax measure gives manufacturers the confidence to invest in their future by boosting productivity and enhancing technologies.

Let us see what—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. I appreciate the interest and enthusiasm, but we do have to get a couple of more questions in.

Questions and comments, the member for Kingston and the Islands

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of things in the hon. member's speech that I just cannot let pass.

One is the statement that “prior to the global recession, we kept the budget balanced”. I might remind the House that the budget actually went into deficit because of increased spending before the recession.

Second, I find it very strange and perverse to be bragging about all the people removed from tax rolls. In fact, the 20% of people in my riding who live below the poverty line might like to be in a position to have the income to pay taxes.

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate this member as well on his election.

Under the leadership of the Conservative government, Canada has weathered the global recession better than nearly all other industrialized countries. I am very proud of our government. Indeed, with the help of Canada's economic action plan, we have emerged as one of the world's top performing advanced economies.

Here are the facts. Canada has had seven straight quarters of economic growth with nearly 540,000 new jobs created across Canada. We are proud of our record. We are proud of our government and we are proud of our Prime Minister.

• (1820)

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as this is my first opportunity to be back in the House, I first want to thank the constituents of Selkirk—Interlake for sending me back for the fourth time. It is indeed an honour and a privilege to represent the great people of Selkirk—Interlake.

We had an incredible election. I travelled almost 10,000 kilometres across my riding, which is slightly bigger than the province of Nova Scotia. However, it is great to be here to advocate on behalf of my constituents.

I want to thank the almost 300 volunteers on my campaign team for helping to get me re-elected. I also thank my staff in both my constituency office and here on the Hill for all the great work they have done for me over the past several years.

I extend my deep love and appreciation to my wife Kelly and my daughters, Cortney, Taylor and Cassidy, for their continued support and love and for allowing me to do this job and to be so far away from the farm.

The Budget

I also congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your new appointment. This is your first day on the job in this new role and we are looking forward to working with you over the next four and a half years.

Indeed, I congratulate all members for being elected to this esteemed House. This is a great opportunity for all of us here to debate policy and acts and to deal with legislation that will improve the lives of Canadians. We always have differences of opinion but it is a great opportunity to talk about those opinions in the House in a respectful way. I am looking forward to the improved decorum that we will bring to the House.

What we are dealing with today is budget 2011, which is a rerun of what we dealt with back in March. I congratulate the Minister of Finance for retabling this document because we took this document to the people after March 25 and we campaigned on it. We talked about all the great things that are happening in the budget and Canadians overwhelmingly said yes, that they supported it. In my riding, over 65% of the people support the government's policies and this budget.

This budget is great for my riding of Selkirk—Interlake. It is great for Manitoba and it is great for all of Canada. I really want to talk about how this budget, which is so fiscally responsible, getting us back to balanced budgets, eliminating the deficit and continuing to grow our economy and create opportunities for Canadians, is so important for rural Canadians.

One of the highlights in the budget, at least for me, is the way that we will attract more doctors, nurses and nurse practitioners to rural areas. In my riding of Selkirk—Interlake, and indeed in Manitoba, we see the provincial government and different health agencies trying to recruit doctors from all over the world. That is not sustainable and that has not really worked. A lot of them do not want to stay in rural areas and so they move away.

The Conservative government is proposing a made in Canada solution. We will offer student loan forgiveness for doctors up to \$40,000, and for nurses and nurse practitioners up to \$20,000 if they practise in rural communities. They would get to come right out of university, establish themselves in rural communities, maybe meet a significant other, start up their practices and really get to fall in love with our rural way of life. To me, that is exciting and something that will really pay dividends long term.

Another thing in the budget is a new \$3 million initiative to help communities develop a more integrated approach to dealing with palliative and end of life care. In Manitoba, unfortunately, palliative care is treated differently in rural areas than in the city of Winnipeg. In the city, the provincial NDP government funds palliative care. However, in rural areas, we need to volunteer, do all sorts of fundraising drives and hospice walks just so we can pay for coordinators and programs. It is important that our government is stepping up at the federal level to supply \$3 million to communities that want to develop an integrated approach to palliative care. That is something that is so desperately needed across Canada.

Tying in with that is the new tax credit for family caregivers. That is something that will provide dollars to those people who take care of a loved one who is sick or is in palliative care and allow them to

be recognized economically for the service they are providing that is not being provided through the health care system.

● (1825)

We have heard a lot of talk today about the increase in the guaranteed income supplement. It is a great move. We will see dollars go up for individuals and for couples, and it will help the most disadvantaged seniors.

If we look at rural areas, we often see seniors who are widows or who come from a farm family or a small business where they did not contribute to a pension or do not have any CPP. They really do live on their OAS and GIS. Therefore \$50 a month, \$600 a year, is a big improvement for those seniors who are still living below the poverty line.

Maybe it is not enough. We hear that all the time. However, it is the first step and it is the first time anything has been done. The former Liberal government did absolutely nothing.

I am proud that our government recognized it. Now we are stepping up and providing the assistance that is so desperately needed.

We have also instituted the new horizons program and are increasing it to \$10 million a year. That new horizons program for seniors has been very well received in my rural communities. New horizons groups and different senior resource groups have been able to access money to help seniors be mentors in our areas, to provide accessibility into different facilities and to develop programs and places where they can meet and gather. That is also where we have stepped up. We developed the program, and seniors across this country have thanked us.

Of course this budget really does support our business community. Up and down my main streets, it is all small business. We do have some manufacturing and some medium-sized enterprises, and there are a few large corporations in the riding, but overwhelmingly it is like most of Canada, where two-thirds of the businesses are small and medium-sized enterprises. They employ over 60% of Canadians. That is where we should be putting our efforts, and we have.

They have benefited from the tax cuts we have brought forward. They will benefit from the new EI holiday for new hires. That tax credit will assist in developing more jobs and long-term gainful employment for people in our areas. That is important for rural Canada.

We also see that they will benefit from the new capital cost allowance. We are extending it so they can pay off their purchases over two years on an accelerated basis. The accelerated capital cost allowance will see them retool, be more productive and be more competitive, which again helps our manufacturing base. We are seeing a growth in manufacturing in my riding.

Our rural municipalities have really benefited. They thank the federal government for making the gas tax fund a permanent measure that they can now count on and bank on. They can go in a year ahead and know that these dollars are coming from the federal government. They find it just fantastic.

The Budget

The infrastructure investments we have made throughout my riding and throughout Canada have been very well received by the municipalities because they were in such a deficit position from the standpoint of infrastructure and the need for infrastructure investment. Now they have that investment and they thank us for it, because they were ignored by the previous government and often the provincial government.

In Manitoba the provincial NDP has not stepped up and put in its share of the dollars to ensure that infrastructure investments happen. They thank the federal government for stepping forward and bringing in the building Canada fund, increasing the federal-provincial-territorial base infrastructure program, bringing economic stimulus dollars and even the community adjustment fund so that they are able to access dollars and make significant investments.

In the province of Manitoba the NDP government is thankful for this budget. It is really pleased that we have been able to increase transfers for health care. The total budget for health care is almost a billion dollars in Manitoba. It is up significantly, up by almost 30% from where the Liberals were. We have also seen an increase in investments and in transfers for social assistance and infrastructure to the provinces.

Overall in the Manitoba budget, \$3.4 billion comes from federal transfers. Almost 40% of its entire budget is coming through transfers. The provincial NDP in Manitoba thanks Canada's Conservative government for ensuring that it will have those investments.

One of the things I am quite pleased to see in this budget is that we are doing away with political subsidies. Over the last number of years in this House we have heard a lot of name-calling and braying. We have heard people complain about dollars used for partisan purposes. Nothing is more partisan than giving taxpayer dollars to fund political operations and political mechanisms within parties across this country, and funding organizations like the Bloc Québécois, which used Canadian taxpayers' dollars to advance its separatist cause.

That is just ridiculous. I hear about it all the time. When I was campaigning, my constituents were asking over and over again why we were giving money to a political party that wanted to completely ruin Canada.

It is a great budget.

I know my time is up. I look forward to answering questions another day.

● (1830)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The member for Selkirk—Interlake will have five minutes remaining for questions and comments the next time the House considers this issue for debate.

It being 6:30 p.m., this House stands adjourned until 2 p.m. tomorrow, pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:30 p.m.)

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